

BMGT - 604 – Competitive Strategy

Fall 2021

Course Description & Objectives:

The purpose of BMGT 604 is to make you a better strategist.

BMGT 604 is an introduction to strategic management, the art and science of distinguishing a firm from its competitors in the marketplace. This class is topical, hands on and, hopefully, relevant to your work and career objectives. Our world is VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous), with continuous technological disruptions, geo-political instabilities, and other unfolding shifts. This makes the need for strategy more crucial than ever!

Over the next five weeks, we will review the basic precepts (the essential toolkit, if you will) of strategy and then migrate to connecting a firm's intended (or accidental) strategy to its business model. By recognizing the interrelated and symbiotic relationship between a firm's strategy and its business model you will understand how the organization can create a sustainable competitive advantage. Finally, this course will lay the foundation for the Advanced Strategy Seminar where you learn additional skills and acquire complementary tools to round out your ability to think and act strategically.

Specifically, by the end of BMGT 604, you will be able to:

1. Appreciate the challenges managers face in uncertain and volatile environments.
2. Understand basic concepts of strategic management and business model design.
3. Integrate strategy and business model design and their real-world application.
4. Recognize the value, challenges and shortcomings of the tools of strategic analysis.
5. Realize your role as both strategist and business model architect and what that entails.

Course Structure and Teaching Style

We will utilize case studies, established theory, real world examples, and live discussions. Expect very little traditional lecture— my role here is to curate your contributions and contextualize them within the various strategic frameworks we cover. In many instances, your knowledge and experience will exceed my own as you all are the ones working in industry and experiencing in real time the various forces, issues and trends we will discuss. In our five weeks together, we must co-create knowledge and push ourselves to develop our strategic muscles. Given our short time together, each class will require heavy preparation as well as active class participation (in-class and through discussion boards) from each of you.

Assignments and Grading

	<u>Weight (%)</u>
1. Individual Strategic Analysis	40%
2. Individual Business Model Analysis	40%
3. General Participation	20%

Individual Analyses (80%)

In Week 2 of the course, you will be assigned your first individual case study based on your assigned capstone firm. A second individual case study will be assigned in the last week of our session together. Both assignments will involve you conducting in-depth strategic analyses of your assigned firm and its industry using the strategy frameworks discussed in class. Grading will be based on the “tightness” of your arguments using the tools at your disposal. Did you apply the frameworks correctly? Does your analysis reflect critical thinking? To what extent does your analysis support your logic, reasoning and conclusions? Separate documents outlining each Individual Analysis assignment will be available on Moodle.

General Participation – In class and on MS Teams discussion forums (20%)

You must participate in class and on MS Teams in order to make the discussions interesting, insightful, and fun. However, there is no need to contribute to each and every topic. Some of the best contributors are those who participate in a subset of the conversations, but whose comments are always insightful and compelling. The key issue is one of quality, not quantity.

We should work together to make each discussion a lively, stimulating, and intellectually rewarding venture in group learning. You are individually and collectively responsible to that end. Believe me, nobody (including me) wants to hear me ramble on endlessly about the course concepts without engaging in class discussion. The best sessions are those that are highlighted by an interactive discussion about the potential marketing opportunities that arise from course concepts. As such, we are all *co-producers* of knowledge.

Below is a description of how your class contributions will be calibrated:

Outstanding Contributor: Contributions in class reflect exceptional preparation. Ideas offered are always substantive, and provide one or more major insights as well as providing a fruitful direction for the class. Arguments are well substantiated and persuasively presented. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the discussions would be diminished significantly.

Good Contributor: Contributions in class reflect thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive; provide good insights and sometimes a fruitful direction for class discussion. Arguments, when presented, are generally well substantiated and are often persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussions would be diminished considerably.

Satisfactory Contributor: Contributions in class reflect adequate preparation. Ideas offered are sometimes substantive, provide generally useful insights, but seldom offer a major new direction for the class. Arguments are sometimes presented, and are fairly well substantiated and sometimes persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussions would be diminished somewhat.

Unsatisfactory Contributor: Contributions in class reflect inadequate preparation. Ideas offered are seldom substantive, provide few useful insights, and rarely offer a constructive direction for the class. Class contributions are few and far between. Many contributions are “cherry picking” efforts making isolated, obvious or confusing points. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussions would not be changed or perhaps even improved.

The Fine Print – please read this stuff!

Academic Integrity

Academic misconduct is any activity that may compromise the academic integrity of the University of Montana. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, deceptive acts such as cheating and plagiarism. Please note that it is a form of academic misconduct to submit work that was previously used in another course. If cheating of any form is detected, you could be given a failing grade the assignment in question.

The following message about academic integrity comes from the Provost’s office:

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. The University of Montana Student Conduct Code specifies definitions and adjudication processes for academic misconduct and states, “Students at the University of Montana are expected to practice academic honesty at all times.” (Section V.A., available at

http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php). All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar the Student Conduct Code.

In addition, the COB Code of Professional Conduct can be found at:
<http://www.business.umt.edu/Soba/SoBAEthics/CodeofProfessionalConduct.aspx>.

Classroom Etiquette

This class will provide you an opportunity to develop skills necessary for success in the workplace. For example, **attendance** is required in both this class and in your future job. Respect for your classmates is also required in order to provide the best learning environment. Classroom etiquette refers to **no sidebar discussions, no newspapers or crossword puzzles, no cellular phone use during class (this includes text messaging), no surfing the web, and no other disruptive actions** (i.e. leaving abruptly during class without prior notification – not including restroom breaks). If you are disruptive in class (talking, text messaging, etc.), you will be asked to leave class and any points awarded that day will be forfeited (attendance, participation, extra credit).

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). "Reasonable" means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult <http://www.umt.edu/disability>.

Email

According to University policy, faculty may only communicate with students regarding academic issues via official UM email accounts. Accordingly, students must use their UM email accounts (netid@umconnect.umt.edu or fname.lname@umontana.edu). Email from non-UM accounts will likely be flagged as spam and deleted without further response. To avoid violating the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, confidential information (including grades and course performance) **will not be discussed via phone or email.**

The University of Montana MBA Program

College of Business Administration Mission Statement

The University of Montana's College of Business Administration is a collegial learning community dedicated to the teaching, exploration, and application of the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a competitive marketplace.

Master of Business Administration Mission Statement

Serving our region by educating ethical leaders who are effective in managing organizations in the global environment.

Master of Business Administration Assessment and Assurance of Learning

As part of our assessment process and assurance-of-learning standards, the MBA program has adopted six learning goals for our students. These are as follows:

COB MBA graduates will demonstrate...

- integrated knowledge and understanding of various business functions.
- strong communication skills supportive of their leadership abilities.
- integrity and ethical behavior in individual and collective work.

- analytical and critical thinking in decision making.
- an understanding of emerging trends in information technology and the interplay between information technology and organizational strategy.
- an understanding of the implications of the global business environment.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topics	Assignments	Due Dates/Notes
Sept. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction & Course Overview • Strategy Basics: Strategy DNA, SWOT and Generic Strategies • 3 Hurdles 	READ: -What is Strategy? -Margin & Volume	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please visit Rivian 	COME PREPARED: Identify the various components of “What is Strategy?” to Rivian: OE, Positions, Tradeoffs, etc.	
Sept. 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive Forces • Value Chain & Competitive Advantage 	READ: -How Competitive Forces Shape Strategy -How Information Gives you Competitive Advantage - Rivian Case	Individual Assignment Strategic Analysis released, due <u>Sept. 22</u> by 5 PM. <i>Late papers will receive grade deductions.</i>
		COME PREPARED: Detail the individual Forces impacting the Electric Vehicle Industry	
Sept. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Competencies • Guest Speaker – Ben Ferencz, Creative Director of Apparel at Rivian 	READ: - Core Competence of the Corporation - Rivian Case	
		COME PREPARED: Sketch out Rivian’s Value Chain. What is its Core Competence? To what extent do apparel and other soft goods align with the rest of the business?	
Sept. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy versus Business Model • Blue Ocean Strategy 	READ: -Will business model innovation replace strategic analysis?	

		<p>-Blue Ocean Strategy: From Theory to Practice</p> <p>WATCH: Cirque du Soleil BOS https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkF_yStN4pw</p>	
		<p>COME PREPARED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sketch a Blue Ocean Strategy Canvas for Rivian...which values did the company Eliminate, Reduce, Raise and Create? 	
Sep. 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Model Innovation • Value Proposition 	<p>READ: <i>What to do against disruptive Business Models</i></p> <p><i>Strategy and business models: Why winning companies need both</i></p> <p>WATCH: <i>The Business Model Canvas – 9 Steps to Creating a Successful Business Model</i> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPOcUBWTgpY)</p>	<p>Individual Business Model Analysis released, due Oct 14 by 5:00pm</p>
		<p>COME PREPARED:</p> <p>Complete a Business Model Canvas (template on Moodle) for Rivian. What is Rivian's Value Proposition?</p>	

This Syllabus is Tentative and Subject to Change