

**B8624-001: Driving Strategic Impact**  
**“Mastering the Tools of Strategy Consulting”**  
**FALL 2023**

**Session:** Fall 2023 –Term A

**Time:** Tuesdays, 9:00am – 12:15am; (9/5, 9/12, 9/19, 9/26, 10/3, 10/10, **EXAM: 10/17**)

**Room:** GEFFEN 440

**Professor:** Marco Viola

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**Course Overview**

Whether you want to follow a career in consulting or just want to improve your problem solving capabilities for ANY other job, this course will provide you with valuable skills to navigate both the consulting and corporate worlds.

Through a combination of lectures, class exercises, case discussions and real life examples, this course focuses on key models and frameworks used by top management consultants to better understand, diagnose, solve, recommend and implement top strategic corporate decisions.

The course’s ultimate objective is to develop a disciplined, structured and analytical approach to consistently help you and your clients succeed.

**Connection with the Core**

This course builds on knowledge primarily from Strategy Formulation, Marketing Strategy and Leadership Development.

Specifically, we will further develop concepts like company and competitive analysis, sources of economic value, trade-offs, etc. Basic knowledge of incremental cost/benefit analysis, key

financial statements and marketing segmentation will help students create more robust recommendations in class exercises and cases.

Throughout the course, class exercises will also provide students the opportunity to integrate and further develop key leadership concepts like team management, influence, persuasion and decision-making.

### **Course objectives**

This course is designed to teach students several problem-solving methodologies that complement other managerial tools acquired in undergraduate and graduate studies, focusing on key analytical, communication and influencing skills to solve everyday business problems.

The course is organized around the phases of a typical strategy engagement: problem definition, problem structuring, data gathering & analysis, recommendations development and finally implementation. Students will get to learn and practice specific consulting tools and principles associated with each of these phases, such as issue trees, hypothesis-driven problem-solving, interview guides, etc.

The course will also briefly cover key techniques for project management and skills for successful client management.

The course emphasizes hands-on practice with real life examples. The course is intended to provide the students with a pragmatic approach that will guide the formulation and implementation of corporate, business, and functional strategies.

At the end of the course, students should know how to:

- Concretely define the scope of a project or consulting engagement
- Break up a complicated problem into logical pieces that can be individually addressed
- Efficiently gather the right data to build a relevant fact base and generate strategic insight
- Effectively extract information from internal and external experts
- Synthesize information to drive key conclusions
- Develop robust & specific recommendations that provide the highest value to the client among feasible alternatives
- Present recommendations and conclusions in a persuasive manner to gain buy-in
- Develop trust-based relationships with clients

### **Grading**

This course will use a combination of readings, case studies, lectures, class exercises (with real life examples) and will require the completion of a final exam.

Requirements for the course and the contribution of each towards the final grade are as follows:

ACTIVITIES	PERCENTAGES
Online & Class Participation (Class, Pollev, Online & Yellowdig)	40%
Assignments –Group Projects	30%
Final Exam	30%

### Assignments –Group Projects

This course will have some group projects, which will walk you through the typical life-cycle of a project or consulting engagement. After a presentation in the first class defining a problem, teams (of 4-5 students) will evaluate a client situation, analyze the data and generate a recommendation for the client.

There will be 4 Assignments:

Deliverable	% Grade	Type	Date Due
1. List of Key Issues to Analyze –Card Co	5%	Group (A)	Due Second Class
2. Heli-Heaven Case	5%	Group (A)	Due Third Class
3. Recommendations for Dynamo Case	10%	Group (A)	Due Fourth Class
4. Recommendations for Giant Bank	10%	Group (A)	Due Sixth Class

There will be an additional –**OPTIONAL**- assignment regarding Card Co. that we'll discuss in class. Should you choose to do it, it could add up to 10% to your Final Grade

5. Recommendations for Card Co Case	Group (A)	Due Fifth Class
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The assignments are due 2 days before each class and will give students the opportunity to “take a first crack” on the frameworks learned in class. While the exercises themselves will not be time consuming, the more effort put into them, the more you will be able to take advantage of the skills learned in class.

Assignments will be graded both on content and format, based on originality, analytical strength, feasibility and logic & format.

### Online & Class Participation

**This course adheres to Columbia Core Culture. Students are expected to be PRESENT, PREPARED and PARTICIPATE.** Your active participation in the discussion and PollEv in class (as well as your online participation in discussions and Yellowdig community) is considered very important in this course. Let's get the most out of perhaps the scarcest resource we have - our time in class together!

Prior preparation of the cases and assigned readings are essential. **All students have to be fully prepared to discuss cases during class.** Pay special attention to the readings before

our first class that should ignite your inquisitive minds to come to class with wonderful doubts and discussion points!

There are also a number of interesting online discussions, PLEASE PARTICIPATE to enrich those discussion topics for your colleagues.

By making 40% of your grade dependent on your participation (**this includes in class, PollEv, YellowDig and online participation**) we hope to encourage you to feel responsible in making this course work. Several classes will feature mini-cases that students are asked to analyze during class discussion.

**Class attendance is critical.** Students **must** be on time and attend class regularly and with appropriate preparation if they wish to leave this course with a tangible assimilation of the skills discussed. Class attendance, tardiness & participation will be tracked! **Missing any of the sessions without an excuse will lower your grade.** **This course adheres to CBS Core Culture: If you miss 2 classes for unexcused reasons, you will at most receive a P1.** **Missing three classes will automatically result in a failing grade unless there is excused illness.**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** **If you are planning to take the class but are waiting to be registered, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT YOU COME TO THE FIRST SESSIONS to make sure you don't miss important material and your class participation grade is not affected.** **FIRST CLASS MANDATORY ATTENDANCE**

### **Final Exam**

The final exam will be a 1.5 hours (although you will get an extra hour to complete it!), open-book, open-notes exam. The exam will be designed to test your ability to understand and analyze client situations. This will require a good grasp of the concepts we learned in class. Therefore, the best way to prepare for the final exam is to be an active participant in each class session during the term.

### **Reading Materials**

There is no required text for the course. If you would like to probe certain topics in more detail, feel free to check with us on where to look for reading materials. A few books that cover some topics we'll touch upon in class have been provided as recommended readings.

Course materials consist of class lecture notes. These will be available on Canvas.

### **References and Recommended Reading**

During the course, we will also recommend some interesting articles and other sources that can provide you with more insight into the skills learned in class. These books and articles cover some basic concepts and views. Generally, these books and articles will not to be a basis for class discussions. You can read them before class, after class, or not at all, although I strongly encourage you to at least know what each book/article offers.

## BOOKS

Cheng, Victor (2012). *Case Interview Secrets*. Innovation Press

Zelazny, Gene (2006). *Say It with Presentations, Second Edition, Revised & Expanded: How to Design and Deliver Successful Business Presentations*. McGraw-Hill

Maister, David H. (2000). *The Trusted Advisor*. Simon & Schuster

Rackham Neil (1998). *Spin Selling*. McGraw-Hill

Barbara Minto (1996) *The Minto Pyramid Principle: Logic in Writing, Thinking, & Problem Solving*. Minto International, Inc

Cosentino, Marc (2010). *Case in Point*. Burgee Press

Friga, Paul N. (2009). *The McKinsey Engagement*. McGraw-Hill

## ARTICLES

### Strategy

1. Doria, Joyce Doria, Rozanski, Horacio and Cohen, Ed. “*What Business Needs from Business School*”. (2003 -Reprint No. 03305). Strategy + Business Magazine.
2. Ken Favaro, with Kasturi Rangan and Evan Hirsh. “*Strategy: An Executive’s Definition*”. (2012). Strategy + Business Magazine.

### Interviewing

3. “STARTS” Framework for Interviewing

### Teamwork & Project Management

4. Livingston, Sterling J. “*Pygmalion in Management*” (1988 -Reprint 88509). Harvard Business Review.
5. Oncken, William Jr. & Wass, Donald L. “*Management Time: Who’s got the Monkey*” (1974-Reprint 74607). Harvard Business Review.
6. Dan Lovallo & Olivier Silbony. “Taking the bias out of meetings”. McKinsey Quarterly (2010)

7. Renee Cullinan. "Run Meetings that are fair to Introverts, Women and Remote Workers". Harvard Business Review (2016)

#### **Recommendations Development**

8. Jeanne Liedtka (2006) *"Using Hypothesis-Driven Thinking in Strategy Consulting"*, Darden Business Publishing
9. Bradley, Chris, Hirt, Martin and Smit Sven (2011) *"Have you tested your strategy lately"*, McKinsey Quarterly
10. Roxburgh, Charles (2009) "The Use and Abuse of Scenarios", McKinsey Quarterly
11. Heidi Grant Halvorson & David Rock. "Beyond Bias". PWC Strategy&. (2015)

#### **Presentations**

12. Zelazny, Gene (2006). *"Say It with Presentations: How to Design and Deliver Successful Business Presentations"* Second Edition, Revised & Expanded. McGraw-Hill. (Pp153-160)

#### **Client Management – Influencing & Building Trust**

13. Maister, David H. (2000). *The Trusted Advisor*. Simon & Schuster. (Pp 203-222)
14. Laborde, Genie Z. "Influencing With Integrity: Management Skills for Communication and Negotiation", pp25-34

#### **Useful Frameworks for Demand and Cost Side Analysis**

15. Cosentino, Marc P. *"Case in Point"* (Sixth Edition -2010). Burgee Press. (Pp33-57)

## Course Schedule

	Date	Topics	Format	Case Assignment & Recomm. Readings
1.1	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>Course Description &amp; Overview</b> Management Consulting Framework – Who is a successful Management Consultant? – Consultants & Strategy – Why strategic problems are difficult?	Lecture	Readings: (1), (2) Survey DSI Watch Videos Card Co.
1.2	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>Problem Definition</b> Going beyond Client Proposals Problem Definition vs. Problem Solving Problem Statements, Understanding the Why	Lecture Class Ex. Videos Case	
2.1	<b>Class 2</b>	<b>Problem Structuring -Working Smarter</b> Identifying Key issues (MECE) Creating a Job Management System Hypotheses Driven Approach (HDA)	Lecture Class Ex. CASE	<b>List of Key Issues to Analyze</b> Readings: (8)
2.2	<b>Class 2</b>	<b>Generating Strategic Insight</b> Data Gathering & Analysis Techniques	Lecture Class Ex. Role Play	
3	<b>Class 3</b>	<b>Generating Strategic Insight II -Data &amp; Interviewing</b> Data Analysis, Synthesis & Mock-up Brainstorming & Interviewing Skills	Lecture Class Ex. Role Play	<b>HELI-HEAVEN Case</b> Readings: (3)
4.1	<b>Class 4</b>	<b>Recommendations Development</b> Building Robust Recommendations Logical Writing, Presentations, Audience Analysis, Elevator Pitch Pyramid Principle	Lecture Class Ex. CASE	<b>Recommendations DYNAMO CASE</b> Readings:(9), (10), (11)
4.2	<b>Class 4</b>	<b>Useful Frameworks</b> <b>How to Analyze a Business</b> The Performance Improvement Wheel	Class Ex. CASE	Readings: (15)
5.1	<b>Class 5</b>	<b>Frameworks (Cont'd)</b> Evaluating M&A, others Mini cases	Mini Cases Class Ex.	<b>Recommendations CARD CO. CASE</b>
5.2	<b>Class 5</b>	<b>Managing Teams, Managing Clients</b> How to Manage a Project Successfully Content and Process Management Team Leadership & Influencing	Lecture Class Ex. Videos	Readings: (4), (5), (6), (7)
6.1	<b>Class 6</b>	<b>Building Trust &amp; Successful Client Relationships</b> Building Blocks for Developing a Successful Client Relationship Building Trust	Lecture Class Ex. CASE	<b>Recommendations GIANT BANK CASE</b> Readings:(12), (13), (14)
6.2	<b>Class 6</b>	<b>Wrap-up –Summary of Class</b> Going Beyond the Final Presentation - Implementation Tips for success	Lecture Class Ex.	
7	<b>TBD</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>		<b>FINAL EXAM</b>