**BA 404  Small Business Consulting Experience**

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SSE 3105  
Office Hours: TTH 9:30-10:30 and 12:30-1:30 or by appt.

**Class Schedule**  
F 9:00-11:40  
SSW 2500

**SDSU Small Business Consulting Center Small Business Consulting:**  
Gateway Bldg. 1502 -Entrepreneurial Management Center

**Required Texts**  
It is advisable to have access to textbooks from the required core business courses;  
MKTG 370 Marketing  
FIN 323 Finance  
ACCT 201 and 202 Accounting  
MGT 350 Management core courses

**Purpose and Structure of BA 404**  
BA 404 is an unusual course that is designed to allow students to apply many of the skills you have learned in the SDSU CBA business program. The course is structured to form consulting teams of four students. They are then assigned as a team to a San Diego-area business or organization which have very real problems and are not “make work” projects.  
The CBA uses this as a way to extend and maintain good relationships with local organizations, increasing the market value of your degree from SDSU. Consequently, student projects must meet very high standards. Most students will find the project to be a rewarding experience as they actually apply what they have previously studied in class and are helping a small business at the same time.

**Time Commitment**  
The operational standard used by the College of Business Administration is roughly three hours of class work (reading, homework, assignments, projects and class) per hour of credit. For this type of course it is roughly 8-10 hours per week, during a regular 15 week semester. This time will be spent either in class, or working directly with the client or on some other project-related activity. Time allocation is *not evenly divided across the semester* and there are several “crunch” periods
when the alpha and beta report and the final presentation are due.

Each student should plan to budget a minimum of 100 hours of **project time** (in addition to class time). Students will maintain time logs, both individually and as a group, and submit these twice over the term.

**Contribution**
The course requirements are modeled after a consulting firm, and, as such, all members of a team are expected to contribute their fair share to the project.

Peer evaluations will be collected twice over the term to assess the work of each team member. Although rare, it is entirely possible for a team, on the vote of a majority of its members, to “fire” or drop a teammate, after appropriate consultation with the instructor. The steps are:

1. Before a team “fires” a member, written notice of the team’s evaluation of the member’s work must be presented to the individual involved and to the instructor so that an attempt can be made to remedy the situation.

2. After one written notice has been provided to a team member and sufficient time for correction has passed, the individual can be “fired” without being given further written notice. Although this is a serious action, it does occur in the “real-world.” This action typically will result in the individual failing the course.

We meet as a whole class roughly 65% of the scheduled class meetings. However, this time is dedicated to BA 404 and you must be completely available for classes or meetings on Friday from 9-11:40. This is used for scheduled team meetings with the instructors and clients, for unscheduled meetings, as a time that all team members can meet without time conflicts, and as a time to conduct research related to your project. **Do not** schedule other activities such as work, travel, attending other lectures, conducting work for other classes or attending group meetings for other classes during the scheduled BA 404 time. This is a **mandatory condition** for your participation in BA 404 this term. Failure to fully attend all class sessions and meeting will result, at a minimum, in a significant reduction of the course grade.

**Support**
The Small Business Consulting Center (SBCC), located in Gateway 1502, houses a number of computers and specialized software packages available for your use. There are some copies of prior BA 404 reports available in the Entrepreneurial Management Center. All required paperwork is to be turned in there to your GAs, and you may make arrangements to
use the office/computer lab after hours. You can use the regular classroom during class time for group meetings or the SBCC in Gateway Center.

The program coordinator is Angelica Bouras with whom you all submitted the application. Her phone number is (619) 594-3950.

The client for whom you are doing research will need to approve any significant budget for your project. Monetary support has been provided to defray modest costs associated with the project including items such as:

- copying of questionnaires
- purchase of special reference materials and specialized software
- postage and mailing.

Normal mileage and copying expenses of the final report are not reimbursable. To be reimbursed, we must approve in advance all expected expenditures and original receipts must be submitted for reimbursement. The project manager should submit one complete reimbursement request for the entire group at the end of the project.

Student teams are expected to bear the expense of making copies, typically three, of the final report. Generally, one is for the client, one for the SD SBID, and one for reserve in the SDSU Library.

**Faculty and Graduate Student Advisors.** Each project team will typically work with two graduate student advisors, a First reader and Second reader. They will hold office hours in Gateway Center 1502 and are available to meet with student groups additionally.

The role of the advisor is to act as a "sounding board" regarding plans and proposals for the project, and to provide limited guidance in the project’s execution. THEY ARE NOT EDITORS. If they and the instructor are having to do too much editing, the draft or final version will be returned unread.

Projects are intended to be designed and implemented by the team and not by the team’s advisor. They are there to respond to the student team’s written documents and presentations NOT to write the document.

The instructor must approve your statement of work and your final written report. To avoid confusion, maintain regular communication with your advisor, in person and by e-mail, get approval at agreed to stages, and always submit professional quality work.
Student Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be qualified to:

1) Summarize the organizational managerial context of the business decision.
2) Determine the appropriate information needed to arrive at business recommendations.
3) Determine the methodologies needed to determine the required information from both primary and secondary sources.
   - Implement the appropriate methodologies in a semester-long research project.
   - Analyze the collected information to arrive at sound managerial recommendations.
4) Write a sound research report for presentation to management.
5) Orally present the research results to management in a well-organized presentation.
6) Work as a productive member of a team tasked with solving a decision problem.
   - Mitigate interpersonal problems that exist in the research team setting.

Project Managers

Each team will have a project manager, who has overall responsibility for keeping the team on track and coordinating the work of the team. Another important task of the project manager is to keep the team’s TAs and GAs as well as the faculty apprised of the status of the project through progress reports. For specific periods, project managers will prepare short progress reports outlining what has been accomplished during that period and what the team expects to accomplish during the next reporting period.

Grading

Typically, it is an expectation that each final report will require at least minor modification before being cleared for final presentation to the client. Reports requiring major revision or rewriting may be reduced by one letter grade. Late reports may also be reduced in grade. The more the report reflects sound work and creative thinking on the part of your group, the higher the grade. Your overall team evaluation will be higher the more that your group can plan and act independently and produce good quality results.

The following elements will determine the grades for each team:

- 70% percent – Client consulting analysis, recommendations, reports and
presentation -- content and style and value to client

- In-Class Presentation (pre-alpha) 5%
- Alpha report 25%
- Alpha Corrections and Slam Dunks 10%
- Beta report 15%
- PPT presentation 5%
- Presentation to Client 10%

- 30% Individual Evaluation¹
  - Time Logs 5%
  - Data Analysis for client 15%
  - Class Participation 10%

In general, most students in a team receive the same grade, based on a combination of peer review and instructor evaluation on all of the above components. In instances of identifiable differential performance among team members, based on peer review and level of commitment, the team grade will be adjusted accordingly, by a full letter grade or more. Elements that may be addressed in the individual student evaluation process include quality and quantity of input, timeliness and work ethic.

**Professionalism**

You are expected to act professionally in all aspects related to this course. This includes, but is not limited to: maintaining confidentiality of the information provided to you by the client, keeping scheduled meetings with clients and giving the expected effort to the project. If asked, each of you will sign a confidentiality agreement and present it to your client. All work that you submit to the client, your teammates, and the instructors should reflect your best possible effort, and be free from typographical, spelling and grammatical errors. A standard similar to that expected in a professional business consulting engagement will be adhered to in this course.
Schedule: Spring 2013*

1. January 18  Introduction  
   Selection of Projects
2. January 25  Researching and Writing the Small Business Plan
3. February 1  Meet with client at time arranged by GAs
4. February 8  Defining Problems
   Gathering research to Resolve
5. February 15 Assignment #1 Due: Individual Analysis Data 10%
   9AM
6. February 22 Meet GA and professor in class to discuss progress on Alpha
   In-class presentation of client’s problem (10 minute PPT) 5%
7. March 1  Begin work on Slam Dunks and Recommendations
8. March 8  Alpha Report due to GAs 25%
   Alpha Report due to Instructor 3/20 - GA corrections made
   Leave in all GA corrections
9. March 15 Meetings with GAs and Instructor
10. March 22 Corrected Alpha and Slam Dunks due to TA 10%
11. April 12 Corrected Alpha and Slam Dunks due to Instructor
    Discussion of Beta
12. April 19 Discussion of Presentation
    Draft of Beta report to GA
    Draft of Beta report to Instructor 4/24 20%
13. April 26 Corrected Beta to GAs and Instructor
14. April 29  note this is a Monday
    FINAL PPT AND DOCUMENT due to GAs 5%
    No EXCEPTIONS
15. May 3  Presentation of Projects to Clients 9-12:40 10%

*Note that the schedule is NOT cast in stone and is subject to modifications if necessary