

ENT 496 – Small Business Analysis and Strategy
Spring 2017
MW 1:50 – 3:10 PM, GH 238

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Office Hours: By appointment – please email to set up a meeting at a mutually convenient time.

Prerequisites: Senior standing and CIS 243, FIN 330, MGT 210, MGT 314, MKT 220.

Catalog Course Description: Opportunities for students to act in a management consultant relationship with selected small/medium regional entrepreneurial organizations, firms. Overall strategy and policy issues are emphasized.

Course and Learning Objectives:

This course is based on experiential or “hands-on” learning. Students will work in teams, integrating their knowledge across courses to assist area small businesses/organizations. These small firms/organizations have wide-ranging needs from market research, business planning, operational issues, marketing planning, etc. Throughout the course students will be required to think critically, communicate professionally, and take action on strategic recommendations based on research. Learning materials and methods include textbook readings, assigned readings, client meetings, professional writing, meeting firm deadlines, and making presentations.

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Conduct professional meetings with consulting clients to both determine their needs and communicate recommendations
- Apply business skills acquired throughout courses to assist small businesses/organizations (clients) in the community and region
- Research the history of a business and the trends/dynamics occurring in the industry
- Demonstrate an understanding of the steps necessary to develop and facilitate a consulting project plan
- Exhibit clear use of the group collaborative process in decision making and project execution
- Recognize and conceptualize a complex issue into a clearly written, thoughtful summary
- Demonstrate an understanding of the organization’s impact on the community and region
- Make a professional, well-articulated summary presentation to the client

Bottom Line: The experience gained in this type of “hands on” course will greatly assist you in project management, consulting, or starting or joining a small or family business. Use these opportunities to hone your management skills, learn how to complete a consulting project, improve your resume, and strengthen the quality of your interviews to come!

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Text

Cook, R.G., Belliveau, P., & Campbell, D.K. (2012). The Experiential Student Team Consulting Process: A Problem-Based Model for Consulting and Service-Learning, 4th edition.

ISBN-13: 978-1-28-511542-9

Software

Students will need access to a computer outside of the classroom, as well as access to Microsoft Office.

Blackboard

I will be using Blackboard extensively for posting class materials, important/helpful links, and disseminating important information about the course. Please be sure to check the ENT 496 site every 24 hours for updated announcements or messages to the class. In order to receive messages and announcements, you will want to ensure the email address you have registered with Blackboard is one that you check daily.

Small Business Institute® Membership

It is strongly encouraged that all students in this course become a member of the national Small Business Institute®. Membership is available through the national SBI website; the cost is \$10 per year or \$15 for 2 years. The membership link is as follows: <http://www.smallbusinessinstitute.biz/Student-Membership>

GRADING

Performance in the course is evaluated on the following items. Descriptions, deadlines, guidelines, requirements, and submission details are available via Blackboard for each item considered in course performance appraisal.

Performance Evaluation Procedures

Item	Points Possible
Student Info Form, Waiver, Preferences	10
Base Level Individual Case Analysis	75
Progress Reports and Time Sheets	45 (3 @ 15 Points each)
Journal Assignments	45 (3 @ 15 Points each)
Letter of Engagement**	50
Project Outline**	5
Drafts and Final Report**	200
Practice and Final Presentation**	120
TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	550

** Team Project Component. All team-based points subject to peer evaluation

Grading in the course is based on a total points system. Your grade is determined by your (and your team's) performance at various stages of the consulting process. Simply meeting the course requirements, however, does not guarantee you an "A" in the course. You (and your team) must produce truly excellent work in order to earn an "A." No incompletes are given in this course.

If you require a certain grade in the course to achieve a particular goal (i.e., maintain your 4.0 GPA, graduate, avoid your parents' wrath), then you will need to work to ensure that your performance in the course is adequate to meet that goal. Please do not approach me for "extra credit" or additional opportunities to improve your grade. Keep in mind that to be fair to all students, I cannot offer one student an opportunity that I cannot or am unwilling to provide to the rest of the class.

To determine your percentage score, you will take the total points earned divided by the total points possible.

90+%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
Below 60%	F

As a business student, you have many wonderful experiences and a pool of knowledge to draw from in your careers. This course will allow you the opportunity to synthesize and integrate the information across your business courses to undertake a small business consulting project. These are intensive, semester-long projects that require dedication, critical thinking, professionalism, and teamwork; however, this is a win-win project. You get real-world experience and class credit for completing the project, while the business owner gets an in-depth analysis of some key components of his/her business. We will also work to make the project as manageable as possible by providing timely progress reports and taking a project management approach to organizing completion of the consulting project.

I will assign your teams of **4 to 5** students, as well as the business each team will be working with at the beginning of class on **2/1**. You will be expected to assign duties within the group during the 2/1 class period and work to make contact with the client during this week.

In the sections to follow, you will find guidelines and requirements for the letter of engagement, project, outline, draft and final consulting documents, and draft and final presentations. Peer evaluations are due periodically, according to the course outline. Please see the Peer Evaluation documents on Blackboard in order to conduct these evaluations appropriately. **All individual grades related to the team project assignments outlined in this document are subject to peer evaluation.**

Keep in mind that ALL assignments will be graded on thoughtfulness, quality, and value provided. The top student team final consulting project (based on the project and presentation) will be awarded a monetary prize and their project will be forwarded to the national Small Business Institute® Project of the Year competition.

Student Info Form, Waiver, and Project Preferences (5 points)

The first step in the semester is to submit your student information sheet, project preference rankings, and waiver by the end of class on 1/27. Submitting these items on time is worth 5 points. In order to move forward with the class, these documents must be submitted by each student.

Base Level Individual Case Analysis (75 points)

You will be provided a case on TOMS Shoes at the beginning of the semester, and are expected to complete an analysis based on the case prompt and supplemental materials by 1/30 at the beginning of class. This assists me in examining your analysis and writing skills, with feedback that may assist you as you work on the team project.

Progress Reports (45 points)

Each team will be required to submit three progress reports following the form provided on Bb. Each progress report deadline will precede team meetings with Dr. Peake to assess progress on the project. Information required includes any work completed up to the time of the report, including client meetings and interviews, any sources used in research conducted by the team, problem areas, as well as individual work reports. You are also required to regularly update your team's time sheet, and submit it with these progress reports. These documents will be assessed on thoroughness and quality.

Journal Assignments (75 points)

Journal assignments are completed individually by each student, and are designed to assess your knowledge at the time of completion. You should not use your textbook or any additional resources when completing the journal assignments. Each journal assignment varies in length and time requirement; however, these requirements are stipulated in the assignment instructions on Bb. Please keep in mind that these assignments are graded on quality and thoughtfulness.

Letter of Engagement (50 points)

The letter of engagement serves as a contract between you and the client about the objectives, approach (scope), and deliverables for the project. The letter of engagement clearly identifies what the team will do, why the team will do this, and the point at which particular items will be completed. Remember, the LOE is a negotiable document. Please adhere to the following deadlines for the LOE.

- LOE draft due to the instructor **2/19** via Bb by 11:59 PM
- Deliver Letter of Engagement to Client by **3/1** (this may include revisions made by the client)
- Return signed Final Letter of Engagement to Dr. Peake via Blackboard **3/5** by 11:59 PM

The LOE should be structured with the following sections, written as a professional memo to the client (see example on page 62 of text).

- Brief Greeting
- Background
- Project Objectives
- Approach
- Client Deliverables
- Scope/Responsibilities
- Project Budget (note that no expenses are expected)
- Project Schedule
- Agreement and signatures

Project Outline (5 points)

The project outline should indicate each section that will be present in your final consulting document (in order), and will serve as your table of contents. By each section, please note the status of the section, who completed (or will complete) the section, and the deadline for doing so.

The Project Outline is due to Bb **3/5 by 11:59 PM**. Please note that page numbers are not necessary at this time.

Draft and Final Reports (200 points)

There are two drafts for your consulting document due during the course of the semester. The **first draft (25 points)** is due **3/23 by 4:00 PM**, and the **second draft (100 points)** is due **4/13 by 4:00 PM**. I will review your drafts and return them to you. Your team will be required to edit the document and incorporate requested suggestions, so your final copy may be as polished and professional as possible.

Please format the first draft according to the guidelines below, so you have a more accurate picture of how the project is shaping up at each stage. Keep in mind that your drafts will be graded on quality, including grammar and sentence structure.

The FIRST DRAFT must present the following sections in full and content related to basic ideas for sections noted with an asterisk (*):

- Business Description/Company History
 - o Firm Analysis
 - o Industry Analysis
 - o SWOT Analysis
- Owner Objectives
- Problems/Concerns
- Strategic Business Recommendations*

The final consulting report (75 points), Peer Evaluations and completed Activity Logs are due by 5/3 at the end of class.

The **second draft and final consulting documents** must follow these basic guidelines:

- Your draft must be complete and secured with a binder clip.
- You must submit two copies (one for me, one for the client) of your **final**, professionally bound consulting report
- The entire report may be no more than 100 pages all-inclusive (each page, including title, appendices, etc. count toward the limit)
- 12-point font for report text (Times new Roman)
- 1-inch margins
- Double-spaced (2.0) report text
- Each page must be numbered consecutively and match the Table of Contents

The overall consulting document adhering to these guidelines is to be divided into the following **5 sections**, along with an executive summary (no more than 2 pages). Keep in mind that cover page and

appendices are in addition to these sections and should support the information in the sections described.

I. History (approximately 10-15 pages in length)

In this section, the objective of the student team is to analyze the history of the client, as well as conduct an industry analysis. It is imperative that the student team performs a comprehensive examination in order to uncover trends, issues, and other relevant information that will help you better identify the client's real problems. It is recommended that this section be divided into three parts: (1) Analysis of the Firm, (2) Analysis of the Industry, and (3) SWOT Analysis.

II. Statement of the Owner's Objectives (approximately 1-2 pages in length)

In this section, the student team will identify the owner's short-term and long-term objectives. The key here is to identify the objectives of the owner, not the objectives of the student team. If the client does not have objectives, this can be viewed as a potential problem. If the owner does not have objectives, it is the responsibility of the student team to help the owner establish good strong objectives (short-term and long-term).

III. Problems (approximately 1-2 pages in length)

In this section, the student team will identify the client's true problems. The student team should work with the client to uncover the most critical problems facing that particular business. Be careful that you identify problems, NOT SYMPTOMS! Generally speaking, the student team will work on 2-4 problems during the semester (or sometimes one major problem). Most problems have many smaller parts that also need to be addressed.

IV. Recommendations (approximately 30-35+ pages in length)

In this section, the student team will offer comprehensive recommendations to the clients. All recommendations are to be thorough and complete. For example, if the student team identifies that one of the client's problems is the lack of a marketing plan, the student team will actually create a marketing plan for the client. The real objective here is to provide the client with a report they can use to help them make better decisions that benefit their business. In addition to the explanation of the recommendations, all costs associated with each recommendation should be discussed as well as how to properly implement it to make it work. **THIS SECTION IS THE HEART OF THE CONSULTING DOCUMENT!**

V. Conclusions and Comments (approximately 1 page in length)

In this section, the student team summarizes the recommendations and thanks the clients for providing this learning opportunity.

Practice and Final Presentations (120 points)

You will have 20 minutes to present your information to the client with **no more than 15** PowerPoint slides, including the cover and conclusion slides. At least 3 members of the group must present to the client, although all members of the team must be present (in professional dress) and stand with the team during the presentation. The business owner(s) and key stakeholders for the Department and Gordon Ford College of Business will attend the final presentations, so your presentations should be well-rehearsed and entirely professional. You will have the opportunity to practice your presentations,

with extensive and constructive feedback prior to giving your final presentation to the client and stakeholders.

The **practice presentations (20 points)** will be held **4/24 and 4/26** and should mirror exactly how you plan to make your final presentation. All students are required to attend both practice presentation sessions to provide feedback to the team presenting. The final presentations to clients and stakeholders will be held **5/1 and 5/3**.

The **final presentation (100 points)** should include the items outlined below. Keep in mind that the slide recommendations are simply guides and not hard-and-fast rules, although they are intended to help you maintain focus on the most important aspects; however, the **15 slide overall limit** will be strictly enforced.

- Introduction of Consulting Group and Business Owner (1 slide)
- Analysis of the Firm, Analysis of the Industry, and SWOT Analysis (3 slides)
- Owner's Objectives (1 slide)
- Problems (1 to 2 slides)
- Recommendations (4 to 5 slides)
- Conclusions (1 slide)
- Thank you and questions (1 slide)

COURSE CONDUCT AND POLICIES

For this course to work in the way that it is most effective, the class must build and maintain a climate of respect, trust, and professionalism:

- **Attendance:** Students with unexcused absences (meaning the absence was not approved prior to the class period in which the absence occurred) will **lose one letter grade** for each incident. This is a professional environment and attendance is absolutely essential.
- **Travel:** The student team must **travel** together to visit the client (at least one on-site visit and two additional face-to-face visits) a minimum of **4** times, and must make **6** total documented contacts. It is expected that all Kentucky driving laws will be adhered to while traveling on SBI-related business. **WKU and the SBI® accept no responsibility for violations of these laws.** Each student participating in the course must complete and submit the WKU Release and Waiver of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement posted to Blackboard.
- **Professionalism:** All students are expected to work within a professional environment. This relates to both attitude and performance. You are expected to be able to work independently and with a team, as you would in a professional work environment. All work is expected to be of high quality and submitted on-time.
- **Confidentiality:** The teams will only discuss SBI business within the confines of their group. The strictest level of confidentiality is expected. **A breach in confidentiality will lead to an automatic "F," as well as any repercussions that evolve from the university and/or the client.**
- **Late Policy:** No late assignments or projects will be accepted under any circumstances.

- **Sundown Rule:** You have one week from the time grades are posted on Bb to inquire about a specific grade.
- **Changes to the Syllabus:** The instructor reserves the right to make modifications to the syllabus, tentative course outline, etc., if needed. Students will be provided no less than one week notification of any changes if at all possible.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. The term “cheating” includes, but is not limited to (1) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (2) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; or (3) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty member or staff of the university.

The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

Please note that plagiarism includes using the words of a source too closely, even when it is cited in the paper (without quotations). You are responsible for ensuring that any submitted material is free from plagiarism.

If you or the student team engage(s) in **any manner of academic dishonesty for this course, a failing grade will be given on the assignment, and depending on the severity, the individual or team may receive a failing grade in the course.** Additionally, your case will be referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs for appropriate disciplinary action.

STUDENT DISABILITY SERVICES

In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services in DUC A-200 of the Student Success Center in the Downing University Center. The phone number is 745-5004. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.