ABOUT THE COURSE

Managers often express surprise when they find that people are more difficult than numbers to understand. Recruiters often indicate that they wish new managers possessed stronger people skills. Alumni often affirm that they too wish they had stronger people skills. The aim of this course is to provide you with some of these skills so that you can become a more effective manager and leader.

However, management is not a science. Nor is it a profession. It is an art—a craft that is developed over a lifetime. This course is therefore not designed to offer you a magic formula for how to manage an organization. It is designed to provide tools to help you better understand why people in organizations do the things they do and how to influence these behaviors. We use theories from the fields of management, economics, sociology, psychology, and philosophy to help us understand the challenges and opportunities associated with individual-, team-, and organizational-level behaviors.

The interactive nature of this class—including debates, role-plays, simulations, and case studies—provides a rich learning experience. Opportunities to reflect and analyze these experiences provide us new ways of looking at the world around us. We will have few traditional lectures, and those that we do have will be short and serve to synthesize a class discussion or exercise. This means that the majority of our class time will require the inputs of the entire class, so it is essential for all of us to be well prepared for each class in order for any of us to take anything away from it.

COURSE TOPICS, MATERIALS AND ASSIGNMENTS [PROVISIONAL]

The details provided in this syllabus are provisional, and will be modified somewhat in advance of the course. Detailed information on expected course topics, materials and assignments are provided in the pages that follow. Course readings and cases are distributed in electronic format through IVLE. Some course readings can be downloaded only once, so please save or print them for future access.
October 2, 2013: Getting Organized—Structure in Organizations

This first session serves as an introduction to the course. A framework for thinking about the question “what is an organization?” is discussed and then we focus on the first part of that framework: organizational structure. Organizations are complex systems in which multiple pieces have to work together. We think about how organizations can divide tasks and coordinate people to achieve a common goal.

One Page Reflection Questions: Stretch Experience
- From your own work/task experience, recall a situation where you really stretched yourself—a situation where you worked not only hard but also well (resourcefully, using all of your strengths and abilities). In no more than one page, describe what makes it stand out in your mind as a stretch experience and the factors leading up to or bringing about this experience.

Supplementary Readings
- “Evidence-Based Management” by Pfeffer & Sutton in HBR (Jan 2006)
- “Do You Have a Well-Designed Organization?” by Goold & Campbell in HBR (Mar 2002)
- “Wrong People” by Mintzberg in Managers Not MBAs (2005)

October 9, 2013: Creating Community—Culture in Organizations

In this second session, we focus on the second part of our framework: organizational culture. Every organization has its own unique set of unspoken norms and routines, and these work together to tell a story about what the organization is all about. We look at how to make sense of the objects, behaviors, and practices of organizational life and the underlying values they represent.

One Page Case Questions: Meg Whitman at eBay (A)
- How would you describe the ‘culture’ at eBay and its roots?
- What do you see as the strategic value of the eBay culture?
- What do you see as the biggest challenges that Meg Whitman faces in the case, and what are the underlying principles that shape your assessment of what eBay must do?

Note that much has happened at eBay since the publication of this case. Though it has not been successful in China, eBay continues to dominate the online marketplace in Singapore (ebay.com.sg).

Supplementary Readings:
- “Understanding Cultures” by Pearce in OB: Real Research for Real Managers (2012)
- “Welcome to the New Company Town” by Useem in Fortune (10 Jan 2000)
October 16, 2013: Bringing out the Best—People in Organizations

In this third session, we focus on the third part of our framework: people. Organizations are made up of people who all share a common identity in the organization but who also have their own unique self-identities. We examine what motivates people to think and act in the ways that they do, as well as the role that organization-based identities and self-identities play in such attitudes and behaviors.

One Page Case Questions: Managing Creativity at Shanghai Tang

- What is Raphael le Masne’s vision for Shanghai Tang when he joins the firm?
- If there was going to be a newspaper article written five years after his joining, what would he want the headline to be?
- What motivates and demotivates designers?
- What motivates and demotivates managers (i.e., the buyers and salespeople)?

Note that there are six Shanghai Tang stores in Singapore. Do visit one of them if you have time.

Supplementary Readings:

- “Employee Motivation: A Powerful New Model” by Nohria et al. in HBR (Jul-Aug 2008)
- “It’s not just a job: Shifting meanings of work in the wake of 9/11” by Wrzesniewski in JMI (Sept. 2001)

October 23, 2013: Driving Change—Power in Organizations

In this fourth session, we focus on the final component of our framework—power. We think about what it means to have power as well as how to use it, abuse it, and respond to it. We also consider the central role of power dynamics in organizational change. The promise of good ideas is often not realized when the advocates of those ideas fail to demonstrate resolve and commit the resources needed and to get them implemented. Thus, we focus on the positive aspect of power and its use in change efforts.

One Page Case Questions: The Roller Coaster Ride: The Resignation of a Star

Who has the “upper hand” between Stephen and Peter at the start of the day?
Who played the situation better?
What should each of them have done differently to have better played the situation? Be specific.
How well did Rina play her situation?

Supplementary Readings:

- “Mastering Power” by Pearce in OB: Real Research for Real Managers (2012)
- “An Exhortation To Liberate Italy from the Barbarians” by Machiavelli (1513)
- “Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail” by Kotter in HBR (Jan 2007)
October 30, 2013: Deciding and Learning—Cognition in Organizations

In this fifth session, we focus on the challenges of making business decisions and learning. As organizations engage in the world, its members must make sense of these experiences and modify actions in pursuit of ongoing improvement. We think about how organizations can learn from experience as well as what should be learned.

One Page Case Questions: Phase Zero: Introducing New Services at IDEO (A)
• How successful was the Simmons project (on a scale of 1 to 10)? Why?
• What is the company’s “traditional” value proposition?
• How did the company design itself to be geared to creativity? (Think of the congruence model.)
• What should IDEO learn from the Simmons project?
• How can IDEO learn to be effective in future Phase Zero projects?

Note that IDEO designed Singapore’s MOM Work Pass Division process. Do visit if you have time.

Supplementary Readings:
• “What you don’t know about making decisions” by Garvin & Roberto in HBR (September 2001)
• “The hidden traps in decision making” by Hammond, Keeney & Raiffa in HBR (September 1998)
• “The Competitive Imperative of Learning” by Edmondson in HBR (Jul-Aug 2008)

November 6, 2013: Moving Forward—Setting direction for continuous improvement

In this sixth and final session, we focus on the prospects for continuous improvement in organizations and society. In light of the relentless pace of the business world, we are reminded of the importance of being clear about where we are headed, why, and how.

Supplementary Readings
• “The good life: Good money, good work, good friends, good questions” by Torbert in JMI (March 1994).
• “Radical change, the quiet way” by Meyerson in HBR (October, 2001)

January 9/12 (3:00pm - 5:00pm): Final Integrative Case
ASSESSMENT

One Page Reflections and Case Questions (10%)

There are five (5) one-page written assignments to be submitted. These assignments entail either responses to questions concerning a case study or reflections on experience. These exercises help focus your thoughts in advance of class sessions, and ensure lively discussion. There are no “right or wrong” answers to these questions; we appreciate creative and insightful responses. One-page write-ups should be no more than one page in length, and are to be submitted through IVLE before class (late submissions not accepted).

Personal Case Study (10%)

A personal case study describes a real-world people/managerial problem that you find significant and challenging in some way. It may be grounded in your work experience, a situation within an organization you know, or a situation currently receiving media attention. Personal case studies provide you with an opportunity to connect concepts being studied to organizational problems that have personal relevance. Guidelines for personal case study preparation are included in Appendix I.

Team Case Analysis Report (30%)

Working in teams (3-4 people), you will conduct an integrative analysis of one of the personal case studies prepared by the members of your team, including a succinct problem statement, analysis, recommendation, and implementation plan. The text of the team’s report should be no longer than five (5) double-spaced A4 pages (excluding diagrams and appendices). This report will be submitted two weeks after the module’s completion.

Class Contribution (30%)

Given the interactive nature of the class, a high level of input from each person is necessary and expected. Even though a certain amount of input is obviously needed for any class discussion, please recognize that quality, not quantity, is key. Look for ways to stay on track with existing discussions by offering insightful responses to questions and building on other comments. Avoid repeating other people’s comments or derailing discussions. This requires all of us to be actively involved in the discussion even when someone else is talking. To help us all focus on the classroom dialogue, please refrain from using your phones or computers in class.

Final Integrative Case Study (20%).

The final individual exercise in this course provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate your command of course concepts within the context of an integrative case. This case will be distributed one week before the end of the semester, which will give you time to reflect on how the class materials may sharpen your understanding of what is going on in the case. You will be given two hours during the final session of the class to answer a set of specific questions concerning the integrative case.

Note Regarding Academic Integrity: Signing your name to a report, assignment or examination signifies that the work is your own. In written reports, give credit where credit is due, acknowledging sources for both ideas and direct quotations. Follow accepted standards for citing and referencing sources (e.g., APA or MLA format). Students in this course will not receive academic credit for submitted assignments where there is evidence of plagiarism.

FINAL NOTES

I look forward to seeing you in class. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.
APPENDIX I

PERSONAL CASE STUDY PREPARATION

Your personal case study will describe a real-world people/managerial problem that is in some way significant and challenging to you. It could be something that has already happened, that is ongoing, or that will need to be addressed in the near future. A case that contains questions, puzzles, or challenges provides a richer vehicle for analysis. Please feel free to disguise the case as you wish so that you can share your personal case with your colleagues in the course.

Sources for personal case studies include 1) the organization where you work (for part-time students), 2) an organization that you know is open to your completing a consulting project, or 3) information from published sources that can be integrated to provide perspective on a specific organization issue.

Make sure that the experience is bounded and manageable so that it can be described succinctly in 2-4 pages. Your description need not be elaborate—simply provide enough information to enable someone unfamiliar with the case to understand the essentials of the story.

Some suggestions for preparing your case:

- **Tell a good story.** When writing about a case in which you are involved, it usually works best to write in the first person. Describe what happened as you saw it, including your own thoughts and feelings (but make sure your thoughts and feelings are labeled as such). If you are not a key player in the case, adopt the perspective of the decision maker in the case, and describe situations and events as they pertain to him/her.

- **Set the stage.** Provide a relatively brief description of the organizational setting and your role in it. Provide information to help readers understand the most important elements in the situation.

- **Focus on direct description.** The purpose of the case is to describe what happened, not to analyze, evaluate, or editorialize. If, for example, there was a significant meeting, provide a description of what people actually said and did in it.

- **Consider different sides of issues:** Enrich your case description by incorporating (a) structural issues (e.g., how things are organized, coordinated); (b) "people" issues (e.g., issues of management style, group process, interpersonal relations); (c) politics (was there conflict? about what? between whom? etc.); (d) symbols (think about organizational culture, symbols, myths, and rituals; were there questions about what really happened, or about what it really meant?).

- **A good case usually ends with a question, a choice point, or an unsolved problem.** (E.g., what should I do now? how could I solve this problem?) The focal question or problem should be yours, not someone else’s. In other words, your question should be about what you can or should do, rather than about what someone else should do. No doubt other people are involved, but if you think they should think or act differently, focus on how you might get that to happen.

**Submission Guidelines:** Personal case studies are to be submitted online (IVLE) at the beginning of our second session (October 9, 2013). The text of your case should be no longer than four (4) double-spaced pages in length. Feel free to include additional figures and appendices as necessary. If you are compiling your case from published sources, be sure to include relevant bibliographic/source information.