



**B8701: Management Consulting Lab: Mid-Sized African Firms**  
**Wednesdays, 6-9:15pm**  
**MBA/EMBA Spring 2024, Full Term**

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**INSTRUCTOR BACKGROUND**



Joe Timko is a former McKinsey & Co partner, where he focused on industries such as communications equipment and services, IT software and services, industrial controls, and chemicals. In 2010, Joe moved to the corporate sector where he served as Chief Strategy Officer for two Fortune 500 companies (ADP, a leading human capital software and services company, and Pitney Bowes, a global player in shipping and communications).

More recently, he spent 3 years in the strategy practice of Ernst & Young, where he was managing director in the Americas advisory strategy practice. Joe currently serves on the Board of PlanetiQ, a satellite weather data company; VUV Analytics, a gas chromatography company; BrightVolt, a battery technology company; and in Chair of Navicore Solutions, a consumer debt counseling non-profit. Joe has been an Executive in Residence at Columbia for 5 years and is an Adjunct Professor. In 2022 he received the Dean's Award for Teaching Excellence.

**OVERVIEW**

This lab course and strengthens your consulting, problem solving, and communication skills by working on a semester-long project with a company that is based in Africa. The students in this course will work with companies that are enrolled in the Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness Africa. Known as EC-Africa, this program is offered by CBS Executive Education and equips African entrepreneurs with the skills, tools, and contacts to professionalize and grow their businesses in today's global environment. Each company enrolls a team of two or three senior staff — CEO, founder, managing director, CFO, COO, or other leaders. The companies are all looking to scale. Each company is unique in industry and size, and typically ranges from \$1M to \$15M in annual revenue, and 10 to 500 employees. To learn more about the EC-America program and the enrolled companies, check out the [EC-Africa website](#).

The class is valuable not only for students who are going to work in management consulting after their MBA, but for everybody who wants to apply their learning from the MBA to the benefit of a company as well as those who want to sharpen their entrepreneurial skills.

The projects with companies from EC Africa, will also provide insights into opportunities and challenges for firms in Africa. Africa is the world's second-fastest growing region – after emerging Asia – according to the African Development Bank Report. 1.3 billion people live in Africa and according to the United Nations, the population is expected to increase to 2.5 billion by 2050. The working-class population in Africa is growing by 2.7 percent each year (compared to 1.3 percent in Latin America and 1.2 percent in Southeast Asia). McKinsey projects that by 2025 two-thirds of the estimated 303 million African households will have discretionary income and consumer spending will reach \$2.1 trillion.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, many firms and investors are viewing Africa as having tremendous of potential – but there are also unique challenges that make building a business in Africa difficult. Working with a company in Africa allows students to get unique insights into what it means to have a business in Africa.

## COURSE ORGANIZATION

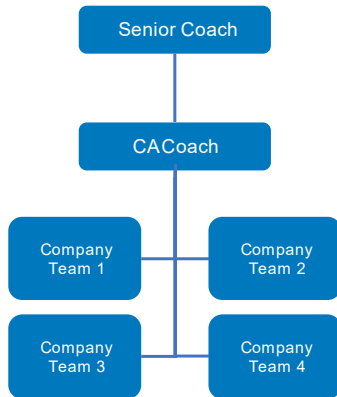
This course is part of the “Management Consulting Lab (MCL)” series. MCL is designed to be beneficial for companies and for students. Through MCL, companies get access to CBS MBA students to work on a critical project. In return, MBA students experience a structured approach to learn 1) rigorous problem solving and project management skills, 2) client interactions, and 3) application of knowledge and skills learned in their coursework. The structure of the MCL course is very different than a normal class. The class is almost entirely project-based, and students are grouped into teams of three depending on their expertise. Each team does a semester-long project for one African company. MCL is structured in the following way:

- Much of the learning from the course will occur outside the classroom. 4 student teams of three students each will be paired to with a Consulting Coach and a Senior Consulting Coach. See the chart below. There will be weekly 45-minute check-ins for each student team with their Consulting Coach. The Consulting Coach is an MBA Course Assistant with substantial consulting and project management experience who helps in guiding the process and the reflections.

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<sup>1</sup> McKinsey&Company. Winning in Africa's consumer market. 2015.

## Coach Structure



- A **Senior Coach (SC)**, will support 4 student teams.
- As current/former senior partners, they provide coaching to student teams and coaches through Zoom meetings.
- SCs do not interact with clients.
- They do have grading input on student teams.

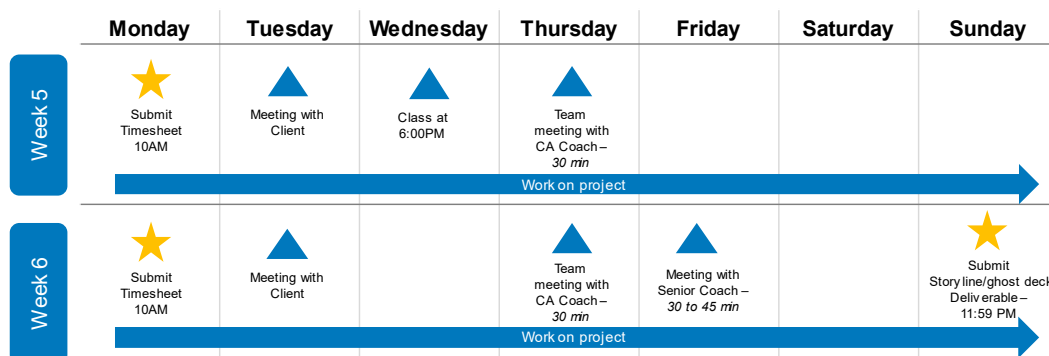
- A **Course Assistant (CA) Coach** will be paired with a SC and also support 4 student teams.
- The CA coaches play the role of a "junior partner".
- They will guide the teams and keep them on track and they too will receive coaching from the SC.
- They will not interact directly with the clients.
- They do have grading input on student teams.

- **Student groups of 2-3** will work on a project with one client for the semester.
- They will own and manage the relationship with the client.
- They will get coaching directly both from the CA Coach and the Senior Coach.
- They will provide upward feedback on their coaches twice during the course.

- Bi-weekly team meetings with the Senior Consulting Coach will also be held. This coach is a senior partner at a consulting firm who provides insights and coaching on project and client management challenges.
- Periodically throughout the semester we may cancel a formal class meeting in favor of allowing students to 1) meet with their teams to problem solve; 2) meet with CA and/or Senior coaches; 3) meet with clients; 4) conduct research and analyses. **Wednesday evenings MUST remain available** for meetings and course work. Unavailability will be treated as an unexcused absence.

The chart below is meant to show a representative two-week period in the middle of the semester and how meetings and other events might line up.

## A day in the life



## NOTE ON TRAVEL

Travel to the company's headquarters is not part of the course and would be at the option of the students and the company.

## CLASS MEETINGS

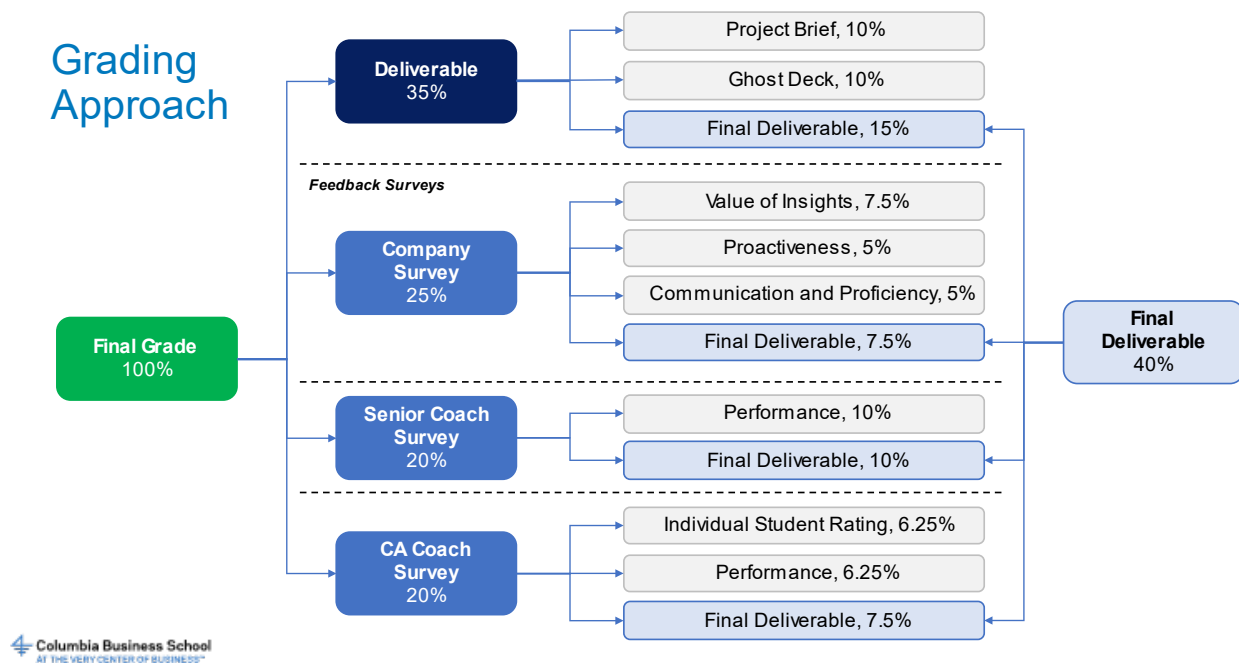
Class meetings will cover the following topics.

- Overall course introduction
- Consulting basics and getting your client engagement off to a good start
- Best practices for refining your project brief (a description of the work you will do agreed to by the company)
- Cross-cultural communication – guest speaker
- Working with entrepreneurs (while perhaps aspiring to be one) – guest speaker
- The art of communicating advice – guest speaker
- Applying change management principles at your client – guest speaker
- Creating compelling charts
- Periodic learning reflections from your client experiences

In addition to these topics, we will discuss each major deliverables for the course. They are 1) the project brief, 2) a “ghost” deck (early draft of your final deliverable showing the structure of what you intend to communicate), and 3) your final deliverable.

## METHOD OF EVALUATION & ATTENDANCE POLICY

Grades will be determined as follows:



Class attendance and participation will be tracked. Potentially **excused reasons** for missing class include religious observance, military service, court appearance, illness, and family emergency. If you miss class for a reason above, we will excuse you if you: i) let us know ahead of time, ii) watch the class recording, iii) write up a 200-word summary of your key takeaways, and iv) email the write up to us before the class following the one you missed. ***Students are allowed a max of 1 excused absence.***

**Unexcused reasons** for missing class include interviews, weddings, student activities, conferences, and personal travel. ***You may be excused ONCE for these reasons*** if you i) let us know ahead of time, ii) watch the class recording, iii) write up a 200-word summary of your key takeaways, and iv) email the write up to us before the class following the one you missed.

Students with **1 unexcused absence will lose 4 percentage points off their final grade**. 2 unexcused classes will at most receive a P1, students with 3 or more unexcused classes will receive an F. It is up to the student to keep track of how many unexcused absences you have, and to understand how absences may impact their overall grade in the course.

## WORKLOAD AND TRACKING OF HOURS

The workload from this course is significant but so is the reward. **According to prior student surveys the course requires between 7 and 11 hours/week depending on the schedule of near-term deliverables.** Students track their hours in a weekly activity log.

## SEMESTER SCHEDULE - SPRING 2024

Week	Start Date (Monday)	End Date (Sunday)	Format	Class Topic
<b>Week 1</b>	22-Jan	28-Jan	Whole Class <b>Wed, Jan 24, 6:00 – 9:15pm</b>	<b>Class:</b> - Course overview - Project Briefs - Starting a Successful Consulting Engagement
<b>Week 2</b>	29-Jan	4-Feb	Teams with Coach Teams with <b>Senior Coach</b>	<b>Deliverable:</b> Team Learning Reflection (Jan 31)
<b>Week 3</b>	5-Feb	11-Feb	Whole Class <b>Wed, Feb 7, 6:00 – 9:15pm</b>  Teams with Coach	<b>Class:</b> - Check-in Survey - Working with Entrepreneurs - Guest, J. Guzman - Cross-cultural communication - Guest, V. J. Purdie-Greenaway
<b>Week 4</b>	12-Feb	18-Feb	Teams with Coach Teams with <b>Senior Coach</b>	<b>Deliverable:</b> Final Project Brief (agreed by team and company) (Feb 18)
<b>Week 5</b>	19-Feb	25-Feb	Whole Class <b>Wed, Feb 21, 6:00 – 9:15pm</b>  Teams with Coach	<b>Class:</b> - Check-in Survey - Review of Project Brief Deliverable - Best Practices for Ghost Decks and Storylines - Creating Compelling Charts - CA Coach's
<b>Week 6</b>	26-Feb	3-Mar	Teams with Coach Teams with <b>Senior Coach</b>	Last week of A-Term

BREAK	4-Mar	17-Mar		
Week 7	18-Mar	24-Mar	Teams with Coach	<b>Deliverable:</b> Storyline or ghost deck (March 24) <b>Deliverable:</b> Mid-Semester Pulse Check and Feedback on Coaching (Mar 24)
Week 8	25-Mar	31-Mar	Whole Class <b>Wed, Mar 27, 6:00 – 9:15pm</b>  Teams with Coach Teams with <b>Senior Coach</b>	<b>Class:</b> - Review of Ghost Deck Deliverable - Change Management - Guest, J. Brockner
Week 9	1-Apr	7-Apr	Teams with Coach Teams with <b>Senior Coach</b>	<b>Deliverable:</b> Draft project deck (April 7)
Week 10	8-Apr	14-Apr	Whole Class <b>Wed, Apr 10, 6:00 – 9:15pm</b>  Teams with Coach	Open student discussion on client relationships and project do's and don't's
Week 11	15-Apr	21-Apr	Teams with Coach Teams with <b>Senior Coach</b>	<b>Deliverable:</b> Final project deck (April 21)
Week 12	22-Apr	28-Apr	<b>PLEASE NOTE, THIS CLASS IS ON MONDAY</b> Whole Class <b>Mon, Apr 22, 6:00 – 9:15pm</b>	<b>Class:</b> - Senior Coach Panel; - Class Learnings Discussion; - Client Panel - Course Feedback; - Reception at local bar <b>Deliverable:</b> End-Semester Feedback on Teammates and Course Experience