

Course content

The course aims to introduce the student to core problems in corporate strategy. The fundamental questions around which it is designed are as follows:

1. What is the overarching goal of a firm and what is the contribution of strategy to its achievement?
2. How do the different businesses owned by a firm fit together and how does this contribute to its performance? What can firms do about it?
3. What are important challenges for firms in today's society?

The first question is key to understand what corporate strategy is about as the notion of strategy generally assumes some goals to be achieved. However, what constitutes the goals of an organization remains an open question and we will study different ways of answering it. The aim of the class is that students gain a better understanding of how to define firms' goals which may enlighten their future activities as managers.

The second question lies at the heart of corporate strategy, which is concerned with the overall performance of a firm and its relationship to all the activities a firm is involved in rather than the performance of any specific activity carried on by the firm. We will study various ways in which firms may develop their activities, acquire new ones, divest from others and create synergies with other organizations and how this in turn may impact their performance.

The last question is an opportunity to introduce students to more advanced topics in corporate strategy related to current changes in many societies. The course will consider how the call for 'purposeful' businesses and for a stronger involvement of firms with societies leads to new problems for corporate strategy.

Classes will alternate between the introduction of theoretical material to the student, in-class exercises and case discussion.

Students will be gathered into groups. Groups are composed of up to 6 members and students have to self-enroll into groups on iCorsi by the end of the first week of class. Case studies will be done in-class, by group.

On iCorsi, students will find material for each class. This material will consist in the case study for the class, relevant newspaper articles and research articles. Students are expected to read case studies before the **Friday** class as it will be discussed during class. Reading additional material is optional but encouraged.

On week 14, each group will submit semester-long report on a firm of their choice. The goal of this report is for students to outline the strategic challenges faced by a company and propose solutions to them based on concepts viewed in class.

Please communicate the firm of your choice no later than October 15th to me via email: gouvap@usi.ch. It can be any firms, operating in any industry. You are expected to:

- Introduce its main businesses
- Discuss its current strategy and the main drivers of its performance
- Identify potential problems with the current strategy or problems for the company's future
- Propose solutions to overcome these challenges

Assessment

Student's final grade will be computed as follows:

80% final exam

20% final report

10% class participation during cases (bonus points)

Reference textbook

Grant, R. Contemporary Strategy Analysis, 9th Edition, Wiley

Contact

Teaching assistant: angelo.deleo@usi.ch

Professor: gouvap@usi.ch