

Fall 2007 BIT 646 / Strategy 646
Syllabus
Solving Societal Problems through Enterprise and Innovation

Overview

The world's toughest problems can become opportunities for for-profit companies, non-profits, and other enterprises. These include challenges in the areas of poverty, health, education, the environment, and other social issues, such as treating women and children better. We will pay significant attention to how companies working at the economic base of the pyramid in the developing world and in the West can develop successful businesses, though we will focus on other opportunities as well.

We will look at many examples of societal development through enterprise, try to spot trends, and look for frameworks. We will see that part of what makes such solutions work is finding ways to adopt innovative perspectives and devise innovative solutions.

We will explore the relationship between businesses serving society, innovation, and information and communications by looking at new technologies, new forms of organizations, new patterns of communication, higher quality and more accessible information, and other adaptations arising from fundamentally re-conceiving of how enterprises work. We will see how many innovations in this area embrace new business approaches that are supported by leapfrog technology. We will see innovation in almost everything we consider.

This course is non-technical, highly interactive, and requires no special background. It should be of interest to those wishing to understand where new business opportunities for serving society lie and how organizations can innovate to take advantage.

Format and Philosophy

I long ago abandoned the "vessel theory" of learning, where the instructor (believes s/he) has the knowledge and tries to "pour" it into the heads of his or her students. Instead, I believe learning takes place when you read, think, put your ideas "out there," and are forced to come to your own understanding. (This applies to students *and* teachers, by the way.) To support this style of teaching / learning, I design classes where each of us is expected to bring to the class an open mind, a sense of curiosity, and a willingness both to hear and offer their points of view.

In addition, **each week there will be a written assignment** that will require you to address a topic related to our discussion for the week. We will be using a “wiki” (as in wikipedia) to support these assignments. You will not be expected to write a lot every week – but you will be expected to contribute. Details about assignments will be forthcoming. Your contributions will not be graded on a weekly basis. At the end of the term, however, I will look at your contributions as one indication of your engagement in the course.

Final Project

You will choose a topic for a paper for this course. I will suggest some topics, too, but I know that there is a great diversity of interests among students in this course, and I encourage you to work on a topic that truly excites you. I will be looking for you to demonstrate an applied understanding of what we talk about in the course than goes beyond “book reporting” or a simple description of existing approaches to solving societal problems via business and enterprise. I will be looking for “you” in your paper – your thoughts, ideas, and opinions – based, of course, on facts and your understanding of what is taking place “on the ground.” (I am more than happy to grant extensions for you to continue working beyond the nominal end of the term if you request one.)

You may also convince me that there is a project you would like to work on in lieu of writing a paper. If it is relevant to the general theme of the course, let’s discuss it.

On either your paper or your project, you may work by yourself or with one other person.

Grading

I am looking for you to demonstrate to me your engagement with the material and that you have come to a new, and original, understanding. There are several ways you can do that: through your class participation, your contributions to the wiki, or your paper (or project). Sorry: I can’t give you a formula for “points” that guarantees you an “A” (or Excellent). But, what I am saying is that you have different ways to convince me that your work is first rate.

Class Schedule

September

4 Introduction and Societal Impact

6 The Creation of Wealth

Beinhocker, Chapter 1
Sachs, "The end of poverty"
Pralhad, "Aid is not the answer"

Optional: Hammond, *Which World?*

11 Innovations in Poverty and Livelihood

Pralhad and Hart, "Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid"
Martin Fisher, "Income is Development"

13 Poverty -- US "BOP"

SOS Alert
Finast SuperMarket (A) and (B) Business Enterprise Trust
Browse: Base of the Pyramid Protocol
<http://www.bop-protocol.org/>

18 Innovations in Health Care

Rao, "Social Entrepreneurism in HealthCare in India"
Browse <http://www.telemedicine.com/>
Browse <http://www.oneworldhealth.org/>

20 Health, cont'd

25 Innovations in Education

Please explore: http://www.itcportal.com/ruraldevp_philosophy/educating.htm
Read one of the following. About ICT training in Africa, India, respectively.
Nairobi Kenya.

http://www.digitaldividend.org/pubs/pubs_03_nairobis.htm

Aptech. Read Executive Summary (or entire case if interested). At:
digitaldividend.org/case/case_vidya.htm

27 **Education, cont'd**

Friedman, "Still Eating our Lunch"
The Reinventing Education Initiative: Evaluation Perspective
Browse: http://wiki.laptop.org/go/The_OLPC_Wiki

October
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Environment

Hawken, *Natural Capitalism*. (Preface, Chap. 1, 13)
(Entire book available for download at:
<http://www.natcap.org/sitepages/pid20.php>)

4 **Design (environment and more)**

McDonough and Braugart, "The Next Industrial Revolution."

Gage, "Some thoughts on how ICTs could really
Change the World"

Eggleston et al "Information and Communications Technologies,
Markets, and Economic Development"

9 **Achieving Scale**

Yunus "Social Business Entrepreneurs are the Solution"
www.grameen-info.org/bank/socialbusinessentrepreneurs.htm
Browse: <http://www.acumenfund.org/>
Browse: <http://www.ashoka.org/>
Optional: Chu, "Commercial Returns and Social Value:
The case for micro-finance"

11 **Integration -- The World, Business, and YOU**

Hart, *Capitalism at the Crossroads* Chap 3, 4