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BMIS 479.01: Introduction to Consulting

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Course Information

Dates: Monday - Wednesday
Times: Section 1: 9:40 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Section 2: 11:10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Venue: Gallagher Business Building 205

Professor Information

Professor: Dr. David Firth
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Web Site: <http://www.business.umt.edu/faculty/firth>
Phone: (406) 243-5979
Office: Gallagher Business Building 360
Office Hours: **Mon/Wed 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**
Or by appointment made via e-mail

Mission of the UM School of Business Administration

The University of Montana's School of Business Administration is a collegial learning community dedicated to the teaching, exploration, and application of the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a competitive marketplace. As part of our assessment process and assurance-of-learning standards, the School of Business Administration has adopted the following learning goals for our undergraduate students:

Learning Goal 1: SoBA graduates will possess fundamental business knowledge.

Learning Goal 2: SoBA graduates will be able to integrate business knowledge.

Learning Goal 3: SoBA graduates will be effective communicators.

Learning Goal 4: SoBA graduates will possess problem solving skills.

Learning Goal 5: SoBA graduates will have an ethical awareness.

Learning Goal 6: SoBA graduates will be proficient users of technology.

Learning Goal 7: SoBA graduates will understand the global business environment in which they operate.

Mission of the MIS Department: To help our MIS students get great MIS careers.

Course Description

This course is aimed at those who wish to be successful consultants or entrepreneurs. The skills needed to be a successful consultant fall into three categories; 1) technical

skills, 2) interpersonal skills, and 3) consulting skills. We will not be addressing the technical skills aspect in this course – it is assumed that you will acquire these during your other classes. We will be addressing the interpersonal and consulting skills categories. This means that we will be learning how to actually do consulting, from how to write a proposal, present at the client, document the work you do, bill for that work, and terminate the engagement.

Learning Objectives

The overall course objective is to provide the concepts and skills you need to actual do consulting. We will concentrate on learning and implementing the tools and skills that you will need on any consulting engagement.

Upon successful completion of the course, you are expected to be able to:

- Craft a sensible and articulate proposal for the consulting work you will be doing.
- Be able to budget and track the work that you are doing.
- Use a framework to structure the consulting work that you are doing, and justify why you are using that framework.
- Understand what the difference is between strategic, business process, tactical and other consulting.
- Know how to deliver the consulting project – gather information, analyze it, document it, report your progress, and report on the consulting project.
- Communicate effectively in interviews and presentations – that means learning how to listen and learn.
- Develop a personal plan for improving yourself to become a better consultant, by understanding your own strengths and weaknesses.

Instructor's Expectations

In general, the students should assist the instructor in creating a positive, supportive environment for learning. Consulting is the business world depends on a successful “team” approach. Characteristics of successful teams include: diversity in background and skills; tolerance of diversity, uncertainty and ambiguity; clear and complete communication; and mutual respect of others views. Therefore students are expected to attend classes on a regular basis, arrive to class on time, remain in class until it ends, participate in discussions when appropriate, turn in assignments on their assigned due date. Most importantly, all participants in the class should be considerate of the other class participants and treat them (and their opinions) with respect. Insensitivity in this area will not be tolerated.

Wireless devices, including computers, PDA's, cell phones, and pagers, may not be turned on or in use during the class period unless approved in advance by the professor.

Students with disabilities documented through U of M Disability Services for Students (DSS) will be accommodated and have the responsibility to contact the instructor to initiate the appropriate actions. Please see me to discuss any concerns on this matter. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). “Reasonable” means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult <http://www.umt.edu/disability>.

Course Requirements and Expectations

The course will consist of some or all of the following:
lectures, in-class activities, exams, team assignments.

Lectures

The majority of the course content will be delivered via lectures. Since it has not been possible to find a textbook that adequately addresses the material we want to cover in this course, we will not be using one. As a result, other material has been selected to expand your exposure to various aspects of consulting. It is your responsibility to access this material from Moodle, print it off and read it. Since there is no book, the costs of doing this compensate.

In-Class Exercises and Discussions

Students are expected to read the assigned material or perform the assigned activities prior to coming to class. These activities and exercises are designed to reinforce the lecture material. Therefore, failure to do so will severely hamper your understanding of the lecture and, ultimately, your class participation grade. In-class quizzes will also provide students for participation grade credit. The student’s performance during in-class discussions will be a major component of the class participation grade.

Exams

There will be one “take-home” exam.

Team Assignment

The team assignment has critical significance. Effort and strength in the team assignments will substantially impact your final grade. Team assignment peer reviews will help me assess your effort and strength. A poor peer review from two or more of your peers will impact your grade significantly.

Client Meeting

The main element of your team assignment will be the meeting with the client (me). The idea behind the client meeting is two-fold: 1) see how you as a team analyze and then present the analysis of your material, 2) video-tape you as a team and give you personal post-class feedback on your presentation style and skills. During the meeting your client

will be “potentially hostile”. You should expect the questions you receive to be hard focused, and to press you on your thinking. Thinking nimbly and articulating your thoughts on-the-fly is a critical consulting skill that we’ll test here.

Homework

The TV show Lie To Me, on Fox TV.

I have posted season one of Lie to Me in Moodle. There are 12 episodes. We will have a spot quiz whenever I remember to give one. The quiz will be questions that check that you have watched the show. We use this show because it very capably demonstrates and teaches the art of understanding body language. Since professional consultants often cite their ability to read people as being a critical component of their success, learning the fundamentals of body language is important to your success in this field. You should start watching the show, expecting to be tested, in week 2. That means Week 2 = Episode 1, Week 3 = Episode 2, and so on.

Required Textbook

A review of the available textbooks and professionally oriented textbooks found none that adequately supported this course, particularly at the price points of the books. As a result, we may selectively use a chapter or two from one or more books, and evaluate it in class. The following are two of the most likely books we might use:

"The Advice Business" Fombrun and Nevins, Prentice Hall

"Consulting for Dummies" Nelson and Economy

Grading

Final grades will be based on the following:

Individual Assignments - 20 points

- 30 Second/ 2 Minute Intro – 5 points
- LinkedIn Profile – 5 points
- Destiny Mortgage SCQA – 5 points
- Trucks r Us – 5 points

Improve BMIS 479 Report – 10 points

Due 5pm on the last Friday of the regular semester

One Exam - 15 points

We will have one exam, covering important things that have been addressed in class. This will be a "download and complete within 1 hour" exam.

Client Meeting – 20 points

Meet in teams. Some sort of handout will be needed to guide the meeting. A two-page "**Here's what you need to do**" report is due after this meeting. There will be a peer evaluation to determine that there was even contribution from all team members. Significant variation in grades amongst team members based on peer evaluated effort can occur.

Write up of visiting consultants – 6 at 5 points each for 30 points

These are due Monday 5pm following the visit

For Fall 2015 we have:

- 1) UM SoBA seniors who worked in consulting firms over the summer
- 2) Tom Stergios of ATG (Advance Technology Group) Missoula Solutions Center
- 3) Chris Warden of Washington Corp.
- 4) KPMG Advisory
- 5) Ray Kordoplowski of Customer Value Management
- 6) Sherri Davidoff of LMG Security

Portfolio of Key Charts and Insights from class – 5 points

A self-help document, prepared from materials culled from class, for you to refer to later when you are consulting.

It is important to recognize that grading necessarily reflects the instructor's judgment regarding the quality of your work. Although an objective criterion for grading exists, all grading is somewhat subjective. If you have a question about a grade, please see me. However, requests for re-grading are likely to meet with skepticism unless an obvious grading mistake or unfairness is presented.

Grades will be conferred on a \pm basis and comply with the ranges shown below. Please note that the School of Business Administration requires students to attain a C or better in all lower core classes.

<i>Overall Percentage</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>
pct \geq 93%	A
93% > pct \geq 90%	A-
90% > pct \geq 87%	B+
87% > pct \geq 83%	B
83% > pct \geq 80%	B-
80% > pct \geq 77%	C+
77% > pct \geq 73%	C
73% > pct \geq 70%	C-
70% > pct \geq 67%	D+
67% > pct \geq 60%	D

Class Attendance

Class attendance is extremely important to succeed in this course. Attendance is mandatory, meaning that you are expected to attend each class period. However, the professor understands that there will be times when personal issues are unavoidable and take priority. Therefore, each student will be allowed three (3) excused absences without penalty.

Since students are allowed three excused absences, there is no need to contact the professor to explain an absence. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to obtain missed material from your peers, so establish contact with other students in the class immediately.

If **for any reason** (including illness) more than three absences occur during the course of the semester, the student will receive a negative adjustment to their final grade down by one full letter grade.

Class will start on time. You are expected to be at your assigned seat, if one is assigned. Attendance will be taken on a random basis. The professor may take attendance at any time during the class session. Students are considered to be in attendance when the professor takes attendance. **If you are not in your assigned seat when attendance is taken, you will not be given credit for attending that day.** If you need to leave class early, which I don't recommend, please notify the professor at the beginning of class. Failure to do so may result in the loss of attendance for that day.

Name tents will be distributed to all students. Students must bring their name tents to each class session. If students lose their name tents, it is their responsibility to replace their name tents with a professional-looking version, which specifies your full name and section number. Hand-written name tents are not acceptable in a business setting, just as a hand-written business card is not. **Failure to bring an acceptable name tent to class will result in the loss of attendance for that day.**

Academic Integrity

Integrity and honesty are hallmarks of the consulting profession. It is your duty to abide by the University's academic policies, and it is the instructor's duty to enforce those policies. Cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Cheating, failure to follow instructions, and/or failure to follow course policies may result in a reduced grade or a failing grade at the instructor's option. The following message about academic integrity comes from the Provost's office: *"All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student*

Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.”

Email

According to University policy, faculty may only communicate with students regarding academic issues via official UM email accounts. Accordingly, students must use their GrizMail accounts (netid@grizmail.umt.edu or fname.lname@umontana.edu). Email from non-UM accounts will likely be flagged as spam and deleted without further response. To avoid violating the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, confidential information (including grades and course performance) will not be discussed via phone or email.