

GEB 6105: Venture Analysis

Course Objective: (1) To explore and critique real-world examples of how new business ventures were conceived, started and run. (2) To provide students with the analytical skills necessary to examine the structure and strategic and tactical activities of new business ventures.

Course Description: A new paradigm has emerged in both business and the economy as a result of the advent of the Internet, subsequent improvements in bandwidth and the resultant widespread use of the Internet. This new paradigm, however, is different from that envisioned and widely touted in the dot-com days of the late 1990's. Rather, it is manifested in great leaps in the application of new technology in business, advances in productivity previously unheard-of, but now commonly accepted and rapid changes in markets consistent with the volume of freely available information.

Entrepreneurs have started new ventures for generations. Success was more a function of tenacity and a measure of how good was the idea underpinning the business. Errors in the structure and early conduct of the enterprise could be overcome with time through learning. In the new paradigm though, tolerance for such errors has become acutely narrow. Competition has become intense, technology-based, market-focused and highly competent. In such a competitive environment, the lack or misuse of the application of currently available technology to the structure and conduct of a new business could quickly spell its demise. Similarly, the inability to adapt the enterprise to the emergence of new technologies to make it market-driven and structure-perfect could have the same effect. In summary, competition is just too tough; the end could come quickly.

An entrepreneurial orientation is the common denominator among successful enterprises in this new paradigm. The elements frequently key to successful competition include a team approach to management focusing on enterprise value rather than individual recognition, structuring an environment that promotes seeking and exploiting opportunities rather than recognizing and solving problems, conceptualizing and committing to new markets rather than being constrained by traditional boundaries, and balancing intelligent risk and the opportunity for rapid advancement.

Organizational size neither offers a safe harbor nor increased risk. New ventures exist either as a new, small business or as an element of a large organization. Large companies have become competitive in this new paradigm by redefining their cultures. Decision-making has been shifted downward in these companies to encourage quick reaction to market opportunities.

Every student that plans to work, therefore, will face the need to negotiate these new realities, whether it be big company, small company, new company or old. The goal of this course is to provide you with real-world examples of how new ventures are run well and not-so-well. It will focus on developing the analytical skills to examine, both from a tactical and strategic standpoint, opportunities, missed opportunities and problems.

The course will be organized around virtual cases. Students will be organized into teams for the entire course. Tuesday of each week will be devoted to a presentation to the class by an entrepreneur who is seeking advice about either his business concept or a business issue of significance that he currently is facing. The second Thursday following each case presentation will be devoted to a presentation to the class by the team responsible for evaluation of the current project. The presenting team will be required to also submit a final report two days following its presentation (two copies, please, one of which will be given to the entrepreneur) covering its analysis together with the points derived from the general discussion. Team members will be graded both on their presentation and on the final report. There will not be a final exam in the traditional sense for this course. Your grade in the class will be determined as follows:

Team Grade – Presentation 50%

Team Grade – Final Report	50%
Class Discussion	+/-

Class Outline: The course will cover one case per week, and will be supplemented with lectures and general discussions pertaining to the functional areas covered in each case.

Prerequisites: Graduate student.