

SYLLABUS
MBA 595 E2
Marketing Strategy for Competitive Advantage
Summer 1, 2015

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- Cases & Readings:**
- Larréché, Jean-Claude, Hubert Gatignon, and Rémi Triolet (2010), *Markstrat by StratX: Participant Handbook*, Woburn, MA: StratX. (Provided by StratX once you register. Registration instructions found on Moodle.)
 - Other assigned readings are to be found on eReserve in Moodle. Supplemental readings are also there, should you wish to have access to background reading on various marketing principles.
 - Should you wish to be able to reference an integrated text on marketing principles as a resource for background reading, I would suggest any available standard text on the principles of marketing or marketing management.

Overview

This course provides a strategic and tactical overview of contemporary marketing practice, with emphasis on competitive strategy and positioning. We will review marketing issues with respect to target segmentation and consumer decision making, the design of products that meet consumer needs, pricing, channels of distribution, and marketing communication.

Grading Summary	
Markstrat presentation	80%
Markstrat ranking by final period stock price index	20%
TOTAL	100%

Grade Scale			
93-100	A	73-76.9	C
90-92.9	A-	70-72.9	C-
87-89.9	B+	67-69.9	D+
83-86.9	B	63-66.9	D
80-82.9	B-	60-62.9	D-
77-79.9	C+	Below 60	F

Readings

Please obtain and prepare assigned readings prior to class discussion. Assigned readings are from the Markstrat Participant Handbook (MPH) and eReserve in Moodle. eReserve readings are arranged in alphabetical order by title (titles in parentheses in the reading list). Additional readings may be posted during the term.

Markstrat/Functional Marketing Games Overview

"Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterwards."

Vernon Law, former major league baseball pitcher

You will be taking part in a computer simulated competitive marketing strategy game this term. The details of the game and how it is played will be addressed in class and in the associated reading. Briefly stated here, Markstrat simulates manufacturing industries making Sonites and Vodites, consisting of four to six firms in an industry (six teams in this instance), with a student team acting as each firm's marketing department. The market consists of five [consumer] segments served by three channels of distribution. Student teams must allocate funds to various activities including advertising, product development, and marketing research. They also must make decisions regarding the sales force, its apportionment across three channels, price, and production order quantities. Teams are given the objective of maximizing net contribution to profits. Early in the term, students will form themselves into individual firms. There will also be a class or two early on devoted to getting the game started, and explaining the details of the exercise. Check the following class schedule for the date(s).

More broadly stated, Markstrat is a form of in- and out-of-class experiential learning exercise in the Elon pedagogical tradition. As its name suggests, it will be a learning experience rather than a directed exercise, conducted largely by the firms themselves without the constant oversight and guidance of the professor. In other words, you will learn by doing, not by my telling you. Hamer (2000, p. 27) describes computer simulations as a form of loosely structured experiential activity because they are relatively broad in scope, relatively long in completion time, and relatively uncontrolled. Hamer (2000, p. 27) goes on to list those complex activities, as follows:

- students are faced with unstructured, ambiguous situations;
- a great deal of student learning may take place outside of class and away from the instructor;
- students must deeply process course materials and creatively apply those materials to the situation; and
- Students have a great deal of control over what they learn from the activities and the process through which they learn.

The efficacy of computer-based learning tools may be particularly pronounced for marketing education, where there is a performance aspect to a mastery of the subject.

Marketing students must not only acquire a knowledge of the fundamental principles of sound marketing practice, but also realize the implications of having to integrate and apply those principles in a highly complex, dynamic and competitive environment; which they must confront with only partial information and an awareness of the need to act. Simulated marketing strategy games are highly valuable because they realistically portray such challenging environments and circumstances in the classroom. Students can first experience the vagaries of actual marketing practice in a relatively fail-safe context and begin to develop the broad insights and coping skills that actual marketing practice requires.

As one may surmise from the above description, this exercise imposes demands upon students that they may not have encountered in a formal classroom setting. The relative lack of structure of the game, its uncertainties and its competitive aspects provide for the real chance for failure, a prospect that students may find unsettling. But, there is a great deal to be learned from participation in the game, and experiencing the conditions that it imposes, and learning how to cope with them in the relatively failsafe conditions of the classroom, before they are experienced in actual business conditions. Therefore, be prepared to be challenged, but also be prepared to have fun! The game is a powerful learning experience that most students come to both value and enjoy!

Reference

Hamer, Lawrence O. (2000), "The Additive Effects of Semistructured Classroom Activities on Student Learning: An Application of Classroom-Based Experiential Learning Techniques," *Journal of Marketing Education*, 22 (April), 25-34.

Markstrat Deliverables

Decisions. Each individual in the class is to be assigned to an industry and a firm. Each firm is responsible for formulating and delivering 9 sets of marketing decisions prior to a set deadline to be agreed upon by the class. Basically, this means that there is a decision due during each of the final nine weeks of the course.

It is crucial that each team adhere strictly to the deadlines that are set. The game cannot be run until all are in hand. If run late, then each team will have a shorter interval in which to formulate the next period's decision set.

Presentation. Your firm will make a final presentation during the last class. You are to tell the story of the game from your perspective, covering how your strategy evolved over the course of the game, indicating weak aspects as well as strong points, what you would do to correct the former, providing reasons for your final ranking, how you would proceed if the game were to continue. The primary audience is your competition, and your objective is to help them flesh out their game experience by providing the game experience from your perspective.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Lecture Topics and Associated Readings, Key Dates, Due Dates

Assigned readings are from the Markstrat Participant Handbook (MPH), eReserve in Moodle, or are stand-alone HBS cases and articles. eReserve readings are arranged in alphabetical order by title (titles in parentheses in the reading list). Additional readings may be posted during the term.

#	Day	Date	Topic	Assignments
1	Mo	6/1	Course Introduction. Markstrat Introduction #1	Reading: Markstrat Participant Handbook, p. 1-35.
2	Th	6/4	Market Segmentation, Positioning.	Reading: Borden, "The Concept of the Marketing Mix;" Kotler & Armstrong, "Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning: Building the right Relationships with the Right Customers." Markstrat: Decision 1 due.
3	Mo	6/8	Markstrat Introduction #2	Reading: Markstrat Participant Handbook, p. 36-71. Markstrat: Decision 2 due.
4	We	6/11		Markstrat: Decision 3 due.
5	Mo	6/15		Markstrat: Decision 4 due.
6	Th	6/18		Markstrat: Decision 5 due.
7	Mo	6/22		Markstrat: Decision 6 due.
8	Th	6/25		Markstrat: Decision 7 due.
9	Mo	6/29		Markstrat: Decision 8 due.
10	Th.	7/2	Markstrat Presentations	

NOTE: class days in red are adjustments to the MBA Summer 1 calendar.