GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

MGMT 799: 002
MANAGING IN VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS
FALL 2000

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Course objective: To prepare you to deal thoughtfully and confidently with key emerging management challenges and opportunities.

Specific goals

• To deepen your understanding of how the workplace is changing and what is required of managers in this new environment
• To develop your ability to work cross-culturally
• To develop your ability to build teams and collaborations with people in dispersed locations
• To give you experience using new business communication technologies and enable you to thoughtfully assess when and how to use them
• To strengthen your ability to manage people in a knowledge and service-oriented economy
• To improve your facility in using fundamental concepts and skills introduced in prior management courses by applying them to a new set of contemporary issues

Class format

This is a seminar course for advanced students in which you are expected to take initiative and participate actively. Webster’s New World Dictionary defines a seminar as “a group of supervised students doing research.” We will investigate cutting edge management issues, explore theoretical frameworks that organize thinking about these issues, and refine practical skills for dealing with these issues.

Sessions will include brief, focused lectures, class analysis of case studies and readings, workshops in the use of new business communication and collaborative technologies, and debriefings concerning coursework conducted outside of class. In particular, you will become a member of a multi-cultural, geographically dispersed work team that collaborates for six weeks through the use of advanced communication and information technologies. Lessons drawn from the experience will be explored in class and in individual written papers. Our partners for the project are University of Auckland and University of Western Australia.

Each of you will be expected to take a leading role for one class session. This will be by reading materials in advance, framing key issues for the class’s analysis, and providing later a
brief written summary of “take-aways” from the class discussion, or by guiding the class in exploration of a particular business communication technology. Each week, you are expected to come to class well prepared to discuss the assigned readings and cases and participate actively.

In classroom sessions and in deliverables, you are invited to draw upon concepts and skills introduced in prior management courses, as well as those presented in this course.

**Deliverables**

As part of a group of three or four members, you will be asked to write a seven-page paper analyzing the key issues in the Bob Chen and David Shorter cases (see full assignment at the end of the syllabus). This paper is due at the start of class on Sept. 16 and will constitute 20 percent of each group member’s final course grade.

You are expected to take the lead in one class session as described above. Together with class participation, this will constitute 15 percent of your final grade. Available sessions include the following:

- Sept. 9  Skills required of managers in the 21st century
- Sept. 16 Managing in multi-cultural environments: Bob Chen/David Shorter summary
- Sept. 23 Team-building with cross-cultural, geographically dispersed teams
- Sept. 30 ICQ follow-up workshop (one or two people)
  Implementing international strategies (one person)
- Oct. 7  Audio/video-conferencing workshop (two or more people)
- Oct. 14 Interaction in geographically dispersed teams
- Nov. 4 International partnerships and Hewlett-Packard case
- Nov. 11 Managing virtual teams and Intersoft case
- Nov. 18 Alternative workplace and off-site teams case
- Dec. 2  Managing professionals and knowledge workers
- Dec. 9  Managing knowledge and McKinsey case

As an individual, you will construct a Lotus Notes discussion database and either a personal web page or a web page for your transnational team. Much of this work will be done in the course of training sessions conducted during class time. You are expected to take initiative in helping your international team use technologies such as Lotus Notes, web pages, and ICQ. Use of technology will constitute 5 percent of your final grade.

Your transnational team will be asked to write an analysis of an international organizational change management case. This case analysis of seven to ten pages will be due Oct. 19. In addition, your team will have two team-building assignments: the Totem Exercise (due Sept. 24) and the Team Contract, due Oct. 1. For details on these assignments, see the end of this syllabus. The assignments also appear in the “Calendar of Events” on the Virtual Organization Workshop web page at [http://www.som.gmu.edu/cramton/orgworkshop2/](http://www.som.gmu.edu/cramton/orgworkshop2/)

Finally, after this team concludes its work, you will write as an individual an analysis of the experience, drawing on the team’s communication records and on materials presented in this course. Suggestions concerning the format and content of this paper will be provided in class. The paper should be between seven and ten pages in length and will constitute 25% of your final grade. It is due Dec. 9.
In your work on all written assignments, keep in mind that you may not present as your own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement. You also may not borrow the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement. You may cite materials assigned in this course as follows: (Author’s last name, page number). For other materials, you must include full bibliographic information.

**Summary of deliverables**

Bob Chen/David Shorter case analysis (group paper, Sept. 16) 20%
Class session lead, discussion questions, summaries, and class participation 15%
Technology use (team database, team or personal web page, ICQ) 5%
Totem exercise and team contract (group work, Sept. 24 and Oct. 1) 10%
Case analysis paper with partners at other universities (group paper, Oct. 19) 20%
Peer evaluation by VOW partners 5%
Analysis of VOW team experiences (individual work, Dec. 9) 25%

**Required reading**

A package of course readings will be available for purchase at the Copy Center Retail Store, Johnson Center 117. Be sure you get the materials for Professor Cramton’s section of MGMT 791 (Section 002).

In addition, you should purchase the paperback book, *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands* by Terri Morrison, Wayne A. Conaway and George A. Borden (Holbrook, MA: Adams Media Corporation). It will be available in the GMU bookstore.
Week 1 (Sept. 2)
Course introduction and groupware workshop (Lotus Notes and ICQ)

For more information,
- ICQ homepage: http://www.mirabilis.com

Week 2 (Sept. 9) Bring to class materials to put on your personal or team web page
Skills required of managers in the 21st century and web page building workshop

- Allred, Snow & Miles, “Characteristics of managerial careers in the 21st century”
- Bartlett & Ghoshal, “The myth of the generic manager: New personal competencies for new management roles”
- Hamilton, “Going global: A world of difference”
- Lancaster, “Learning to manage in a global workplace”

Review your career so far and your professional goals for the next ten years. In what type of business environment do you plan to work? What skills will you need to be effective in this environment? Write down your learning goals for this course.

Week 3 (Sept. 16) Bob Chen/David Shorter paper due today
Working and managing in multi-cultural environments

- Hofstede, “Cultural dimensions in people management”
- As assigned in class, read either the Bob Chen case or the David Shorter case
- “The overseas Chinese: Some cultural features” (handout)
- Morrison et al., “Canada” and “Hong Kong”

Week 4 (Sept. 23) Cross-cultural collaboration exercise with global partners due today
Team-building with cross-cultural, geographically dispersed teams

- Hill, “Managing your team”
- Roberts et al., “Managing the global workforce: challenges and strategies”
- Morrison et al., “Australia,” “New Zealand,” and “United States”

Week 5 (Sept. 30) Team contract due
Implementing international strategies and ICQ follow-up workshop

- Kanter & Dretler, “Global strategy and its impact on local operations”
- Boudreau et al., “Going global: Using information technology to advance the competitiveness of the virtual transnational organization”
- Moore & Birkinshaw, “Managing knowledge in global service firms: Centers of excellence”
Week 6 (Oct. 7)
Debriefing team experiences and audio/video-conferencing workshop

- Jacobs Suchard case
- Kotter, “Leading change”

Week 7 (Oct. 14)
Interaction in geographically dispersed international teams

- Cramton, “The mutual knowledge problem and its consequences in geographically dispersed teams”
- Brennan, “The grounding problem in conversations with and through computers”
- Storck & Sproull, “Through the looking glass darkly: What do people learn in video-conferences?”

Week 8 (Oct. 21)  Jacobs Suchard case analysis due Oct. 19.  Hard copy in class Oct. 21
Debriefing on Jacobs Suchard case analysis and team experiences

No reading assignment

Week 9 (Oct. 28) No class this week

Week 10 (Nov. 4)
Applications: International partnerships and acquisitions

- Hewlett-Packard: Singapore (A)
- Morrison et al., “Singapore”
- Pressler, “Giant Food to be sold to Dutch grocery firm”
- Swardson, “Buyer’s global growth took root in the kitchen”
- Swardson, “Deal is Ahold’s latest step in a buy-America strategy”
- Hall, “Dutch company plans to buy GNC”
- Flank & Burton, “Side effects: Cross-border merger results in headaches for a drug company”

Week 11 (Nov. 11)
Applications: Managing virtual teams

- “Intersoft of Argentina” (parts A and B)
- Leonard et al., “Virtual teams: Using communications technology to manage geographically dispersed development groups”
- “Mini case-study of experiences on a dispersed team” (optional)
- Morrison et al., “Argentina” and “Russia”

Week 12 (Nov. 18)
Managing remote workers: case analysis

- Apgar, “The alternative workplace: Changing where and how people work”
- Maruca, “How do you manage an off-site team?”
No class Nov. 25 because of Thanksgiving Day

**Week 13 (Dec. 2)**
Managing professionals and knowledge workers

- Mintzberg, “Covert leadership: Notes on managing professionals”
- Quinn et al., “Managing professional intellect: Making the most of the best”
- Davenport & Prusak, “The promise and challenge of knowledge markets”

**Week 14 (Dec. 9) Final paper due**
Managing knowledge

- March, “A note on knowledge management”
- Bartlett, “McKinsey & Co.: Managing knowledge and learning”
Assignment for Bob Chen/David Shorter case analysis, due Sept. 16
Maximum paper length: 7 pages

Your group will be composed of some people who have been asked to concentrate on the Bob Chen case and to view the situation through his eyes and some who have been asked to concentrate on the David Shorter case and on his vantage point. As you work on the paper together, explore these differences in point of view and the reasons for them.

Identify the key performance problems related to Bob Chen. What are the causes of these problems? How should these problems be solved? Describe and use concepts from this class and from your prior management classes in your analysis and solution. Your grade will be based on 1) logic and clarity of description and analysis, 2) clear and appropriate use of concepts, and 3) integration and quality of writing.

Some issues to consider are:

1) How would David Shorter describe his approach to management? How would he describe Bob Chen’s approach?
2) How does Bob Chen see the situation (i.e. how would he describe Shorter’s approach to management and his own approach to his job)?
3) What factors explain discrepancies in their views? Be sure to address cultural issues, either explaining why you think they play a role in this situation or why you think they are not relevant.
4) How would Shorter evaluate Chen’s performance and what factors would influence his evaluation? How would you evaluate Chen’s performance?
5) What are particular challenges and dilemmas of managing subordinates who have different cultural backgrounds and working styles from your own?
6) How would you resolve the performance problems evident in this case?