

MBAX 6170

Business Plan Preparation

Syllabus

Fall 2007

Course Objectives

One of the most exciting and satisfying activities in business is to start a new venture. In this course students will learn how to prepare a comprehensive strategy for launching a new business. The vehicle for achieving this is the preparation of a business plan based on an opportunity that students have selected.

Upon completion of this course students will:

- Learn what is a business plan, its elements, and how do they fit together.
- Know why and when you need to write a business plan.
- Experience the difficult, but essential, process that all entrepreneurs go through when they plan their new venture.

Course Description

Students will have the opportunity to apply their entire business education and experience to a very practical, hands-on project. Working in small teams, you will research the market for the product or service; prepare marketing, sales, development and operations plans; and make financial projections.

Writing a business plan requires you to ask tough questions about the nature of the business. What is the need for your product or service? What are the benefits? What is the target market and how will you penetrate it? What is your sustainable competitive advantage? How will you develop and produce the product or service? What management team is required? What are the risks of the venture and what can you do to reduce them? What are the financial implications of the plan? What resources, including funding, are required?

The most effective way to understand the entrepreneurial process is to take a hands-on approach. In this course students are expected to interact with the business community, be able to work effectively in teams, and be active participants in classroom discussions.

Strong written and oral skills greatly facilitate success in starting a new venture. Those individuals that can effectively communicate their ideas will have an advantage over those that cannot. As such, the assignments in the course center on written and oral communications.

Approach

Concept Selection

Early in the course, each student is required to prepare a one-page description of a business concept that they would like to pursue. If a team has been formed, then you may submit one concept description for the group. Evaluation will be based upon the clarity and persuasiveness of the write-up.

Team Selection

From the business concepts submitted, the instructor will choose the top ten based on the persuasiveness of the concept description and the viability of the venture. Those students, whose ideas were deemed to be the best, will present their concept to the class and try to convince them of its brilliance.

It is the responsibility of the lead entrepreneur to recruit a team of four students. To help in this process, a "Trade Fair" will be held in which the lead entrepreneur will recruit team members from his or her fellow students who have expressed interest in working on the plan. It is highly recommended that the lead entrepreneur try to establish a diverse team, i.e. it should not be comprised of all marketing majors; someone with strong engineering or finance experience will greatly facilitate the team's efforts.

Business Plans

To develop a thorough understanding of business plans, we will evaluate several different types. We will look at how these plans were prepared, where they were especially effective, and how they could be improved.

Research

- Interviews: It is essential that teams talk to lots of business people and potential customers. During the weeks following the selection of the concept, the team will spend much of its time testing the concept by interviewing industry experts, potential customers and users, distributors, competitors, designers, engineers, vendors, manufacturers, consultants, investors, etc. Is the problem you are solving real? Who is the target customer and how do they make decisions? What are the essential features of the product? What are the unique benefits? What is the sustainable competitive advantage? Can it be profitable? Spending hours on the Internet or in the Library does not answer these questions.
- Customer surveys: Design and conduct a survey of your target customers to determine their interest in your product or service. You should to collect information and data that validates the target customer profile, confirms their willingness to purchase the product or service and on what basis. This information is key to proving to readers of the plan that the market is real.
- Secondary research: The team will conduct in-depth research on the market and

industry, utilizing the library, internet, journals and industry associations.

Class Organization

Class sessions will be organized roughly as follows:

- First ½ hour: New material will be presented and assigned readings discussed.
- Next 2 hours: Class discussion on assigned material.
Starting in week 5 we will conduct In the Fire Sessions, in which teams will be chosen to present for 10 minutes a critical element of the business plan to the instructor, an outside guest and the rest of the class. This will be not be a standard PowerPoint presentation; rather you will discuss what conclusions you have made, the basis for them and what is your validation. Think of this session as a meeting with investors or a board meeting.
- Last ½ hour: Team breakout sessions to work on specific sections of the plan.

Resources and Materials

Required Readings:

- Downloaded from <http://leeds-faculty.colorado.edu/Moyes>
 - Lawrence and Moyes, 2007, Writing a Successful Business Plan
 - Moyes and Lawrence, Financial Projections Model

Helpful materials that can be downloaded from <http://leeds-faculty.colorado.edu/Moyes>

- Examples of business plans
- Various tools and resources

Other resources that may be useful during the semester include:

- John A. Tracy, 1989. How to Read a Financial Report, (New York: Wiley)
- Jeffrey A. Timmons, 2006. New Venture Creation, 6th Edition (Irwin)
- Course website <http://leeds-faculty.colorado.edu/Moyes>

Prerequisites

Students are expected to have a solid grounding in the basic business disciplines, including marketing, finance, operations, and accounting. Students with an insufficient background to successfully complete the course may be asked to withdraw at the discretion of the instructor.

Grading

There are six components used to determine student grades:

1. **Individual assignments** The course will begin with one individual assignments from all students (business concept description).
2. **Team assignments** In the Fire Sessions: There are 5 In the Fire assignments (Weeks 4, 5, 6, 9, 11) to be completed by each team during the semester. Each team is expected to participate in at least 4 sessions. Teams will be graded on

their ability to clearly articulate and defend their position, the level of understanding of the issues, and evidence provided to support their conclusions.

Written Assignments & Team Presentations: There are 7 written assignments to be handed in by each team during the semester and 2 formal PowerPoint presentation. Assignments will be graded on the thoroughness in which the questions raised in Writing a Successful Business Plan are addressed and the evidence provided to support the conclusions. The grade points for these assignments is as follows:

Week 4: Opportunity/Need, et al. 10 points

Week 5: 3 alternative Value Propositions, et al 10 points

Week 6: 10 Call Reports, et al. 20 points

Week 8: Business Analysis Assignment/Presentation 100 points

Week 10: Marketing Plan/Presentation, Customer Survey Res. 50 points

Week 11: Operations Plan & Development Plan, et al. 20 points

Week 12: Financial & Management Plan 20 points

3. **Final team written plan.** At the end of the semester, each group will submit its final written plan for evaluation. Detailed grading criteria provided on website.
4. **Final team presentation.** At the end of the semester, each group will present its business plan to the class. Detailed grading criteria provided on website.
5. **Peer evaluation.** Each member of a team will evaluate the other members in the group, based on their contributions in the preparation of the business plan. This will be done twice during the semester – week 8 and week 13.
6. **Individual Participation.** The instructor will evaluate the participation of each student. This evaluation will consider attendance, participation in class discussions, In the Fire sessions and team break-out sessions.

There are 1,000 points possible in the course:

Assignment	Number	Pts each	Total Pts
1. Individual Assignments	1	10	10
2. Team Assignments			
Written Assignments & Presentation	7	Various	230
In the Fire Sessions	4	40	160
3. Final Team Written Plan	1	350	350
4. Final Team Presentation	1	150	150
5. Peer Evaluation			
Week 8	1		25
Week 13	1		50
6. Individual Participation	1	25	25
TOTAL			1,000

Final letter grades will be determined according to the following scale:

Points	Grade	Points	Grade
975	A+	775	C+
925	A	725	C
900	A-	700	C-
875	B+	675	D+
825	B	625	D
800	B-	<625	F

General Course Policies

1. Written assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of the class for which they have been assigned, unless otherwise specified by the instructor. Written assignments not received will receive a grade of zero.

2. Attendance Policy: Students are required to attend every class. If you are unable to attend a class, please send an email to the instructor prior to class. Should you miss class your grade may be reduced by one letter grade.

Campus Policies

The following campus policies that apply in this course:

Honor Code The purpose of the honor code at the University of Colorado at Boulder is to secure for students an environment in which all individuals have responsibility for,

and are appropriately recognized for, their individual academic and personal achievements. See www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode.

Students with Disabilities Students with disabilities who qualify for academic accommodations must provide a letter from Disability Services (DS) and discuss specific needs with the professor, preferably during the first two weeks of class. See www.colorado.edu/sacs/disabilityservices.

Religious Holiday The University of Colorado at Boulder has a legal and moral obligation to accommodate all students who must be absent from classes or miss scheduled exams in order to observe religious holidays.

See www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html.

Student Behavior Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty has the professional responsibility to treat students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which students express opinions. See www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html.

Course Web site: <http://leeds-faculty.colorado.edu/Moyes>

Instructor:

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Wed 3:00 to 5:30pm

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