

COMPETING THROUGH OPERATIONS

COURSE OUTLINE

1. Introduction

The central idea is that, to compete effectively in the long term, a company must be the best at something. In order to determine this differential and the role that operations play in this long-term competitive strategy, we need to define the actors in the configuration of Operations, propose a framework for analyzing competitiveness in operations and analyze the basic activities of the operations.

2. Objectives

The overall objective of the course is to study how senior management can achieve a competitive advantage through Operations. We seek a better understanding of the role of operations in a company's competitive strategy, as a vehicle for more effective action.

The conceptual framework that we propose is based on three pillars: first, the company's mission or promise, regarding what it wants to be best at; second, the structure of the Operations; and third and final, the customer's perception of the company's mission. These three "actors" must be directed following the same "script." In other words, the configuration of the Operations must be guided by the company's mission and the customer must perceive this configuration to be appropriate for the mission.

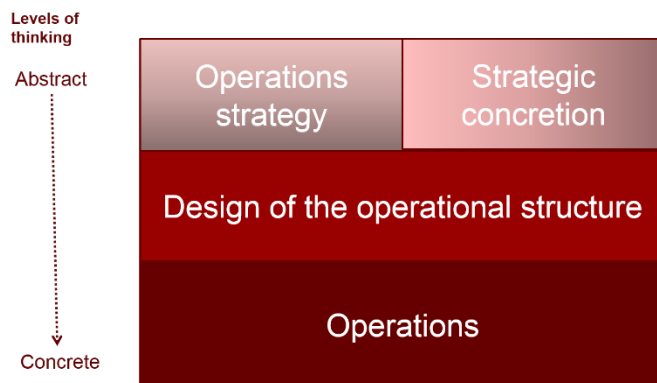
3. Learning Outcomes

The course will ensure that students know how to identify the key elements of operations strategy, identifying how to act on the differential factors that achieve its implementation. They will be taught how to bring together the concepts learned in Operations I and align them with a company's strategy.

The fundamental core of the Operations model in service firms that is proposed is the use and development of knowledge stock. If knowledge becomes the focal point, there is a requirement to analyze what knowledge there is, what there should be, what is missing, how it is used and how it is developed. Paired with this is efficiency as an urgent necessity – not as a differentiating factor but as a basic need for survival. That is why we will talk about the efficient structure of Operations, of industrializing, of being able to extract the full potential from brain workers and we will even consider how to squeeze every ounce of resources from the operational structure, including the brains of our people. And to make them do what we want them to do and for this to be what they want to do. Operationalizing requires a

model that takes into account many components that are extremely sensitive to the impact they have on one another. This applies to both industry and services. But in services, there is the added imperative of constantly finding a mountain of solutions to individual problems that the customer presents. The complexity of Operations requires a conceptual model that allows us to understand all these current interactions and to be able to transmit precise instructions that incorporate all the nuances. And to face this challenge, it is necessary to ask the right question, at the right time, requesting all the relevant information. That is, you need to understand the problem as a whole.

Three levels of action are proposed to achieve this, ranging from the most abstract to the most concrete. The most abstract level focuses on analyzing what knowledge we need and how we make the company's strategy operational. It alerts us to those elements that are differentiating factors. It analyzes, using a set of questions, the blocking factors that impede the autonomous functioning of the agents. From there we go down to a level of greater concreteness and we tackle how to design the service configuration. We go from the concept to the service delivery, analyzing the improvement system for the sustainability of the service in between. This is an intermediate level of concreteness. Finally, we come to the operational level, to the real detail, to the "how." We tackle the reality of the situation, get down to the nitty-gritty and analyze the implementation in detail.



4. Skills

Operational diagnosis, knowledge analysis, identification and improvement of the six operational variables, design of the customer journey in the company itself or in the extended enterprise, identification of critical elements for the industrialization of a service.

5. Content and Methodology

During the course, we will examine both service firms and industrial firms. We will analyze the general structure of Operations and its components. Part of our work will involve the design of the operations system.

"Destroying the problem" and going to the root of its causes will be the leitmotifs for diagnosing and implementing the path toward improvement and competitiveness. To achieve this, we will learn new quality tools, analyze knowledge and evaluate the learning cycle within the company.

The following book is required reading: *How to Make Things Happen: A Blueprint for Applying Knowledge, Solving Problems and Designing Systems That Deliver Your Service Strategy*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Case studies on the topics will be used, there will be talks and videos will be used, and students will give presentations on situations they have studied.

Each student will apply ideas from the course to solve a specific problem that they might have in their company and will write a report about it.

6. Evaluation

To achieve the academic objectives of the course, the following will be required:

- Preparation of cases
- Active participation in sessions

Your participation in class will serve as a guide to let me know whether you are understanding the concepts being discussed and are progressing well through the course and whether you are learning. I will divide the evaluation between your participation in class, coursework, and a final report:

Participation in class: 50% of the grade.

Final report: 50% of the grade. The objective of this report is to demonstrate the applicability of the concepts we have studied during the course. For this purpose, you must apply something of what you have learned during this course to the company where you work.

The report should highlight what improvement may come (or has come) from the application of the concept.