Management B8519 Section 1

Launch Your Startup Summer 2017
(Full Term: May 22 – August 8)

Room: URIS 303
Day/Time: Monday 5:00PM - 9:15PM

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Introduction
This “hands-on” applied course focuses on the creation, evaluation, development and launch readiness of a new business or social venture. For each new venture, key issues are addressed in a fashion highly consistent with other formal venture planning processes including: business model development, customer discovery, product-market validation, in-depth industry and market analysis, product or service innovation, brand development and go-to-market strategies, team selection & management, profit models, financing, and legal considerations. Throughout the class students will refine their venture’s business model based on instructors’, visiting domain experts, peer, customer, and investor feedback.

To enroll in this class, it helps to have a “vetted” business or social venture concept prior to joining the class. A previously vetted venture concept includes ideas that have been worked on in earlier MBA or other graduate classes, presented in formal venture competitions, or formulated within formal venture creation program outside of University, as in events or classes specially targeting aspiring entrepreneurs. You are allowed to join the class as part of a venture team (within or external to the class) who has been working on a new business idea prior to the class. It is entirely permissible to change projects (“pivot”) or join another peer team after the class has started. Working individually or preferably in teams (of no more than four), students spend the entire term developing an effective and comprehensive plan for a “real” venture concept, with proof of concept including customer-based market validation and early product/service prototypes. Students complete the class with a comprehensive new venture planning document, investor pitch, a minimal viable product, and validated business model.
New venture ideas must be something that the student(s) are passionate and are capable of near term execution. In other words, the new venture “must” be doable. Projects should reflect students’ genuine interest, but do not need to be tech-centric, venture capital-type projects or even "for profit" (many successful non-profits have taken LYS). If a project is based upon a student’s idea, then unless a written agreement states to the contrary, the ownership of the idea and the work done during the semester is the property of the student(s) who had the original idea. All participants sign a non-disclosure agreement so we can engage in open discussions about each other’s ventures. By the second week of class, all students are expected to solidify the venture concept they wish to pursue throughout the term or have joined another team. There can be no changes in venture or team membership after the fourth week.

**Grading:** Student grades are based on timeliness of submission, research efficacy, comprehensiveness, and overall quality of major deliverables throughout the class. The majority of the grade is based on collaborative work with the exception of 10 points allocated to individual class reflections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final Venture Planning Document</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Venture Presentation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimum Viable Product/Prototype</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Assignments (45pts), Individual Reflections (10pts), Active Class Engagement</td>
<td>55</td>
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**Course Description**
This course deepens the students understanding of entrepreneurship and innovation practices by guiding them through the new venture creation process as applied to an enterprise idea of their choice. Students, through interactive lectures, short cases, guest speakers, and self-directed assignments, learn the core elements of venture creation and planning in a specially sequenced modular format.

Each module provides the participant with the knowledge and tools required to develop a comprehensive new venture plan. At each stage, students are exposed to critical terms, tools that support research and decision making, and explanations of how each major planning activity fits into the new venture creation process.

During each module, students respond to a series of venture questions and exercises, guiding them through the planning process in a self-directed manner. Students identify and evaluate a venture opportunity, assess the industry and market attractiveness for their venture ideas, form competitive strategies, develop minimum viable products and services, and generate full financial statements. This course allows students to hone such professional skills as creative problem solving, oral and written communication, project management, financial analysis, and effective team leadership. See Tables 1 and 2 for list of topics, focus areas, and associated assignments.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Modules</th>
<th>Focus Areas</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>Your Idea</td>
<td>Course introduction &lt;br&gt;Identifying &amp; evaluating new venture opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>Your Business Model</td>
<td>New venture success factors &lt;br&gt;Business model canvas &lt;br&gt;Value proposition (The Offer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>Your Customer</td>
<td>Product-market fit &lt;br&gt;Customer Interview creation &lt;br&gt;Data collection &amp; analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>Your Market</td>
<td>Target market and segmentation &lt;br&gt;Market size &lt;br&gt;Customer profile definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>M5</td>
<td>Your Industry</td>
<td>Industry analysis &amp; trends &lt;br&gt;Competitors’ comparison &amp; positioning &lt;br&gt;Competitive advantage</td>
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**Table 1. Course Modules (1-5), Core Topics, Key Focus Areas, & Assignments**

**Modules 1-3: Opportunity.** Participants are stepped through each element of a formal venture process, including how to evaluate their progress at each major juncture. Participants develop a venture concept summary that details early assumptions about their venture's proposed business model. Key focus areas include the consumer problem or pain point to be solved, opportunity or need that the venture addresses; defined value proposition for all relevant customers & stakeholders, assessment of preliminary target market in terms of size and segmentation, initial description of proposed product or service; identification of distribution channels the product or service will need to reach the market, and explanation of unique end-user benefit, why a customer will pay for said solution. An overall business model is generated describing the following components: value proposition and rationale for customer and market selection (product-market fit); the scope and channels for products/services offered by your venture; proposed organizational design including key activities, resources, and partnerships; and initial assumptions on revenue streams and cost structures. Participants refine this preliminary business model throughout the class. The early validation of this business model is conducted through an extensive customer discovery process where students engage with target customers to better understand their requirements.

**Modules 4-5: Strategy.** New venture strategies are developed with an emphasis on competition, globalization and market potential for their new ventures. Participants conduct comprehensive analysis of the competitive landscape, identifying key competitors in their industry sector, and exploring their respective business models. Participants assess the targeted market size and industry, discover how to obtain market feedback and validation on market acceptance, develop product features that align with the stated value proposition, generate pricing assumptions, and, learn how to evaluate the industry or niche in terms of maturity and growth potential. From this analysis, participants identify a sustainable competitive advantage, capitalizing on internal strengths and mitigating any challenges and threats from the external environment.
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<th>Course Modules</th>
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| M6 Your Product | ▪ New product development success factors  
 ▪ Minimum viable products (MVP)  
 ▪ Product development plans & costs | Early stage product design  
 Customer co-creation feedback  
 Product development plans |
| M7 Your Brand | ▪ Power of the brand  
 ▪ Marketing strategies to drive customer acquisition  
 ▪ Digital marketing & social media approaches | Marketing mix  
 Customer acquisition  
 Branding elements & checklists |
| M8 Your Financial Plan | ▪ Revenue and cost assumptions  
 ▪ Income statement projections  
 ▪ Cash management  
 ▪ Capital requirements  
 ▪ Funding sources | Revenue & cost assumptions  
 Startup cost checklist  
 12 month income & cash statement  
 Funding sources & requirements |
| M9 Your Team | ▪ Core team selection  
 ▪ Key partnerships | Team profile  
 Key partner organizations |
| M10 Your Launch | ▪ Elevator pitch guidelines  
 ▪ Pre launch checklist | Launch readiness, next steps  
 Venture presentation & planning documents |

Table 2. Course Modules (6-10), Core Topics, Key Focus Areas, & Assignments

**Modules 6-7: Innovation.** Product innovation is explored and participants develop a roadmap for development and market testing. One of the main activities at this juncture is the development of a minimum viable product. Participant teams illustrate the essential features of their product or service through such techniques as concept boarding, sample web pages, and process charts. Additionally, participants learn the basics of product or service pricing, marketing strategies and promotional tactics with a focus on product positioning, branding, marketing mix, and the optimal way to price, promote, sell, deliver, and service the customer.

**Modules 8-10: Leadership.** All the research and decisions come together to support assumptions required to build the overall revenue and profit models for the business. Participants build a preliminary 3-year financial plan based on projected revenues, cost of goods, and anticipated operating costs. Participant venture teams generate a three-year projected income statement and cash flow analysis. Various sources of capital for venture funding are discussed and participants define how much capital is needed and how it will be used. Recruiting and selecting team members for new ventures has its challenges, especially when there are many skills required, but limited resources. This module explores strategies and tactics to bring together the right set of players that will provide the required expertise and core competencies needed to meet the new venture’s value proposition as well as position the company for future growth. Looking for co-founders and partners, managing family relationships, partnering with complimentary organizations will be explored in relation to the participants’ ventures. Core principles of organizational design and culture creation will be discussed. Finally the role that corporate social responsibility can play in achieving financial goals is explored.

**Course Assignments**

**Weekly Assignments, Class Reflections & Active Class Engagement (55 Points).** Throughout the course, students apply a sequenced series of activities and exercises to support their new venture development. Weekly assignments (45 points), based on class topics, are structured to lead founders and teams through the steps required to form a new venture, from initial concept through execution plan. Students submit these assignments weekly and are provided with timely feedback prior to the next assignment so that comments and be incorporated into their
work as the project moves forward. Additionally, students are encouraged to participate in class discussions, provide peer feedback, engage guest speakers, and offer insights from their own venture work. At the end of each class, individual students are asked to respond to a number of reflection questions (10 Points) designed to align what has been discussed in class with their venture projects. Finally, students are encouraged to schedule individual or team meetings with the faculty outside the class for individualized discussions regarding venture development. Faculty offers weekly in-person and web-based office hours with plenty of flexibility to support on-going venture work.

Final Venture Planning Document (25 Points). Students construct a comprehensive new venture plan that draws mainly from weekly assignments and supplemental research. By working on the document narrative throughout the course, students are able to consider each component of their business model carefully, developing hypotheses and research that validates key assumptions at each step. In the end, the final document can be used in total, or in customized sections, to provide interested parties and investors with information on venture development, launch, and growth potential.

Final Venture Presentation (10 Points). Students deliver a timed “pitch,” providing an opportunity to share the venture idea with peers, faculty, and investors. Participants receive constructive feedback on various elements of the business models as well as on their presentation skills. The presentation is designed to complement the final venture planning document.

Minimum Viable Product (10 points). Students develop a minimum viable product, an early prototype that embodies the essential features of the product/service that provide the potential solution to the customer problem being solved by the venture.

Course Management Platform
The program is facilitated by the use of Columbia Business Schools course management system, called CANVAS. Faculty use this system to provide participants with class materials, encourage student engagement, and interaction with course content, receive assignment submissions, and create two-way dialogue on venture work. In order to gain the most from the program, students should bring their laptops to class and have reliable Internet connectivity and bandwidth outside of class to be able to download program materials and watch associated videos.