STRATEGY

“Wanderer above the Sea of Fog” (Caspar David Friedrich, 1818 – Hamburger Kunsthalle).

(MBM406)
2020 Full Time MBA – Cass Business School

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STRATEGY (MBM406)

Full Time MBA

INSTRUCTOR

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Strategy is one of the oldest disciplines in human history, and it is the theory and practice of making decisions that shape the future of ventures and organizations. Strategic management sets the rules to orchestrate complex resources in ever changing environments, and it represents a knowledge pillar for executives, directors, leaders, and strategic consultants. This core module asks what is strategy and how developing an efficient and effective strategy leads some firms to achieve and sustain competitive advantage. The module also explores which tools can help managers and executives to enable superior results for their organizations. Given the centrality of this module for a top-ranked MBA program, this course ambitiously aims at developing MBA professionals who not only master the core topics, tools and perspectives of strategic management, but also are able to adapt their application to the different competitive contingencies.

TEACHING STYLE AND CLASS FORMAT

Understanding is developed through lectures, group discussion, case studies, external informants, and textbook/course readings. Timely and pivotal concepts from the field of strategic management are explained by using established literature as well as iconic case studies from real companies. Real cases are discussed in class by using analytical tools that can be later deployed in everyday (working) life. The objective is first, to understand the various theories of strategy, second, to familiarize with useful analytical tools, and third, to connect them and acknowledge their benefits and limitations given a specific task and situation. Great importance will be given to use of data to analyze situations and make informed decisions about strategy. Knowledgeable guest speaker(s) will be invited to share their theoretical and professional experience with the cohort. Outdoor or special activities might imply the direct involvement of the class in some kind role game. The nature of these activities will be connected to a theoretical perspective and/or a case study discussed in class. Ex-post reflection on the relation between the role game and the strategic management theory is the ultimate goal of this activity.

Important: all of those who attend face-to-face teaching are required to bring their own laptop or ipad, and a pair of headsets. This is needed to engage with those attending from home on Zoom during class.
RULES OF ENGAGEMENT IN THE ZOOM CLASSROOM
(In line with Prof. Empson’s guidelines)

The Full-Time MBA aims to be a synchronous programme, may this be delivered face to face or online. Unless disrupting circumstances emerge (the school shuts down, the instructor is sick or potentially contagious etc.), the MBM406 Strategy module will thus be mostly delivered in face to face format, and live streamed on Zoom (see links in the syllabus below). I expect you to follow my classes “live”, which means either in person or by streaming them online.

In addition to being streamed on Zoom the sessions will be recorded and made available on Moodle after class, to facilitate learning. You are allowed to skip attendance of live sessions only if you provide to me and to course office proofs of extenuating circumstances (e.g., you are sick; you have to attend someone sick; you are stuck in a far-away country where the time difference makes attending online the live-streaming unfeasible etc.) and these are accepted as valid motivations.

As class participation is integral to the flow of discussion. Everyone attending from home is expected to keep their videos on at all times, behave like they were in a physical classroom, and actively participate to the sessions.

For those who cannot come to class in person, this module is a good vehicle for practicing the on-line engagement skills that will be essential in the “new normal” workplace. Following the advice and rules of engagement below will enable you to get the best out of our time together.

Before the module starts

- Ensure you have a secure and stable internet connection (use a CAT 6 or 7 ethernet cable if your wireless connection is not top grade, stable, or the wi-fi signal is weak from where you connect).
- Use the best quality hardware available to you - a large monitor if possible to enable you to view the whole class and definitely not a mobile phone. Make sure you have good sound quality for your speakers and microphone.
- Make sure you have a webcam whose resolution can be supported by your internet speed. Having a webcam is key, but there is no point in having an HD camera if your connection speed cannot support it.
- If you are not already confident using Zoom, spend a little time getting comfortable with the software (all Cass students and staff can register for a pro account). Make sure your name is displayed on your video image rather than your username.

Before every class

- Prepare by doing the mandatory readings and reflecting on the the assigned question/exercise. Writing down the answer is optional, so is the submission of the document for an evaluation (see details later in this document).
- Make sure you are presenting a reasonably “professional” appearance to the camera (as you would if we were meeting face-to-face, or at least from the waist up!). If required, wear business attire.
- Make sure that you will not be disturbed during the class. Turn off your phone.
• We will do comfort breaks for everyone. So please do not leave the session or your workstation unless it is absolutely needed.
• As in a normal class, drinking is fine, eating is not.
• **Slides will be uploaded onto Moodle after the class ends.** I will share my screen with you during class to help you follow the discussion and the slides. In the meantime you can take notes somewhere else.
• Arrive in the Zoom room a few minutes early. Try not to leave it to the last minute or disrupt the class by arriving late. Please notify me in advance if you are unable to attend a session or if you need to arrive late or leave early.

**During class**

• In general keep your video on and your microphone off. Just as I would in a face-to-face class, I will be observing your reactions and encouraging the flow of discussion by watching how you are responding to the material and cold calling you as needed. I particularly like to cold call those with their camera off, and penalizing them if they are not following. Keep it in mind.
• It may take you time to get the balance right between listening silently, participating actively, and interrupting confusingly. If in doubt, aim to say more rather than less and rely upon me to manage the class dynamics.
• If you want to speak, use the “hands up” Zoom button or physically raise your hand and I will acknowledge you. Remember to unmute yourself when you want to speak.
• On-line lessons require a different pacing and deeper concentration than face-to-face classes. It is very tempting to “drift away” virtually during an on-line class and you can quickly lose your thread (it is much harder to multi-task in an on-line class than in a live classroom). So resist the temptation to check emails/texts etc. during the class, or doing anything else that is not “following the class”.

**COURSE MATERIALS**

This course core textbook is:
Grant, R. M. 2019. *Contemporary strategy analysis (10th edition)*: John Wiley & Sons. Not all the chapters will be covered in class (see detailed program).

Given the “state-of-the-art” and nature of the course, the readings also include a selection of academic papers, relevant articles, and foremost lecture notes (please note for example that the book does not cover at all the “business model”, which is one of the key topics of our module).

All lecture notes and slides will be posted on Moodle **after each class**.

**Students will be usually required to do some readings and exercises before the class. Please check in the detailed program.**

**ASSESSMENT**

The module assessment is in four parts:
1. **Formal Exam** (50%): individual, closed-book with open questions and exercises based on a case study that will be delivered beforehand. A clean copy of the case study material will be also available during the exam.
The questions will be based on the topics covered in class and the assigned readings. Originality will be awarded with additional points. During the module an indicative sample examination will be given to the students, and discussed.

2. Group coursework (25%): Group project on competitive rivalry analysis; see details in the specific assignment document.

3. Individual task (Done vs. Not done; if not delivered or poor in contents, penalization up to 10 points): write a single page, double space, font 11, 1 inch margin document in which you explain:
   A. How you contributed to the group.
   B. What you learned from the group-work activity.
To be individually delivered on Moodle with the group project by Sunday 18/10/2020, at 9pm.

4. Assessment based on Integration Week group project (25%): specific program will be delivered.

5. Pre-session individual assignment (optional): before each class, students are required to read the assigned materials. In case they want to check their preparation they can opt to respond to a specific set of questions and/or exercises whose development should not exceed 1 page (+unlimited references)—formatted in font 11, 1.5 interline space, 1 inch margin. This activity has three main goals:
   - Prepare you to individually face the type of exercises that you will find in the Formal Exam. The students who successfully complete these individual assignments will hardly fail the exam.
   - Make sure you will do and understand the readings. As a matter of fact, the readings will provide sufficient knowledge to respond to the assignment.
   - Become self-sufficient in understanding new strategy concepts. In business life you will probably need to acquire strategic tools without having someone explaining them to you.

FEEDBACK: The feedback for those who submit the answer will be “pass vs. fail”. If failed, you will be invited to re-take the assignment over-and-over again until you get it right. If you are not able to deliver a correct result by the deadline of the Group Project (Sunday October 19, 2020 at 9pm), in your final grade you will be penalized by 2 points per each failed individual assignment.

Let me reiterate: Doing the readings and reflecting on the preparatory question are mandatory. Responding in writing to the question and submitting it for evaluation are optional. Yet, if you decide to send your written answer, you implicitly agreeing to being evaluated, which means that you will have to strictly align to all guidelines (deadline, formatting), and if fail you will have to resit until passing (if you want to avoid penalizations).

Additional information will be provided in class. In case you have additional questions on the assessment please ask them in class (rather than via email or individually) so that the instructor can fairly provide the same information to all the participants. If for some reasons you decide to have a private interaction with the instructor (email or meeting), you are expected to forward the instructor’s answer to all your classmates. Not following this rule might result in mark penalization.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Information systems continue to change the way strategies are developed and implemented. In this spirit, I experiment with social network technologies that can involve all course participants. You are encouraged to engage, contribute, and voice
opinions related to class discussions through these channels. These will enhance your learning and make your module more enjoyable.

**Twitter:** follow updates and tips on my profile @aversapaolo and #StrategyCass and contribute to the discussions.

**Spotify:** What is a strategy module soundtrack? Songs can be shared on Spotify (search for the playlist **Strategy Soundtrack**) available on Moodle. You are invited to contribute to the playlist to refine the community sense of music sharing among participants. One guideline: try to choose songs that are somehow related to a reflection emerged in the module!

**Instagram:** this is the less academic social media where to interact. Still, can we make strategy a visually appealing discipline you can follow me @aversapaolo.

**Suggested filmography:**
These movies relate to some of the topics we will cover in class. I leave to you discovering which one. Feel free to comment on those in our social media channels or in class.

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**A NOTE ON ACADEMIC PLAGIARISM AND APPROPRIATE REFERENCING**

To most of you this will be probably self-evident, but I want to make sure that we all understand: Copying paragraphs from sources (e.g., magazine, newspaper articles, industry reports, Wikipedia, other websites, student’s theses, etc.) without properly citing them is a serious offense. Properly citing means: if you copy word-by-word, you have to mark this by enclosing the copied text with quotation marks “…” and citing the source (e.g. Batman, 2013, p. 26). Even if you do not copy word-by-word, but you paraphrase someone else’s idea, you must indicate its source in the reference. This citation has to follow directly the idea (attach a footnote or an endnote). At the end of the paper, you should then list all sources that you have cited in the text.

Let me re-iterate: Non-proper citing is a very serious academic offense that in other courses has led Cass professors to bring them to the attention of the academic quality board of the University, fail their exams and expel them from the program. I think all of us want to avoid such incidents – which is really easy to avoid: simply be careful in your papers that you attribute ideas/frameworks etc. that you use to their respective sources.
Keep in mind that Cass instructors and staff are supplied with anti-plagiarism software suites that can easily identify texts that have been copied or even paraphrased from other sources, even if paraphrased or translated from other languages. Please, mind what you write!

F.A.Q. Can I cite Wikipedia? Answer: Wikipedia is not a reliable source per se as there is no systematic control on its sources or content, so you should not cite it. However, the great majority of Wikipedia’s facts are cross-referenced to other sources (see them at the bottom of each Wiki-page). Suggestion: do not directly cite Wikipedia, but rather use Wikipedia to identify other sources that you can cite and reference.
SESSION 1 - WEDNESDAY 23/09/2020
INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGY MODULE
WHAT IS STRATEGY? A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION.

Room N201 – 200 Aldersgate 10.00 – 11.50

Join Zoom Meeting
https://city-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/91278887796
Meeting ID: 912 7888 7796
Passcode: strategy

Readings
- Chapter 1. The Concept of Strategy.
- Chapter 2. Goals, Values and Performance.


Pre-session Individual Assignment (Mandatory)
After doing the readings, respond to the following question:
“What is Tesla strategy? Is Tesla a successful company?”
Consider what is Tesla strategy (you can consider external sources) and explain to which extent Tesla has successfully implemented its strategy and whether it is ultimately a successful company. Mind these guiding questions “how do you measure success? What are Tesla’s stakeholders? Have they always been the same?”

Written submission (optional)
Format:
I suggest you focus half page on assessing what is Tesla’s strategy, and the other half to argue whether it is successful and why,

Strictly 1 page content (plus unlimited references), 1.5 line space, font 11, 1-inch margin.
Write your name and last name on top of the document.
Upload a Microsoft Word file (no PDF please).
Name the file: LastName_FirstName_Session1.doc

Deliver on Moodle by Monday 21/09/2020 at 9pm.

Any deviation from the indications above will invalidate the submission.
Join Zoom Meeting
https://city-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/97869742161
Meeting ID: 978 6974 2161
Passcode: strategy

Readings
- Chapter 8. Industry Evolution and Strategic Change.

Pre-session Individual Assignment (mandatory)
After doing the readings, prepare a Porter’s Five Forces Analysis of the Web Search Engine industry.

Written submission (optional)
Format:
To save space, do not draw the 5 Forces chart (with arrows and boxes), but rather simply mention the five forces and how they shape the industry via bullet points. Remember to give an assessment to the force (e.g., strong, weak, medium).

Strictly 1 page content (plus unlimited references), 1.5 line space, font 11, 1-inch margin.
Write your name and last name on top of the document.
Upload a Microsoft Word file (no PDF please).
Name the file: LastName_FirstName_Session2.doc

Deliver on Moodle by Saturday 26/09/2020 at 9pm.

Any deviation from the indications above will invalidate the submission.
Join Zoom Meeting
https://city-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/93304888025

Meeting ID: 933 0488 8025
Passcode: strategy

Readings
- Chapter 5. Analyzing Resources and Capabilities.
- R.M., 2020 "Netflix vs. Disney" Case Study (available on Moodle).


Pre-session Individual Assignment (mandatory)
On the basis of (a) their resources and capabilities and (b) the strategies deployed, will Netflix or Walt Disney be more successful in the world market for streamed video entertainment over the next five years?

Written submission (optional)
**Format:**
Strictly 1 page content (plus unlimited references), 1.5 line space, font 11, 1-inch margin.
Write your name and last name on top of the document.
Upload a Microsoft Word file (no PDF please).
Name the file: LastName_FirstName_Session4.doc

Deliver on Moodle by **Sunday 27/09/2020 at 9pm.**

Any deviation from the indications above will invalidate the submission.
Join Zoom Meeting  
https://city-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/92782096363  
Meeting ID: 927 8209 6363  
Passcode: strategy

Readings  


Optional readings  


Pre-session Individual Assignment (mandatory)  
After doing the readings, reflect on the business model of AirBnB and try to describe it by using the template/labels of Table 1 of Baden-Fuller and Haefliger 2013 (p. 421).

Written submission (optional)  
*Format:* Strictly 1 page content (plus unlimited references), 1.5 line space, font 11, 1-inch margin.  
Write your name and last name on top of the document.  
Upload a Microsoft Word file (no PDF please).  
Name the file: LastName_FirstName_Session3.doc  

Deliver on Moodle by **Wednesday 30/09/2020 at 9pm.**  
Any deviation from the indications above will invalidate the submission
SESSION 5 - MONDAY 06/10/2020
COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

Room N201 – 200 Aldersgate | 10.00 – 11.50

Join Zoom Meeting
https://city-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/92953767235

Meeting ID: 929 5376 7235
Passcode: strategy

Readings
  - Chapter 4. Further Topics in Industry and Competitive Analysis.
  - Chapter 7. The Sources and Dimensions of Competitive Advantage.

Pre-session Individual Assignment (mandatory)
After doing the readings, reflect on the SWOT Analysis of British Airways vs. Easyjet competing in the airline European market.

Written submission (options)
Format:
Strictly 1 page content (plus unlimited references), 1.5 line space, font 11, 1-inch margin.
Write your name and last name on top of the document.
Upload a Microsoft Word file (no PDF please).
Name the file LastName_FirstName_Session6.doc

Deliver on Moodle by Saturday 04/10/2020 at 9pm.

Any deviation from the indications above will invalidate the submission.
SESSION 6 - FRIDAY 09/10/2020
LEARNING FROM A STRATEGY LEADER: THE DUCATI CASE
VIP GUEST SPEAKER:
FEDERICO MINOLI
FORMER CEO & CHAIRMAN OF DUCATI MOTOR HOLDING S.P.A.
CHAIRMAN AT DAINISE SPA AND CEO AT DEUS EX MACHINA
SENIOR FELLOW IN STRATEGY AND LEADERSHIP AT CASS BUSINESS SCHOOL
(ALSO, CEO AT BALLY INTERNATIONAL AG, WORLD WIDE VP MARKETING OF PLAYTEX
INTERNATIONAL, GENERAL MANAGER OF BENETTON USA, CONSULTANT FOR
MCKINSEY AND PARTNER OF BAIN & CO.)

Zoom Online – link will be shared.
DRESS CODE: BUSINESS ATTIRE

Join Zoom Meeting
https://city-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/98226550174
Meeting ID: 982 2655 0174
Passcode: strategy

Readings

Sawhney, M., Verona, G., & Prandelli, E. 2005. Collaborating to create: The Internet
as a platform for customer engagement in product innovation. Journal of Interactive
Marketing, 19(4): 4-17.

Aversa, P. 2013. Case Study: Engaging with a company's users. Financial Times:
16.

Suggested: Video: National Geographic’s Megafactories: Ducati

Pre-session Individual Assignment (mandatory)
After doing the readings, respond to the following question:
What is the main strategy lesson we can learn from Ducati’s strategic turnaround?
(limit your response to one lesson and argument on it).

Written submission (optional)
Format:
Strictly 1 page content (plus unlimited references), 1.5 line space, font 11, 1-inch
margin.
Write your name and last name on top of the document.
Upload a Microsoft Word file (no PDF please).
Name the file LastName_FirstName_Session6.doc

Deliver on Moodle by Wednesday 07/10/2020 at 9pm.
SESSION 7 - TUESDAY 13/10/2020

VOTE YOUR TOPIC ON MOODLE (POLL DEADLINE 06/10/2020 AT 9PM):
(1) PLATFORM AND ECOSYSTEM STRATEGY
(2) CORPORATE STRATEGY
(3) MODULE REVIEW: THEORY AND TOOLS WITH F1 CASES

Room N201 – 200 Aldersgate 10.00 – 11.50

Join Zoom Meeting
https://city-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/94190717358
Meeting ID: 941 9071 7358
Passcode: strategy

Vote your favourite topic out of the following 3.

IMPORTANT NOTE: By picking option 1 or 2 you will benefit from being introduced to an interesting and timely topic but there is a caveat: this will mean additional material for your exam. Vice versa, option 3 does not provide additional content, but does not create additional work.

Option 1: Platform and Ecosystem Strategies

Readings


Pre-session Individual Assignment (mandatory)
After doing the readings, use bullet points to identify the network externalities of Spotify.

Written submission (optional)
Format:
Strictly 1 page content (plus unlimited references), 1.5 line space, font 11, 1-inch margin.
Write your name and last name on top of the document.
Upload a Microsoft Word file (no PDF please).
Name the file LastName_FirstName_Session8.doc

Deliver on Moodle by Sunday 11/10/2020 at 9pm.
Option 2: Corporate Strategy

Readings

Pre-session Individual Assignment (optional)
After doing the readings, apply Ghemawat’s C.A.G.E. framework to respond to the following question: should Starbucks enter the Italian market?

Written submission (optional)
*Format:*
Strictly 1 page content (plus unlimited references), 1.5 line space, font 11, 1-inch margin.
Write your name and last name on top of the document.
Upload a Microsoft Word file (no PDF please).
Name the file LastName_FirstName_Session8.doc

Deliver on Moodle by **Sunday 11/10/2020 at 9pm.**

Option 3: Module Review: Theory and Tools with F1 Cases

Readings

Carefully Review the course lecture slides.

- Chapter 9. Technology-based Industries and the Management of Innovation

Pre-session Individual Assignment
After reading the above and reviewing what we did in class during this course, use bullet points to briefly describe the limitations of the following tools (i.e. what each one of these tools does NOT tell us): Porter’s 5 Forces and SWOT.

Written submission (optional)
*Format:*
Strictly 1 page content (plus unlimited references), 1.5 line space, font 11, 1-inch margin.
Write your name and last name on top of the document.
Upload a Microsoft Word file (no PDF please).
Name the file LastName_FirstName_Session7.doc

Deliver on Moodle by **Sunday 11/10/2020 at 9pm.**
SESSION 8 - WEDNESDAY 28/10/2020
OUTDOOR ACTIVITY (SURPRISE!)
- WEAR COMFORTABLE SHOES –

Room N201 – 200 Aldersgate | 13.00 – 15.00

Readings


No assignments for this session.
No assignments for this session.