

GENERAL MANAGEMENT: GETTING THINGS DONE IN ORGANIZATIONS

COURSE OUTLINE

1. Introduction

Strategic leadership is the core responsibility of general managers. By strategic leadership we refer to the responsibility of identifying the key challenges for the company, outlining a coherent set of actions to respond to them, and guiding the organization in implementing them. Other widely used terms such as strategy implementation and strategy execution unfortunately evoke a temporal division of labor between strategizing and organizing, and between thinking and doing, which are neither accurate as a description of management practice nor normatively useful as a prescription for best practice.

Leading organizations means more than having an effective business strategy. Too often carefully crafted strategies fail in the field because of poor execution and a lack of understanding of the political, cultural, and organizational dynamics of the firm. Success obtains when general managers can act simultaneously as strategists and orchestrators, strategizing the position of their firms in the external environment and growing their businesses, while simultaneously organizing the four internal pillars of their organization – its system of critical tasks, its formal structures, its organizational culture and its people.

A critical concern for the general manager consists in integrating the will of the owners/shareholder, corporate governance mechanisms and market requirements, with the acquired commitments, aspirations and realities of people within the organization, and a clear vision of the business value creation model. To succeed in this complex task, general managers should be aware of their competencies and influence abilities, as well as relationships with key stakeholders. This requires effective prioritizing, organizing and leading change processes.

How can general managers tackle this complex process? In this course develop a framework that could help you be more effective as you take on these responsibilities. We take a holistic and process-centered approach to governing an organization, executing business strategy and achieving organizational change. The range of cases studied goes from large global organizations to smaller ventures striving to grow, which require different approaches to general management.

2. Objectives

Participants are expected to develop abilities to understand how general managers at various levels can govern an entire organization, mobilizing their units towards common organizational goals, and how leaders can nurture and guide the strategic process in their firms. As strategic execution often requires implementing critical

changes within the firm, we will stress the decisions, actions, and conditions that facilitate or impede the successful attainment of organizational transformation.

3. Learning Outcomes

- Transforming strategic formulation into strategy execution
- Successfully taking charge of a new general management position
- Understanding the common barriers to “getting things done”
- Realigning internal organizational elements with external stakeholder demands
- Identifying and overcoming internal sources of resistance to change
- Navigating informal organizational networks to get things done

4. Competences

General competences

- Critical thinking
- Team work and communication
- Decision making
- Judgment under uncertainty
- Change management
- Specific competences
- Develop skills for the general manager to:
- Optimally transition into a new position
- Align organization, processes, and people in order to achieve your strategic objectives
- Analyze the level of alignment of an organization
- Successfully develop, plan and implement an organizational change plan
- Assess the political landscape of your organization, and devise plans to successfully roll-out your strategies given political constraints
- Govern an organization’s operations and key stakeholders successfully.

5. Content and Methodology

This course aims to integrate topics covered in prior courses around the main responsibilities of General Management. The course will be structured around three interlocked modules:

Module 1. The General Manager and the Institutional Context

In this module we will start with an overview of the task facing general managers when leading processes of strategic refocus and transformation. With the case of Lululemon we aim to identify the problems that leaders face when taking over an organization, turning it around to continue adding value while keeping the founders, employees and owners satisfied. With UFINET, the course delves into the

relationship between general management and shareholders, examining a company that has experienced ownership changes in the past ten years, from multinationals to private equity. A general manager's agenda and work follows ownership profile in ways that reflect not only the organization's development but also the priorities of various stakeholders.

Module 2. Leading strategic, organizational, and cultural change

Managers with good ideas are often ill-prepared to sell them within the company and naively assume that everyone should accept the superiority of their ideas. In this section we will explore political dynamics in organizations, identify sources and tactics of power, with a focus on the role of social networks and influence tactics. The module includes case discussion of firms' transformation, a simulation exercise designed to test your ability to advance ideas and practices within an organization, and an analysis of your existing professional networks.

Module 3. Strategic congruence and organizational alignment

In the final module of the class, we will discuss the concept of alignment between organizational structure, processes and people. Organizational structure and management systems are the most obvious means to link business and corporate spheres. With the cases included we will examine (a) how different organizational forms are fit for different strategies, and (b) how alignment is also a political process, and managers are responsible for integrating diverse stakeholders' interests in a unified organizational project. We will close the course with a reflection on the essence of the general manager's job and responsibilities.

The BP Case illustrates how corporate governance and management systems interact with organizational culture to bring about environmental and business disaster; we will discuss ways for corporate leaders to ensure business sustainability and cultural adaptability

The course presents the framework and concepts through the discussion and analysis of concrete business situations in recent cases (65%), interactive lectures (10%) and a simulation exercise (25%). Required readings (IESE Technical notes, HBR articles and other readings) are included in the course packet and detailed in the program below.

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6. Evaluation

Trading type	Weight	Evaluation elements and learning outcomes
Contribution to peers' learning (class participation)	50%	effectively communicate the analysis of organizational situations observed in different cases used as basis for analysis engage in an open constructive dialectic process to diagnose the interplay between strategic formulation and execution offer real-time peer feedback on classmates' strategic analyses utilizing the frameworks and the concepts learned in class, thus showing understanding and dominance of course content
Final project	50% (30+20)	team-based analysis of the problems faced by general managers when getting things done. The team will conduct a series of interviews of general managers and provide a comparative analysis of their problems. The project will require two deliverables – one individual and another team-based. They will count toward 30% and 20% of the final grade, respectively.

Contribution to peers' learning (class participation)

The cases that we will study are about specific business situations; they are an opportunity to both apply the concepts we discuss in class as well as further develop our ability to execute strategy, lead organizational change and get things done. Peer learning is an important part of the course, which makes it imperative that everyone attempts to regularly contribute to case discussions. Preparation for each class should be thorough and consistent from class to class. This includes reviewing the assigned readings and cases and answering all the discussion questions for each case.

Because of the course's emphasis on case analysis, the major and important part of your learning in this course will take place in the classroom. Participation grades are a function of your class contribution and of commitment to peer learning. Repeating comments that other students have already made or missing class will obviously not add to your participation grade. In class participation, I value quality above quantity. Comments should aim to help everyone understand the issues at hand while contributing depth to debated arguments.

Final project

The course project replaces the final exam. The central theme of the course project is the analysis of the critical tasks, governance challenges, and most common

barriers to strategic execution and organizational change that general managers face in their daily activities.