

**Management 298-D Section 12**  
**Special Topics in Management: General Management**  
***Winter 2023***

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**Class Time and Location**

- Thursdays, 8:30-11:20am, Marion Anderson Hall G419
- First Day of Class: Thursday, January 12
- Last Day of Class: Thursday, March 16

**Final Exam Window**

- The class has a take home, self-scheduled Final Exam that is 4 hours in length.
- Students must start the exam at a time of their choosing between Sunday, March 19 at 6pm and Wednesday, March 22 at 6pm. Once a student begins the Final Exam, they will have 4 hours to complete it. The exam must be completed in one continuous 4-hour session, starting at a time in the window above.
- Students must start the Final Exam within the window indicated above. There are no exceptions. Please plan accordingly. Internet access will be required.

**Individual/Group Project**

- Students must submit an individual project by Sunday, March 26. There are several intermediate deadlines that involve feedback to and from classmates. Please carefully read the details of this project below, as several deadlines are involved.

## INTRODUCTION

General Management is a cross-disciplinary course that draws on concepts from Strategy, Leadership, Organizational Behavior, Negotiation and other business fields. The goal of the course is to give students tools and skills that help senior managers in organizations “get important stuff done.” Management usually involves directing, coordinating with, influencing, giving feedback to, and rewarding/punishing in others in organizations, and the class has a heavy element of “managing others.” This is often but not only one’s subordinates – general managers also have to “manage” co-workers at the same level, their superiors, and oftentimes other organizational stakeholders.

A key theme of the class is “leading by managing” – the idea that leaders are remembered less for leadership traits (such as being inspiring or visionary) and more for *management* decisions such as how they allocate time, what they say to and direct others to do, how they reward good and punish bad behavior, and other similar decisions. These decisions often appear (and sometimes are!) in the weeds, day-to-day, and decidedly non-strategic. But these day-to-day management challenges often eat up the majority of a senior manager’s time. And the compilation and history of a manager’s decisions in these situations, particularly in regard to how they affect others, is often the most important contributor to an employee’s long-term success as an organizational leader.

This class is highly experiential. In almost every class session we will carry out roleplays, simulations, exercises, and/or games that mirror a problem in management. Because of this highly experiential approach, we do not videotape in-person class sessions. We also do not allow auditors.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

General managers coordinate decisions, actions and collaboration in organizations that span functional or other boundaries. Due to this coordinating role, general managers play a fundamental role in the success of organizations. General managers usually are tasked with coordinating the work of others in the organization who have deeper specialized knowledge than they do, and whose work is more siloed and less broad than the general manager herself. A general manager also must answer to at least one superior; even the CEO of a company (who is herself a general manager) must answer to a Board of Directors and owners/shareholders of the company. Senior leaders of virtually all organizations are, by definition, general managers, and employees who build strong general management capabilities even before they formally become a general manager are much more likely to become and ultimately succeed as a senior leader in an organization.

Because the fundamental job of a general manager is to coordinate across the boundaries firms

use to organize their work, acting as a general manager is fundamentally about managing tension within an organization. Other employees in an organization with whom a general manager interacts have different viewpoints, objectives, incentives, motivations and skill levels. Yet a general manager must lead, coordinate and motivate the work of those she manages. At the same time, she must communicate to, negotiate with and influence her superiors. She is also ultimately responsible for implementing the strategic vision of the unit she manages, which requires both strategic thinking and implementation knowhow.

The art of general management is in balancing tensions: the polarity between what is desired and what is possible. Good general managers are able to see a situation for what it is realistically, yet at the same time are able to envision and lead others towards something better. Successful general managers are both practical and visionary – they are not constrained by organizational inertia and constantly challenge themselves and their organizations to think bigger, but they also are able to accomplish realistic, well-defined goals given the constraints their organizations face. A skilled general manager balances the tension between individual ambition and the need for teamwork. A good general manager gives confidence to others by making the hard decisions look easy. A good general manager allows those with whom she works to “sleep easy” because all is under control, even as she stays awake at night worrying about the best course forward and how her decisions impact her colleagues and organization.

General managers must therefore be “fluent” in a number of business skills: strategy, leadership, process and systems design, managing and motivating others, negotiation, and emotional intelligence. No human being is naturally skilled in all of these areas, and a large part of a general manager’s job is to assess her performance in all required skill areas, and improve in the ones where she lacks competency.

In this course you will study the tools and skills a general manager requires in order to lead her business unit to accomplish its strategic purpose. Although organizations vastly differ in their exact strategy and purpose, all organizations must create value in order to be successful. Ultimately, then, a general manager’s role is deliver the promised value creation that stems from a company’s strategy, and this course is about tools and skills needed to deliver organizational value. We use a framework called the “Pyramid of Value Delivery” that describes at a high level the four ways that a manager leads others in the organization towards a common purpose:

# Pyramid of Value Delivery



- **Strategic Leadership** refers to using “leading by managing” tools to further the strategic aims of an organization. This means understanding the organization’s strategic vision, breaking down the steps required to achieve this vision into a number of operational steps, and – most critically – leading others in the organization towards fulfillment of these steps. General managers often “do” little in an organization beyond leading and managing others. Yet this “leading by managing” is extremely difficult. General managers must be adept at building credibility with others, and using a management style that causes others to not only want to follow the manager’s direction, but also to know *how* to best move forward. “Leading by managing” is complementary to, but looks fundamentally different than, leadership skills taught in other MBA courses on leadership. (These usually miss the “management” component, about which this course goes into significant detail.)
- **Structure and Process** refers to the formal rules by which a strategic plan is broken into manageable “chunks” of activities that employees can then work towards. Examples include designing jobs and roles within organizations, deciding on reporting lines and organizational structure, and making rules that help guide decision making. A general manager plays a critical role in designing the structures and processes that guide the actions of other employees, and monitoring employee performance on the required actions.
- **Incentives** refers to the setting of financial and non-financial rewards and punishments for others in the organization. They define how an organization rewards strong performance and punishes poor performance. Due to the power of incentives in motivating action, any

general manager must be adept at designing and managing an incentive system that governs organizational rewards and punishments. Note that “incentives” mean much more than just monetary pay, although monetary pay is an important element of most incentive systems.

- **Culture and Mental Models** refers to the informal, tacit “social order” of an organization that shapes attitudes and behaviors outside of formal structures, processes and incentive systems. Cultures implicitly design behaviors that are encouraged, discouraged, accepted and rejected within any group. General managers face a “chicken and egg” problem when considering culture within the Pyramid of Value Delivery. Any existing organization already has a culture which can constrain a manager’s ability to take or encourage certain important actions, sometimes greatly so. But adept general managers are also able to influence organizational culture in ways that are beneficial for the strategic vision of the company. Sometimes general managers must completely change organizational culture – one of the most difficult tasks in any organization.

### **COURSE FORMAT**

This course is largely case-based, and the cases draw on real management issues faced by managers in organizations. Most of the cases in the class are in business settings, but some are in other settings, including government and the military. There are a relatively large number of exercises, including in-class “games” or other short exercises, negotiation simulations where students are given a role to play, role playing exercises, and other similar activities. In short, while this class appears similar to your Strategy class in its case-based approach, it is much more interactive than the Strategy course, and we do more than simply discuss cases.

As such, attendance in the course is very critical, as is active participation in the class discussion and class activities. Students who anticipate missing more than a class or two, at most, should not take this course, as it is basically impossible to make up missed material. In this class, students will learn most by participating in the class exercises and discussions. (Please note classes are not videotaped.)

### **GRADING AND COURSE CURVE**

- **Participation: 35%**
- **Final Exam: 35%**
- **Individual Group Project: 30%**

Approximately 50% of students in the class will receive an A or an A- (with the top few students,

at most, receiving an A+). Approximately 50% of students in the class will receive a B+, B or B-. Grades below B- are only given to students whose exams or class participation indicate a basic lack of preparation and/or familiarity with key course concepts.

### **CLASS PARTICIPATION**

Participating in class is critical to student learning. Almost every class will have elements of “putting you in the shoes of a manager” required to make on-the-spot decisions. These decisions are often difficult, but getting practice in these difficult situations is an important goal for the course. Also, the entire class will learn a lot by seeing how others react to these situations. Not performing optimally when faced with a challenge during class can therefore be “optimal” from a class participation perspective.

We will therefore not consider a student’s performance on any exercise, simulation or roleplay when grading participation. When discussing a case, we also will not consider whether a student made a statement that was “right” or “wrong.” The primary criterion by which participation is grade is: “did the participation move the class forward?” Here are some examples of participation that helps accomplish this goal:

- Statements that make new points or arguments, or that add new evidence to existing points or arguments made by others;
- Participation that shows active listening and attention, that builds on others statements, and/or that amends one’s previous statements based on others’ feedback;
- Participation in exercises that show that the student is taking the exercise seriously, is trying her best, and if necessary is trying to get outside her comfort zone.

There are also some types of participation that tend not to add value:

- Statements that move the class away from the point being discussed (for example by bringing up something off-topic, or something about a topic the class has already moved on from);
- Statements that are repetitive of others’ statements and/or that indicate that the student is not actively listening to others or is not paying attention;
- Strong expressions of opinion without corresponding facts or analysis in support;
- Participation in exercises that indicate that the student is not taking the exercise seriously or is skeptical of the value of the exercise;
- “Outlandish” or “off-the-wall” participation in exercises done merely to get attention, as a joke, or to avoid the tension inherent in the exercise;
- “Skirting the rules” of an exercise or simulation as a way to avoid the tension inherent in the exercise;
- Using phones, sending texts, checking social media, etc during class sessions

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

We realize some students must sometimes miss class. Many students are in peak recruiting season; we all have busy schedules; life contains many difficult tradeoffs. (The Professor and TA hope to help you think about these tradeoffs, and are always open to discussing them with you, even if they do not involve questions about whether to attend class!) If you do miss a class, we expect you to do your best to learn the covered material. Students who miss class typically do this by reviewing the slides posted to Bruin Learn from the class in question, asking for notes from a classmate, talking to a classmate about the missed the class, and reaching out to the TA and/or Professor to talk about the material in class. The TA and Professor are happy to talk about the content of missed classes with you, but we strongly prefer to do so once a student has attempted to catch up on her own to the extent possible. Please note there is no possibility of “making up” missed participation.

That said, given the participatory nature of the class, frequent if not perfect attendance is very important. Students who miss a second class session during a quarter should immediately reach out to the Professor and TA to explain why they have missed 2 classes, whether any future absences are likely, and how to best catch up on the material. Students who miss 3 classes in a quarter will likely have a hard time achieving a grade above a B+.

Students may not miss more than 3 class sessions except for exceptional circumstances that will be reviewed with the MBA Program Office.

## FINAL EXAM

The Final Exam is a take home format, and must be completed in a single stretch during the 4-day exam windows listed on page 1. (There is no pausing the clock once a student has started an exam.)

The exam will be open book, but will also contain a case that you must read during the 4-hour window. Exam questions may include multiple choice questions, short answer questions, or essay questions. More information about the exam will be distributed closer to the date of the exam.

Please remember that students are required to take the exam during the indicated exam windows. There are no exceptions. Please start planning now to take the exam in the window indicated. Thank you.

## INDIVIDUAL GROUP ASSIGNMENT

Each student in the course will submit a 3 page “GM Action Plan” (GAP) that describes specifically what they plan to work on to succeed as a General Manager in the future. The GAP is due by 11:59pm on Sunday, March 26. The Professor will provide you with individual feedback about your final GAP. Previous students have indicated that they have used their GAP to guide their actions and decisions throughout their careers.

While the GAP is individual to you, you will also give and receive feedback from classmates on three “check points” as you build your GAP. Each checkpoint corresponds to the end of one of our three class modules. The Professor and TA will see your submission to your classmates at each checkpoint, and may provide feedback, but the majority of the interim feedback will come from classmates. You will be asked to rate the value of the feedback you receive from your classmates – this information will only be viewed by the Professor and TA. Valuable feedback to classmates will help the classmate improve their Action Plan by, for example, pushing for deeper specifics, pointing out other issues to consider, suggesting specific actions to take, or providing other concrete ideas that are helpful.

We will provide more information about the Individual Group Assignment later, but students have the following deadlines for their GAP project:

- Module 1 Submission to Teammates: Wednesday, Feb 8
- Module 1 Feedback to Teammates: Wednesday, Feb 15
- Module 2 Submission to Teammates: Wednesday, Feb Mar 1
- Module 2 Feedback to Teammates: Wednesday, Mar 8
- Module 3 Submission to Teammates: Wednesday, Mar 22
- Module 3 Feedback to Teammates: Sunday, Mar 26
- FINAL GAP DUE TO PROFESSOR: Sunday, Mar 26

## MODULE READINGS

At the end of each module, the Professor will post Module Readings about the frameworks and dynamics discussed in that module (typically readings from *Harvard Business Review* or similar outlets). We post these readings only after a module is completed because the readings will have deeper meaning at that time. Doing these readings is required, and content from the readings may show up on the final exam. We also may discuss readings in later modules in the class, so students should plan to read the module readings at the end of each module. All of the readings are relatively short – students can typically read all the readings for a particular module in 60-90 minutes. (They are really great articles though!)

## **ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND ETHICS**

As a member of the UCLA Anderson academic community, the highest standards of academic behavior are expected of you. As students who are finishing their time at Anderson, we assume that these standards are already clear to you. Please feel free to speak to the Professor or TA if you have any questions about standards around plagiarism, collaboration with other students, classroom behavior, or the use of outside materials. Any evidence of cheating, disruptive classroom behavior, or disrespect for others in the UCLA Anderson community will result in penalties up to and including failing the course, and a report to the UCLA Dean of Students Office.

## **COURSE TIMELINE AND ASSIGNED CASES**

### **Notes:**

- Cases are either available via the COURSE READER (indicated by CR), or will be posted directly to BRUIN LEARN (indicated by BL).
- Discussion Questions for each case will be posted to Bruin Learn at least one week in advance.

### **Module 1 – Strategic Leadership**

Jan 12	TANK IN THE BOG (BL), MARTHA RINALDI (CR)
Jan 19	ECOLAB (CR)
Jan 26	YELLOWTAIL MARINE (CR)
Feb 2	IRONBOX (BL)

Note: Submit Module 1 GAP to teammates by Wed, Feb 8. Submit feedback to teammates by Wed, Feb 15.

### **Module 2 – Structure, Process and Incentives**

Feb 9	ARCK (BL)
Feb 16	CHUNG AND DASGUPTA (BL)
Feb 23	DELOITTE (CR); GENERAL ELECTRIC (BL)

Note: Submit Module 2 GAP to teammates by Wed, Mar 1. Submit feedback to teammates by Wed, Mar 8.

### **Module 3 – Culture**

Mar 2	ZURICH INSURANCE (CR)
Mar 9	GOOGLE (CR)
Mar 16	IBASIS (CR)

Note: Submit Module 3 GAP to teammates by Wed, Mar 22. Submit feedback to teammates by Sun, Mar 26. Submit final GAP assignment to Professor by Sunday, Mar 26 at 11:59pm

Note: Final exam is taken at home and can be started anytime between Sunday, March 19 at 6pm and Wednesday, March 22 at 6pm. Students must submit their exam answers within 4 hours of starting the exam. Students must start the exam during the indicated window. No exceptions.