Kellogg School of Management | Marketing

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

MKTG 944
Solving Business Challenges
Syllabus

Faculty:
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Course Description:
Organizations (for-profit, non-profit, start-ups) seek evidence-based marketing strategies that will increase their competitive advantage leading to growth and sustainability. The Solving Business Challenges course is a working partnership with a real organization facing these issues. A group of diverse organizations are carefully recruited and their project concept vetted allowing teams to tackle the issues upon the start of the quarter. The student and faculty will identify the appropriate methodology and project plan. While the final client presentation will occur at the end of the quarter, the analyses and marketing strategy development will be managed to the five week session. Potential client/project opportunities include, but are not limited to: global market opportunities for small businesses; retailer transformational strategies; innovation strategies for non-profits facing unanticipated customer attitudinal shifts. The project may be the first phase of multi-phase process; meaning the outcome will become an input into the following phases.

Prerequisites:
All Students: (MKTG-430-0 OR MKTG-440-0) AND MGMT-431-0

Course Schedule

Week 1: Class meeting over lunch.

- Review course schedule and client touch points
- Finalize team formation and project assignment (project descriptions available to enrolled students 10 days prior to this meeting; students requested to develop teams and preferences)
    - Designate team member who will be:
        - Primary client contact
        - Logistics/methodologist
- Schedule scoping meeting with faculty (prior to client kickoff meeting)
- Primary client contact organizes kickoff meeting with client (remote medium—conference call, GoToMeeting, etc.).

Week 1 – Week 2

- Scoping (faculty/internal team) occurs prior to client kickoff meeting
- Client kickoff meeting

Week 2

- Team develops a work stream plan
    - Team members assigned to each with deadlines for completion

Week 2 – Week 3

- Secondary research (library databases, obtaining access to relevant subscription databases)
- Develop in-depth interview guides, review with faculty and client
    - Begin scheduling interviews to occur during week 3

Week 3 and Week 4

- Secondary and primary research continues
- An informal status meeting with client (primary client contact schedules)

Week 5

- Team meets with faculty to discuss research results and transference to actionable strategic recommendations
    - Storyboard final client presentation

Summary of Client Touch Points and Deliverables

Client Touch points:

- Kickoff meeting—between weeks 1 and 2
- Update meeting—week 3-4
- Final presentation—week 10 (contingent on student team preferences, faculty and client availability)
- Some clients may request a weekly status meeting
    - Not required
        - At team's discretion
    - May suggest email questions, etc. and if necessary schedule a client/team call
    - If client wants weekly meeting establish flexibility to cancel if nothing to report and/or discuss

***NOTE: Any data collection instruments (in-depth interview guides) to be shared with client before collecting data (post-faculty review)

Client Final Deliverables:

- Annotated power point deck
    - Notes section reserved for substantiation of points on the main slide
        - This becomes a transition document from the team to client
        - Client can extract content for their own internal presentations and have justification within each slide
    - Main presentation ~35-40 slides
        - Appendix for more detailed information
        - For example, summaries of in-depth interviews, secondary research sources and more detailed findings than in main deck

***Note: any primary data provided must be cleansed/de-identified

Faculty Role

- Regular check-ins with teams
- Email any and all questions
- Manage the client in terms of the roles each play (client, student team, faculty)
    - These roles been communicated and agreed upon by client prior to accepting project
- Provide conceptual models for consideration to be applied and methodologies (including source recommendations)
    - Ensure learning and practical experience
- Available for attending and providing feedback of dry-runs for client final presentation

Evaluation

- Project and client management (25%)
    - Staying on schedule; managing project scope creep; meaningful meeting participation with client
    - If applicable, ensuring the collaborative nature of the project with the client through effective communication
- Peer Evaluation (10%)
    - Form provided in week 9
- Faculty Evaluation (15%)
    - Effective meeting participation; contributing thoughtful comments and suggestions that advance the project in a positive manner
    - Quality of team and individual contributions
- Final presentation annotated deck and client presentation (50%)