

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA  
WHARTON SCHOOL

MANAGEMENT 711 COMPETITIVE STRATEGY AND INDUSTRIAL  
STRUCTURE

Fall, 2015, T/Thrs: 1030am  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3-5pm  
E-mail : Thomas@wharton.upenn.edu

Professor Louis Thomas  
2111 SHDH

**ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES**

Course Overview

This is an advanced course in the economics of strategy. This course will have a particular strong emphasis on competitive strategy and will apply some basic tools from economics to examine the strategic decisions that managers make. We will examine those decisions concerning pricing, capacity investment, advertising, new product introductions, research and development, and organizational design. The course will integrate traditional economic models with case study materials.

Course Materials

- Course Pack from Study.net
- Class Handouts

Evaluation

Grades will be based on one in class examination, case analyses, and class participation.

The relative  
Weights of the components are as follows:

- In class examination                      50% (**Nov 12<sup>th</sup>** )
- Written Industry Analysis                30% ( **Due Dec 15<sup>th</sup>** )

- Class participation 20%

## **I. Course Introduction**

**August 27<sup>th</sup> : Session 1 – Introduction**

## **II. Competitive Strategy**

### **A. Price Competition**

**September 1<sup>st</sup> Session 2: Competitive Pricing: Anticipating Rival Response**

Readings:

“The Mother of All (Pricing) Battles”: The 1992 Airline Price War (KEL006)

Questions:

1. Under what conditions will American Airlines pricing scheme restore higher industry price levels?
2. Why do you think scheme failed?

**September 3<sup>rd</sup> : Session 3: Competitive Pricing: Threats and Commitment**

Readings

The Coffee Wars

Can anyone win the Coffee War?

How to Escape a Price War

Questions for Coffee Industry

1. Evaluate General Food's Strategy to deter P&G. In light of the models discuss the results of this strategy.

2. There are only two or three major competitors in this industry. Generally, one would think that few players imply greater profitability. Why isn't this true for the coffee industry?

## **B. Strategies to Lessen Price Competition**

**September 8<sup>th</sup> : Session 4: Contracts with customers**

Readings:

Practices that Credibly Facilitate Oligopoly Coordination  
Reconsider "Mother of All Pricing Battles."

Questions:

1. Reconsider American Airlines value pricing scheme? Under what conditions will it work?

## **II. Industry Analysis**

### **B. Sunk Costs and Market Structure**

**September 10<sup>th</sup> Session 5- Sunk Costs and Market Structure/ Market Share  
Dominance or Fragmentation**

Readings

Sunk Costs and Market Structure  
Anheuser-Busch and the U.S. Brewing Industry (HBS # 9-799-026)

**September 15<sup>th</sup> Session 6: Advertising Sunk Costs Continued/ Stackelberg  
Follower**

Readings:

Case: Coors (9-388-014)

Questions

1. Why did the brewing industry consolidate?
2. What factors accounted for Coors's advantage in the mid-70's?
3. Why has Coors's performance since then deteriorated?

## **September 17<sup>th</sup> Session 7: Sunk Costs and Structure/ Stackelberg Leader**

Readings:

Case: Gillette launch of sensor (9-792-028)

Questions

1. What sort of competitive game has been played out historically in the wet shaving industry?
2. How well did Gillette respond to BIC's attack in disposables?
3. Should FLAG have been introduced as a disposable or as a cartridge razor?
4. Do the economics for Sensor appear attractive?
5. How aggressively should Symons launch Sensor?
6. When should a company cannibalize its own products?

## **Dynamic Sunk Costs**

### **September 22<sup>nd</sup> Session 8-Capacity Preemption**

Readings

Intel Corp., 2005 (HBS # 9-706-437)

### **September 24<sup>th</sup> Session 9: Credible Spatial Preemption in the Very large Aircraft Market**

Readings:

Airbus A3XX: Developing the World's Largest Commercial Jet (A) (HBS 9-201-028)

Questions:

1. Which firm Boeing or Airbus would you predict based on Game Theory to be the first to introduce a product in the VLA segment
2. How do you explain the apparent outcome?

### **III. Technology Competition**

#### **A. Innovation with Rapid Imitation**

**September 29<sup>th</sup> Session 10- Innovation and quick imitation**

##### Readings

Case: Minnetonka (N9-795-163)

##### Questions

1. What was Minnetonka's strategy prior to the launch of Softsoap?
2. Compare Minnetonka's experiences in the soap and toothpaste business. How do you explain the differences?
3. Why did Minnetonka shift from "mass to class" in the mid-1980's?

##### Questions for Innovation and Imitation

1. You are the strategic manager at firm A. You decide to spend \$C on new product advertising. You realize that managers at firm B will probably copy your product and follow you into the market. You believe that managers at B will also spend \$c on advertising. For various levels of advertising dollars, predict the response of B's managers. Given these beliefs, what should you do?
2. Suppose that marketing research has predicted that \$9.5 million must be spent on new product advertising. What strategic choice would you make?
3. The probability of success has now increased to 90%. Would this change in beliefs affect your optimal strategy given in question 2?

#### **C. New Product Competition**

## **October 1<sup>st</sup> Session 11: Power Play**

### Readings:

Power Play (B): Sega in 16-bit Video Games (9-795-103)

1. Evaluate NEC's and Sega's strategies for challenging Nintendo in the video game business.
2. Why did Nintendo delay introducing a 16-bit video game system?

## **IV. Corporate Strategy**

### **A. Diversification and Market Entry**

#### **October 6<sup>th</sup> Session 12- Entry Choices / Entrant's Advantage**

##### Readings

ValuJet Airlines (KEL043)

#### **October 13<sup>th</sup> Session 13-Entry Choices / Incumbent's Advantage**

##### Readings

AOL Europe vs. Freeserve (A) (HBS # 9-703-409)

#### **October 15<sup>th</sup> Session 14- Comcast and Video on Demand**

##### Readings:

"Comcast wants to Challenge the World, .... " Fortune, October 18, 2004

#### **October 20<sup>th</sup> Session 15: Verizon**

##### Readings:

"Verizon's Gutsy Bet", BusinessWeek, August 4, 2003

#### **October 22<sup>nd</sup> Session 16: NBC series Law and Order**

##### Readings :

“Crime Pays”, Fortune, March 21, 2005

### **October 27<sup>th</sup> Session 17: Diversification through new product entry**

#### Readings:

Fox News: We Report We Decide

#### Questions:

What does The Fox News Channel Mean by “ Fair and Balanced”? Why have they been so successful?

Why have both MSNBC and CNN struggled given Fox’s strategy?

### **October 29<sup>th</sup> Session 18: Multipoint Competition:**

#### Readings

Cat Fight in the Pet Food Industry (A), (HBS# 9-391-189)

#### Questions:

#### Pet Food

1. Why did the bidding for Anderson escalate? Why so high?
2. Is the Quaker acquisition a threat? For which firm?
3. What should Purina do? Again, consider the nature of the strategic threat?
4. Why do prices begin to rise?

### **November 3<sup>rd</sup> Session 19: Credible Spatial Preemption**

#### Readings

Case: The Ready-to-Eat Cereal Industry in 1994 (9-795-191,9-796-122)

#### Questions

1. Why has RTE cereals been such a profitable business? What changes have led to the current industry “crisis”?
2. Why have private labels been able to enter this industry successfully? How do the cost structures of private label and branded cereal manufacturers differ?

3. What does General Mills hope to accomplish with its April 1994 reduction in trade promotions and prices?
4. What are the risks associated with these actions? How do you expect General Mills' competitors to respond?
5. What should General Mills do?

### **November 5<sup>th</sup> Session 20: Preemption in Movie Release Dates**

#### Readings

Case: Paramount Pictures: The Transformers Dilemma (HBS # W12144-PDF-ENG)

### **November 10<sup>th</sup> Session 21 - Capacity Preemption**

#### Readings

Case: Dupont (HBS # 9-390-112 )

#### Questions

1. What are the major cost drivers in this industry and what is their impact on Du Pont's Competitive position?
2. Should Du Pont pre-empt?

### **November 12<sup>th</sup> Session 22- In Class Mid Term Examination**

### **November 17<sup>th</sup> Session 23 Competitive Cost Analysis : Optional Class Topic**

#### **B. Vertical Contracting**

### **November 19<sup>th</sup> Session 24- Vertical Competition**

#### Readings

Vertical Restrictions

#### **C. Game Theory and the Art of Schmoozing: Managing your career**



**November 24<sup>th</sup> Session 25: Internal Labor Markets and Job Tournaments:  
Associate/Partner Game and the Art of Schmoozing**

Readings

Baron and Kreps, “ Internal Labor Markets”

Kreps and Baron, “ Promotion and Career Concerns”

View Video Clip “ Sex and the City: Season 1, Episode 3, “ Bay of Married Pigs” “

Bain & Co., Inc.: Making Partner (HBS # 899066)

**December 1<sup>st</sup> Session 26: Economics of Corporate Culture and Organizations**

Readings

Johnson & Johnson (A) (384-053)

Questions

What is the purpose of the Credo?

**December 3<sup>rd</sup> : Session 27 Economics of Organizations and Leadership**

Readings:

An Economic Perspective on Leadership

**December 8<sup>th</sup> Session 28: Economics as a tool for Managerial Decision Making**

Readings

Fog of War Video ( to be viewed in class)

**Instructions on Written Analysis:**

The written analysis should be based on a strategic situation of your choice. Your chosen situation must be one where a manager or other individual must take into the account the strategy of rivals before making his/her strategic choice. You should then apply some of the economic models discussed in class to analyze the strategic choices made.

Your paper should include the following

General background: 2-3 pages: You should provide some general description of the key decision makers (e.g., firms). You should also describe the strategic choices (e.g., price, market entry, new products, advertising) available to the decision makers/managers and what options they ultimately chose.

8-10 pages of Analysis of strategic decisions made in light of the economic models from class

Suggested Paper Length including all exhibits: 12-15 pages, doubled spaced, 12 point font, One inch margin, header( team member names)

Team size: 3-5 students

Date Due: by 5pm, Monday, December 15<sup>th</sup>

One on one meeting:

Each team is strongly encouraged to have a brief one on one meeting with Professor Thomas. At least one week prior to the meeting, each team should submit electronically the following information

1. Brief outline of proposed topic and areas of analysis
2. 1-2 page brief description of your proposed topic area and relevant economic models from class

Keep in mind the higher the quality of the documentation you submit, the higher the quality the feedback.

Delivery Instructions: Students should post their papers to web café no later than the due date. Pdf format preferred.

Example of Prior paper topics. Some prior papers are also available on web café

Google v

Apple (iPhone v Android)  
Facebook (search and social media)  
Microsoft (chrome)

Cloud Computing (Amazon)

Hybrid Automobiles

Stephen Starr Restaurants

Historical Examples  
    Wars (Battle of Bull Run, Iraqi)  
    Romeo and Juliet

Political or Policy Debates  
    Elections (US Presidential, India Congress Party)