

# STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

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Location: Ben Gurion University

Class Times: Sunday, November the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 09:00-17:00; Monday, November the 23<sup>rd</sup>; 09:00-17:00; Friday, November the 27<sup>th</sup>, 09:00-13:00; Sunday, November the 29<sup>th</sup>, 09:00-17:00

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

*« If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there. »*

Lewis Carrol

*«Walk your own path and be yourself. »*

Joanne Nussbaum

### Context

According to popular wisdom, leaders are expected to be “people who do the right things” in difficult situations: they take care of the future, with dreams, missions, visions, strategic intent, purpose...

Leaders are used to ask the “what” and “why” question and open new paths beyond the *status quo*. Leaders think more about strategy than operations, more about empowerment than control.<sup>1</sup>

However determining the “right thing” has become more and more challenging: the global village is becoming increasingly complex, interconnected, and unpredictable.

In such a context, we do believe that today strategic thinking – defining a path - and leadership – guiding travelers - are truly intertwined.

### Goal of the seminar

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<sup>1</sup> Source (modified): Picken, J. and Dess, G. 1997. *Mission Critical: Seven Common Strategic Mistakes that Derail Even the Smartest Companies*, Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin Professional Publishing

The goal of the *Strategic Leadership* seminar is to provide students with both analytical frameworks and inspiring postures to help them define a strategy for a given organization.

*Strategic Leadership* approach is based on the intuition that “the more unpredictable the environment, the greater the opportunity—if you have the leadership skills to capitalize on it”.

Several kernel skills<sup>2</sup>, when mastered and used in concert, allow leaders to think strategically and navigate the unknown effectively: the abilities to keep on learning about oneself, to recognize one’s inner aspirations, to ask inspiring questions, to interpret from different angles, to make decision according to conscious trade-offs, risks, and unintended consequences for customers and other constituencies, to pinpoint and address conflicting interests among stakeholders, and to communicate stories about success and failure to promote institutional learning.

Hence we will intertwine two flows of knowledge:

- The first one has to do with the art of strategizing, understood as articulating a plan for achieving a goal, defining a course of action for an organization with a specific business in a given evolving environment. It requires spending some time on acquiring useful tools and frameworks (such as PEST analysis, Porter 5 forces, competition analysis, value chain analysis...) in order to be able to analyze current competitive positioning and assess different options for action in the future.
- The second dimension is connected to the leader him/herself and her/his qualities. Under significant uncertainty, the leader’s compass lies in his/herself. Much of the resources to be mobilized are internal ones, such as intuition, energy, ability to connect with others... These are the very qualities to be honed in order to allow for a real strategic vision and a truly collective work of design strategy.

## **Objectives**

During the course students will:

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<sup>2</sup>. See S. Krupp and P. Schoemaker, *Winning the Long Game: How Strategic Leaders Shape the Future*, PublicAffairs, 2014.

1. Explore and acquire the fundamental concepts in competitive strategy: industry analysis, strategy identification and evaluation, organizational implementation process, competitor analysis, firm and industry evolution, and cultural changes;
2. Understand how these critical and strategic thinking tools are related to the individual characteristics of effective strategic leaders: the way they assess the environment, the factors that influence their ability to make effective strategic decisions (cognitive grids, power and authority, relationships with external stakeholders...).

## **Pedagogy**

There will be a mix of different learning devices such as academic lecturettes, cases analyses, experiential sessions, workshops, buzz groups... Examples will be mostly taken out of the business world and linkages will be established with the non-profit sector, relying on the participants' experience and expertise.

## **Grade**

Final grades will be based on the following assignments:

- 30 percent for your contribution in class: sharing insights with peers, providing examples from your own experience, making links between concepts and your own work environment...
- 70 percent for the final exam: you will be expected to prepare the strategic diagnosis of a non-profit organization of your choice; our piece of advice is that you choose an organization you belong to or you have belonged to, in order to rely on a solid knowledge and to make this exercise a useful one.

The goal is to apply the different frameworks and tools we will have explored during the class in order to define the key dimensions of your organization, assess its sustainable strategic positioning and define some potential axes of development. Eventually, the strategy dynamics of the organization will be linked with the leader's profile of the organization (values, style, postures, acts...).

## Readings

Two cases will be prepared for the class:

### 1) *Johnsonville Sausage (A)*

- How would you characterize the sausage industry?
- Why was change necessary at Johnsonville?
- What strategic decision would you make regarding the Palmer option? Why?

### 2) *Shaping Spaarbeleg: Real and Unreal*

- What is the strategic issue for Spaarbeleg?
- What strategic change process is being implemented?

Questions are here to guide a close reading of the texts. The use of a pen to underline significant passages is recommended.

## Course schedule

**The whole course is made of three interwoven threads.**

- **Leadership knowledge:** we will explore of the inner consistency of the individual leader and definition of his/her own personal strategy (purpose, values, course of action)
- **Strategy frame:** we will understand industry dynamics, competitive intensity and key environment parameters, and learn how to assess the competitive position of a firm, analyze its activities and capabilities, and determine which combinations of positioning, activities, and capabilities result in a sustainable competitive advantage
- **Quest for meaning:** we will discuss the definition of the performance of a given business, and examine how business strategy fits with broader dynamics in the society. Eventually, we will touch the question of value creation for the different stakeholders and connect it to sustainable business models.

## Indicative Bibliography

Michael E. Porter, "What Is Strategy?" *Harvard Business Review*, November– December, 1996.

P. Schoemaker, S. Krupp, and S. Howland, "Strategic Leadership: The Essential Skills", *Harvard Business Review*, January/February, 2013.

J.-C. Spender, *Business Strategy: Managing Uncertainty, Opportunity, and Enterprise*, Oxford University Press, 2014.

Charles Handy, *The Elephant and the Flea, Reflection of a Reluctant Capitalist*, Harvard Business Review Press, 2003.

Steven B. Sample, *The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership*, Jossey-Bass, 2003.

J.C. Collins, Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last, Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, Harper Business Essentials, 2004.

Robert E. Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within* Jossey-Bass, 1996.

Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game*, Tor Books, 1992;

Frank Herbert, *The Santaroga Barrier*, Tor Books, 2002.