



**MANAGEMENT 7400  
LEADING EFFECTIVE TEAMS**

**March 4 – 6, 2024**

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**Note: This is a preliminary version of the syllabus; it is subject to change at the instructor's discretion**

**OVERVIEW**

Among Fortune 1000 companies, 800 use teams as the primary way to innovate and solve problems for responsibilities ranging from product development to customer service. In this course we will use the latest evidence from the science of organizational psychology to understand an array of tactics that can help you maximize the potential of teams you lead.

It's important that we organize concepts in a way that is both intuitive and consistent with what we've learned in a century of research on teams. The best way to do this is to split the course into two basic parts that match the two key phases of teamwork: *generating strategy* and *implementing strategy*. We first have to decide what we're going to do as a team (generate strategy), and then we have to get it done (implementing strategy). On the first day of class, I'll explain why these are the two core phases of teamwork. Within the second phase (implementing strategy), there are two primary challenges: motivating action and coordinating action. This leaves us with three topics that we will use to organize our three-day course:

1. **Day 1: Generating Strategy.** This includes tactics for optimizing team decision making.
2. **Day 2: Motivating Action.** This includes tactics for directing your team's attention toward a shared vision and inspiring persistence when work becomes especially tedious or demanding.
3. **Day 3: Coordinating Action.** This includes tactics related to division of labor and combining expertise effectively while minimizing losses in efficiency.

My primary goals are for you to (1) reflect on what will make you a better team leader and team member, and (2) to leave the final day of class with at least ten highly actionable strategies that

you can immediately implement when you return to work.

Organizational psychology is a social science discipline. Like any other discipline, it is predicated on collecting data and analyzing it using advanced statistical techniques. On some occasions we'll get a fairly nuanced look at how studies are conducted. On other occasions, we'll review a wide array of studies in a short period of time.

We will cover topics using a broad spectrum of approaches, including simulations, group exercises, case discussions, videos, and lecture. This will allow us to learn ideas conceptually and experience them firsthand.

The contents of this syllabus are subject to change at my discretion.

### **ELECTRONICS POLICY**

To ensure the most immersive and engaging learning environment, electronics are prohibited unless otherwise noted. You are not permitted to use laptops, tablets, or your phones.

I want to maintain the rigor expected in the Wharton MBA program while also being realistic (especially for those of you who are WEMBA students who may need to attend to work responsibilities). You will have breaks so you can attend to work matters. If you must immediately attend to a work situation, then please step out of the classroom to do so.

I know how central electronic devices are to our personal and professional lives, thus I have wrestled with this decision for a long time, and I revisit it before every new course I teach. Here is my reasoning:

Once my students stopped using electronics in class, I noticed an enormous boost to the overall classroom experience. Everyone was less distracted, more engaged, and more excited about the engagement they witnessed in their classmates. They told me that it was refreshing not to see the person sitting in front of them on their email. I had many students individually thanking me for getting rid of electronics.

We spend the rest of our lives on our devices – let's stay off of them for as much as possible for a few days so we can fully embrace this topic and learn as much as possible from each other.

If you do not believe this is realistic for you, then you won't get as much out of this course as you should, and you will distract your classmates. In that case, I recommend that you do not enroll in this course.

### **COURSE RHYTHM**

A major advantage of an intensive three-day course is the opportunity to fully immerse ourselves in a single topic. To take full advantage of this opportunity, we're going to use a "flipped"

approach that is the opposite of what is taken in many courses. Rather than learn about a topic before applying it, our first exposure to each topic will be an immersive experience – either a simulation, group exercise, or case discussion. We will then debrief the key lessons and broaden them to real world examples. At that point I will discuss how the assigned readings will deepen our understanding of each subtopic.

You will read about each topic *after* your first exposure to it. This will allow us to dive into each topic with no preconceptions – learning how teams work from the inside-out rather than the outside-in. This approach follows best practices in educational psychology, which suggests that it is critical to use a hands-on experience as the basis for extrapolating broader principles.

It is critical that you do the readings after each class so that your understanding of each principle solidifies. Mastery of the readings will also be critical for your performance on the individual action plan. As I explain below, I know you are very busy, so I have chosen readings that are engaging and no longer than necessary.

### **CASE DISCUSSIONS AND GROUP EXERCISES**

We will discuss examples that get into the rich detail of what happens in firms that make excellent (and poor) use of teams. We will pair these discussions with exercises that are, by design, quite different from the types of tasks you encounter at work each day. This is deliberate. The complications of day-to-day work are stripped away so we can focus more intently on the psychology of how we interact, how we solve problems, and how we make decisions. This will provide us with the clearest possible window to see and understand the universal patterns of communication and problem-solving that are at play in most teams.

I ask you to remember the intentionality behind the design of these tasks in case you find yourself wondering why we are, say, building a tower with pieces of spaghetti and marshmallow or trying to decrypt a complex puzzle. Please immerse yourself in the tasks without judgment.

After each of these team exercises, I will touch on real world analogues. By connecting exercises that have been intentionally stripped of context to real-life examples, you will more easily be able to recognize key patterns – the pitfalls and tripwires that your current and future teams experience – and how to address them quickly.

Last but not least, students who embrace these exercises usually find them incredibly fun. They are a great way to get to know each other, stay engaged, and experience healthy competition.

### **MATERIALS**

I realize that you have to read extensively for all of your classes, so I want to make sure that the readings for this class are as worthwhile as possible. I sought to identify readings that will help you learn the course concepts while also being engaging. Most of the readings are either cases, exercises that you'll need to prepare for interactive sessions, or passages from books

that are written in an accessible way (in the style of popular books) by authors who have training in social science methods. The readings will all be available free of charge on Canvas in one of two places: “Course Materials @ Penn Libraries” (this is the only place we are allowed to store copyrighted material) or at “Files→Cases” (this is where I store cases that I have personally written).

## GRADING

- **Individual Action Plan (50%):** The course concepts will contribute more to your professional success if you immediately apply what you have learned in the classroom to your everyday experiences. In particular, it is important to think about how the ideas we cover can be translated into concrete action steps. Toward that end, you will draw on the lessons from the three phases of this course (generating strategy, motivating action, and coordinating action) to outline a series of action steps to improve a team you lead. My goal is for this project to be as practically useful as possible. The full details and grading criteria of this assignment will be posted on Canvas.
- **Attendance, Preparation, and Engagement (35%).**
  - You must physically be at every class *on time* and *the entire time*. There are only three sessions, so if you are absent for one half (or even one quarter) of one day, you will miss so much content that I strongly discourage you from remaining enrolled. Any absence or missed class time will also come at the expense of your assigned teammates, who will be relying on you for the many group activities.
  - I will sprinkle in short breaks in case you have to attend to urgent work matters. If a work situation comes up that is so urgent that you can’t wait until the next break to address it, then please leave the room rather than cut against the electronics policy.
  - Since the root of “attendance” is “attend”, you also must be present mentally, such that you’re paying attention. If I notice that you are using your phone or tablet, then you will be given an unexcused absence for the day.
  - Given the size of the class and the short amount of time we have, there won’t be an opportunity for everyone to talk on a regular basis. However, I expect you to be on time and prepared for each session, and to contribute when possible.
  - If you are unable to contribute to the class discussion when I call on you or cannot contribute to team exercises because you are inadequately prepared or engaged, then significant points will be deducted from this portion of your grade.
  - If you are excessively or routinely late, then you will be marked absent at my discretion.
  - If you must miss class for medical reasons, then please email me and provide an explanation.
  - There will be a letter grade reduction for every unexcused absence. This is independent of grade reductions for tardiness, missed assignments, lack of

- preparation, and phone use.
- This portion of the grade will also account for two straightforward deliverables that are due for the first class. You must (1) register for the Everest simulation and (2) read the syllabus. Below is more detail on each of these deliverables.
    - **Register for the Everest simulation.** You must register for the simulation we will be doing on the first day of class (i.e., the Everest Team Simulation). A member of the Wharton Learning Lab will provide instructions on how to do this a few days before this session. Specifically, please look for an email from Kerryn Hayes, Heather Meier, Joseph Lee, or Lennart Meincke. You will need to register several days in advance of the simulation. I'm currently putting the deadline as March 1, but this may change depending upon IT's needs. Please bring your laptop for the sim.
    - **Read the syllabus.** Because students find it tedious when professors spend class time covering information about course requirements, I try to avoid this as much as possible. At the same time, it's important that we're on the same page about what to expect (and what is expected of us). I will be (gently and kindly!) cold-calling students on the first day, and some of my questions are likely to invoke issues that are mentioned on the syllabus (especially in the "overview" section above). Please read this entire syllabus carefully.
  - **Reflection questions (15%).** Before each class there will be one reflection question due. A good response is thoughtful but concise – about 250 words – though the length can vary. The question will sometimes be rooted in the assigned readings. I will review your responses prior to each class as a way to get a sense of the range of experiences and opinions in the room ahead of our class discussions. The questions must be submitted on time. Late submissions earn 0 points.

All students are responsible for reading, understanding, and following the full policies posted on Canvas regarding assignments, attendance, grading, and academic integrity. Thank you for taking this part of the course seriously.

If anything serious occurs to you during the course that impairs your capacity to attend all sessions for their entirety, submit the assignments on time, and otherwise perform up to your normal ability, you must let me know immediately. I realize that some situations are unavoidable, so I only ask that you to keep me apprised of what is going on. Other than a note from a licensed professional, you do not have to provide me with specific details if they are confidential — but if you are going to make me aware that something is preventing you from performing optimally, then I must be made aware *as it is happening* rather than after the fact. I will not be able to make adjustments to your grade after the course is over.

## COURSE POLICIES

**Seating:** I'm hoping to get to know all of you. Consistent with what is used in the rest of the MBA program here at Wharton, we're going to have a preplanned seating arrangement because of how much it will help me get to know each of you as quickly as possible. Although I fully understand how nice it is to be able to choose your own seat, this approach is by far the easiest way to help me to get to know each of you, and, in turn, to help you be involved in the class. Thank you for your understanding. The seating chart will be provided on the first day of class until five minutes into the class period; thus, you will not know your seat if you are late to the first class. Unfortunately, I can't grant requests to move seats. I typically get many such requests, and it would be impossible to honor each request without undermining the whole purpose of the seating chart! Please note that you will be changing seats pretty frequently because of the various team exercises, so you will not be stationed in one spot for the entire course.

**Electronics – “unplugged”:** As noted above, to get credit for attendance you need to be off all electronic devices unless you have received written permission from me or unless otherwise instructed.

**Academic Integrity:** Students are required to abide by the University's policy of academic integrity at all times. This applies to exam-related issues as well as plagiarism on graded assignments. Additional information on plagiarism is available online.

**Withdrawal:** it is not possible to withdraw from this course after the first class. Permission must be granted for all requests to withdraw.

## SCHEDULE

### Agenda for Monday, March 4

- 9:00am: Introduction: Foundations of Teamwork
- 9:45am: Designing your Team: What the Science Says About Team Size and Team Composition
- 10:45am: Generating Team Strategy: Idea Generation and Evaluation
- 12:00pm: Lunch
- 1:30pm: Revisiting Idea Generation and Evaluation
- 2:00pm: Generating Team Strategy: Deliberation and Decision Rules
- 4:15pm: Integration and Class Discussion
- 5:00pm: End of Today's Session

### **Agenda for Tuesday, March 5**

- 9:00am: The Shift from Generating to Implementing Team Strategy
- 10:45am: Motivation: Directing Attention (Vision and Milestones)
- 12:00pm: Lunch
- 1:15pm: Motivation: Directing Attention cont'd (Designating Role Responsibilities) and Inspiring Action (Jumpstarting People into Action)
- 2:45pm: Motivation: Inspiring Action cont'd (Shaping the Path and Connecting Work to Core Needs)
- 4:00pm: Motivation: Recap, Integration, and Ford Simulation
- 5:15pm: End of today's session

### **Agenda for Wednesday, March 6**

- 9:00am: Reflecting on Team Motivation: Debriefing Ford
- 9:45am: Coordinating Action: Building Common Ground
- 12:00pm: Lunch
- 1:15pm: Coordinating Action: Minimizing Process Loss
- 3:00pm: Coordinating Action: Spanning Boundaries
- 4:45pm: Final Course Recap: Integrating What We've Learned about Generating and Implementing Team Strategy
- 5:15pm: End of the Course

## **READINGS**

Please note that I will call on students to discuss the material. As noted above, the readings will all be available free of charge on Canvas at "Course Materials @ Penn Libraries" (for copyrighted readings) or "Files → Cases" (for cases that I have written). If you do not complete an assignment and are prepared for class, then points are likely to be deducted from your attendance and engagement score.

### **Readings due for March 4**

- There are no readings due for the first day of class.

### **Readings due for March 5**

- Read: Cosier and Schwenk – "Agreement and Thinking Alike: Ingredients for Poor Decisions". This reading is available on Canvas under "Course Materials @Penn Libraries".

### **Reading assignment due for March 6**

- Read: Nordgen and Schonthal – “The Human Element” (pages 3 – 5). This reading is available on Canvas under “Course Materials @Penn Libraries”.
- Please quickly skim all of the following readings and then choose one for a careful in-depth analysis:
  - Heath and Heath – “Made to Stick” (pages 98-129). This reading is available on Canvas under “Course Materials @Penn Libraries”.
  - Heath and Heath – “Switch” (pages 73 – 100). This reading is available on Canvas under “Course Materials @Penn Libraries”.
  - Heath and Heath – “Switch” (pages 49 – 57). This reading is available on Canvas under “Course Materials @Penn Libraries”.
  - Heath and Heath – “Switch” (pages 105 – 113). This reading is available on Canvas under “Course Materials @Penn Libraries”.
  - Heath and Heath – “Switch” (pages 182 – 190). This reading is available on Canvas under “Course Materials @Penn Libraries”.

### **Readings due after final session**

– Note: I’ve listed five readings below, but taken together it is only about 15 pages of total reading

- Read: Hackman – “Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances” (Chapter 1 – I recommend reading or skimming the entire chapter, as it is very engaging, but only pages 22-23 are required). This reading is available on Canvas under “Course Materials @Penn Libraries”.
- Read: Groysberg – “Chasing Stars” (pages 126 – 131 and 141 – 145). This reading is available on Canvas under “Course Materials @Penn Libraries”.
- Read: Kozlowski and Ilgen – “The Science of Team Success” (pages 58-59). This reading is available on Canvas under “Course Materials @Penn Libraries”.
- Read: “Velocity Vies for the Impossible” and come to class prepared to engage in the exercise. This reading is available on Canvas under “Files→Cases”.
- Read: “The Future of Ford”. This reading is available on Canvas under “Files→Cases”. Please prepare responses to the two questions on the final page about the decisions that Lin must make. I plan to call on a select set of students to report their recommendations.