

Teaching Strategy to Undergraduate Students: A Round Table

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Abstract

We propose facilitating a round table on the topic of teaching strategy to undergraduate students. The session is intended to provide a bonding and networking opportunity for strategy teachers to share class activities and teaching approaches to effectively engage undergraduate students, who lack executive management experience and find the topic particularly challenging. In addition, student engagement can be difficult because strategy is often taught as a senior year capstone course at the same time students are interviewing for jobs and preparing for graduation.

Keywords: *Strategic Management; Undergraduate Business; Capstone strategy course*

Introduction

A capstone strategy course focuses on the concept of competitive advantage and integrates elements of a business degree (marketing, operations, finance, leadership, etc.) in order to demonstrate how they influence firm performance. This course is a common senior-year requirement for many business majors and because of its complexity, macro-level perspective, and positioning in the senior year, it can prove to be a challenging experience for undergraduate students. In order to maximize our teaching effectiveness of this course, we propose a round table session that brings together capstone strategy teachers in order to share our experiences and ideas. The session is also intended to foster a collaborative community of MOBTS strategy scholars, which, to our knowledge, currently doesn't yet exist.

The focus of the round table discussion will be on sharing approaches, materials, activities, and experiential exercises that participants have found useful and effective when teaching strategy to undergraduate students. The purpose is to begin to develop a list of effective practices for MOBTS members to draw from when developing strategy courses or when looking for fresh ideas that have worked for others. There are four intended outcomes of the session:

1. Share effective teaching practices for capstone strategy courses.
2. Share issues and problems that have come up when teaching strategy to undergraduates and brainstorm ways to overcome such roadblocks.
3. Begin the development of an "effective practices" list of ideas and activities that all MOBTS members can draw upon if and when they need to teach a strategy course.
4. Continue to strengthen the community of strategy scholars who participate in MOBTC.

The target audience for the roundtable is anyone who is teaching strategy or may be teaching strategy in the near future.

Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications

Pedagogical research has addressed the many challenges related to teaching the capstone strategy course and several approaches have been proposed to effectively teach strategy-related content (e.g. Albert & Grzeda, 2015; Greiner, Bhambri, & Cummings, 2003; Kachra & Schnietz, 2008). Through a guided discussion process, participants can share what has worked best for them and hear what has worked well for others. It is also good to know that others may have experienced the same issues or problems when teaching strategy to undergraduate students and the group can brainstorm possible solutions to such issues. In addition to building a community of strategy scholars within the MOBTS family, the session is ultimately intended to improve the teaching of strategy throughout the world. Ideally, students will benefit from a greater understanding of strategic concepts and be able to apply them in their daily lives, when starting a business, or when developing or discussing strategic issues in a corporate environment.

The capstone strategy course is important for undergraduate business students because it incorporates learning from all of the business disciplines; marketing, finance, operations, MIS, and management. It is perhaps the only chance for many students to see how all functions of a business need to work together in order for an organization to be successful. And ultimately, successful strategy generation and implementation involves leadership that is capable of communicating across organizational boundaries, inspires others, and creates an organizational culture that is effective and efficient. Since this can be a tall task for an instructor to facilitate, our session will be designed to provide ideas,

resources, and support to MOBTS participants charged with such a task. If the session goes as planned, it could be a recurring event at the annual MOBTS conference.

Session Description

The authors of this proposal are experienced strategy scholars and executive facilitators. The authors will facilitate the discussion, incorporate their own thoughts into the discussion, and capture ideas as they are shared. This will include making sure the discussion doesn't get off track and everyone has a chance to share their thoughts. The authors will also gather contact information from participants in order to share ideas and materials on an ongoing basis.

The session will be run like an executive round-table discussion with a clear agenda and a process that invites everyone to participate. The agenda will for the 60-minute session will be:

Timing	Action	Outcome
0-20	Introductions of facilitators and participants Discussion of problems/issues with teaching strategy to undergraduate students	Participants learn about each other and share common issues with teaching the capstone strategy course.
20-50	Discussion about approaches, exercises, cases, evaluation methods, etc. that participants have found to be effective when teaching the course.	Participants bond with each other and learn from each other.
50-60	Reflection and wrap up. The facilitators will set up a Dropbox for participants to share materials and follow-up actions will be agreed to.	The session is intended to be a starting point for the development of a strategy scholar community. Contact information as well as material will be shared through access to the Dropbox.

REFERENCES

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