How I Teach Series 2024*

Global Strategy Module on International Strategic Alliances

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*This document is a part of the series How I Teach by the Teaching Resources Committee of International Management Division at the Academy of Management. The aim is to provide instructors of global strategy, international management, and international business with module-specific and topic-focused teaching resources for their undergraduate and graduate courses.
Global Strategy:
A Module on International Strategic Alliances

Faced with resource constraints and market competition, a growing number of organizations today rely on various corporate development activities to facilitate their global strategies. These activities include strategic alliances (e.g., inter-firm agreements, joint ventures, networks) and mergers & Acquisitions.

Some instructors devote 3-6 hours of their course on the topic of corporate development; some institutions dedicate an entire course. This teaching resource document provides some conceptual reading materials, cases, simulations, multimedia resources, and interactive class exercises to design your module on cross-border corporate development activities. Depending on your course’s modality and your pedagogical approaches, you are welcome to choose the materials that fit your class.

My Approach to Designing a 3-hour Module

Typically, I provide some background readings for the learners to review before the class meeting. Regardless of the class level, I assign relevant textbook chapters, exciting and recent press coverage of a current or ongoing cross-border alliance, and a case study (or a simulation). I add at least 1-2 scholarly articles (e.g., published in practitioner journals like HBR or MIT Sloan) for the graduate level. I also recommend selecting brief articles and readings from the options provided in the following sections for executive levels.

To design the face-to-face class sessions, I usually have a 30-to-45-minute lecture with a few slides and/or a short video to show in class. The goal is to highlight 3-4 most salient points. In the rest of the session, I provide students with critical questions/prompts, especially integrating the most valuable takeaway(s) from the readings to discuss in small groups. Focusing on these helps learners to brainstorm and reflect further for deeper understanding and refinement. In the final 30 minutes of the session, I guide the groups to summarize their discussions in light of the assigned case study or simulation that helps to build a “real-world” context and apply their learning.
Peer-Reviewed Scholarly Articles

International Strategic Alliances, Joint-Ventures & Networks


Practitioner-Friendly Brief Articles & Book Chapters

Good for Master’s and Executive Levels


Case Studies

Good for both undergraduate and graduate levels

An Uncommon Alliance: Unilever's 'The Vegetarian Butcher' Meets Singapore's 'The Social Kitchen' By: Kenneth Goh, Sheetal Mittal, and Daniel Z. Mack

Publisher: Singapore Management University; HBSP Order No. Product Number: 023SMU-PDF-ENG

Link to purchase: https://store.hbr.org/product/an-uncommon-alliance-unilever-s-the-vegetarian-butcher-meets-singapore-s-the-social-kitchen/023SMU

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Set in 2022, the case describes the partnership between Unilever Food Solutions (UFS) and The Social Kitchen (TSK), a social enterprise, to launch Unilever's flagship alt-meat brand 'The Vegetarian Butcher' (TVB) in Singapore. However, TSK comprised only one restaurant so far. The case highlights some crucial questions: Was it sufficient for UFS to launch TVB successfully in the highly competitive Singapore market? Should UFS also look at other alternate food service channels to widen TVB's visibility? Moreover, did the venture generate adequate returns on the investments made by Unilever? Did the brand partnership with TSK and the related social media buzz generate enough sales leads to justify the collaboration moving forward?

**Star Alliance in 2020.** By: Benjamin Gomes-Casseres and Jacob Judd

Publisher: Ivey Publishing **Product Number:** W21007-PDF-ENG

Link to purchase: [https://store.hbr.org/product/star-alliance-in-2020/W21007](https://store.hbr.org/product/star-alliance-in-2020/W21007)

By working through the case and assignment questions, students will be able to: understand the role of alliances in a global, regulated industry; learn the fundamental economics of airlines; learn how a network of alliances, or constellation, can be managed; and explore how alliances respond to severe industry shocks.

**Dropbox: A Digital Firm’s Journey Abroad.** By: Noman Ahmed Shaheer Siddiqui, Mirea Woo, Max Stallkamp, Sali Li, and Liang Chen

Publisher: Ivey Publishing **Product Number:** W21303-PDF-ENG


By working through the case and assignment questions, students will be able to do the following: Explain the brace model of the internationalization of digital firms and the need to balance the digital and physical aspects of foreign expansion; Evaluate the key success factors for digital firms pursuing a brace model of internationalization, focusing particularly on the nature of firm resources, strategic alliances, and network effects; Highlight the competitive and institutional challenges faced by digital firms pursuing a brace model of internationalization, and assess the different strategic tools available to overcome those challenges.

**Jio and Facebook: Adding Value through an Alliance.** By: Prashant Salwan, Shailesh Pandey, and Srinivasan R Iyengar

Publisher: Ivey Publishing **Product Number:** W21044-PDF-ENG

The case and assignment questions prepare students to do the following: Explain how value is created through strategic alliances; Decode strategic alliances between technology companies operating in developed and emerging economies; Describe the intricacies of international growth strategies; Outline the significance of international strategic alliances; Determine an appropriate framework for international strategic alliances and partnerships.

**Experiential Simulations and Class Exercises**

**Global Collaboration Simulation: Tip of the Iceberg.** Developed by Tsedal Neeley

Appropriate for: Undergraduate/Graduate/Executive Levels

Length: 1 Hour
$16.25 per student degree granting course /$47.95 per student non-degree granting course.

The simulation constrains the ways in which the native and nonnative speakers can interact, and the resulting experience replicates communication patterns in real globally diverse and distributed teams.

**Platform Wars: Simulating the Battle for Video Game Supremacy.** Developed by John Sterman

Appropriate for: Specialized graduate and executive courses

Source: MIT Sloan School of Management
Available for Free with Educator Access
Link: https://forio.com/store/mit-platform-wars-simulation/

To allow students to experience interactively the challenges of strategic competition in multi-sided markets with significant network externalities and important complementary assets.

**Trust Game.** Developed by MobLab

Appropriate for: Undergraduate/Graduate/Executive Levels
Source: Havard Business Publishing Length: 20 Minutes
$5 per student degree granting course /$10 per student non-degree granting course.
This simulation is an exercise in trust. Students are paired into groups with an investor who invests a portion of money with the responder. The money invested triples in size and the responder decides how much, if any, they would like to send back to the investor. Without trustworthiness or fairness, the responder may never send any back and thus the investor should never invest. However, if players do have mutual trust, the initial investment can benefit both players substantially.

**The Climate Action Simulation: A Climate and Energy Policy Negotiation Game.** Developed by John Sterman, Thomas Fiddaman, Travis Franck, Ellie Johnston, Andrew Jones, Stephanie McCauley, Philip Rice, Juliette N. Rooney-Varga, Elizabeth Sawin, and Lori Siegel

Appropriate for: Undergraduate/Graduate/Executive Levels  
Source: MIT Sloan School of Management  
Length: 3 Hours  
Available for Free with Educator Access  

In a large group setting, participants play business, civil society, and government leaders representing different sectors that have convened to collaborate in a multi-player setting toward committing to global warming. Participants discuss, negotiate, and try out possible measures like implementing subsidies, carbon pricing, and energy efficiency technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

*International strategic alliance is *not* the primary foci of these recommendations. Instead, these resources help to highlight certain aspects of international strategic alliance formation and/or management using organizational behavior (building trust, global team management, cross-cultural communication, mutual adaptation) and/or strategic management perspectives (complementarity, network externality).

**Supplementary Video Resources**

Strategic alliances: Game changers in business performance – PWC Strategy&  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iW3cwWZWqN8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iW3cwWZWqN8) [2:25 min] (Apr 22, 2014)

The importance of strategic alliances at EPOS: A case in point  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQqV3PPlGxo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQqV3PPlGxo) [2:34 min] (Jun 14, 2022)

How has the role of joint ventures and alliances evolved? – McKinsey  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJqEC05UAtY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJqEC05UAtY) [1:19 min] (May 26, 2021)

Understanding the value of strategic alliances and partnerships – Wharton Executive Education  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qR_etqWuS2k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qR_etqWuS2k) [1:27 min] (Apr 28, 2016)

Common challenges in forming strategic alliances – PwC US  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAx17ksRmag](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAx17ksRmag) [6:35 min] (Oct 5, 2015)

Why partnerships, joint ventures, and alliances fail – BCG  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAyZIIlFSOE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAyZIIlFSOE) [2:05 min] (Jun 3, 2021)