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MBA 603.01: Integrated Project Management

Clyde W. Neu

University of Montana - Missoula

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INTEGRATED PROJECT ASSIGNMENT MBA 603 – SPRING 2007

One goal of MBA 602 last fall was to provide students with an “integration experience,” (i.e., an opportunity to learn how the various functional disciplines of business are integrated within a company). By their very nature, the development of **business strategy** and the design and development of **information systems** addresses several key functional areas of business. Thus, a careful analysis of a company’s business strategy and its information systems approach will help reveal the ways in which a company might gain (or might fail to gain) a **sustainable competitive advantage** in the marketplace.

At the conclusion of MBA 602, each of you selected an industry within which you would concentrate your research in order to analyze the competitive structure and nature of the industry. In addition, you were to select a specific company to research further. Your assignment in MBA 603 is to write a paper on a company’s successful or failed attempt at establishing such a sustainable competitive advantage, paying particular attention to the role that business strategy and information systems played in the outcome. The company you select should be public (or should be one with which you have access to the necessary information) so that you can readily assess both the elements of strategy and the integration of IT to support strategy.

Your Integrated Project in MBA 603 should focus around three areas of research: (1) an industry analysis, (2) a competitor analysis, and (3) a specific company analysis. This will be the order in which you must write your paper in this class; you must start with an assessment of the industry (sufficient in scope for the reader to understand how your chosen company is positioned in the industry), then a discussion of the principal competitors (again, sufficient in scope for the reader to understand how your company is different from competitors in the industry), and finish with a discussion of the company you have chosen.

The three industries assigned last semester were: (1) the pharmaceutical industry, (2) the automobile industry, and (3) the energy industry. These are industries today where winners and losers are likely to be sorted out based on how well specific competitors structure and implement their business strategies and leverage their IT infrastructure in the process. Some of you have been authorized to use the company you work for or in conjunction with as the topic of your paper.

A document titled **Integrated Project Analysis** will be found in the Course Materials section of Blackboard for this course. This document was posted last semester in MBA 602 as an example of an approach to analyze a company and its industry that integrates the various strategic models covered in class. Netflix was used as an illustration. At the end of the semester, an Integrated Project paper was turned in for Netflix by a student who graduated in December. This paper has been edited and posted to Blackboard in the Course Materials section as a **Sample Paper**.

Your final paper should be no longer than 30 pages in length with space and one-half used within paragraphs and double spacing between. Exhibits are strongly encouraged as contained in the Sample Paper and endnotes or footnotes are **mandatory** (i.e., direct quotes must be footnoted and must allow the reader to readily locate any source listed). You may include Exhibits as Appendices if not integrated within the paper. Your paper must be submitted by e-mail and must be sent to either Dr. Neu & Dr. Evans as directed.

You may work on this project with your classmates who have selected the same industry as you have. However, the final written paper must represent your own ***individual work*** as this project takes the place of the former Exit Examination given by the business school to each student graduating from the MBA program. In all likelihood, no two of you will see the situation exactly the same anyway, and the cross-fertilization of ideas coming out of a discussion between two or more persons working to analyze an industry and the various competitors in that industry will benefit all that participate. You are encouraged to share articles with each other via the e-mail feature in Blackboard.

There will be no scheduled classes during the first five weeks of the term for this class. Rather, the instructors will be available for consultation on this assignment and will correspond with you via the Internet. Papers are due on or before Monday, February 26. No late papers will be accepted.

As directed by the Provost in January 2006, the following paragraph has been required to be inserted in all syllabus material commencing Spring Semester 2006:

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. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>.