

**MBA -5500**  
**Competitive & Collaborative Strategies**  
Albers School of Business & Economics, Seattle University  
**Fall 2020**

September 09 – November 18

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**Time and Day:** Wednesdays 6:00pm – 9:00pm

**Venue:** ZOOM – Synchronous

**Appoints: Wednesdays**  
**before and after class time**  
**or by appointment**

**Bulletin**

In his bestselling book, *Strategy Safari*, Henry Mintzberg suggests, “strategy can be awfully boring by making it complex. Consultants can be straighter than academics, not to mention the planners. Everybody is unnecessarily serious. Suppose, if that gets us better strategies, fine. But it often gets us worse ones – standard, generic, uninspiring.” The strategy doesn’t only have to position; it also has to inspire those responsible for implementation. Successful strategies are compelling and persuasive in the eye of the beholder. The real power of any strategy is the opportunity it affords to entice people into sharing an image of the future.” An uninspiring strategy is really no strategy at all. No wonder the 2010 theme for the Academy of Management Conference was titled, Dare to Care: Passion and Compassion in strategy and management practice and research.

The most interesting companies we know, often the most successful, are not boring (IBM, Boeing, Intel, Apple, Google, Amazon, Costco, Starbucks, Tesla). They have a novel, creative, inspiring, sometimes even playful strategies. By taking the whole strategy business less seriously, they end up with more serious results – and have some fun in the bargain.

What’s in the word “strategy”? According to what follows, a lot more, and a lot less, than you might have imagined. If you think all of this meant to confuse you, you are right; it is unfreezing. Welcome to the course in Advanced Strategy!

**Purpose**

*Encounter - learning*

The word that best summarizes my beliefs about education is **encounter**. Encounter not only captures the importance of coming into contact with ideas, objects, persons, but it also implies engagement that produces lasting impact. When we encounter ideas, we struggle with them, grasp them, and learn from them. Encounter, then, is the essence of education, which offers students and faculty alike the opportunity to be exposed to new thoughts, concepts, theories, struggle with them, and enhance learning. Research shows that “nobody is as smart as everybody,” so using a more open, network-centric model would enhance your knowledge faster than otherwise.

Business environments are dynamic, exciting, challenging, and increasingly global – These qualities make them attractive invite encounter. The pace of change in the business world guarantees that customer needs/wants of products will continue. This need will propel the creation of whole new companies and industries, thus continuously entering the competitive landscape. Furthermore, business enterprises are powerful. We all are affected by businesses as consumers, as employees of the corporation, and as employers and corporations. No profession, no aspect of our

culture, our lives, are free from the influence of business and commercial activity. If managed effectively, wisely, and honestly, it is a powerful force to improve the quality of our personal and societal life around the globe.

An exciting encounter will occur when you apply concepts, theories, tools, and techniques that unfold during each class to actual business practices that have challenged you in the past or are currently challenging you and your fellow managers. This seminar will help you examine your beliefs and mental models about the general environment, industry-specific environment, the importance of business definition, positioning, the appropriate size, and diversification issues, the relevance of organizational design and structure to the firm's strategy, and its competitive landscape. It will also help you sometimes break away from competitive thinking by creating blue oceans (new ways of creating/doing businesses) and making the competition altogether irrelevant. This seminar will help you develop new ways of thinking and learning to become influential business leaders in your careers with the soul. I eagerly await your thought-provoking contribution to the seminar making each encounter electrifying, challenging, and enriching.

### **Readings**

1. Robert M Grant, Contemporary Strategy Analysis (2016) TEXT ONLY. Please check first with SU library. You can also buy from Amazon just under \$10. You can buy any edition 2016 or later but make sure it is text only.
2. Purchase SEVEN Harvard Business Cases at a discounted price from HBP using the following link: <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/755272>
3. Some additional articles are listed under each session. These are optional reads. We will not have time to cover these during the class time. But it is a good collection of articles that I would recommend to you as professional MBAs to get a better grasp on the topic. These are all available from SU online library free of charge. Some articles may not allow printing as Harvard Business Publishing has changed their policy towards SU but you can read it online. Contact reference desk for any issues. Contact Felipe Anaya (reference librarian) for Albers for any research issue. He will be more than helpful to facilitate you through any search and research.
4. Bloomberg news, Wall Street Journal, Economist, Fortune, Forbes, and other business news that is exciting to you and relevant to the topic covered during each session are highly recommended to share.
5. While listening to my presentations on various strategy topics, reflect on your company's strategy, its formulation, implementation, and evaluation process. Think how theories, models, and frameworks you are learning in the class inform your business practices.

### **Activities**

**Lectures: Presents theories, strategy concepts, and frameworks with examples.**

**In class Activities:** Include discussion and case analysis.

**Guest Speakers: Share their business practices on topics covered during each session.**

**Team Presentations:** You will form teams comprising of two members each. Teams will select an industry of their liking for exploration. Industry analysis is about identifying its attractiveness in terms of sustained competitive advantage applying strategy frameworks including PESTEL, Porter's Five Forces Model, and Four Action Framework of Blue Ocean Strategy. In the end, each team will present its findings as industry experts to inform investors whether to invest in this particular industry.

**Individual Research Paper:** You will need to write a research paper on your selected company from the industry you chose for presentation. In your paper, you will compare your selected firm (focal) to its competitor (benchmark) from the same industry. At times, you may also need to use industry average performance standards. Selecting focal and benchmark firms from the same industry will help you collect background information on the industry value chain and its history. This information will feed into your research paper investigating the determinants of your firm focal performance.

While comparing your focal firm to its benchmark, match the two on size determined either by net sales, total assets, or total employees. You will analyze your focal firm performance using quantitative and qualitative data gathered from scholarly articles, databases, trade, and business publications. Starting with financial ratios such as profitability, liquidity, leverage, and activity ratios, you will draw excel graphs showing a comparison in financial performance to its benchmark and industry averages.

After identifying the differential quantitative performance between focal and benchmark, why *do some firms perform better than the competition given similar opportunities and constraints in the environment?* Explore the firm's internal resources and capabilities, comparing it with the benchmark. Substantiate your opinion with data and facts to reach conclusions and recommendations.

While analyzing your firm to its benchmark, you can take a position as a firm manager, given the charge of analysis, a management consultant, or a critical Wall Street business analyst. Resources and capabilities analysis include leadership, quality of human resource management, organizational structure, structure alignment with strategy, marketing/advertising, corporate culture, and organizational behavior issues, including motivation, conflict resolution, and change management.

This exercise helps diagnose issues at the firm/organizational level, devise alternative strategies, and reach formidable conclusions and recommendations. Your research paper should be between 12-14 pages, double spaced, Times New Roman font type, 12 font size, and one-inch margins. Put large graphs, photos, tables in appendices. Please use APA style for references and citations. Since it is an important undertaking for the first time in your three years of MBA, you will be assessing a firm from all angles. I will keep discussing it during class time for further clarification until everyone is 100% clear about it.

**Quizzes:** There will be 2 un-announced quizzes to examine your knowledge of the subject matter and ensure your commitment for the assigned readings.

### **Seminar Structure**

**Consultation:** I am available for consultation if you need advice, have questions, or simply want to discuss your ideas. E-mail me for a zoom meeting.

**Participation:** You are expected to attend every session, read assigned material beforehand, and participate in class activities and discussion. Absenteeism will result in a lowered grade.

## Grades

You are not pitted against one another in competition for a fixed number of "A" grades. In theory, everyone can get an "A." Your course grade is a function of the quality level of your performance weighted by the quantity points assigned to a particular activity.

### Quality Level:

96 to 100%	= A
90 to 95%	= A-
87 to 89%	= B+
83 to 86%	= B
80 to 82%	= B-
77 to 79%	= C+
73 to 76%	= C

### Quantity Points:

Discussion/Attendance	2000 points
2 Quizzes (unannounced)	1000 points
Team Presentations	3000 points
Individual Research Paper	3000 points
2 Case write-ups	1000 points

### Grade Determinants:

Your overall grade is determined by the equation:

$$\text{GRADE} = \frac{\sum(\text{Quality Level} \times \text{Quantity Points})}{\sum(\text{Quantity Points})}$$

### Passing Grade:

You need to pass each assignment in its individual standing. For example, if you desire to achieve "A" in the course you need to score "A" on each of the above activity that is attendance and active participation, quizzes, individual research paper, group presentation, and case write ups.

### Code of Conduct:

I trust your honesty and consider each one of you a person of integrity. You are familiar with policies pertaining to plagiarism. Any incident of such kind on an individual research paper will result in a failing grade.

### Attendance:

Arrange all activities prior or later to the seminar dates. Each session presents a new topic in the field of strategy. So be sensitive to your own learning and time and of others.

## Tentative Outline

**Sep 09** – What is management? What is strategy? Why Bother? What does competitive advantage mean and how to measure it?

**Readings: (A) Read Syllabus (B) Grant Ch. 1: The concept of strategy; Ch. 2: Goals, values, and Performance**

**Note:** We will have: (1) Introduction & expectations – 20 minutes (2) syllabus Discussion – 20 minutes (3) Presentations on the above topics - 60 minutes + 40 minutes (4) breaks – 20 minutes

## Sep 16 – Industry Analysis: External Environment and Competitive Dynamics

**Readings:** Grant Ch. 3: Industry Analysis; Grant Ch. 8: Industry evolution & strategic change; (Article) Hoffman, “Why environmental scanning works except when you need it? (Business Horizon, May 15, 2004)

Case -1: CEIBS: A Global Business School Made in China (9-510-088)

## Sep 23 – Analyzing Resources and Capabilities: Internal Environmental Scanning

**Readings:** Grant Ch. 5: Analyzing resources and capabilities; (Article) Collis & Montgomery, “Competing on resources” (*HBR, August 2008*); (Article) Christensen & Kaufman, “Assessing your organization’s capabilities: Resources, processes, and priorities” (*HBR, August 2008*)

Case-2: The Walt Disney Company: The Entertainment King (9-701-035) (3 pages double spaced analysis due)

## Sep 30 – Business Strategy & quest for Advantage: Positioning Strategies

**Readings (Topic A):** Grant Ch. 7: Sources and dimensions of competitive advantage (B) Hammer, “Deep

Change: How Operational Innovation Can Transform Your Company” (*HBR April 2004*); Stewart & O’Brien, “Execution without Excuses” (*HBR March 2005*)

Case-3: IMAX (809M19) (3 pages double spaced analysis due)

## Oct 07 – Corporate Strategies

**Readings:** Grant Ch. 11: Vertical integration and scope of the firm; Ch. 13: Diversification

Strategy (B) Cullinan, Le Roux, & Weddigen, “When to Walk Away from a Deal” (*HBR April 2004*); Goold & Campbell, “Desperately Seeking Synergy” (*HBR September 1998*)

Case-4: AOL Time Warner, Inc. – (9-702-421)

## Oct 14 – Blue Ocean Strategy

**Readings:** Kim & Mauborgne, “Creating new market space: A systematic approach to value innovation can help companies break free from the competitive pack” (*HBR Jan - Feb 1999*); Kim & Mauborgne, “Blue Ocean Strategy” (*HBR October 2004*)

**Cases-5&6: The evolution of Circus Industry (A) (BOS007); Even a Clown can do it: Cirque due Soleil Recreates Live Entertainment (B) (BOS008)**

Note: Research paper and team presentation discussion

Guest Speaker: TBA – Griffin Deebach – Voglio Marketing partner (Tentative)

## Oct 21 – Strategy Implementation and Execution (structure and control systems)

**Readings:** Grant Ch. 6: Organizational structure and management systems; Ch. 14: Implementing corporate strategy; (Article) Beer & Eisenstat, How to have an Honest Conversation about your Business Strategy (*HBR February 2004*); (Article) Martin Roger, The Execution Trap (*HBR July 2010*)

Case-7: Merck Conflict and Change (9-805-079)

**Guest Speaker:** Pat St. Laurent (VP – Global Strategy -Expeditors) (Tentative)

**Note:** Research paper and team presentation discussion

### **Oct 28 – Strategy Implementation Ctd. + International Business Strategies**

**Reading:** Grant Ch. 15: External growth strategies

**Guest Speaker:** TBA (Greg Lohman) (Tentative)

### **Nov 04 – Team Presentations**

### **Nov 11 - Individual research papers due (ONLINE on Canvas)**

#### **Academic Policies**

The following website facilitates and informs students of their rights and responsibilities related various academic and non-academic policies: <https://www.seattleu.edu/education/student-resources-and-services/policies--forms/>

#### **Plagiarism**

SU policies on plagiarism, cheating, and academic code of conduct violation is clearly spelled out and discussed on the following Seattle University website:

<https://www.seattleu.edu/media/redhawk-service-center/registrar/registrar-policies/Academic-Integrity-2011-3.pdf>

#### **Disabilities Services for students**

Information on disabilities can be accessed at <https://www.seattleu.edu/disability-services/>.

GOOD LUCK – Looking forward to our engaging encounter!