

**6M 238: Contemporary Topics in Marketing:  
Strategic Digital and Service Business Management (3 credits)  
Summer 2010, CIMBA First Session  
Tentative Course Syllabus (Subject to Change)**

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**Course Overview**

There are two major components in this course. The first component is built around readings, cases, and lectures. In this part of the course, we will explore how services and digital technologies are transforming the strategic options facing today's businesses. We will learn how businesses are using services and digital technologies to create new value propositions for their customers and workforce, to invent new methods of creating and capturing profits, and ultimately to pursue the goal of strategic differentiation from their competitors. The attraction, retention, and building of strong customer relationships through quality service and judicious use of digital-technologies are at the heart of this component of the course. Thus, the lessons from this course are equally applicable to organizations whose core product is service (e.g., banks, transportation companies, hotels, hospitals, educational institutions, professional services, telecommunication, etc.) and to organizations that depend on services and digital technologies for competitive advantage (e.g., high technology manufacturers, automotive, industrial products, etc.).

The second component of this course is built around a service business simulation. In this part of the course, you will be charged with managing a service company in a market where customers are demanding and competitors are working hard to take away your business. You and your team members will assume control of your company which has been operating in the market for a while (so you do not need to worry about start-up issues). As a team, you will make strategic and tactical decisions (every quarter) which will be incorporated into a computer-simulated market to reveal how you performed against your competitors (other teams). Although the simulation always starts from the same position, your experience will proceed on a unique path depending on the strategy and tactics your team chooses. This feature allows comparisons and illustrates how markets can evolve differently. The scope of your decisions will cover Human Resources (such as hiring, firing, retaining, deploying and compensating service personnel), Marketing (segmentation, targeting, positioning, selection of marketing mix, service design and portfolio management) and Operations (technology, productivity, capacity management, forecasting and service quality management). Through the simulation, you will learn how to develop and execute a value creation strategy for your customers.

**Course Goals**

- To *understand* the impact of services and digital technologies on how to add value to your company's stakeholder.
- To *think* systematically about strategic opportunities and challenges in managing a service business.
- To *act* strategically in growing your company when competitors are also thinking and acting strategically.
- To have some *fun* while learning.

## Course Format

The coursework will entail a mix of:

- Critical analysis and tools (readings and lectures)
- Applications (cases and simulation)
- Communication skills (presentations and written assignments)

Much of the learning is expected to occur by participation in two major class activities: class discussion of cases, readings and the business simulation.

## Required Materials

- No specific text is required for this course. Rather we will use a number of Harvard cases, chapters from different books, articles from popular press and the web in this class. *Whenever possible, these will be given to you in a course packet.*
- The major tool for this course is the simulation that will be played over the web. Instructions for registering will be given to you in class. Chapters from the student manual from the business simulation will also be used as readings in this class. *The student manual will be given to you as a course packet.*
- It is very important that you learn more about the simulation before our first simulation session. To do this, **you must read the student manual** (available via ICON site or the simulation site). You should also visit the simulation web site (<http://www.links-simulations.com/indexvariant.php?variant=SM>) and explore the resources (such as FAQs, service audit, decision forms, etc.)

## Evaluation Components

Your evaluation in this course will be measured using two components as described below:

### *Non-simulation based*

Individual class participation (cases/readings)	200 points
Group presentation of short assignment	100 points
Quizzes	100 points

### *Simulation based*

Individual memo about simulation .....	100 points
Report to Board of Directors (Group).....	100 points
Simulation Performance (Group).....	200 points

**Total 800 points**

## Semester Grades

Grades will be based on your point total (out of 1000 points), assigned as follows: 100-90% A, 89.9-80% B, 79.9%-70% C, 69.9-60% D, <59.9% F. Within these groupings, I will use +/- grades. I will look at the distribution of total scores and apply scaling/normalization, if necessary.

## Class Participation (Individual)

*Class Participation:* Your participation is *expected* in each class session. You should be prepared to participate during case discussions as well as discussions of any assigned reading materials. Your participation score will be determined based on the *quality* (not the quantity) of your comments in class.

## Team Configuration and Peer Evaluation

You will be assigned to groups that will become the executive management team of a

company. Please note, at end of the course you will be asked to provide a quantitative assessment of the contribution made by each member of your team. The peer evaluations will be an important aspect in determining the individual effort components of the simulation. If your team is having trouble working effectively, it is your responsibility to get the help you need.

### **Short Assignment (Group)**

For some of the sessions, your group will be asked to prepare and present an “applied” short assignment. These will be handed out in advance. You will present these assignments in class on the day they are due. I will randomly assign and schedule each group for one short assignment. These assignments will be related to business and technology issues or services marketing issues. Each group will make a **20-minute** presentation (plus an additional 5-10 minutes for Q&A from students in class) describing their review of the assignment. It is your responsibility to stay within this timeframe—long presentations may be terminated or downgraded. You should turn in your PowerPoint slides (printed 6 slides/page) to me on the day of the presentation. Also, please post your slides for the benefit of other students on ICON after presentation of the assignment in class. Please see the schedule for the day/time your group is assigned to present.

### **Individual and Group Simulation Performance**

During the course, there will be many informal meetings with me (some of these will be face-to-face and others may be virtual via email) as you are working on your business decisions. I will be asking you as a team, and as individuals, to discuss your strategic decision-making. These interactions are intended to help develop your skills in articulating a business analysis to a knowledgeable third party. In addition, they give your instructor the opportunity to provide feedback to the team and to comment on possible conceptual errors.

In these interactions, I will assess your *individual* preparedness, efficient use of time, quality of analysis, and degree of your involvement and knowledge. At the end of the simulation, I will also assess your *group's* overall business performance for the simulation. The largest part of this will be the objective performance of your business based on the KPIs or the key performance indicators (more on this in class). There will also be a qualitative assessment with influencing factors that include overall management skills, final financial outcomes, degree of improvement (for those teams with a slow start), quality of decision-making, and timeliness of decision submissions.

I should note that the purpose of the simulation is learning. While financial outcomes are important, these are somewhat sensitive to mistakes made in early quarters of the simulation. I may decide to make allowances for a few painful mistakes, particularly in the early going.

### **Attendance Policy:**

Attendance at all classes and CIMBA sanctioned activities is MANDATORY. All unexcused absences will have the following consequences:

- a. 1st absence will result in a loss of a 1/2 of a letter grade in that class
- b. 2nd (cumulative) absence will result in a loss of an entire letter grade in that class
- c. 3rd (cumulative) absence will result in a dismissal from the program

Absences due to illness require a note from the CIMBA Office Staff. If a student is sick and cannot attend class, he/she must inform the CIMBA Staff immediately. Failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence.

### **Expectations of Student Academic Integrity**

Because we regard this class as we would any job responsibility, it seems prudent to clarify in advance the policy on timeliness and ethical behavior. In this regard, unexcused late work is unacceptable. With regard to ethical conduct, given the professional nature of the MBA program, it is unlikely that a student in this class would turn in work which is not his or her own. However, if we determine that any assignment, project, paper or test was not written solely by the student (or students) whose name(s) appears on the project, or material taken from other sources is not appropriately cited, the student(s) involved will have committed academic misconduct and will receive an "F" for the class. In addition, your name on a course document is an acknowledgement that you contributed to, and are responsible for, the content. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the appropriate Dean, and the student may be placed on academic probation or dismissed from the program. Decisions on these matters may be appealed to the MBA Committee. The University of Iowa MBA Honor Code, as well as the definition of academic misconduct, can be found in the Tippie School of Management Student Policies and Procedures Manual.

### **Course Accommodations**

If you have a disability that may require some modification of seating, testing, or any other class requirement, please let us know as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Similarly if you have any emergency medical information, or if you need special arrangements in the event the building must be evacuated, please let me know. Please see me after class hours or during my scheduled office hours or schedule an appointment. Further information is available on at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds>