

Case Studies in Management and Marketing: Critical Thinking, Public Relations and Integrated Business Topics

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Abstract

Researchers at Harvard University, Cranfield University and Thunderbird University have published extensively on case studies. These publications and internet searches, add significantly to the scholarship on global business and leadership. Critical Thinking, a Philosophy course, and Public Relations, a Communications course, were taught in the Business Department at the University of Phoenix. The Integrated Business Topics course is commonly called Strategic Management. It is a capstone course for seniors; at most business schools. Teaching these courses proved a challenge, especially if the number of hours per class was limited to 20 as opposed to 45 hours in traditional settings. This paper aims to address these issues by using case studies to reinforce learning, team work, and leadership in the E-Learning paradigm.

Keyword: International Management, Global E-Commerce, Critical Thinking, Public Relations, Integrated Business Topics, E-Learning, Global Business Leadership

Harvard University, Cranfield University UK, and Thunderbird University have been publishing case studies for 20+ years. While teaching courses in the business schools, one uses these case studies as the backbone of research, Hsu (2008). Since 1996, internet e-commerce has become the new paradigm for business; this extends as well to education, where most courses involved research using the E-Learning paradigm. Individual or team final projects using real-life case study, will make the learning more interesting.

(A) Dominican College

Dominican College is located 14 miles northwest of New York City. Donald Hsu joined Dominican College in 1988 as an Associate Professor. As of the Spring Semester of 2009, the College enrolled 1,970 students. Business is the largest division. The Business Division offers Bachelor of Science programs in Accounting, Computer Information Systems (CIS), Economics, and five concentrations of management: Financial Management, Human Resource Management, Information Systems Management (MIS),

International Management (IM), and Marketing Management. A Master's Degree in Business Administration (MBA) was approved by the State of New York in 2008. Hsu served as the Director of Business Administration Division from 1990 to 1996, and taught courses in MIS and IM. While the MIS enrollment is down, the IM enrollment has steadily increased for the past 10 years.

1. MG355 International Management

In Spring 2009, two sessions were offered. 19 students enrolled in the day session and 14 in the Accel evening session (for working adults). Accounting, finance, toxic mortgages, ethics, human resource, managing culture, marketing, merger/acquisition, and operations, were covered in details, Hsu (2006) and Hsu (2008). Students did group final projects covering global business founders/managers in China, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, UK and USA, (see Table 1 and 2).

2. MG 366 Manage Global E-Commerce

Ten people enrolled in the Accel class, in Spring 2009. Ebay and Amazon served as examples of the American success stories for e-commerce. This course covered 7 countries taking e-commerce to the global level. In the continental Europe, 60 discount airlines are now operating to benefit travelers. There are 27 countries with 500 million people in the European Union. Each discount airline started with just one website doing e-commerce, and tried to be the next RyanAir or EasyJet. Final projects involved the comparison between a discount airline and a traditional airline, covering Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Spain and UK, see Table 3.

(B) University of Phoenix

University of Phoenix (UPX) is a private for-profit institution of higher learning. It has an enrollment close to 400,000 students and is the largest private university in USA. UPX was founded in 1976 and is owned by the Apollo Group Inc. UPX has 200+ campuses offering more than 100 degree programs from associate degrees to PhDs. Its main campus is located in Phoenix, Arizona. The New Jersey campus is located in Jersey City. As the college campus chairman, Thomas Schmidt was in charge of hiring, training and scheduling classes for all instructors.

In February of 2008, Hsu went through a rigorous 16-hour training session and was certified to teach Business/Computer courses. The training was mandatory for all instructors regardless of prior teaching experience. From May 2008 to May 2009, Hsu taught: Critical Thinking, Information System Security, Integrated Business Topics, Marketing, Marketing Research, Organization Behavior, and Public Relations. Hsu taught most of these courses in the past and published papers on Marketing Research, Hsu (2006) and Organizational Behavior, Hsu (2008).

1. MGT 350 Critical Thinking

Each twenty-hour course at UPX consisted of a five-week, four hours per week schedule. Week one covered the characteristics of critical thinking and decision making. Week two dealt with problem identification and formulation. Week three focused on decision making. Week four covered decision implementation and the week five evaluated the decision outcomes and processes. Four books were used: Bateman and Snell (2005), Kirby and Goodpaster (2006), Paul and Elder (2006), and Robbins (2004).

In any other university, this course normally ran 40-45 hours per semester with one textbook. How could anyone teach four books in 20 hours? UPX E-Learning website (E-campus) listed the reading assignment for each week. For week two, student would download: Chapter 7, 9, 10, 11 from Kirby and Goodpaster (2006), and Chapter 4, 5 from Paul and Elder (2006). UPX has negotiated agreements with book publishers. Students pay a course resource fee and are permitted to download and then print the pages. This saves students time and money. Nine people took this course. They formed three learning teams with

three people in each team. Each week, there were two papers due. One was the individual paper and the other was the team paper, Table 4. The course syllabus described the details for the Problem Formulation and Identification Paper as follows:

Each Learning Team member will investigate and observe the decision-making processes most prevalent in their organization. As a Learning Team, collate, and compare and contrast the findings from individual team members. Prepare a 1,050-1,400-word paper in which you compare and contrast the problem identification and formulation styles in your team's organizations. Specifically discuss the strengths and weaknesses found in each style. Consider the most favorable aspects of each style discussed to describe a process by which a problem can be identified and described to stakeholders in a manner that is sensitive to their perspectives.

This shows how much work needed to be done outside of the classroom. Students would spend 15 to 30 hours after class to do these assignments. Team work was not easy either. With full-time work and family obligations, it was difficult for three people to get together to do team assignment. Virtual teaming was fine (email correspondences only, no face-to-face meeting), but did not always work.

Hsu presented lectures using PowerPoint slides. Simply reading the slides bored students. The better teaching method was to read a few lines, and ask general questions, such as: What is a syllogism? What is a Venn diagram? Why would critical thinking be important for business? What is the role of critical thinking in decision making? These type of questions got immediate attention. Students voiced their opinions in a lively manner. It is important to ask students to provide examples on critical thinking, team work, management decision making process using their daily work, and to discuss the pros and cons for each issue. Four hours were very long in the evening, because all students worked during the day. Two breaks were given, 15 minutes each at 7:15 pm and then at 8:45 pm. Hsu met students individually. Some of them had poor English writing skills. They were asked to seek help. Hsu spent much time with weaker students. The purpose was to make sure they would be able to catch up with the rest of the class. This strategy earned student respect.

2. MKT 438 Public Relations

This course is normally taught in the Communication department, under the School of Arts Science. UPX offers it as part of the marketing curriculum. Topics covered: the definition of public relations (PR), creating a PR campaign, applying the concept and tools used by the PR professionals, diversity in the workplace, outsourcing, good corporate citizenship, crisis management plan, PR campaign, target audience, proactive versus reactive PR, market research needed for PR, media release PR issues, sponsoring events, internet security, spokesperson, corporate newsletter, PR communication tools, and globalization issues. Using Tylenol, Ford SUV accidents and other real-life cases made the class more interesting. Textbooks used were: Lattimore et al (2006), Newsom et al (2004), and Seitel (2006).

This course was taught online by Hsu, as a directed-study; to one student. The key is to communicate with the student on a continuing basis. Emailed requests from the student were replied to promptly. Constant communication, feedback, critiques, and making suggestions engendered the success in this course. The grading is different from teaching a regular class, Table 5. The syllabus listed the requirement of a strategy paper on the creation of a PR Campaign:

Prepare a 1,200-1,750-word paper in which you recommend strategies to build media relations and generate publicity for the organization selected in Learning Team Meeting One. Be sure to address the following in your Strategy Paper:

- a. List objectives for the PR Campaign
- b. Identify the organization's publics
- c. Identify the risks in the strategy.
- d. Write a media release and create a media distribution list for the media release

e. Develop a tactical plan utilizing at least five of the PR tools listed below:

- 1) Event planning
- 2) Open house
- 3) Press conference
- 4) Community event
- 5) Sponsorship
- 6) Corporate newsletter (internal and/or external)
- 7) Direct mail
- 8) Internet/intranet
- 9) Promotional items
- 10) Promotions – sweepstakes
- 11) Spokesperson

3. BUS 475 Integrated Business Topics

This capstone course covers the strategic planning and management in the business environment. Topics are: select a business, SWOTT analysis, strategic plan, balanced scorecard assignment, strategic direction evaluation, communication plan, tactics and overall strategy. This course aims to combine all the tools (accounting, finance, human resource, information technology, management, marketing, and operation), learned in the business school, to start a business that will be successful. Books were: Pearce and Robinson (2005), Thompson et al (2006). The syllabus gives the strategic plan assignment for the week as follows:

In preparation for your Individual SWOTT Analysis Paper, discuss with your Learning Team the forces and trends below that must be taken into consideration while developing a strategic plan. Given today's business environment and each Learning Team members' selected business idea, provide a list of the lessons learned for your Learning Team's discussion for each of the items listed below:

- (A) External forces and trends considerations: Legal and regulatory, Global, Economic, Technological, Innovation, Social, Environmental, Competitive analysis
- (B) Internal forces and trends considerations: Goals, Strategy, Structures, Processes and Systems, Resources, Strategic capabilities, Culture, Technologies, Innovations, Intellectual property, Leadership

Hsu taught this course two times: to a class of six students in a regular lecture class and to one student as a directed study. Due to the large amount of work in this course, it was difficult for one student.

Conclusion

With the down economy, more students have enrolled in undergraduate and MBA programs. International Management, Global E-Commerce, Critical Thinking, Public Relations, Integrated Business Topics courses were taught at two different institutions of higher learning to 61 people. The E-campus infrastructure at University of Phoenix made the E-Learning pleasant. It is an excellent platform to train tomorrow's leader.

Business Plan software, a global finance exercise, Harvard case studies, homework, internet search, an MS Project exercise, and final projects using PowerPoint presentation by a team or an individual; will have the best chance of success in an E-Learning environment. Students gave rave reviews (see Table 6). It was a very rewarding experience.

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Table 1 MG 355 International Management			
	Final Group Project	Day class	
<i>Group A</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Group B</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Tejada	Liliane Bettencourt	Andrew-Field	Lakshmi Mittal
Nkabane	Loreal, France	Reddick	Mittal Steel, Luxembourg
<i>Group C</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Group D</i>	<i>Topic</i>

Bright	Indra Nooyi	Pichardo	Albrecht brothers
Sital	Pepsi Cola, USA	Yavadakis	Aldi, Germany
<u>Group E</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group F</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Bates	Amancio Ortega	Brock	Bernard Arnault
Ruffin	Zara, Spain	Coaxum	LVMH, France
<u>Group G</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group H</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Earl	Andrea Jung	Scavera	Prince Alwaleed
Paciello	Avon Products, USA		Kingdom, Saudi Arabia
<u>Group I</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group J</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Capote	Stefan Persson	Berriios	Masayoshi Son
Garcia	H & M, Sweden	Murphy	Softbank, Japan

Table 2 MG 355-L* International Management			
	Final Project	Accel class	
<u>Group A</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group B</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Jastrow	Loreal, France	Maldonado	Mittal Steel, Luxembourg
<u>Group C</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group D</u>	<u>Topic</u>
West	Walmart, USA	Flynn	Nike Inc, USA
<u>Group E</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group F</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Bohan	Telmex, Mexico	Manieri	Cheung Kong Industries
			Hong Kong, China
<u>Group G</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group H</u>	<u>Topic</u>

DiSalvio	Severstal, Russia	Munkelt	Porsche SE, Germany
<u>Group I</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group J</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Navarro	Nintendo, Japan	Mosser	Reliance Industries India
<u>Group K</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group L</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Tomaselli	Disney, USA	Spruck	Lego Group, Denmark
<u>Group M</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group N</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Szanto	Ahold, Netherland	Russo	Ikea Corp, Sweden

*Accel evening class for adults

Table 3 MG 366-L* Global E-Commerce			
	Final Group Project	Accel class	
	<u>Names</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Project</u>
1	Knez	Germany	Lufthansa Air Berlin
2	Jastrow	Ireland	AerLingus Ryanair
3	Ciraolo	Italy	Alitalia MyAir
4	Oliver	Czech Republic	Czech Airline Smart Wings
5	Santana	Spain	Iberia Airline Air Madrid
6	Nozkowski	Poland	Lot Airline Wizz Air
7	DeCosta	Belgium	VLM Airline Virgin Express

8	Twumasi	UK	British Airway
			EasyJet
9	Jo	Finland	Finnair
			Blue 1
10	Bailey	Sweden	ScandJet
			SAS

*Accel evening class for adults

Table 4 MGT 350 Critical Thinking grading		
<i>ASSIGNMENTS</i>	<i>Due</i>	<i>Points</i>
Individual (75%)		
Critical thinking Application Paper	W1	5
<i>Decisions in Paradise</i> , Part I	W3	10
<i>Decisions in Paradise</i> , Part II	W4	10
<i>Decisions in Paradise</i> , Part III	W5	15
Final Examination	W5	15
Attendance and in-class participation	All	20
Learning Team (25%)		
Faculty Choice Assignment	W2	5
Problem Formulation and Identification Paper	W3	5
Problem Formulation and Identification Presentation	W4	10
Thinking Critically Simulation Review	W5	5
Total		100

Table 5 MKT 438 Publication Relations grading		
<i>ASSIGNMENTS</i>	<i>Due</i>	<i>Points</i>
Defining Public Relations Paper	W1	8
Public Relations Campaign: Overview Paper	W2	10
Functions of Public Relations Paper	W3	8
Public Relations Campaign: Strategy Paper	W3	10

Effective Communication Case Study Analysis	W4	10
Public Relations Campaign: Progress Report Presentation	W4	9
“Managing a Crisis Using PR” Simulation Summary	W5	10
Final Project PowerPoint presentation	W5	10
Public Relations Campaign: Final Written Paper	W5	15
Attendance and Discussion	All	10
Total		100

Table 6 Selected Student Comments

24030469	MKT/421	11/20/2008	New Jersey	JERSEY CITY CAMPUS	HSU DONALD
	SurveyID: 8718398	STRATEGIC MEASURES	COMMENT	Mr. Hsu ability to relate theory to real-life allows a student visualizes the provided materials concepts.	
24030469	MKT/421	11/20/2008	New Jersey	JERSEY CITY CAMPUS	HSU DONALD
	SurveyID: 8738275	STRATEGIC MEASURES	COMMENT	DR. DONALD HSU WAS A VERY GOOD INSTRUCTOR. I WOULD RECOMMEND HIM.	
24030469	MKT/421	11/20/2008	New Jersey	JERSEY CITY CAMPUS	HSU DONALD
	SurveyID: 8741345	STRATEGIC MEASURES	COMMENT	Mr. Hsu did a great job in teaching the course.	
24030469	MKT/421	11/20/2008	New Jersey	JERSEY CITY CAMPUS	HSU DONALD
	SurveyID: 8741345	FACULTY EFFECTIVENESS MEASURES	COMMENT	UOP need more instructors like Mr. Hsu.	
28635892	CMGT/440	3/19/2009	New Jersey	NEW JERSEY CAMPUS - DIRECTED STUDY LC	HSU DONALD
	SurveyID: 9439712	FACULTY EFFECTIVENESS MEASURES	COMMENT	Professor Hsu is a good instructor. He always provides appropriate feedback. Additionally he responds to all my questions in a timely manner. This assisted me in	

				proceeding with my projects on time.	
26346652	MKT/441	4/7/2009	New Jersey	JERSEY CITY CAMPUS	HSU DONALD
	SurveyID: 9526049	FACULTY EFFECTIVE NESS MEASURES	COMMENT	Don proved to have massive insight on practical marketing research, its methods, and new marketing tools.	