

Lindner College of Business
MS Marketing Capstone Project
-Prospectus and Application-

During January – April 2015, 30 graduate students pursuing a Masters in Science (MS) degree in Marketing will engage in their capstone learning experience. At UC's Lindner College of Business, the MS Capstone experience involves intensive client projects, tackled by graduate student consultants.

Who are these students and what is this program? As graduate students, the MS-Marketing students have completed an undergraduate degree. Most are employed (or have been employed) in a career occupation. The MS-Marketing program, comprising 12-courses (32 credit-hours) in marketing, is structured to concentrate on the breadth and depth of learning and experience available in marketing and marketing-related areas. Students receive extensive training in branding, strategy, market research, buyer behavior, innovation methods, product management and international issues. Their role in the Capstone is synonymous with that of an external consultant (not as an intern or employee), so they propose a plan in response to the client's needs and are responsible for executing that plan. Some graduate students are completing the program on a full-time basis and thus can be possible candidates for longer-term employment. Consequently, the client may find the Capstone project to be a useful method for exploring talent possibilities.

What is the MS Capstone Project? Prospective capstone clients may select from among five distinct engagements depending on the needs of their company. These client engagements vary in length, focus, program modules, and student effort.

- 1. The "Explosive Growth" Engagement:** This program is for successful corporations seeking high growth through innovation and global market expansion.
- 2. The "Competitive Differentiation" Engagement:** This program is for companies who want to regain or defend their marketplace position to achieve profitable growth.
- 3. The "Market Insights" Engagement:** This program is for non-profit and for-profit organizations needing deep insights about their current markets and customers.
- 4. The "Brand Equity" Engagement:** This program is for non-profit and for-profit firms needing to clarify or establish its brand in the market place.
- 5. The "Tactical Execution" Engagement:** This program is for companies seeking a quick fix or analysis to enhance their "go-to-market" effectiveness.

Detailed descriptions of these engagements and the programs modules included are shown below.

How do I submit an application for an MS Capstone Project?

If you would like to have your organization's marketing issue considered as a MS Capstone Project, please answer the following questions in a brief narrative format (1 page in total):

- 1) ***Who are you?*** Please provide a brief background of your organization. What is your organization's mission? If your organization has multiple divisions or operating groups, please focus specifically on your sector. What sets your organization or group apart from others in the region (or in your competitive set)?
- 2) ***What are your current marketing issues/needs?*** Please identify the specific area of need that you believe would be appropriate for this MS Capstone Project. What is the business issue that is being addressed? How does the marketing need relate to that issue? What is the target audience related to this marketing need?
- 3) ***Which client engagement is most needed given your marketing issue?*** Are there unique or challenging issues that will be addressed? Do the Program Modules for this engagement make sense in light of your business issue?
- 4) ***Who is your project's key contact?*** Please provide complete contact information for this person and note what other parties from the organization will also be involved.

Clients must be fully committed to sponsoring the project, to providing access to information and other resources, and to interact with the student consultants throughout the project.

What are the fees for this project?

Capstone projects require significant time investments by the faculty supervisor, other graduate faculty members, and graduate assistants to assure a smooth and effective outcome for the client. To offset these costs, clients donate a gift of \$5000 (established, for-profit companies) or \$2500 (non-profits and startups) ***only if they are satisfied with the work completed.***

What's the process after the application? The supply of students in the Capstone Experience is "fixed;" however, the demand for such projects is difficult to predict. Therefore, we cannot guarantee that each and every project will have a student assigned. If your project is selected and assigned to a student, s/he will prepare a project charter during early January. In the charter the student consultant will delineate the general problem statement, description of the project, goals for the project, boundaries for the project, action plan/timeline with critical milestones, budget, key client contacts, confidentiality agreements, presentation and written report due dates. This project charter will serve as a key alignment tool for ensuring that each consultant meets the client's needs for this project.

Email any questions that you have to drew.boyd@uc.edu. Please submit your proposed projects no later than Friday, November 28, 2014 to drew.boyd@uc.edu.

Capstone Engagements

1. **The “Explosive Growth” Engagement:** This program is for successful corporations seeking high growth through innovation and global market expansion. This comprehensive program dives deep into market opportunity, competitive threat, and company capabilities. It begins with an assessment of the company’s core competencies so that final recommendations are linked to firm skills. The cornerstones of this program are strategy and innovation. *Two* student consultants will lead a cross-functional team to create a pipeline of new products and services using the structured innovation method, *Systematic Inventive Thinking*. Company representatives participate in a focused innovation workshop to lend insight and feedback. The pipeline innovations will be expressed in the form of a hypothetical, futuristic company catalog of products and services with recommendations on sequencing and development. To position the company for growth, the student consultants will develop a comprehensive marketing strategy and value proposition.
2. **The “Competitive Differentiation” Engagement:** This program is for companies who want to regain or defend their marketplace position to achieve profitable growth. The goal is to find the most accessible market opportunities and to recommend concrete positioning strategies for success with existing products and services. The student consultant will use both quantitative and qualitative market research to identify current and potential customer perceptions. The research will yield a recommended segmentation approach. Company representatives will be led through an “Attribute Value Mapping” workshop to understand where value is being delivered in the market today and what the company needs to do to differentiate itself from the competition. A written marketing plan will pinpoint specific a target audience and positioning strategy to win and grow.
3. **The “Market Insights” Engagement:** This program is for non-profit and for-profit organizations needing deep insights about their current markets and customers. A thorough market analysis will define the market opportunity and highlight key trends affecting the business. A comprehensive marketing research effort will reveal new understanding about current buying patterns, preferences, and perceptions about you and your competitor. Using the marketing research, company representatives will participate in an “Attribute Value Mapping” workshop to help understand what is being delivered in the market and how customers achieve value from it.
4. **The “Brand Equity” Engagement:** This program is for non-profit and for-profit firms needing to clarify or establish its brand in the market place. A thorough marketing research effort using both quantitative and qualitative methods will uncover new insights and perceptions of the firm’s reputation and current brand equities. Using the research, the student consultant will lead the company through various exercises to identify potential new brand equities and approaches. The final deliverable is a comprehensive strategy to include a brand architecture, value proposition, brand character, and suggested communications strategy to express the brand.

5. **The “Tactical Execution” Engagement:** This program is for companies seeking a quick fix or analysis to enhance their “go-to-market” effectiveness. Clients choose one or more selected tactical areas: pricing, channel management, integrated communications, or digital marketing. The student consultant uses secondary and existing primary market research to “deep dive” into the selected area to create solid recommendations for improvement.

Program Modules

1. Core Competency Analysis: This analysis identifies key benefits the firm is delivering in the market place. It maps those back to strategic assets of the firm that are leveraged to produce the benefits. The strategic assets are then mapped back to a set of internal company skills – its core competencies.
2. Innovation Pipeline: Using *Systematic Inventive Thinking*, a cross-functional team of graduate students from UC’s masters programs in marketing, IS, quantitative analysis, and design collaborate over a four day period to create new innovative products and services in an assigned category. The ideas are narrowed down to create a coherent development pipeline expressed in the form of a hypothetical, “dream catalog,” of future products and services.
3. White Space Adjacency Analysis: This analysis looks “outside the box” to define new market spaces just at the fringe of the company’s current business.
4. Global Market Priorities: This analysis uses a linear weighted model to rank order the most appealing countries for possible expansion within a specified category.
5. Market Opportunity Analysis: This analysis considers multiple factors including share position, growth trends, cost to acquire, cost to serve, and Customer Lifetime Value to find the best areas for growth.
6. Customer Market Research: Highly trained student consultants deploy a variety of qualitative and quantitative research techniques and analysis including focus groups, interviews, and surveys.
7. Competitive Matrix: This analysis produces a detailed matrix comparing top competitors across 15 to 20 factors.
8. Marketing Strategy: This module defines the most appropriate strategy to pursue among four alternatives: Acquisition/Stimulate Demand, Retention/Stimulate Demand, Acquisition/Earn Share, or Retention/Earn Share.
9. Segmentation Analysis: This analysis determines what benefits are most sought after in the market place and how targeted customers perceive your company’s performance on those variables versus the competition.

10. Attribute Value Map Workshop: This is a four hour workshop conducted with the client to connect product or service attributes to the benefits they produce and ultimately to the values derived by the consumer. “Below-the-line” inputs are also identified as possible candidates for differentiation.
11. Value Proposition: Using the Five-Box Positioning Tool, this effort yields a concise, well-supported statement on how a company will compete in the marketplace and position itself in the minds of the consumer.
12. Brand Development: This module uses formal market research and insights to create a brand architecture, brand character, and value proposition to establish a coherent brand promise in the market.
13. Value Based Pricing: Using the Economic Value Analysis model, this module yields pricing recommendations as well as ways to communicate price relative to value.
14. Channel Strategy: This module delivers either B2B or B2C channel approaches based on current market conditions. It includes recommendations for distributor roles in a zero, one, or two level channels of distribution to deliver the value proposition.
15. Communication Strategy: This module integrates all facets of communication including media, public relations, sales promotion, and website to create a coherent strategy for communicating the firm’s value proposition.
16. Digital Strategy: This module delivers recommendations on how to listen and track conversations that are happening in the social web about your products and services. It recommends suggested digital media to begin shaping that conversation.

Program Modules	Engagement Templates				
	<i>“Explosive Growth”</i>	<i>“Competitive Differentiation”</i>	<i>“Market Insights”</i>	<i>“Brand Equity”</i>	<i>“Tactical Execution”</i>
Core Competency Analysis	x				
Innovation Pipeline	x				
White Space Adjacency Analysis	x				
Global Market Priorities	x				
Market Opportunity Analysis	x	x	x		
Customer Market Research	x	x	x	x	
Competitive Matrix	x	x	x		
Marketing Strategy	x	x			
Segmentation Analysis	x	x	x		
Attribute Value Map Workshop	x	x	x	x	
Value Proposition	x	x		x	
Brand Development				x	
Value Based Pricing					x
Channel Strategy					x
Communications Strategy				x	x
Digital Strategy					x
Pipeline Plan (“Dream Catalog”)	x				
Written Report and Analyses	x	x	x	x	x
1 hour presentation to client	x	x	x	x	x