

DOS3704 OPERATIONS STRATEGY

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

How did ZARA become one of the fastest growing and most profitable brands in fashion retailing? How did Wal-Mart grow to be the world's largest retailer? To a large extent the answer is that ZARA and Wal-Mart view their operational capabilities as an important and integral part of their competitive advantage. As do other successful companies, such as Procter & Gamble, Toyota, and Coca Cola, they invest strategically in physical plants and facilities, in process and information technology, in employee, supplier, and distributor relationships, and perhaps most importantly, in organizational practices and know-hows. The objective of this course is to provide students with a set of qualitative frameworks and quantitative tools to analyze and guide the long-term, strategic decisions for a company's operations function. The course is recommended for those interested in consulting, general management, or operations careers, but also for finance specialists interested in assessing the risks, the opportunities, the competitive advantage, and ultimately the value embedded in a company's operations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After taking this course students will be able to analyze and improve a company's operations strategy. More specifically, students will be able to:

- List and explain the range of strategic choices to be made in operations strategy
- List and explain the various links between operations and other business functions
- Analyze and describe the internal and external factors that influence strategic operational investments
- Analyze and describe the connection between operations strategy and the firm's business strategy and competitive position
- List and describe basic principles that lead to an organization's operational success
- Assess an existing operations strategy by identifying its key elements and by evaluating it qualitatively and financially
- Improve an operations strategy by analyzing key drivers and decisions for each element and by developing recommendations and implementation plans

REQUIRED READINGS

- J. Van Mieghem, 2008. Operations Strategy: Principles and Practice. Dynamic Ideas. (optional textbook)
- Additional readings and cases will be made available by your lecturer.

COURSE METHODS

Regular sessions will have lectures heavily complemented with additional external inputs. These will be in the form of case and textbook readings and in-class discussions. Each topic of the subject will be discussed using a combination of models, exercises, case-discussions, and readings.

Team assignments and one team project are also required. Theory and conceptual thinking form the backbone of the course but there will also be a strong emphasis on experiential and action-based learning through case preparations and team project in which actual results can be expected. Teams will consist of 4 to 6 students.

ASSESSMENT METHOD

1. Class attendance and Participation: 25% (individual)
2. Team Assignments: 25% (group grade, but if there is a clear reason to do so I may upgrade or downgrade certain individuals in the group)
3. Team Project: 15% (group grade, but if there is a clear reason to do so I may upgrade or downgrade certain individuals in the group)
 - a. Proposal: 5%
 - b. Presentation: 10%
4. Peer Evaluation: 10% (individual, due in week 13 before class)
5. Final Test (in class in week 13): 25% (individual)