



Teaching Conference for  
Management Educators

**OBTC 2017 at Providence College  
June 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

Submission Template

**SUBMISSION GUIDANCE**

*\* Remove all identifying properties from this document \**

*\* All files must be saved in PDF format \**

*\*Please include ALL supplementary text at the end of this document\* \*Only one document  
should be submitted\**

**Submission Template for the  
2016 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

*In your abstract, please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words), and three to four keywords. If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.*

**Title: Leveraging Controversy in the Classroom**

**Abstract:**

Industries laced in controversy can stimulate student engagement in the classroom. For example, studying cannabis companies in Strategic Management courses can be both relevant *and* engaging. They are relevant because competing in the cannabis industry requires the analysis and understanding of a wide range of organizational and environmental variables. Simultaneously, the controversial nature of the industry is interesting by virtue of it being a “changing current” at home and abroad. Participants will learn how to incorporate the cannabis industry as a context for a Strategic Management course. A short case on a Canadian cannabis company will also be presented.

**Key words:** Strategy, Canadian Cannabis Industry, Case, Regulatory change, Changing current

2) Teaching Implications:

*What is the contribution of your session to management pedagogy/ andragogy? Specifically, please include your learning objectives, and describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Also, include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.*

The purpose of this session is to share how the Canadian cannabis industry was used as the main context for an undergraduate Strategic Management course. Beyond the controversial nature of the industry, the complexity of the cannabis industry made it an ideal context because the overall learning objective of the strategy course was to learn how to apply various strategy theories. To reach the learning objective, students were assigned to teams, each of which were in charge of researching one cannabis company for the entire term. As each topic was introduced, discussion questions were assigned for class discussion. The questions that were assigned will be shared with session participants.

In pedagogical terms, the benefits of focusing on this dynamic industry were (1) students were able to focus on the cannabis industry as it changed throughout the semester and (2) students were able to become experts on one industry by applying the usual strategy tools such as the 5-Forces model (Porter, 1991) and the CAGE framework (Ghemawat, 2001) that are typically covered in Strategy courses. Current press releases from companies, regulatory & legalization announcements, and other articles were utilized during the semester to illustrate some of the dynamic aspects of strategic decision-making and were especially helpful in illustrating the need for companies to adapt to quickly changing business and regulatory environments. The discussion questions helped students to apply the strategy tools and concepts that were covered in the course. The students also participated in a video conference with the CEO of a large Canadian cannabis company during the semester and were able to ask insightful questions that enriched their knowledge of the industry and help them learn about the issues that CEOs think about beyond what was covered in the textbook.

### **3) Session Description and Plan:**

***What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities will you facilitate: how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Please remember that reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session.***

The purpose of this session is to present an approach for incorporating the Canadian cannabis industry in weekly or bi-weekly discussions in a Strategic Management course. A similar approach could be created to incorporate the American (or other national) cannabis industry into a Strategic Management course. Participants will have the opportunity to learn more about the industry itself and how to create a syllabus that relates various topics in Strategic Management to the industry. For those who might want to use a cannabis company case for just one class session, a short case (currently not published) about a Canadian cannabis company that clearly illustrates several strategy concepts, will also be presented and discussed. A teaching note will also be shared.

Timeline:

1. Overview of the Canadian cannabis industry and why it is an ideal focal industry for a strategic management course. If there are participants who are knowledgeable about the American cannabis industry, we can do a comparison

- of the Canadian and American industries to highlight the challenges that could be discussed in Strategy (or International Business) courses. (20 minutes)
2. The syllabus and discussion questions that were used in the fall of 2016 will be shared and discussed. We could also brainstorm additional possible questions. (10 minutes)
  3. Share and discuss a condensed version of a new (currently not published) teaching case on a Canadian cannabis company. (30 minutes)

**4) Application to Conference theme:**

**How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *Navigating the Changing Currents*?**

The legalization of cannabis is a "changing current" because governmental regulations are currently in the process of slowly changing in countries around the world. It represents a change in societal acceptance, regulations, and a birth of a new (legal and regulated) industry. In the last American election (in November, 2016), nine states voted on legalizing recreational or medical marijuana ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/11/08/medical-marijuana-sails-to-victory-in-florida/?utm\\_term=.910426504ae1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/11/08/medical-marijuana-sails-to-victory-in-florida/?utm_term=.910426504ae1)). Only one state voted to reject the legalization of cannabis. In Canada, the Trudeau government announced that legislation to legalize recreational cannabis would be introduced in the spring of 2017 (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/philpott-un-marijuana-legislation-legalize-1.3544554>). Other countries around the world also have various levels of cannabis legalization (Decorte et al, 2016).

Business students need to learn about industries that are changing in today's environment. By introducing an industry that is a "changing current" in their strategic management course, we were able to demonstrate that the theories and concepts could be applied to a new emerging industry, thereby illustrating the usefulness of those theories and concepts.

**5) Unique Contribution to OBTC:**

***Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?***

*This work has never been presented.*

### **References:**

Decorte, Tom, Martin Bouchard, and Gary Potter eds. *World Wide Weed: Global trends in cannabis cultivation and its control*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2016.

Ghemawat, Pankaj. "Distance still matters." *Harvard business review* 79.8 (2001): 137-147.

Porter, Michael E. "Towards a dynamic theory of strategy." *Strategic management journal* 12.S2 (1991): 95-117.