School of Engineering and Applied Science

SE1500 Introduction to Business Management

Semester One 2008/9

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INTRODUCTION

In the future it is likely that most, if not all, of you will be members of business organisations, either as managers, employees, or consultants and so, some basic understanding of business organisations, their environment, their strategy and operations, and their structure and culture, is crucial to your chosen profession as engineers, regardless of which area you choose to specialise in. This module is designed to introduce engineering students to the fundamental principles of business management and, in particular, those of pivotal relevance to the engineering profession, such as understanding the business environment, product development and innovation, operations and materials management, and project management.

TEACHING AND LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

I am a dedicated advocate of **active learning**, which is to say that I do not profess to know everything there is to know about business management, will not have time to go over every single detail of business management, and expect that you will **actively engage** with the subject matter before and during the sessions. You are all very different learners and you all have a host of very different experience/skills/knowledge. My role is to act as a 'guide' through the maze that is business management, so ideally you will be learning some things from us, some things from the text, and some things from each other as you engage in debate and share ideas/experiences/thoughts. A crucial part of active, self-directed learning is online participation via **WebCT™,** software specially designed for such learning. **I will also primarily utilise WebCT™ to email you, so please ensure you check your Aston email accounts regularly.**

MODULE OBJECTIVES

As noted above, this unit is designed to introduce engineering students to the core elements of business management in order to allow them to make sense of or analyse the business environment and make appropriate strategic decisions. In this context, the emphasis throughout is on being *analytical* rather than being descriptive and trying to 'pigeon-hole' problems into pre-defined boxes. Specifically, upon successful completion of this module, I'd expect students to:

Knowledge

- Understand Business Management and Why You Need to Study it
- Understand Entrepreneurs, Managers and Employees
- Understand Multinationals and the Global Business Environment
- Understand the Ethical and Legal Environment of Business
- Understand Leadership and Motivation, and Organisational Structure and Culture
- Understand Product Development and Innovation
- Understand Sales, Marketing and Customer Relationship Management
- Understand Operations, Materials, and Project Management

Skills

- to think critically and analytically
- to use qualitative and quantitative data to assess the business environment and strategic options
- to integrate theory and practice
- to take responsibility for their own learning through application of models/frameworks to concrete situations

PRESCRIBED TEXTBOOK

Jones, G. (2007) *Introduction to Business: How Companies Create Value for People*. McGraw Hill, New York.

ASSESSMENT: A group-based report accounting for 100 percent of the total assessment

You are required to pick a business organisation you have a good understanding of, gather further information as required, and prepare a report based on the group's analysis. You are required to:

- Identify a range of theories and concepts that might be relevant to the company and apply these in order to assess the situation the company is in and to identify issues, problems and challenges.
- Use knowledge and understanding gained from the module, from your analysis of the company, and from independent research, to generate a list of potential recommendations or courses of action.
- Select an alternative and justify your choice, making clear any assumptions you have made.

*Basic issues to be addressed **MIGHT** include (in no particular order):*

- Brief **overview** of the company: what does it do? Where is it?
- The **international, regional, industrial environment** in which the company operates
- Is the company a **multinational**? HOW/WHY?
- Research and Development, technological **innovation**, production processes/techniques: is the company **entrepreneurial**? HOW/WHY?
- **Leadership and motivation**: what type of **managers** does the company have? Are **employees** motivated? HOW/WHY?
- **Structure and Culture**; how is the company structured/designed? What is the culture like? HOW/WHY does this relate to leadership and motivation issues above?
- How does it **market** its goods/services? Does it **advertise**? How does it manage its relationship with consumers?
- How does it manage its **operations**? How does it manage its **supply chain**?
- Does the company have a **competitive advantage**? HOW/WHY?
- If yes, is this advantage **sustainable**? HOW/WHY?
- What do you **recommend** it do to survive in the future?

The purpose of the assignment is to enable students to:

- undertake independent research
- learn the principles of teamwork
- apply topics from the module
- communicate the findings of a formal piece of work and meet a deadline and
- enhance written communication skills

Assessment criteria:

- ability to interpret and analyse the company's situation
- ability to develop and apply conceptual frameworks to analyse the company
- thoroughness of research undertaken, extent of reading, collection of relevant data, etc.
- ability to logically arrange and present the materials
- ability to analyse source material and draw valid conclusions to support arguments etc.
- full acknowledgment of sources consulted, references used etc. including the bibliography
- presentation to an acceptable standard

Assignment length: Approximately 3000 words. Appendices should only be used where appropriate and not to circumvent the word limit.

Notes:
No primary data (interviews, participant observation, survey questionnaires) should be collected for this assignment.
No individual assignments will be accepted, only team work projects as assigned from the UG office will be marked.

Due date: Friday 19th December by 4pm, to the ESM (Engineering Systems & Management) Office, MB138.

All groups are required to submit a peer review sheet and a GroupWork Management Diary.

Records of meetings/group work should be kept in your Groupwork Management Diary (which is not assessed), to allow a full evaluation of individual contribution. By doing this, individuals who consistently miss group meetings or fail to deliver on agreed objectives can be highlighted in the Groupwork Management Diary and also, through the Peer Review Sheet.

Poorly performing individuals who have no extenuating circumstances may be allocated less than 100% of the final group mark. For example: The overall group mark is 50% however one member of the group has hardly contributed any written work and not attended any group meetings. This person is allocated a 20% contribution assessment by the group hence their course mark for the assignment section of this course would be 20% of the 50% mark received i.e.10%

PEER REVIEW SHEET

PLEASE FILL IN THIS FORM AND ATTACH TO YOUR GROUP REPORT

STUDENT CANDIDATE NO:	% *	STUDENT CANDIDATE NO:	% *
_____	____	_____	____
_____	____	_____	____
_____	____	_____	____
_____	____	_____	____

☐ **All group members contributed equally (please tick)**

Date: ____ / __ / _____

Signatures: _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

* Where a group member's contribution has been assigned as less than 100%, the Groupwork Management Diary will be consulted. If it is clear that the individual has not contributed to clear and well defined standards of group performance / attendance then their mark will be adjusted in-line with the percentage from the Peer Review Sheet.

Alternatively, if each group member has contributed equally, then the relevant box can be ticked and all group members will receive the full mark for the assignment. All group members must sign the form. The assignment will be counted as late until this form is submitted.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF LECTURES

DATE	SESSION
7 October	1. Introduction and Overview: What is Business?
14 October	2. Guest Lecture # 1: Why Engineers Should Study Business
21 October	3. Entrepreneurs, Managers, and Employees
28 October	4. Multinationals and the Global Business Environment
4 November	5. Business Ethics and the Legal Environment
11 November	6. Leadership & Motivation
18 November	7. Guest Lecture # 2: Essay Writing & Referencing
25 November	8. Organisational Structure and Culture
2 December	9. Sales, Marketing, and CRM
9 December	10. Operations and Materials Management
16 December	11. Guest Lecture # 3: Project Management

MODULE READING GUIDE

1. Introduction and Overview: What is Business?

Reading: Text Ch 1

2. Guest Lecture

3. Entrepreneurs, Managers, and Employees

Reading: Text Ch 3, up to p. 84.

4. Multinationals and the Global Business Environment

Reading: Text Ch 4

5. Business Ethics and the Legal Environment

Reading: Text Ch 5

6. Leadership & Motivation

Reading: Text Ch's 6 & 7

7. Guest Lecture

8. Organisational Structure and Culture

Reading: Text Ch 8

9. Sales, Marketing, and CRM

Reading: Text Ch's 10 & 11

10. Operations and Materials Management

Reading: Text Ch 12

11. Guest Lecture

Dr Kyle Bruce, July 2008