

**44285—Group Project and Presentation
Assignment Information
Instructor: Berardi**

Overview

Integrated Business Policy and Strategy (M&IS 44285) is the capstone business course. As a result, this course project will likely be the most comprehensive investigation of your collegiate career. I hope that you find it as challenging and rewarding of an experience as it is intended to be.

Student groups (approximately 4 to 5 students per group) will investigate strategic considerations of a major industry and an organization within that industry as a semester-long project designed to parallel classroom topics. It will be necessary for students to perform outside research to fully investigate the dynamics of the specified industry. However, structure is provided by utilizing *S&P Industry Surveys* available from the library on-line (campus computers) and other library, Internet, and outside sources.

Students are charged with generating a written analysis worth 21 percent of the final grade. A formal presentation utilizing PowerPoint or a similar presentation tool is worth another 7 percent. To ensure that group projects progress in a timely fashion, two preliminary reports worth a combined 6 percent of the final course grade are required. Overall, this means the group project and presentation is worth 34 percent of the final course grade.

In preparing your case/industry analysis you are obliged to offer supporting evidence for your views and judgments. Do not rely upon unsupported opinions, over-generalizations, and platitudes as a substitute for tight, logical arguments backed up with facts and figures. If your analysis involves quantitative calculations, then use tables and charts to prove your point. Do not just tack exhibits on the end of the report and leave it to one to figure out why they are there. You should indicate your knowledge of the economics of business and factors of success in the industry of interest, though this is not to be an exercise in financial analysis. Finally, your evidence should be reasonable and objective. Be wary of one-sided arguments. Likewise, try not to exaggerate or over-dramatize. Strive to display good business judgment, and most of all, make sure your plan of action is operational and solves the problem you have identified. Do not make the most common mistake new graduates make, "Doing the wrong work right."

Peer evaluations will be used as part of the grading process for project and presentation grades. Peer evaluations will be performed after the first preliminary project and at the end of the semester when the final project and presentation are due (concentrating on the final part of the semester but including consideration of the entire timeframe). Peer evaluations may affect up to 50% of the student's grade on group assignments. While it is recognized that contributions may vary in intensity at different times of the semester, it is up to each student and group to ensure that comparable contributions are made over the given timeframe. *Charity is for deserving non-profit organizations not for group members who fail to contribute. To avoid surprises, discuss equity of activities and assignments early and often.* The instructor will communicate to individuals any impact that instructor and peer evaluations have on their grade using information aggregated at the group level rather than individual analysis. Individual peer evaluations will remain confidential.

Semester Project Introduction

Below is a structure your group can (or should) use for your analysis. It follows the course material and should facilitate gradual completion over the semester. Staying current with your project is important as you may be called on to discuss classroom topics in the context of your industry.

As a general guide, your group should select an industry first (only one group per industry, to be determined in class). This industry will most likely correspond to one covered in the S&P Industry Surveys, which can be found on the library website at <http://www.stark.kent.edu/library/ref/subjects/bus.htm> from campus computers along with several other on-line sources.

After the industries have been allocated, groups will select a specific company as their case study. The instructor will assign companies in conjunction with group consultation. Prior to this, groups should gather additional information on 2 or 3 companies and be prepared to convince the instructor that your identified company should be selected. Note: company specific information can be obtained via some of the sources noted above but the *Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week*, *Forbes*, annual reports, company websites, etc. also will be required. Company specific information is critical to the success of this project and is not found in great detail in the Industry Surveys. Be forewarned; begin gathering this data for several industry players immediately after your industry is determined as obtaining appropriate company specific information is perhaps the greatest area of concern.

Project sources are to be documented appropriately using APA Style. You are strongly encouraged to be diligent about documenting sources from the beginning of your work. After the fact documentation is time consuming and fraught with errors. The APA handout can be downloaded from the Writing Center at <http://www.stark.kent.edu/writing/apaformat.htm>

The Writing Center (2nd Floor, Main Hall and <http://www.stark.kent.edu/writing/>) has many useful handouts. They can assist you with questions and provide useful feedback.

Semester Project Analysis Structure

This section contains some information to help you structure your written report and in-class presentation. Note that it follows the course sequence while requiring creative problem identification and problem solving.

- **Introduction/statement of problem**—set the stage by describing relevant characteristics of the industry and targeted company, (e.g. industry, vision, mission, objectives and goals, strategy level, stage of life cycle, competitive portfolio, etc.). Next, clearly state the focal problem of your study and the causes and effects of that problem.
 - ✓ *This section is meant to overview what is to come. Set the stage but do not attempt to explain issues in detail. Finding the right balance in an introduction is often difficult to achieve.*
 - ✓ *The primary source of information for this section will be based upon the S&P Industry Surveys with supplementation from additional sources. Note some of this will need to wait until after your company for investigation has been identified.*
 - ✓ *Annual reports from major industry players can be helpful.*
 - ✓ *Your group will have to propose/identify a problem facing your targeted company based upon the culmination of your research. This probably cannot be accomplished until you are well involved in the project via the external and internal analyses.*

- **Conduct an external environmental analysis (remote, industry, operating etc., a Porter's analysis, industry and competitive analysis, and a financial analysis)**—these techniques are helpful in identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for your focus company. Every industry has a personality; that is, every industry is made up of characteristics that distinguish it from other industries. A careful analysis will include a definition of the industry, discussion of industry structure and boundaries, a discussion of key competitors, past and present growth rates, industry concentration, volatility, the importance of innovation, stage in the life cycle, level and type of government intervention, key buyers and sellers of industry products/services, important pressure groups such as environmentalists or labor unions, current problems and opportunities, and the expected future direction of the industry.
 - ✓ *External analysis is primarily found in chapter 2 of the textbook.*
 - ✓ *Some information regarding this section will be found in the Industry Surveys but will generally need significant supplementation from additional sources.*
 - ✓ *Some mention of competitiveness (chapter 5), business and corporate (grand) strategies (chapters 4 – 9) of the major players may be appropriate here.*
 - ✓ *Information from this section is often referred to in other sections such as SWOT.*
 - ✓ *Porter's analysis will play a key role in this report. Do not, however, ignore the others.*

- **Conduct an internal analysis via SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.** *Strengths* are the positive internal capabilities of the organization that gives it a strategic advantage in achieving its objectives. *Weaknesses* are the internal liabilities or limitations that the organization currently possesses that prevent it from effectively achieving its objectives. *Opportunities* are usually external factors that an organization can exploit to give it a strategic competitive advantage. *Threats* are external factors that have the potential of adversely affecting the organization's effectiveness and/or survival. The SWOT analysis helps locate problems associated with exploiting opportunities, protecting against threats, building on strengths and correcting weaknesses.
 - ✓ *This analysis cannot be completed until your case company has been identified. This section will require significant research in addition to the Industry Survey.*
 - ✓ *While SWOT Analysis is often sufficient for the project, as a group, consider what role, if any, the Resources, Capabilities, Core Competencies, Functional Approach or Value Chain Analysis should play.*
 - ✓ *Use information from external environmental analysis to support/justify your reasoning.*
 - ✓ *The SWOT Analysis Diagram is often a good tool for summarizing your findings and setting the stage for strategic alternative section.*
 - ✓ *Introduction of the long-term objectives, business and corporate (grand) strategies (Chapters 4 – 9) of your targeted company might be appropriate here.*
 - ✓ *These analyses will feedback into the Introduction/Statement of Problem section.*

- **Generate strategic alternatives**—possible solutions to the problem you have stated. In almost all situations, the “do nothing” option is available but may be quite unattractive.
 - ✓ *This section is the synthesis of all the previous data and information you have collected and organized into an understanding of the problem. This is certainly a high-level decision process that will test your group’s abilities. Generation of novel alternatives demonstrates due company and industry consideration and higher-level thinking skills that are appropriately rewarded.*
 - ✓ *Discussion of the long-term objectives, generic and grand strategies (Chapts. 4-9) of your targeted company would be appropriate here.*
 - ✓ *Grand Selection Matrix and Model of Grand Strategy Clusters are often useful decision tools.*
 - ✓ *The BCG Growth-Share Matrix, The Industry Attractiveness-Business Strength Matrix, and The Market Life Cycle -Competitive Strength Matrix might be useful.*

- **Evaluate alternatives**—Include the following three subsections:
 - ✓ *Evaluation criteria*—you should use the same criteria to evaluate each alternative. (You want to compare apples with apples.) For example, what are the critical success factors for the organization in this industry and situation?
 - ✓ *Evaluation method*—A well-developed pro's versus con's analysis of the alternatives related to the criteria is generally sufficient here, although you may use a quantitative technique (e.g. payoff matrix) if you wish. Often this section will not be particularly lengthy but should make it easy for someone trying to quickly determine your evaluation method.
 - ✓ *Presentation and discussion of results*—here you should summarize results of your analysis of alternatives. (Summary tables are especially helpful for presentations.) How does each of your alternatives perform on the criteria you have specified using the method chosen?
 - ✓ *NOTE*—*Decision tools such as SWOT Analysis Diagram, Grand Selection Matrix and Model of Grand Strategy Cluster, The BCG Growth-Share Matrix, The Industry Attractiveness-Business Strength Matrix, and The Market Life Cycle-Competitive Strength Matrix might be utilized here instead of or in conjunction with other sections.*

- **Recommendations**—present your recommendations to solve the focal problem and discuss how it will address/alleviate the effects of the problem. This should include a discussion of the desired performance. In other words, what alternative do you recommend? Then focus on why your chosen alternative is the correct choice. You want to make it easy for decision makers to get to the “bottom line”. Decision makers interested in detail can then reference the previous sections as they see fit.

- **Suggested implementation plan**—discuss the impact of your recommendations on the firm's actions, structure, and processes. What should key managers do right now, one year from now, etc? How can chief executives know the plan is working?
 - ✓ *In general terms, what are some of the shorter-term objectives and functional tactics that might be appropriate? This refers primarily to Chapters 11 and 12.*
 - ✓ *If you are recommending a “turnaround”, A Model of the Turnaround Process might be useful to you.*

(Special thanks to M. Tehrani for some ideas, structure, and resources utilized within.)

Group Presentation (Paper) Grading Sheet

- **Introduction/statement of problem**
 - ✓ Set the stage
 - ✓ Vision, Mission, goals and objectives
 - ✓ Focal problem statement
 - ✓ Causes and effects (other problems and issues)
 - ✓ Presentation quality

- **External Analysis (Financial, Porter's, and industry analyses)**
 - ✓ Remote, Industry, Operating
 - ✓ Porter's analysis
 - ✓ Industry and competitiveness analysis
 - ✓ Financial analysis
 - ✓ Presentation quality

- **Internal Analysis (SWOT)**
 - ✓ Strengths
 - ✓ Weaknesses
 - ✓ Opportunities
 - ✓ Threats
 - ✓ Presentation quality

- **Alternative generation**
 - ✓ Clear indication of how each is a reasonable/feasible solution
 - ✓ Logical set of alternatives given the problem
 - ✓ Presentation quality

- **Alternative evaluation**
 - ✓ Evaluation criteria and method
 - ✓ Discussion of results
 - ✓ Presentation quality

- **Recommendation**
 - ✓ Reasonableness of recommendation
 - ✓ Clear indication of how each will address/alleviate problem
 - ✓ Desired performance outcomes
 - ✓ Presentation quality

- **Implementation**
 - ✓ Appropriate focus
 - ✓ Internal consistency
 - ✓ Clearly integrated with recommendation section
 - ✓ Appropriate time horizon
 - ✓ Presentation quality

- **Presentation (Paper) as a whole**
 - ✓ Consistency
 - ✓ Logical flow
 - ✓ Clarity of arguments
 - ✓ Style/mechanics
 - ✓ Professionalism

STANDARD AND POORS INDUSTRY SURVEY...INDUSTRIES

Browse All Industries

Advertising Jun 2004	HTML	PDF
Aerospace & Defense Apr 2004	HTML	PDF
Agribusiness Apr 2004	HTML	PDF
Airlines ***** May 2004	HTML	PDF
Alcoholic Beverages & Tobacco Sep 2004	HTML	PDF
Apparel & Footwear Mar 2004	HTML	PDF
Autos & Auto Parts ***** Jun 2004	HTML	PDF
Banking ***** Aug 2004	HTML	PDF
Biotechnology Jun 2004	HTML	PDF
Broadcasting & Cable May 2004	HTML	PDF
Chemicals: Basic Jul 2004	HTML	PDF
Chemicals: Specialty Oct 2003	HTML	PDF
Communications Equipment Jul 2004	HTML	PDF
Computers: Commercial Services Jul 2004	HTML	PDF
Computers: Consumer Services & the Internet Mar 2004	HTML	PDF
Computers: Hardware ***** Jun 2004	HTML	PDF
Computers: Networking Sep 2003	HTML	PDF
Computers: Software Apr 2004	HTML	PDF
Electric Utilities Aug 2004	HTML	PDF
Environmental & Waste Management Apr 2004	HTML	PDF
Financial Services: Diversified Jul 2004	HTML	PDF
Foods & Nonalcoholic Beverages Jun 2004	HTML	PDF
Healthcare: Facilities Mar 2004	HTML	PDF
Healthcare: Managed Care Apr 2004	HTML	PDF
Healthcare: Pharmaceuticals ***** Jun 2004	HTML	PDF
Healthcare: Products & Supplies Mar 2004	HTML	PDF
Heavy Equipment and Trucks Mar 2004	HTML	PDF

Homebuilding Aug 2004	HTML	PDF
Household Durables May 2004	HTML	PDF
Household Nondurables Jun 2004	HTML	PDF
Industrial Machinery Jul 2004	HTML	PDF
Insurance: Life & Health May 2004	HTML	PDF
Insurance: Property-Casualty Jul 2004	HTML	PDF
Investment Services ***** Jun 2004	HTML	PDF
Lodging & Gaming Aug 2004	HTML	PDF
Metals: Industrial Jul 2004	HTML	PDF
Metals: Precious Apr 2001	HTML	PDF
Movies & Home Entertainment Feb 2004	HTML	PDF
Natural Gas: Distribution May 2004	HTML	PDF
Oil & Gas: Equipment & Services Jan 2004	HTML	PDF
Oil & Gas: Production & Marketing Apr 2004	HTML	PDF
Paper & Forest Products Apr 2004	HTML	PDF
Publishing Feb 2004	HTML	PDF
Restaurants Apr 2004	HTML	PDF
Retailing: General ***** May 2004	HTML	PDF
Retailing: Specialty ***** Apr 2004	HTML	PDF
Savings & Loans Jun 2004	HTML	PDF
Semiconductor Equipment Feb 2004	HTML	PDF
Semiconductors Jul 2004	HTML	PDF
Supermarkets & Drugstores Jul 2004	HTML	PDF
Telecommunications: Wireless ***** May 2004	HTML	PDF
Telecommunications: Wireline ***** Aug 2004	HTML	PDF
Transportation: Commercial Aug 2004	HTML	PDF