ECONOMICS OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

B8215 - Spring (A) 2021
Mon. and Wed., 12:10 – 1:40 pm

PROFESSOR ANN BARTEL

Contact Information

Email: apb2@gsb.columbia.edu

TA: Letty Perez (LPerez21@gsb.columbia.edu)

Overview of the Course

Many managers and organizations now recognize that a critical source of competitive advantage often comes not from having the most ingenious product design, the best marketing strategy, or the most state-of-the-art production technology, but rather from having an effective system for obtaining and managing the organization’s human assets. A number of developments, including firms’ shifts to knowledge workers, rapid technological change, increased global competition, tight labor markets in some sectors, and experiments with new organizational arrangements, are making the firm’s internal organizational strategy increasingly important for senior managers and for entrepreneurs. Some commentators contend that in today’s economy, with such open access to information, technology, capital, and other resources, adroit human resource management may be one of the few remaining sources of competitive advantage.

The course focuses on the implementation of policies that enable firms to achieve competitive advantage through people. The specific topics covered are recruitment and selection, the challenges and opportunities in using individual and team-based incentives to motivate and reward employees, the use of non-monetary incentives, performance management, investments in human capital, and organizational transformation.

The course relies heavily on cases and examines a large number of companies in a diverse group of industries, including the not-for-profit sector. We will examine the organizational strategy decisions made by these companies and draw lessons from their experiences that can be applied to other companies. Guest speakers from three companies will attend the class.

Connection to the Core

This course builds on the concepts developed in Managerial Economics and Strategy Formulation.
Course Materials

In addition to cases, the course uses readings from the economics and business literature. All of these materials will be available on Canvas.

Course Requirements and Assignments

A. Attendance and Participation (25%)

You are expected to attend all sessions and to actively participate in class discussions. Class participation is essential in order for you to get the maximum benefit from the course. Your grade will be based on attendance, effort and the content of your contributions to the class discussions. The evaluation of content will be based on the following:

- Relevance: Are your comments clearly related to the case and to the comments of others? Do they move the discussion forward?
- Fact-Based: Have you used specific data from the case, from readings, or from personal experience to support the assertions you are making?

If you feel that you are preparing well but that I am not calling on you enough, please let me know so that I can address the problem. While I will mainly rely on voluntary participation, I may also randomly call on students.

On February 8, a role play exercise will be conducted in class and attendance on that day is therefore essential. If you will not be able to attend class that day, please inform me and the TA immediately.

B. Case Write-ups (40%)

There are two written INDIVIDUAL assignments that require you to analyze a case and answer a specific set of questions. To satisfy this requirement, select two of the four cases scheduled for Classes 4, 5, 6, and 7 and answer the questions shown under Preparation Questions on pages 8-10 of the syllabus. The assignment is due at 9 pm the evening before the class on which the case will be discussed. All assignments must be in 12 point font, double-spaced, and cannot exceed three pages. Late assignments will incur a penalty. Each of these INDIVIDUAL assignments count for 20% of your final grade.

C. Final Paper and Presentation (35%)

The final project is an opportunity for you to apply the knowledge from this course to a specific company with which you are familiar. You should work in groups of five
people, with at least one person in the group having worked for that company or having access to “inside” information. Other sources are private equity and venture capital firms which are interested in having MBAs review companies they own or are considering as an investment. It is preferable to choose a small to midsize company. If you choose a large company, your analysis should focus on one department or business unit. Each group will make a very brief presentation on the last day of class (Wednesday, February 17th). The final paper is due on February 22nd at 2 pm. The paper should describe the company’s organizational strategy and critically analyze the strengths and weaknesses of that strategy. Analysis, rather than description, is the focus of the paper. Recommendations for changes to the company’s organizational strategy should be grounded in thoughtful analysis that reflects your understanding of the concepts discussed in the course. Recommended length for the paper is 10 double-spaced pages, not including exhibits.

D. Classroom Conduct

This class will adhere to the Columbia Business School Honor Code and The Columbia Business School Classroom Culture (“Present”, “Prepared”, “Participating”). Columbia Business School is committed to providing all students with the equal opportunity to thrive in the classroom and it is therefore very important that all students treat each other with respect.
COURSE OUTLINE

Class 1: January 11

Introduction to the Course: Linking Strategy and Organizational Choices

Case: Ann Bartel and Stefan Meier, “LUV It or Leave It? Southwest Airlines Reflects on Its Organizational Choices”, Columbia Caseworks, 2020

Class 2: January 13

Strategies for Recruitment

Case: LinkedIn and Modern Recruiting (A), Stanford GSB, 2015


Guest Speaker: Christopher Louie, Senior Director of Talent Acquisition at LinkedIn

Class 3: January 20

Ethical Technology: Mitigating Bias in Hiring

Case: pymetrics (A), HBS, 2019

Guest Speaker: Jessica Barrett (CBS ’14), Managing Director, Global Sales at pymetrics

Class 4: January 22

Incentives Part I: Individual Incentive Plans


**Case Option #1:** If you choose this case for one of your written assignments, submit your answers no later than 9 pm on January 21st. Your answers must be double-spaced using 12 point font and cannot exceed three pages.

**Class 5: January 25**

**Incentives Part II: YGWYPF; Team Incentives**


**Case Option #2:** If you choose this case for one of your written assignments, submit your answers no later than 9 pm on January 24th. Your answers must be double-spaced using 12 point font and cannot exceed three pages.

**Class 6: January 27**

**Organizational Culture in Growing Start-ups**


Readings:

**Case Option #3:** If you choose this case for one of your written assignments, submit your answers no later than 9 pm on February 11. Your answers must be double-spaced using 12-point font and cannot exceed three pages.

**Guest Speakers:** Kaye Foster-Cheek (CBS, ’90), Senior Adviser at Boston Consulting Group and former SVP for Global Human Resources at Onyx Pharmaceuticals; and Doug Love, founder and CEO of Annexon Biosciences
Class 7: February 1

Organizational Strategy in the Not-for-Profit Sector


Case: Ann Bartel, “Children’s Aid: Transitioning to a Results-Oriented Organization”, Columbia Caseworks, December 2017.

Case Option #4: If you choose this case for one of your written assignments, submit your answers no later than 9 pm on January 31. Your answers must be double-spaced using 12-point font and cannot exceed three pages.

Class 8: February 3

People Management at Different Stages of the Organizational Lifecycle


Guest Speakers: Dustin Lucien, Chief Operations Officer, Betterment and Lucy Babbage, Vice President of People, Betterment

Class 9: February 8

Promotion Decisions and Human Capital Investments


Note this is a role play exercise. Confidential materials for your role will be distributed via email in advance of class. Please read the materials carefully before coming to class.
Class 10: February 10

Performance Management


Guest Speaker: Peg Sullivan, Global Head of Talent Management, Morgan Stanley

Class 11: February 15

Organizational Transformation: Implications for HR Practices


Class 12: February 17

Presentation of Group Projects
**Preparation Questions** (be prepared to discuss these questions in class).

**Cases with an asterisk (*) can be used for the two required case write-ups.**

**LUV It or Leave It? Southwest Airlines Reflects on Its Organizational Choices**

1. What are the major sources of Southwest Airlines’ competitive advantage over other airlines and why is Southwest’s strategy so hard to replicate?
2. How are the core values that make up Southwest’s organizational culture reinforced throughout different levels of the company?
3. Would you recommend any changes to Southwest’s human resource practices, and if so, why?
4. How, if at all, does the success of the “all-Boeing-737” policy relate to Southwest’s human capital practices?

**LinkedIn and Modern Recruiting**

1. What are the three most important factors that candidates consider when deciding to accept an offer from LinkedIn?
2. How does LinkedIn’s hiring process avoid “false positives”?
3. Refer to the company for which you worked just before coming to Columbia Business School. After your first contact with the company, were the hiring practices there similar to or different from the hiring practices that LinkedIn uses? Explain why.

**Xiamen Airlines: Pay for Performance**

1. Explain why the economic theory of incentives would predict a positive productivity impact of the new pilot compensation plan at Xiamen Airlines.
2. If you were the HR director at Xiamen Airlines, what would be your concerns about the new compensation system, and how would you plan to address them?
3. Provide an example from your own work experience where it was appropriate to pay based on individual performance and explain why it was appropriate, OR provide an example from your own work experience where it was inappropriate to pay based on individual performance and explain why it was inappropriate.

**Continental Airlines: The Go Forward Plan**

1. Is the bonus scheme for hourly employees likely to be an effective incentive? Why or why not?

**New York City Teacher Incentive Program: Agreeing on a Plan (A)**

1. What are the arguments for using an individual incentive plan for NYC teachers?
2. What are the arguments for using a group incentive plan for NYC teachers?
3. Provide a detailed description of the incentive plan that you recommend for NYC teachers. What metrics would you use and why? How would bonuses be determined?

**New York City Teacher Incentive Program: The Plan In Action (B)**

1. Explain the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher incentive plan that NYC introduced.

**Onyx Pharmaceuticals: HR-Driven Change**

1. While HR tasks were centralized at LinkedIn, they are decentralized at Onyx. Do you agree with the approach that Foster-Cheek used at Onyx? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. Exhibit 3 shows how the bonus was determined for the EVP of R&D under the Total Rewards Program. What do you see as the strengths of this program? Are there any changes you would recommend?
3. In order to achieve Coles’s 2X20 goal, what changes in Onyx’s organizational structure would you recommend and why?
4. What lessons could a start-up company like Annexon Biosciences glean from reading the Onyx case?

**Children’s Aid: Transitioning to a Results-Oriented Organization**

1. Describe Boyer’s strategy for attracting talent to Children’s Aid. Would you recommend any changes to this strategy?
2. Why did Boyer standardize HR processes across the organization? Do you see any downsides to this approach?
3. What are the pros and cons of the new results-oriented culture at Children’s Aid?

**Betterment: People Management at a Start-Up**

1. Should Stein introduce formal performance evaluations and compensation practices, and, if so, what would you recommend?
2. As Betterment grows, can it maintain a start-up culture? How could this be accomplished?

**Embracing Digital: ING’s Journey to a New Way of Working (Parts 1 and 2)**

1. What challenges is ING facing and how will a transformation from “traditional” to “Agile” enable the company to compete more effectively?
2. What are your recommendations for the transformed organization regarding its:
   a. Recruitment strategies
b. Performance management
c. Compensation and rewards

3. What are the implications of the Star/Guardian/Foot Soldier framework for your answers to question 2?