

Project Management
„Business Success Depends on Projects?“

MA Course in Design and Development of Virtual Environments

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*"On the importance of Project Management Operations keeps the lights on, strategy provides a light at the end of the tunnel, but project management is the train engine that moves the organization forward."*¹

Joy Gumz

Many of the ideas contained in these notes are a summary of literature encompassing theoretical & personal experiences and methods of the projects development. My own experience has added a number of perspectives as well as biases which turn me into someone who is far from being a cold, impartial observer of this issue. In fact, if I had to describe my position on the issue I could easily accept being told that "all my life is PROJECT."

This course on Project Management takes place over an intensive 4 day period. Both time limitations and the relative complexity of the issues to be tackled will present a number of challenges that everyone must be aware of in order to make it a worthwhile learning experience. These notes will provide some hints on how to make the most out of this experience as well as provide an overview of the path that we are going to travel together.

In that designing virtual environments is a program on Project Management issues, all materials, together with a set of some supplementary readings which will be handed out in class. Please contact the instructor for additional details and copies of slides will be made available. For the sake of structure, each day will center around a particular theme, helping participants to focus on the issues being analysed.

The word "intensive" must be taken in a literal sense. Timing considerations will require us to "hit the ground running" rather quickly in order to make the most out of the available number of classroom hours. In order to optimise the learning experience, a practive level of class (case) preparation is of the essence.

OBJECTIVES

This course has been designed with the objective of helping:

- Master level students develop a conceptual framework (i.e. their own ideas) covering the basic variables that come to play.
- Identifying when one needs to manage and to make decisions related to the generation or development of projects.
- Help students identify the traits of strong leadership with applied case studies.

This course will attempt to structure your thinking when approaching a project management problems and identify potential solutions. The number of concepts we shall be dealing with is not large by any means and none of them requires deep reflection to be grasped. They will only become useful in so far as the participants learn to interrelate them in a coherent manner as the course evolves. We will learn by doing, so this is where the cases become irreplaceable, as they build on a series of gradually more complex business decisions. As participants will realise, this is more a course on how to manage the project's function rather than a transmission of concepts and buzzwords.

A thorough theoretical understanding of the concepts will not be sufficient unless a framework -a methodology that makes analysis more rigorous and straightforward- is built up that

¹ http://www.projectauditors.com/Company/Project_Management_Quotes.html
<http://www.projectauditors.com/Resume/Gumz.html>

encompasses these concepts. Framework building should prove a challenging intellectual task requiring the flexibility to change, adapt and incorporate concepts as we learn to apply them through cases. The fact that the emphasis of this module is on the application of concepts - rather than just theory building- leads naturally to the second objective described below.

The materials (cases and final homework - projects) chosen for the course will require making decisions and participants placing themselves in somebody else's shoes and making a commitment to a specific plan of action. Helping the students in a way which is consistent with their analysis of the relevant issues in the case constitutes the second objective of this course. In other words, we will try to improve the balance between analytical and intuitive capabilities, realising that effective management combines both in order to truly excel at the business generation phase. Decisions will be approached from a general management perspective, keeping a broad view as it is required in a Program like the one you are following.

Achievement of the above objectives requires frequent participation in class discussion absolutely essential and careful listening to each other's opinion even more so. Participation is a necessity and courtesy is expected.

PREPARING FOR CLASS

As with most things in life, preparation is key, and becoming familiar with the case method might -in some cases- prove a difficult task. There is no "best way" to prepare a case study. Let me repeat, there is no best way but some comments might be useful as suggestions to "get acquainted" with a methodology you will use throughout the Program.

Many participants find it useful to skim quickly through a case a few days before it is covered; look at the first & the last paragraphs, main headings, and exhibits to get a general idea of the type of problem you are confronted with as well as the information available. One then starts the actual preparation in a much better position to identify relevant factors and summarise them in a manageable number of pages (one or two). When preparing the case, some kind of structure must be used to group the issues; a simple framework is provided in the readings distributed before the first case session and I encourage you to use it.

It is unlikely that a "decent" preparation can be completed in less than two hours. To check for the quality of your individual work you can try and write down your action plan in specific terms. When looking at it some questions will still crop up and a few assumptions will be tested. In case it does not happen, you may reconsider the quality of your own preparation effort.

To complete preparation for the class session, group discussion of the case is essential. Group consensus on specific action plan for each case is neither required nor desirable. Instead use the group to sound out ideas, check basic analytical issues and try your hand at persuading a small number of people. Some time will be available each day for group discussion of the cases assigned.

The culmination of our course is the development and presentation of a "unique" project in class (group's homework presentation) which will be graded by your colleagues.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Please do not hesitate to come and ask for help, guidance or just exchange of ideas at any time. I can also be contacted through e-mail at maritanasedysheva@yahoo.com, but please ensure that you have tried to search for the solution yourself first.

It is my hope that the educational experience that we are going to share will increase your appetite for further modules in the Program. I promise to give you my attention, time, and effort – please return the favor.

Structure of the Program

WEEK 7, 29. October 2011

Theme: Quality Metrics, Measures and Analysis

10.00 – 10.30 Introduction to the course Objectives and teaching methodology

10.30 – 11.30 Project Metrics: Guest Lecturer **Dr. Robert J. Pefferly**

11.30 – 11.45 Coffee Break

11.45 – 12.40 Continued

12.40 – 13.00 Summary and Questions

WEEK 8, 05. November 2011

Theme: Project Management Fundamentals and Philosophy

10.00 – 11.30 Project Management Fundamentals and Philosophy (main objectives, methods, methodology)

11.30 – 11.45 Coffee Break

11.45 – 13.00 Strategy and Vision of Project Management (video material and Group work, Group discussions)

Hometask (week 9): Case: „Project Management – What’s the Best Approach for IT?“, Harvars Business Press

WEEK 9, 12. November 2011

Theme: „Why Your Business Success Depends on Projects?“

10.00 – 11.30 Project Management: Team, Time, Results and Success (video material, class discussion)

11.30 – 11.45 Coffee Break

11.45 – 12.30 Group work and Group discussions of the case (hometask): „Project Management – What’s the Best Approach for IT?“, Harvars Business Press

12.30 – 13.00 Introduction to the final Project „FLOWERS FOR THE QUEEN OF MOGADISHU“ (Group work and Presentation)

WEEK 10, 26. November 2011

Theme: „FLOWERS FOR THE QUEEN OF MOGADISHU“ – FINAL PROJECT

10.00 – 11.00 Group work and Presentation, Discussion (2 groups)

11.00 – 11.15 Coffee Break

11.15– 12.15 Group work and Presentation, Discussion (2 groups)

12.15 – 13.00 Discussion, Grading, Summary, Constructive Feedback.