

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP : The Real-Time Case Study**

### **FALL 2004 COURSE INFORMATION**

**Prof. Jim Theroux**

**Office hours:**

#### **Overview:**

As you read this, the managers of a new high-tech company, (to be announced), are striving to achieve the entrepreneurial dream. On a special website you will follow that company, and see their progress week by week. But you will do more than just watch. You will be actively engaged with the company, analyzing its problems, and making input. You will be participating in an in-depth, real-time case study.

Unlike traditional case studies, this real-time case will dig deeply into one company during an entire semester. At this moment, a case writer is stationed full-time at the case company. Each week the writer will provide us with the information we need to analyze a particular problem or question about the company. But our goal is not analysis for its own sake. Instead, we want to go beyond critiquing, and make valuable recommendations to the company. The company is counting on us to perform, and we want to deliver.

**Materials:** All required materials including cases and supplementary reading will be available on a password-protected website. Payment method will be explained in class. The cost is \$60. No textbook.

To access the materials, go to \_\_\_\_\_ (url to be announced).

#### **Method of Instruction:**

Unlike traditional case studies, this case will dig deeply into one company during an entire semester. To produce the case a writer will be stationed full-time at the case company. Each week on Saturday at 6:00pm (ET) the new installment of the case will be posted on the course website. The case and accompanying reading constitutes the information we need to analyze a particular problem or question about the company. The main activity during class time will be to discuss the case for that week.

In addition to the case study, there will be lectures, video conferences, online chat sessions with case company managers, and guest speakers. During certain weeks of the semester, you will have a chance to compete with students at other schools to see who can produce the best analysis of a case problem.

What is the case method? The case method is a way of teaching and learning developed into an art form at Harvard Business School. Today, virtually all business schools use the case method to one degree or another. Harvard uses it exclusively.

The case method is an active approach to learning. Participants in a case discussion are equal in the search to unravel the intricacies of an actual business situation described in the case material. The case discussion

leader asks questions, and by these questions leads the group to a fuller understanding of the case than any one person could achieve by himself.

The case method presumes that there is not a "right" answer, but that participants learn by comparing their own perceptions/analyses of the case with those of their peers. Accordingly, everyone in a case discussion is both a teacher and a learner.

**What do you the student need to do to get the most out of a case discussion?** The quality of any case discussion depends on three factors:

- 1) Preparation. By thoroughly studying the case material, and knowing the facts of the story, you will be able to benefit the most from others' comments and give back the most in the form of comments you make.
- 2) Willingness to participate. Don't be shy; pitch in and offer your perspective. You'll never be graded down for saying the "wrong things."
- 3) Expectations. Don't expect to be told the "right" answer. Be open to learning from the array of comments made by the professor and your peers.

**How should you prepare for a case discussion?** Read the case material and study it thoroughly from the perspective of the key players in the case. Put yourself in their shoes, and figure out both what they should do, and what you would do.

**Assignments:**

- 1) Weekly reading is indicated in the schedule. Because the case unfolds gradually, you will see only a week's assignment in advance. New material will be made available each week by Saturday at 6:00pm. The reading consists of both case study material (information about the case company) and conceptual articles that illuminate the various issues faced by entrepreneurial companies. "Reading" will also include viewing video clips. A transcript of the video will be provided online for those students whose web connections are slow.
- 2) A weekly exercise will consist of a short paper. Each week the professor will announce on the website a problem or question faced by the case company. In 2-4 double-spaced pages you will summarize your analysis of that problem or question. Check the website schedule for the problem/question to be addressed. The paper will be turned in just prior to the class discussion of the case problem. The point of writing the paper is for you to establish your own opinions about the issue-of-the-week prior to hearing what your peers have to say.

Evaluation: 20% = Class participation  
20% = Weekly paper  
30% = Mid-term exam  
30% = Final exam

Extra credit can be earned by students who have a plan for starting a new business and who present their plan to the class.

The weekly exercise is a short paper about the case topic of the week. Superior papers receive a grade of "plus". Papers with obviously little effort exerted receive a "zero". All

others receive a "check" (one point). Papers turned in late receive no credit unless a prior arrangement was made with the instructor.

Superior quality participation during any particular class leads to a bonus point for that class. The only way to receive a zero if you are in attendance is to show that you haven't prepared for the case discussion. "Bad" comments or questions don't count against you. Absence from class results in a class participation grade of zero for that class unless prior arrangement is made with the instructor. If you are sick, send an email to the instructor prior to class.

The mid-term exam, will be "open book", and will consist of one of the case questions that was assigned and discussed during the semester. Accordingly, the mid-term exam will be an opportunity for you to present an improved, more detailed and complete version of a short paper you wrote earlier in the semester. In the mid-term exam you will show how much you absorbed from the class discussion, and how your subsequent reading and thinking has expanded your view of the particular problem.

The final exam, also open book, will be your analysis of a new question or problem related to the case company. The question will be given at the time of the exam, and will be accompanied by new material about the case company.

SCHEDULE (preliminary)

Because we are studying one company, the reading material must be given out week by week. So please check the "Weekly Assignments" on the course website to be sure you are doing the appropriate reading. The schedule and assignments are illustrative and tentative. The final assignment for the week will be posted by 6:00pm (ET) Saturday evening.

### **Week 1 First class meeting**

Orientation to course

Description of the case company's business model

Description of the case company's technology

Description of the case company's industry

### **Week 2 Lecture/Discussion: Evaluating a Business Opportunity**

Conceptual Reading: "How to Assess Risk" plus "Evaluating a Business Opportunity"

Case Reading: The company's business plan

Exercise: Evaluate the risk and return of the case company. Evaluate the company's business model.

Activity:

### **Week 3 Lecture/Discussion: The Business Plan**

Conceptual Reading: "How to Write a Great Business Plan" plus "Developing an Effective Business Plan."

Case Reading: the case company's business plan plus ...

Exercise: Evaluate the company's plan as a document used in the capital-raising process. Does it meet the criteria for a well-written business plan?

Activity: guest speaker

### **Week 4 Lecture/Discussion: The Managerial Challenge**

Conceptual Reading:

Case Reading: video clips of case company managers, plus...

Exercise: Evaluate the managerial team and structure. What problems and solutions do you

see?

Activity:

**Week 5 Lecture/Discussion: Marketing Strategy**

Conceptual Reading: "Judo Strategy", plus...

Case Reading: TBA

Exercise: Evaluate the case company's marketing strategy.

Activity: guest speaker

**Week 6 Lecture/Discussion: Financial Strategy**

Conceptual Reading: TBA (info about venture capital, etc.)

Case Reading: TBA (will include description of current financing structure, and info on the company's capital-raising activity)

Exercise: Evaluate the case company's approach to raising capital.

Activity: guest speaker TBA

**Week 7 Lecture/Discussion: Managing Growth**

Conceptual Reading: "Managing Growth"

Case Reading: TBA

Exercise: Evaluate the case company's management structure and policies.

**Week 8 Mid-term exam**

**Week 9 Lecture/Discussion: Competitor Analysis**

Conceptual Reading: "Know Your Place" (Porter)

Case Reading: TBA

Exercise: Evaluate the case company's competitive situation.

Activity: guest speaker TBA

**Week 10 TBA**

**Week 11 TBA**

**Week 12 TBA**

**Week 13 TBA**

**Week 14 TBA**

**FINAL EXAM date to be announced**

**Preliminary Technical  
Requirements:**

Before using the course website, be sure that your computer is set up with the following software, all of which is available for free download:

\* Internet Explorer 5.5 SP2 (6 to 17Mb)

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/download/ie55sp2.htm>

\*Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0

(~20Mb) <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

\*RealPlayer 8.0 Basic 'Standard' version (9.8Mb)

[http://proforma.real.com/real/player/player.html?src=010810rpchoice\\_c1&dc=828827826#](http://proforma.real.com/real/player/player.html?src=010810rpchoice_c1&dc=828827826#)

; or use this link: <http://www.real.com/player/index.html> and choose RealPlayer 8 Basic.

\*Macromedia Shockwave Player 8.5 & Flash 5.0 (3.4Mb) required for chat functions:

<http://sdc.shockwave.com/shockwave/download/frameset.fhtml?> or use this link:

<http://www.macromedia.com/downloads/> and choose "Macromedia Shockwave Player".

(Optional): \*Windows Media Player 7.1 (10.1Mb)

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/en/download/default.asp>

Other requirements: 133MHz Pentium I (or equivalent), 64 Mb of RAM or greater, 28.8kbps modem or greater (56k or faster connections highly recommended), 16-bit soundcard and speakers or headphones, 65k color video display card.

We recommend that you view the Real-Time Case using Microsoft Internet Explorer.

When first logging on a chat session on this site, if your computer does not already have Shockwave installed, it will be automatically downloaded (unless you say no). On a 28k modem it can take 30-45 minutes. Some computers may have difficulty accepting Shockwave, so give it a good try, but realize that we may have to make alternative arrangements for chat. Please let your professor know if you cannot arrange web chat on this site.

NOTE: Many of the readings contained in this website were originally authored in Microsoft Word or other formats, and have been translated into HTML for ease of viewing. Some of them have slight variations in formatting from the original or have variations in image display; this is normal and not a fault of your computer.