

Duke | MASTER *of* ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT

360 Degree Course Analysis

EGRMGMT 542: Competitive Strategies



Course lecturer:
Prof. Tony O'Driscoll



Analysis Curated by:
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Testimonials from:



Tejaswi Patil



Lorick Jain



Malav Shah

Course Introduction

Checkmate! What does it take to reach that point in chess? - Strategizing and planning 3 steps ahead -patiently waiting for the opponent to react- and if it doesn't go as planned- pivot and strategize again to win!

Games are the most interactive way of learning, and it helps individuals to become better strategists. This is experienced first-hand while learning Duke University's MEM course EGRMGMT 542: Competitive Strategies.

The game- BCG Strategy Palette by Martin Reeves helps students understand how they must become agile players to win in uncertainty. Another interesting Monopoly like game - Transform allows students take up roles in a business setting and strategize in dynamic environment to create maximum value. Yes, these games are the part of coursework and makes learning strategy fun!

Course Background

This course is designed to convey the elements of competitive strategy with a focus on the special considerations of technology-based companies.

Three core tenets of the course are:

1. Companies exist to create, deliver and capture value.
2. What customers find valuable changes over time.
3. Innovation – including in the business model – is required to continue to stay viable.

Students will gain an appreciation for the strategic considerations that affect the success of technology-based offerings in the marketplace through a systematic exposure to key concepts in the context, analysis, formulation and execution of strategic options.

Course Elements

Apart from strategy simulation games, this course enables students to work on Live cases to solve current and contemporary issues in technology-based companies. Scanning the industry environment, analyzing the company's position through the lens of strategic frameworks, and giving optimal recommendations for a company gives students an experience of how Consultant teams devise business strategies for company's endurance on market field.

Learning how to present a strategy to the board members (other classmates), challenging the opposite team on their ideas and facing the questions of board members (classmates) is the most interesting part of this course.

Prof. Tony O'Driscoll imbibes a quality in students that gives them a new perspective to look at the companies, to think every time- why the company did what it did. The course makes you aware of the industry trends and ignites curiosity such that you keep an eye on the steps that companies take in order to thrive in today's ever-changing and diverse market.

If you are someone who's interested in learning about how situations (mostly uncertainty) drive business decisions, this course gives ample previous and live business strategy examples to think and learn about.

Instructor Feedback

Professor Tony's feedback:



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Strategy is about understanding how to create, deliver and capture value for the customer by finding a position that is unique and differentiated and collaborating with other organizations within the business ecosystem.

At the conclusion of this course, students will have the ability to think critically about business strategy, examine the implications of strategic decisions, consider the effect of strategic decisions on people, communicate strategic recommendations clearly, concisely and compellingly in written and oral form.

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Teaching Assistant Feedback

Tejaswi Patil



TA - Fall 21'
Competitive Strategies

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I enjoyed this course thoroughly as a student and as a TA. The live cases introduced are based on the current scenarios. This makes it more interesting to predict and devise a strategy for that company.

The Transform simulation is one of the exciting parts of the course which puts you in a pseudo real time situation of actual merger & acquisitions of the businesses.

It involves a lot of teamwork and discussions overall throughout the semester which helps to learn from each other. There is a lot of improvement witnessed from the start to the end of the semester.

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Student Testimonials

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I took up the competitive strategies course to understand how long-standing technology companies can constantly innovate and maintain their industry position. On this front, I was not disappointed one bit.

The frameworks taught in the course are applied practically at technology giants and they can peek into the future and mould it as they please. The course has allowed me to broaden my mental horizon and look at the bigger picture, an idea that always eluded me as an engineer.

The curriculum has allowed me to solve complex equivocal problems using structured frameworks. As an outcome of the course, I have now begun to embrace ambiguity. The pragmatic nature of the course- live cases and simulations have been especially helpful to understand how leaders at technology companies think on their feet.

There was a live case about Facebook being under constant criticism. Several teams suggested that Facebook do some damage control through rebranding. A day later, Facebook rebrands itself as Meta. Such is the nature of the course, all in real-time.

Lastly, the course came full circle by discussing various business models, cultures, and people. I strongly recommend that everyone take up the course and invest as much as they can in the course as it will help them develop strong mental model communication skillsets which are essential to crack interviews.

Lorick Jain



Student
Competitive Strategies
Fall 21'

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Student Testimonials

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Engineering managers need to learn to "execute strategies, not execute (kill) strategies."

Malav Shah



Student
Competitive Strategies
Fall 21'

In Fall 2021, I took the competitive strategy course taught by Prof. Tony. The class opened my eyes and awakened my competitive instincts - it made me realize that in the face of many challenges, we need to think strategically about our goals and how best to achieve them.

It was one of the few classes which encouraged lots of flexibility when it came down to approaching the learning materials.

The end semester project is one key highlight of this course. Personally, the research and effort I put into the final project helped me crack the TPM internship interview at SiriusXM.

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A Brief about the Author

Aditi Patel



Student
MEM Fall 21'

Aditi is a Master of Engineering Management student at Duke University.

Prior to coming to Duke, Aditi pursued her undergraduate education in Electronics & Telecommunication Engineering from India and worked for 3 years in techno-managerial roles in the Engineering and Market Research industry.

Wearing multiple hats in her previous roles has ignited Aditi's interest in Product, Strategy and Operation roles.