

# Organization Leadership and Innovation: Syllabus

## Course description

This course aims to teach critical skills needed to compete in changing business environments, where innovation, experimentation, and leadership are the keys to success. Working with your team, you will lead and run an internal venture at a fictional corporation, making decisions that all leaders face as they grow their business.

The course is unique in that you'll not only learn from experts in the field, but you'll also get to practice making decisions and tackling challenges in a simulated environment. Working with a team of peers, you will receive feedback about the decisions you make for your venture from a variety of sources; that feedback is personalized and designed to help you course-correct when necessary and ensure that the lessons you learn are immediately applicable within the course and outside of the course. The course creates an environment in which you practice making crucial decisions nimbly and thoughtfully so that you can do the same in real life with the added benefit of practice – the mistakes you make in the course are ones you won't make in real life.

**The course is built around the Organizational Leadership and Innovation Game, which is designed to teach you in three ways:**

**Learning objectives** – skills you will learn and use in the future

**Practice objectives** – specific experiences you will encounter so that when you see them in real life, you will know what to do

**Thinking objectives** – mental techniques you will learn that are applicable outside the course

## Course objectives

### Learning objectives for the course include:

- **Leading a successful team.** You will learn techniques for leading teams to success. Detailed learnings include: issues of team dynamics; common sources of team pitfalls such as the Abilene Paradox, social loafing, and relationship conflict; and team chartering

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- **Business experiments:** You will learn the latest approach to corporate strategy through rapid and cheap experimentation. Detailed topics include: conducting business experiments; developing assumptions; testing hypotheses through quick experiments; making data-driven decisions (should you persist or pivot?) based on the results of your experiments
- **Building teams and organizations.** You will learn how to organize and set up a hiring process to build successful teams. Detailed topics include: how to set up and run a consistent and informative hiring process using interviewing techniques, work samples, and scorecards; you'll also learn how to avoid hiring mistakes so that every hire contributes to your business
- **Sales and marketing.** You will learn how to analyze markets and select customers to target for new products and services. Detailed topics include: how to choose customers to maximize growth and revenue; determine pricing and features for new products; marketing and business model approaches
- **Negotiations.** You will learn how to negotiate. Detailed topics include: how to think about your BATNA and your counterparts' BATNA; first offers; building trust; common interests
- **Pitching and persuasion.** You will learn how to pitch new ideas and persuade stakeholders of the value of your business concept. Detailed topics include: how to build a compelling business case; how to structure an argument; how to put together a persuasive elevator pitch
- **Personal leadership ability.** You will learn how to inspire a team, avoid team pitfalls, and how to achieve consensus

## Practice objectives for the course include:

- **Experiencing the types of data generated by business experiments.** You'll analyze surveys, conduct market tests, and glean information from customer interviews
- **Leading during a time of uncertainty and change.** You'll make consequential decisions for your business at a time of change and learn how to navigate your team through uncertain times
- **Engaging with critical stakeholders in high-stakes settings.** You'll interact with key customers, managers, and employees
- **Navigating through common points of failure for internal ventures.** You'll navigate team dynamics, encounter process losses and gains, and take on the challenges of scaling a venture

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## Thinking objectives for the course include:

- **Perspective-taking and the ability to analyze multiple viewpoints.** You'll recognize and examine the perspectives of your customers, employees, and competitors and see the world as they do
- **Improvisation and bricolage.** You'll solve novel problems and deal with the constraints imposed by a new venture environment
- **Self-monitoring and metacognition.** You'll conduct after action reviews to help your team take stock of and learn from their actions, and you'll get a chance to reflect on what you have learned throughout the course
- **Self-efficacy and the confidence to overcome challenges.** You'll gain the confidence to overcome challenges and explore different ways of thinking through those challenges throughout the course

## Instructional methods

The course is designed to teach key concepts in innovation and strategy through a fast-paced experience. You will learn through **instruction, feedback, interleaving, testing, and reflection.**

The course provides extensive direct instruction about key concepts – through videos, emails, documents, and calls – and you will need to apply what you learned. Early decisions will be less consequential than later decisions, and you'll get a chance to practice before committing to a course of action.

As you make those early decisions, you'll receive feedback that addresses your choices and gives you helpful tips about what you should do to improve. Key concepts are connected and resurface throughout the course. You'll be presented with challenges at one stage, and later you'll encounter similar challenges that require you to recall what you learned. This interleaving of concepts allows you to apply what you learned earlier in a new situation.

We also built reflection into the course so that you can take stock of what you learned. You'll be asked to review what happened and why and consider the adjustments you should make to improve. You'll be prompted with opportunities for guided reflection both individually and as a team through an after-action review.

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## Requirements

The course is designed as a 20 hour, 3-week experience or a 2 to 3-day intensive, in which you are required to work with your team throughout the experience. The course is divided into periods in which you'll be working together with your team (synchronous live team sessions) and periods in which you won't be all together (asynchronous review and strategy sessions).

You should expect many events to happen during the live team sessions, but the course continues during asynchronous review and strategy periods. *At every live team session period, you'll need to check in with Gloria, a character in the course. This will serve as your attendance check-in.* During the course, you'll need to:

**Actively work with your team.** Playing in teams, you will be competing against other teams; to do well and learn all you can, you will need to support your teammates, and you'll need their support as well. A key skill to practice in the course is working well with a team and navigating common team pitfalls. You will get support to make your team successful and ensure an optimal learning experience.

**Commit to 6 synchronous sessions with your team.** The course is designed around 6 live team (synchronous) periods - which means there will be a lot to do during these periods. Every team member is required to be online at the same time during these sessions.

**Commit to working with your team outside of the synchronous sessions.** There will be a lot of information coming at you during the synchronous periods. But to do well, you'll need to put in some time outside of those sessions. For instance, there will be instructional videos by Wharton faculty that will pop up during asynchronous periods. Watching these will help you improve and make good decisions in the course.

## Assessment

The primary way you are assessed is through decisions you make in the course for your team. Decisions will be graded, and you will receive points for these decisions. You may also have an individual grade point total that differs from the group total, depending on factors such as participation and team assessment scores. Assessment depends on the level of the course you take and will be communicated in the course.

## Course Materials

All course materials are housed in the course interface. You don't need any other materials for the course, but you can and should do additional research to help you make decisions. Your **Feedback** section contains many valuable resources that will help you during the course. The **My Library** section has many valuable videos featuring the course author sharing key ideas and experts who will share their advice and perspective about key topics covered in the course.

### QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COURSE?

[Contact us](#) and we will be happy to help.