Module Leader

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Timing and Structure

Lent term. 8 sessions + coursework.

Aims

The aims of the course are to:

- provide participants with an opportunity to discuss the strategic challenges facing managers in today’s business environment and to develop a facility for critical strategic thinking.

Objectives

As specific objectives, by the end of the course students should be able to:

- show a critical, reflective approach to managerial concepts.
- show familiarity with some of the key models used in strategic analysis and have some understanding of their application and limitations.
- show a broad overview of managerial disciplines and their interdependency.
- understand some of the current “hot” topics in strategic management.

Content

Strategic management involves the comprehensive analysis of a firm and its environment and the development of a course of action for the firm. It is therefore a comprehensive topic drawing together themes from marketing, organisation design, economics, and other business disciplines. The primary aim of this module is to provide participants with an opportunity to discuss the strategic challenges facing managers in today’s business environment and to develop a facility for critical strategic thinking. This will require participants not only to understand the course material, but also to apply it to business situations through the analysis of businesses cases in class. This overview of strategy will provide a broad framework for future management study, and a context for engineering practice.

Strategic Management

The lectures will cover a range of topics that provide a basic introduction to strategic management. In each session, the lecturer will introduce a basic concept and explain its role in the strategic management process. The class will then analyse a case or discuss the situation facing some well-known firm in order to explore the application of the concept. The module will cover eight topics.

1. Course Introduction and Industry Analysis
2. Generic Strategies and Competitive Advantage
3. Strategic Innovation
4. Corporate Strategy
5. Strategic Turnaround: How do firms change their strategies successfully?
6. Strategic Failure: Why do strategies fail?
7. Platform Businesses and Non-market strategy
8. Organization, Strategy, and Society

Coursework

Coursework activity: Final

You will prepare a complete strategic analysis of the current and future prospects for a company of your choice. The paper should contain a comprehensive industry and market analysis, including a detailed analysis of relevant competitors, and conclude with strategic recommendations (including corporate and business strategies) for top management. The selection of companies for strategic analysis is entirely up to each student; however, firms in industries that are in transition or firms that are undergoing major strategic changes are potentially more suitable for analysis.

Learning objective:

To get a real-life sense of strategy making and implementation by conducting a strategic analysis of an actual firm undergoing strategic challenges.

The aim is to apply the concepts of strategic management discussed in class (both external and internal analyses) to a real-life situation and achieve a better understanding of the literature through application and learning by doing.

Grading criteria:

1. How insightful is your diagnosis and solution?
2. How clearly have you articulated the key issue at hand. For instance, if you pick Vodafone, try to articulate why it faces the challenge you have identified, and what its implications are for its future.
3. The originality and quality of your analysis. The point of the exercise is not to just cut and paste from existing articles that discuss your case. Can you bring better analytical skills to the case at hand? Can you make an original point about the nature of the challenge? Most analysis in the business press tends to be somewhat shallow. Try to rise above it using better analytical skills.
4. How well substantiated are your claims? Are your claims supported by evidence?
5. Finally, is it coherent and logical? We do not want analysis that is fragmented and contradicts itself. Try to make your essay coherent so it flows logically.

Booklists

Please refer to the Booklist for Part IIB Courses for references to this module, this can be found on the associated Moodle course.

Examination Guidelines

Please refer to Form & conduct of the examinations [2].

UK-SPEC

The UK Standard for Professional Engineering Competence (UK-SPEC) [3] describes the requirements that have to be met in order to become a Chartered Engineer, and gives examples of ways of doing this.
UK-SPEC is published by the Engineering Council on behalf of the UK engineering profession. The standard has been developed, and is regularly updated, by panels representing professional engineering institutions, employers and engineering educators. Of particular relevance here is the ‘Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes’ (AHEP) document [4] which sets out the standard for degree accreditation.

The Output Standards Matrices [5] indicate where each of the Output Criteria as specified in the AHEP 3rd edition document is addressed within the Engineering and Manufacturing Engineering Triposes.

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[1] mailto: lp433@cam.ac.uk