

ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES – SDM

January, 2001

COURSE OVERVIEW

The purpose of this course is to enhance your ability to take effective action in complex organizational settings. This ability will be fostered by building your personal skills in teamwork and by providing you with the analytic tools needed to analyze, change, and lead organizations. This course is therefore a demanding one that stretches from individual skills to the analysis of organizations. It emphasizes the importance of the organizational context in influencing which individual styles and skills are effective. The course employs a wide variety of learning tools, from experiential learning to the more conventional discussion of written cases. The basic framework of the course centers on three complementary perspectives on organizations: the strategic design, political, and cultural “lenses” on organizations.

The course is divided into three parts. The first focuses on team dynamics and the challenges of working and managing within and across teams. The second part introduces you to the three perspectives or lenses for understanding processes in organizations. The third examines ways to generate change in organizations.

Specific Course Objectives

1. Provide you with opportunities to participate in on-going work teams where you can develop and practice new skills.
2. Provide you with the frameworks to analyze organizations as strategic designs, as political systems, and as cultural systems, and enable you to apply these frameworks to take effective action to deal with organizational and managerial problems.
3. Allow you to examine your own behavior and beliefs about organizations in order to contrast, debate, and integrate them with the theories and observations of others, and to learn from the rich experience of your classmates.
4. Encourage you to become a critical reader of the business press and the trends it discusses.

Reading Material

The readings for the course come from the second edition of a "modular" textbook *Managing for the Future: Organizational Behavior and Processes*, written by a team of Sloan School faculty members, which is available from the MIT Coop.

Teams and Teamwork

Each of you will be assigned to a Design Challenge I Team (DC I) and then to a Design Challenge II Team (DC II). In this course we will use this team structure to help each of you learn more effectively than you could as independent individuals. These teams will work together on several assignments and exercises in OP. Two of the assignments in this course are team assignments (Team Case Analysis and Team Organizational Analysis) and you receive a team grade. The individual written assignment focuses on understanding your team and your role in the team. To help you in working to become an effective work team, our *Team Handbook* (Module 3) is included as part of the course readings. This handbook is a resource for you and your team to use in managing relationships and productivity on your team. I believe that what you learn about team dynamics and about your own action patterns in teams will be an invaluable element of your learning from this course and strategies for better action in the future.

I can provide some process consultation to your teams if you encounter problems or challenges. Wise teams know that it is often crucial to seek some form of outside help. Remember that seeking such help is not a sign of failure, but a step in enhancing your learning. Do not wait until your team is in really serious trouble before approaching one or more of these resources.

At the end of the semester teams will form around common areas of interest and will be responsible for choosing an organizational issue that the members will examine in depth as they go back to their companies at the beginning of February. For Assignment #3 (Team Organizational Analysis) these teams will produce an analysis of the common area of interest in the organizations that you work in and will present their results at the end of March when you come back to MIT. The analysis will involve using the frameworks discussed in class to describe the organizational issue that your team has chosen and then propose ways of dealing with or improving the particular areas of interests examined. We will take class time on the 26th and 29th to form teams around areas of interest.

Graded Assignments

Three graded assignments and class participation will make up your final grade.

Assignment #1 – Individual analysis of team and your role in the team - 30% of final grade
– Due January 19th

Assignment #2 – Team recommendations for Change in Dynacorp - 20 % of final grade
– Due January 26th

Assignment #3 – Team Analysis of an Organizational Initiative - 50% of final grade
– Due End of March

Class Participation – I don't have a formal reward for this, but I do assume that you will come prepared to class each day to add value to the quality of the conversations in class.

Learning in this class requires individual participation and involvement. Sharing perceptions and ideas with others is crucial for learning and for understanding how the diverse opinions that you are likely to encounter in an organization are articulated and debated. You will find yourself

presenting and testing out new ideas that are not wholly formulated and assisting others to shape their ideas. You should be prepared to take some risks and be supportive of the efforts of others.

Attendance

It is crucial that you attend class regularly. Your participation not only enhances your own learning, but also is vital to the learning experiences of others. We do a number of exercises in class that are less effective when people are missing. Beyond one “excused” absence you will be dropped a half grade for each additional absence.

Professor

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Office Hours: Email me for an appointment or after class may work.

SDM 2001—OUTLINE OF CLASS SESSIONS

I. MANAGING WITHIN AND ACROSS TEAMS

Class 1	Jan. 10	Team Processes I Reading: Module 3 and Team Handbook Exercise: “Murder Mystery”
Class 2	Jan. 12	Team Processes II Reading: Module 4 Exercise: “Temporary Task Force”
Class 3	Jan. 17	Team Processes III Reading: Module 5 Exercise: “Twelve Angry Men”

II. UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZATIONS: THE THREE LENSES

Class 4	Jan. 19	The “New” Organization Reading: Module 1 <u>Individual Analysis of Team Due (30%)</u>
Class 5	Jan. 22	Strategic Design Lens—ABB Case Political Lens—Rosewell Role Play Reading: Module 2
Class 6	Jan. 24	Cultural Lens—MIT and Your Companies Start Diagnosis of Dynacorp Reading: Module 2
Class 7	Jan. 26	Integrating Lenses—Recommendations for Dynacorp Reading: Module 2 <u>Team Case Assignment Due: Recommendations for Action at Dynacorp (20%)</u>

III. MANAGING CHANGE IN ORGANIZATIONS

Class 8	Jan. 29	Negotiations and Conflict Management—Mango Systems Reading: Module 12
Class 9	Jan. 31	Change—“Strategy that Wouldn’t Travel” Reading: Module 8 and Handouts
	March	<u>Team Organizational Analysis Due (50%)</u>

CLASS SESSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

I. MANAGING WITHIN AND ACROSS TEAMS

Class 1 January 10 TEAM PROCESS I

Required Readings: Module 3 of *Managing for the Future*

- A Team Primer pp. 4-11
- Module 3 - Team Handbook

Assignment: Exercise to be assigned in class.

Class 2 January 12 TEAM PROCESS II

Required Readings: Module 4 of *Managing for the Future*

- Diverse Cognitive Styles in Teams, pp. 17-36.

Assignment: Exercise to be assigned in class.

Class 3 January 17 TEAM PROCESSES III

Required Readings: Module 5 of *Managing for the Future*

- Team Process Observation Guide, pp. 6-14.
- Team Decision Making, pp. 16-24.

Optional Reading: “The Trouble with Teams,” Brian Dumaine (*Fortune*), pp. 25-29.

Assignment: During this class, we shall be watching a video of group decision-making. In the previous class, each team will be assigned one of the categories in the Team Process Observation Guide. Teams should come to class prepared to monitor this category, as well as the processes documented in the note on Team Decision Making, while watching a videotape of a team meeting. To prepare for class, be sure your team has answered the following questions:

1. What information will you collect for your category?
2. How will you organize your team to collect information?

II. UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZATIONS: THE THREE LENSES

Class 4 January 19 THE "NEW" ORGANIZATION

Assignment #1 (Individual Analysis of Team) is Due!

Required Readings: Module 1 of *Managing for the Future*

- “The ‘New’ Organization: Taking Action in an Era of Organizational transformation”
- Module Overview
- Class note: “Changing organizational models”
- A Sampling of Views of the New organization
- Mapping your own organization: questionnaire

Optional Readings: Module 1 of *Managing for the Future*

- “The search for the Organization of Tomorrow”
- “Reading the Business Press”

Assignment: Come to class with your completed questionnaire form from Module 1 (p. 29), “Mapping your own organization: A questionnaire”. Be prepared to discuss the following questions:

- (1) What specific structures or processes in your organization led you to rate it as you did on each of the five features of the new organization?
- (2) What skills and knowledge were most important for you in working effectively in that organization? What skills do you think were most important for the person who was your manager?

Class 5 January 22 THE STRATEGIC DESIGN LENS AND THE POLITICAL LENS

Required Reading for Strategic Design Lens: Module 2 of *Managing for the Future*

- Part 1: Introduction
- Part 2: The Strategic Design Lens

Case: “ABB - Through the Strategic Design Lens”

Assignment: Come to class prepared to discuss the ABB case from the viewpoint of the Strategic Design lens. You should be able to answer the following questions based on the readings:

- (1) What are the strategic grouping structures in ABB? What are the principal linking mechanisms? What are the major alignment challenges, and how does ABB address them?
- (2) It is notoriously difficult to make a matrix structure work effectively. How does ABB make this design work?
- (3) What do you see as the strengths of ABB’s organization design? Its major weaknesses? Would you like to work as an operating company manager in ABB?

Required Reading for Political Lens: Module 2 of *Managing for the Future*

- “The Political Lens” pp. 40-48

- “Power failure in Management Circuits” pp. 50-63

Assignment: Read your assigned role in “Negotiating Corporate Change” case (handed out in previous class) and come ready to play your role.

Class 6 January 24 THE CULTURAL LENS AND STARTING DYNACORP

Required Readings: Module 2 of *Managing for the Future*

- Part 4: The Cultural Lens pp. 65-75
- Edgar Schein, “Organizational Culture” pp. 76-93

Assignment:

- 1) As you read about the cultural perspective, think of the similarities and differences between business school culture and the undergraduate culture at the university you attended.
- 2) Again using Schein’s description of organizational culture, consider the Sloan School. As a team develop a brief list of the artifacts that strike you (collectively) as particularly telling or revealing of the Sloan School culture. Bring any portable artifacts to class and be prepared to discuss them. What meanings do you attach to your collection? What values and assumptions give meaning to these artifacts?

Required Reading: Module 2 of *Managing for the Future*

- Part 5 “Using the Three Perspectives: Analyzing the Implementation of Teamwork” pp. 94-96
- CASE: DynaCorp Corporation (Video to be shown in class -- transcript included in Module 2 for reference -- please read pp. 97-99)

Class 7 January 26 INTEGRATING THE LENSES: TAKING EFFECTIVE ACTION IN ORGANIZATIONS

Assignment #2 (Recommendations for Action in Dynacorp) is Due!

Required Reading: Module 2 of *Managing for the Future*

- Part 5 “Using the Three Perspectives: Analyzing the Implementation of Teamwork” pp. 94-96
- CASE: DynaCorp Corporation (Video to be shown in class -- transcript included in Module 2 for reference -- please read pp. 97-99)

Assignment: Assign each team member one of the three perspectives as his/her focus for the DynaCorp class exercise. This person should come to class prepared to analyze DynaCorp from his/her perspective. We shall make the short video available for you to see in advance as a team; the readings provide the text of the video. What aspects of organizational behavior should you monitor? How will you monitor them? Why are these important? What information do you need to do an effective analysis from your perspective?

III. MANAGING CHANGE IN ORGANIZATIONS

Class 8 January 29 NEGOTIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Required Reading: Module 12 of *Managing for the Future*

- Read entire module, pp. 1-48
- Come prepared to participate in the Mango Case

Class 9 January 31 ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Required Readings: Module 8

- An Intro to Models of Organizational Change pp. 4-8
- The Challenges of Execution, pp. 11-30.
- Handout on “Models of organizational Change” (distributed in earlier class)

Case: Module 1: “The Strategy that wouldn’t travel” pp. 23-27.

Assignment: As a team come to class prepared to discuss the following questions:

- (1) What did Karen and her team do that made the changes at the Wichita plant happen? What were the enabling factors in the plant and its context?
- (2) What can Karen do now, in the context of the second plant? What three “action steps” you recommend?

Remember to use your three lenses! Remember Dynacorp!