

UGRD_LKCSB_2620_MGMT236_WHITNEY ZHANG



Singapore Management University

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Code & Title

MGMT.236 - Managing Strategic Change and Digital Transformation

Effective Start Date

11/01/2027

Offering Unit / Department / School

LKCSB

Course Career

Undergraduate

Course Units

CU:

Grading Basis

GRD - Graded

1

Course Description

To achieve superior performance in an increasingly dynamic and uncertain global business environment, companies in every industry must create internal capability to harness strategic change for sustainable competitive advantage. However, companies that are able to strategically change their entrenched ways of doing things and then reclaim leading positions are the exception rather than the rule. With the industry 4.0 upon us and fast advancement in digital technologies, firms in many industries would find it even more pressing but challenging to build the managerial capabilities to cope with the digital transformation that will reshape the business landscape tremendously for the future. Against this backdrop, this course discusses how companies can effectively manage the strategic change and digital transformation that will significantly impact the way the business is configured for competitive advantage. Besides the internal managerial challenge, the course also emphasizes that companies must cope with

strategic interactions with different industry players to create value collectively and continuously. With respect to digital transformation, the course discusses digital concepts and technologies such as omni-channel, platforms, eco-systems, blockchain, IOT, AI, and cloud computing etc. that impose both challenges and opportunities for strategic change management in the increasingly technology-based, internet-based, and data-based business contexts.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the paradox in the relationship between strategy and strategic change.
- Analyze challenges related to the strategic interaction with competitors, complementors or other players, especially in the digital transformation process.
- Explain the strategic change issues related to disruptive innovation threats, in particular, new digital technologies and digital business models.
- Explain the management issues in turnaround, transformation and continuous renewal process, and apply managerial knowledge and tools to the digital transformation process.
- Propose logical and feasible action plans for successful strategic change and digital transformation.

SMU Graduate Learning Outcomes

Collaboration and leadership, Critical thinking & problem solving, Innovation and enterprising skills, Interdisciplinary knowledge

Competencies

Digital Strategies, Futures Thinking, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Strategy Planning

Course Area(s)

AREA - Business Options, AREA - Business-Oriented Electives, AREA - Digital Business Core, AREA - Econ Major Rel/Econ Options, AREA - IS Related Courses, AREA - Social Sciences/ PLE Major-related, AREA - Strategic Management Electives, AREA - Technology & Entrepreneurship, ENRL - SS Enrolment: 6 ISEP; 1 SUSEP

Simple Requirements

2 CUs for Non-BBM Second Major

Type

Prerequisite

Earn at least 2 credits from the following:

- FNCE101 - Finance
- FNCE103 - Finance For Law
- ACCT101 - Financial Accounting
- ACCT105 - Financial Accounting for Law
- COR-COMM1304 - Management Communication
- OBHR101 - Management of People at Work
- MKTG101 - Marketing
- OPIM201 - Operations Management
- MGMT102 - Strategy
- FNCE104 - Financial Management

CLASS SECTION INFORMATION

Instructor(s)

WHITNEY, ZHANG WEI ZHANG (whitneyzhang@smu.edu.sg)

Instruction Mode

In Person

Consultations

Teaching Assistants

I will be available for consultation with appointment.

Teaching Assistant: TBA

and

Office Location

LKCSB Level 5 - 5015

Assessment Components (New)

Category*		Weightage*	
Class Participation and Activities		20	
Individual or Group?*	With Component?*	Writing	With Oral Component?*
Individual	No		Yes

Category*		Weightage*		Assessment/Submission Period*	
Projects/Assignments		45		Week 12	
Description	Individual or Group?*	With Component?*	Writing	With Component?*	Oral
Group project	Group	Yes		Yes	

Category*		Weightage*		Assessment/Submission Period*	
Final Exam		35		Week 15	
Individual or Group?*	With Component?*	Writing	With Oral Component?*		
Individual	No		No		

Instructional Methods and Expectations

Note: You will be graded according to the curve after aggregating all the components.

The primary objective of this course is to develop students' ability to think strategically, manage organizational change, and address complex digital transformation challenges through the integration of theory and practice. The course adopts the SMU-X experiential learning pedagogy, combining conceptual learning, case discussions, industry engagement, and project-based learning with external partner organizations.

Students are expected to actively participate in discussions, critically evaluate different viewpoints, and apply course concepts to authentic organizational challenges. Lectures provide the theoretical foundations and analytical frameworks, while case discussions, project consultations, and interactions with project sponsors enable students to translate theory into practical solutions. Assessment comprises class participation, an industry-sponsored group project, and an individual final examination.

Class Participation (including attendance, discussion contribution, and project engagement)

Active participation is central to the learning experience. Students are expected to contribute meaningfully to classroom discussions, engage constructively with their peers, and demonstrate critical thinking when analysing cases, readings, and organizational challenges. The ability to articulate ideas clearly, challenge assumptions respectfully, and integrate different perspectives is an important learning outcome of the course.

As this is an SMU-X course, participation also extends beyond classroom discussions. Students are expected to engage professionally with project sponsors, contribute actively during project meetings and consultations, and participate fully in milestone presentations and feedback sessions throughout the term.

The course involves discussions of both academic readings and business cases. Students are expected to complete all assigned materials before class and come prepared to contribute thoughtfully. The instructor may cold-call students to facilitate discussion and encourage broad participation.

Outstanding class participation typically demonstrates the following characteristics:

- Attends and actively participates in all classes and project-related activities.
- Demonstrates thorough preparation by integrating insights from readings, cases, and independent research.

- Makes thoughtful, analytical, and constructive contributions that deepen classroom discussion.
- Builds on the ideas of others while offering alternative perspectives supported by evidence.
- Engages professionally with project sponsors and contributes meaningfully to team discussions and project development.

Students with unexcused absences from class for 4 or more sessions may be given an 'F' for that class. Late class attendance and non-completion of blended learning materials may be counted as an absence from class.

SMU-X Industry Project

This section of Managing Strategic Change and Digital Transformation is offered as an SMU-X course, integrating academic theory with real-world practice. A key component of the course is the SMU-X industry project, in which students work in multidisciplinary teams with external industry and community partners on authentic strategic change and digital transformation challenges identified by the project sponsors. Rather than analysing hypothetical scenarios, students address unresolved organizational issues that are of strategic importance to the sponsoring organizations, such as formulating a transformation strategy, overcoming organizational inertia and legacy systems, balancing innovation with operational excellence, or competing within platforms and digital ecosystems.

The project also allows students to examine digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, data analytics, platform business models and digital ecosystems, not from a technical perspective but through their strategic and managerial implications for the sponsor's structure, business processes, customer experience and competitive position. In doing so, students strengthen their strategic thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, stakeholder management and communication skills while gaining first-hand experience in tackling complex transformation initiatives.

Throughout the term, teams will engage with their project sponsors through project briefings, consultation meetings, milestone reviews, and final presentations. Students are expected to apply the concepts, frameworks, and analytical tools introduced in the course to develop practical, evidence-based recommendations that create value for the project sponsor.

The final deliverables will typically include a written report and a professional presentation to the project sponsor. Depending on the nature of the project, additional deliverables may be required to meet the sponsor's needs. Detailed project requirements, timelines, and assessment criteria will be provided separately.

As collaborative learning is an important component of the SMU-X experience, all team members are expected to contribute actively throughout the project. At the end of the term, students will complete peer evaluations for all team members. Peer evaluation scores may be used to moderate individual project grades based on each member's contribution.

Final Examination

The final examination is an individual open-book, open-notes examination covering all topics discussed throughout the course. The examination is designed to assess students' ability to analyse complex managerial situations, integrate concepts from different parts of the course, and apply appropriate theories and frameworks to unfamiliar business contexts.

Questions may draw upon concepts, readings, class discussions, case studies, project experiences, and new business scenarios introduced during the examination. As the emphasis is on critical thinking and application rather than memorisation, students are expected to demonstrate sound judgement, well-supported arguments, and the effective application of relevant frameworks.

No make-up examination will be administered. Students who are unable to sit for the final examination should refer to the University's policies regarding absence from examinations.

Weekly Lesson Plan

Session	Topics and Readings
1	<u>Course introduction</u> Course overviews and recap of strategy concepts

2	<u>Strategic rigidity</u> Case: Airborne Express -
3	<u>Strategic agility</u> Case: (SMU case) REC on Solar Coaster (SMU-19-0006: https://cmp.smu.edu.sg/case/3896) -
4	<u>Competitive moves</u> Case: (SMU case) A380 rise and demise (SMU-21-0019: https://cmp.smu.edu.sg/case/5066) -
5	<u>Co-opetition and platform business models</u> Case: (SMU case) Cofounder simulation (SMU-17-0004: https://cmp.smu.edu.sg/case/1971) Case: Wintel simulation (materials will be provided in the class) -
6	<u>Strategic transformation</u> Case: Lego transformation -
7	<u>Digital technologies</u> Case: Lego vs. Minecraft
Recess Week (Week 8)	
9	<u>Omni-channels</u> Case: <u>To be announced</u>
10	<u>Digital transformation</u> Case: (SMU case) DBS: Digital transformation to best bank in the world (SMU-20-0015: https://cmp.smu.edu.sg/case/4426) -

11	<u>Dynamic capabilities</u> Case: To be announced
12 & 13	<i>Group presentations</i> <i>Please submit presentation slides before your presentation day, through eLearn/Assignment.</i>
-	

Recommended Textbooks and Readings

There is no required textbook for this course. Most of the readings such as articles from academic journals or popular business journals are ***available electronically*** in the SMU library online journal collection. The instructor will compile a ***digital course pack*** including selected articles and cases for you to purchase. The digital course pack is available at <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/> (to be announced)

For SMU cases, SMU students are entitled to acquire it for free using your SMU account and credentials.

During the class discussion we will integrate the insights from different readings into practical case analysis. Therefore, it is imperative that you read the relevant materials and cases before each class. Additional readings will be distributed or posted on eLearn before certain sessions.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity

All acts of academic dishonesty (including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, facilitation of acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized possession of exam questions, or tampering with the academic work of other students) are serious offences.

All work (whether oral or written) submitted for purposes of assessment must be the student's own work. Penalties for violation of the policy range from zero marks for the component assessment to expulsion, depending on the nature of the offence.

When in doubt, students should consult the instructors of the course. Details on the SMU Code of Academic Integrity may be accessed at <https://smu.sharepoint.com/sites/oasis/SitePages/DOS-WKLSWC/UCSC.aspx>.

Responsible Use of AI

The University recognises the importance of equipping students with the skills to navigate an AI-driven world. While AI tools may support learning, they must be used judiciously and responsibly. Students must not present AI-generated output as their own work.

Each course may set specific guidelines on the use of AI in assessments. Students are required to follow these guidelines carefully and should seek clarification from the instructors if uncertain.

Misuse of AI constitutes a breach of academic integrity and will be subject to the same penalties as other acts of academic dishonesty.

Copyright Notice

Please note that all course materials are meant for personal use only, namely for the purposes of teaching, studying and research. You are strictly not permitted to make copies of or print additional copies or distribute such copies of the course materials or any parts thereof, for commercial gain or exchange.

For the full copyright notice, please visit <https://researchguides.smu.edu.sg/copyright>.

Accessibility

SMU strives to make learning experiences accessible for all. Students who anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers due to disability are encouraged to inform the course instructor as soon as possible. Students may also contact the university's disability services team if they have questions or concerns about academic provisions:

accessibility@smu.edu.sg. Please be aware that the accessible tables in our seminar room should remain available for students who require them.

Digital Readiness for Teaching and Learning (DRTL)

As part of emergency preparedness, instructors may conduct lessons online via the Zoom platform during the term, to prepare students for online learning. During an actual emergency, students will be notified to access the Zoom platform for their online lessons. The class schedule will mirror the current face-to-face class timetable unless otherwise stated.