Course Summary:

General Managers have responsibility for the overall performance, profitability and survival of an organization. Whether managing a branch, plant, store, division or company, they must make the big decisions that determine the organization’s success or failure. For them, there is always more at stake.

This course is designed to teach students how the best managers actually manage. Students will develop a toolkit of proven concepts and practices that will help them succeed as department managers, division general managers and ultimately CEOs. The toolkit will include fundamental principles, practical techniques, analytical skills and a series of memorable “leadership axioms.” The course is organized around modules, each reflecting a facet of the senior manager’s job. Topics include: taking command of a new organization, creating a compelling strategic vision, managing organic growth, achieving operational excellence, developing a motivational corporate culture and improving management decision making. Important financial principles will also be woven throughout the course to assist the student’s understanding of basic financial analysis. Learning will take place through lectures peppered with real world examples, case studies in CEO leadership and the best seller Good to Great, by Jim Collins. Each class session will begin with a lecture on the day’s topic followed by a case discussion describing a relevant management success or failure from across a spectrum of industries.

In lieu of a final exam, students will write a 5-7 page paper that develops a “good to great” plan for an organization familiar to them. While the course covers many topics specific to the general manager or CEO, woven throughout will be personal leadership lessons that can help any manager to deliver improved results and accelerate his or her career advancement.

This course is a companion course to “Business Dynamics” by the same professor. Taken together, the two courses will present the full list of 60 leadership axioms that you can apply in any management setting. Students will be prepared for a broad range of management challenges and will have learned cross-functional techniques that will help them be better managers at any level.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, the conscientious student will have gained a greater understanding of the role of the general manager or CEO in any organization. He or she will have learned a set of specific management tools useful at the general management level, including how to:

- Manage any organization to improve its performance;
- Provide a compelling strategic vision;
- Accelerate organic growth and foster strategic innovation;
- Improve business processes and operational excellence;
- Develop an energized corporate culture;
- Assemble, motivate and reward a championship team;
- Provide ethical and authentic leadership to the organization.
Course Requirements:
You will be required to complete the readings for the class, submit a short case write-up and a longer paper (due two weeks after the course ends) and participate actively in all class discussions. The first half of each class will be devoted to lecture, and the last half will turn to a discussion of the assigned cases. To succeed in this course, you must read the appropriate cases for each class and develop an informed opinion about them, as I will do cold calls on each case. The critical questions for the cases are shown in this syllabus under the course schedule for that day.

A. Readings: You must purchase the course text and also the course readings found on line.

  Available from Amazon.com for $17.99 or less. The book has sold over 3 million copies and is the best selling management book of the last decade. Collins identifies a handful of successful companies that changed their trajectory of growth and analyzes what happened to explain the gear shift into an even higher level of performance. His central observations have become part of the accepted vocabulary of business performance improvement: ideas such as the hedgehog concept, Level 5 managers, technology accelerators and getting the right people on the bus.

- Course Readings: The other required readings for the course will consist of four case studies and several articles. All of the readings are available from www.study.net, with the exception of the Christensen book excerpt, which will be emailed to the class and posted on the class website. Here are the readings:
  4. Case: “Oracle vs. salesforce.com” HBSP, Rev. 9-21-06 (#9-705-440)

These course readings can be purchased in digital form from www.study.net for under $20, to be downloaded to your computer and printed on your own. (For a printed hardcopy to be mailed to you, the cost is around $30.) Please go to the website and register as a student, then click Courses and pick out this one from the others offered by University of Montana. Click on “add to cart” to start the purchase process. No course password is required.

B. Class Participation (25%)

Every student will be graded on your participation in each of the four class sessions. Active participation in class discussions by all students is critical to the success of the course. It’s also good training, for the world of business does not reward the meek. Remember, however, that it is quality, not quantity that counts. Did your contribution advance the learning of all, challenge the professor, demonstrate mastery of the material, energize the discussion and/or turn it in a creative new direction?

On Saturday afternoon, in order to give you a break from PowerPoint fatigue, we will have a UM strategy brainstorming session addressing the question: What should the University of Montana do, as a traditional bricks & mortar university, to meet the challenge of disruptive innovation posed by on-line higher education? To prepare your thoughts, you should read the Christensen Chapters
and also learn what you can about the for-profit education companies such as DeVry, University of Phoenix, and Bridgepoint Education (whose college brand name is Ashford University.)

C. Assignment 1: Case Write-up. (25%)

On Friday evening at the beginning of class, you must submit a case write-up answering the questions shown below in the Course Schedule for either of two cases. Students whose last names begin with A-L should prepare the Zara case, while those with M-Z names should prepare the Oracle vs. salesforce.com case. Your paper should be 2-3 pages in length, either single or double spaced. It will be graded (0-25 points) and returned Sunday morning.

D. Written Assignment 2: Good to Great Plan (50%)

Utilizing the ideas presented in class and in the book Good to Great, your assignment is to prepare a strategic plan for your target organization that will accomplish its strategic intent within the next 5 years. You can choose an organization or department you have worked for, a company or institution that you know well for other reasons, or the UM School of Business Administration. The paper must be 5-7 pages in length, printed in 12 pt. font, and can have line spacing that is single, double, or 1.5 depending on the amount of information you are trying to communicate. All plans should use a time horizon of about five years and contain these four elements:

1. Starting Point and End-State: Begin with a summary statement that describes in both qualitative and quantitative terms the organization today and your vision for the end-state position (e.g., size, profitability, market share, rank, geographic coverage, product scope, etc.)

2. Hedgehog Concept: Present to the reader the hedgehog concept around which you will build your successful strategy. First state it in a single sentence, typed in bold font. Then elaborate on the concept, explaining how it answers the three questions posed by Collins. Explain if this represents a change from the current direction of the organization.

3. Strategic Planks: Identify the specific planks or management initiatives that make up your strategy for getting there. For example, here might be some initiatives for a typical department or company:
   
   - Adopt a new business strategy
   - Offer new product lines or services
   - Attack new distribution channels
   - Reach new domestic or international markets
   - Extend geographic coverage
   - Strengthen core competencies
   - Develop new or expanded resources
   - Apply technology accelerators
   - Open new locations
   - Tighten cost structure
In describing your strategic initiatives, explain the specifics for how you will implement them, such as staffing requirements, task assignments, use of cross functional teams, target dates and budget considerations.

4. **Objectives:** Establish specific, concrete performance objectives by which you will measure whether the plan has been achieved in five years, possibly with intermediate milestones. Cite the most single critical “economic denominator” for measuring the company’s progress, along with your other financial and operational targets.

The target audience for this plan should be the company’s management team and/or board of directors. Avoid jargon and make all technical issues understandable to the non-technical people on the board and within the management team (as well as your professor). Assume that the organization’s directors are sophisticated executives who want any proposals backed up with facts and analysis, not unsupported claims and puffery. Put this plan in a form where you would be proud to submit it to the CEO of the subject company, or to your boss if you are addressing your own department.

**Course Grading:**

Your course grade will be determined by weighting the following factors:

- Class Participation: 25%
- Assignment 1: Case Write-up: 25%
- Assignment 2: Good to Great Paper: 50%
- Total: 100%

**Class Absences:**

Students must attend all four class sessions. However, if illness or another unavoidable excuse causes you to miss a class session, you may make up for it by submitting written answers to four of the questions for the case discussion that you missed, as shown in the Course Schedule below for that session. This should be a 2-3 page conversational summary of what you would have said if called on in class to answer those questions. It must be postmarked no later than the due date for your final paper.

**Class Website:**

Lecture slides and handouts for the course, along with other general announcements, will be posted on the class website on Moodle under **Practice of General Management**.