

Strategy Execution

Jonathan Giuliano
j.g@gatech.edu
scheller.gatech.edu/giuliano

Overview

This course focuses on executing strategy. After strategy analysis and strategy design, how do executives succeed in achieving strategic results?

This course takes an interdisciplinary approach to the theory and practice of strategy execution to help you (1) understand and apply processes of strategy analysis, formulation, and implementation, (2) significantly increase your knowledge of strategy execution, (3) appreciate how theory informs practice, and (4) improve your skills in executing strategy and achieving strategic objectives.

The course involves case studies, discussions, exercises, journal articles, lectures, and videos.

Prerequisites

This course has no prerequisites.

Objectives and Outcomes

In this course, you should learn practical skills enabling you to achieve these objectives:

1. Analyzing, designing, assessing, influencing, and improving strategies
2. Understanding strategy dimensions, consequent issues, and their implications
3. Solving strategy problems
4. Understanding concepts, frameworks, methods, and process to assist in strategy execution
5. Assessing and developing resources and capabilities, including action planning
6. Identifying assumptions and avoiding biases in implementing action plans
7. Identifying key implementation variables, their interconnection, and their context
8. Appreciating the many pressures influencing strategy execution

9. Understanding how to evaluate risk and how to shift probabilities toward success in executing strategy
10. Predicting subsequent-order effects of strategy execution
11. Empathizing with stakeholders affected by implementation
12. Leading by putting strategy into action
13. Constructing hypotheses, structuring experiments, and developing and applying appropriate metrics
14. Conducting and analyzing strategy experiments
15. Recognizing, understanding, and using inductive, abductive, and deductive processes
16. Integrating people, policy, and process in strategy execution

Modality

This is a hybrid course. Approximately half of class sessions take place in the classroom. Other class sessions are synchronous remote via Zoom. The Schedule section of this syllabus identifies which classes we plan to hold in the classroom and which classes we plan to hold via Zoom.

Office Hours

I hold office hours by appointment. If you wish to have a conversation, send an email noting the purpose of and agenda for the conversation and proposing times and dates to talk in person, by telephone, or, if you need to share your screen, by Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Email

I often respond to email quickly, though you should always expect that a response may take 24 hours; the exceptions are weekends and holidays (including school holidays), when I often leave email until the next business day.

Website

Canvas provides the course website for Announcements, Assignments, Files, Grades, Media Gallery, and Zoom. Check Canvas frequently to make sure that you have current course Announcements. Use Assignments to follow assignment deadlines and to submit your course assignments. The Files folder contains the course syllabus and other files. Your scores on Assignments are available in Grades. Media Gallery displays recordings of synchronous remote class sessions. (There are no recordings of

classroom sessions.) Zoom provides the links to synchronous remote class sessions.

Electronics

You must turn off all electronic devices — computers, tablets, mobile phones, etc. — before the start of classroom sessions and keep electronics off for the entire class unless I tell you to use your computer for a specific class exercise; thus, you must bring your computer to every class. Bring pens, pencils, and paper to class for taking notes.

Attendance

Class participation is essential for you to learn in this course and for others to learn from you, so class attendance is mandatory. Missing class, arriving late, or leaving early adversely and significantly affects your course grade.

Attendance at all classroom sessions is demonstrated and verified by your signature on the class attendance sheet. Your signature on the class attendance sheet is the only verification of your attendance in class. The attendance sheet may be circulated anytime during class; you must sign the attendance sheet when it is circulated and only when it is circulated. Asking or attempting to sign the attendance sheet before or after it is circulated is unacceptable and futile.

Any excuse for failing to sign the attendance sheet is best kept to yourself because such excuses adversely affect your grade. Such excuses include these: “I forgot,” “I arrived late,” “I had to leave early,” “I was distracted,” “The attendance sheet missed me,” “I don’t know how I missed the attendance sheet,” “I don’t know what happened,” and “I didn’t sign the sheet, but you know I was in class because I made comments and asked questions.”

With synchronous remote class sessions, Zoom automatically records your attendance. To ensure that Zoom records your attendance properly, sign on to your Georgia Tech account, go to Canvas Zoom, and click on the Zoom link for class.

I understand that you may have to miss class – e.g., because you are ill, or you must travel for work, or you must attend to a family emergency – and in such situations you must (a) notify me by email before the class begins and (b) submit by email a substitute assignment within seven days of the class you miss. Within one day of the class you miss, you should expect an email reply from me with details on your substitute assignment. Substitute assignments take approximately three hours to complete. If there is a recording of class, you must also watch the recording in Media Gallery. While you are notifying me by email about missing a class, make sure that you notify

several colleagues and request that they take notes for you if you are missing a classroom session. Expect recordings only of Zoom class sessions.

If you miss one or two classes, you must submit the substitute assignment for the class or classes that you miss. If you fail to submit one substitute assignment on time, you lose 15 points from your course grade; if you fail to submit two substitute assignments on time, you lose 30 points from your course grade.

If you miss three or more classes, you lose 15 points from your course grade for the third class you miss and 15 additional points from your course grade for each class thereafter that you miss.

Assessment

Your grade for this course is based generally on your mastery of course material and specifically on (1) your two case-study reports and (2) your session reports. All assignments are individual assignments.

1. Case-study reports: These are written reports, each one analyzing a case study and using the Balanced Scorecard to present your analysis, recommendations, and action plans.

Follow this rubric:

1. The word count on your report should approximate 2000 words. The total word count includes words in charts, diagrams, graphs, and tables. You may attach an appendix, which has no word or page limit.
2. The main sources you need for completing this assignment are (a) the readings through the due date and (b) your notes from class discussions and lectures. You may supplement these sources as you think appropriate.
3. Your case-study report must fully answer the case-study questions, which appear below. You may simply write the question verbatim on your report and, beneath the question, write your answer. Write clearly and concisely.
4. You must write and submit your report as one Microsoft Word file or PDF file. Use default margins, typefaces, and fonts (such as Cambria 12 point). Make sure that your format your document so that it is easy to read. Avoid ornamentation.
5. Submit only one file. You must submit the file by uploading it to Assignments (in Canvas) before the deadline. Canvas allows you to submit your file only once.
6. Failure to comply fully with all these rules results in a significant deduction of points from your score. Ignoring one or more of these rules can turn a score of 90 – which is excellent for this course – into a score of 80 or 70 or 60...and eventually 0.

Answer these four questions for each case study. Use charts, diagrams, graphs, and table; you can find examples of these (e.g., strategy maps) in the journal articles on the Balanced Scorecard.

1. With the information in the case study, what is the Balanced Scorecard that you recommend? Why? Use strategy maps.
2. What additional information do you require to complete your Balanced Scorecard? How does that information help? Where or from whom would you get that information?
3. What are the key assumptions on which your Balanced Scorecard rests? What risks do you anticipate, and what is their probability and severity?
4. What is your action plan for implementing your Balanced Scorecard? (Your response to this question should approximate 50 percent of your entire report.)

2. Session reports: A session report is your writeup (of approximately 500 words) analyzing the case study assignment for that session. There are five session reports. Apply lessons from the journal articles, as appropriate, in your analysis and recommendations. Use the Technical Note on Case Studies and the Technical Note on Action Plans to guide your work. Your session report must clearly identify these headings:

1. The most important strategic issues in the case
2. Options for strategy execution
3. The relative advantages and disadvantages of each option
4. Your assumptions
5. Your recommendation
6. Risks of your recommendation
7. Your general action plan

Make sure you are ready to elaborate your action plan in detail during class discussions. In general, you earn a score of 95 percent if your report is acceptable and 55 percent if your report is unacceptable (although I reserve the option of assigning any score within that range). In this context, “acceptable” refers to (1) prevalent standards for MBA students in top programs and (2) my expectations for Georgia Tech graduate students; anything else is “unacceptable.” Submit each of these assignments to Canvas Assignments as one file, either Microsoft Word or PDF. Canvas allows you to submit your file only once.

Late Submissions

Assignments that are late submissions lose at least 10 percentage points. If they are less than 24 hours late, 20 percentage points; if 24 hours late and less than 48 hours late, 30 percentage points; if they are 48 hours late and less than 72 hours late, and 10 additional percentage points for each period of 24 hours thereafter that the submissions are late. If you fail to submit an assignment, your score is zero.

Course Grades

You may earn a course grade of A, B, C, D, or F.

Your course grade comprises:

1. 1st case-study report: 30 percent of the course grade
2. Session reports: 40 percent of the course grade (i.e., 8 percent for each of 5 reports)
3. 2nd case-study report: 30 percent of the course grade

Note that absence from class can have a significant adverse effect on your course grade. For details, consult the section of this syllabus on attendance.

Course scores and course grades follow this table:

90.00 and higher:	A
80.00 to 89.99:	B
70.00 to 79.99:	C
60.00 to 69.99:	D
59.99 and lower:	F

Please note:

1. It is impermissible to audit this course or to take the course on a pass/fail (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) basis.
2. There is no extra credit in this course.

Resources

Required Resource

The required resource for this course is the Harvard Business Publishing course pack. Journal articles and cases are available for purchase and download from this Harvard Business Publishing website:

Course link: <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/1290301>

Course pack: Strategy Execution (Fall 2026)

Course: MGT 6665

For assistance, the Harvard Business Publishing Tech Help line is (800) 810-8858 and email is techhelp@hbsp.harvard.edu. Business hours are 8am to 8pm Monday through Thursday, and 8am to 7pm Friday.

Recommended Resource

If you are looking for a textbook to supplement your knowledge of strategy generally, I highly recommend *Strategic Management, 6th edition*, by Professor Frank Rothaermel. You can learn more about the book at <https://www.ftrstrategy.com>.

Suggested Resources

Students often ask for additional resources on strategy execution. You may wish to consult these journal articles and books, as they provide breadth and depth to what you learn in this course. The Georgia Tech library should have these available, free of charge, in electronic or paper format.

1. Amabile, T. M. 1998. How to Kill Creativity. *Harvard Business Review*, 76, 76-87.
2. Amit, R. & Schoemaker, P. J. H. 1993. Strategic Assets and Organizational Rent. *Strategic Management Journal*, 14, 33-46.
3. Argyris, C. & Schon, D. A. 1978. *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*, Reading, Mass., Addison-Wesley.
4. Augier, M. & Teece, D. J. 2006. Understanding Complex Organization: The Role of Know-How, Internal Structure, And Human Behavior in The Evolution of Capabilities. *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 15, 395-416.
5. Baer, M., Dirks, K. T. & Nickerson, J. A. 2012. Microfoundations of Strategic Problem Formulation. *Strategic Management Journal*.
6. Barney, J. B. & Clifford, T. G. 2010. *What I Didn't Learn in Business School: How Strategy Works in The Real World*, Boston, Mass., Harvard Business Review Press.
7. Barney, J. B., Ketchen, D. J. & Wright, M. 2011. The Future of Resource-Based Theory. *Journal of Management*, 37, 1299-1315.
8. Bourgeois, L. J. & Brodwin, D. R. 1984. Strategic Implementation: Five Approaches to an Elusive Phenomenon. *Strategic Management Journal*, 5, 241-264.
9. Cohen, W. M. & Levinthal, D. A. 1990. Absorptive Capacity. A New Perspective on Learning and Innovation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 35.
10. Crilly, D. & Sloan, P. 2012. Enterprise Logic: Explaining Corporate Attention to Stakeholders from the 'Inside-Out'. *Strategic Management Journal*.
11. Freeman, R. E. 2011. *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
12. Giere, R. N. 2006. *Scientific Perspectivism*, Chicago, Ill., University of Chicago Press.
13. Govindarajan, V. & Trimble, C. 2010. *The Other Side of Innovation: Solving the Execution Challenge*, Boston, Mass., Harvard Business School Publishing.
14. Grant, R. M. 1996. Toward A Knowledge-Based Theory of the Firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, 17, 109-122.
15. Guth, W. D. & Macmillan, I. C. 1986. Strategy Implementation Versus Middle Management Self-Interest. *Strategic Management Journal*, 7, 313-327.
16. Heath, C. & Tversky, A. 1991. Preference and Belief: Ambiguity and Competence in Choice Under Uncertainty. *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, 4, 5-28.
17. Jacobides, M. G. 2006. The Architecture and Design of Organizational Capabilities. *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 15, 151-171.
18. Kaplan, R. S. & Norton, D. P. 2004. *Strategy Maps*, Boston, Mass., Harvard Business School Press.
19. Kaplan, R. S. & Norton, D. P. 2008. *The Execution Premium: Linking Strategy to Operations for Competitive Advantage*, Boston, Mass., Harvard Business Press.
20. Khanna, T., Palepu, K. G. & Bullock, R. J. 2010. *Winning in Emerging Markets: A Road Map for Strategy and Execution*, Boston, Mass., Harvard Business Press.

21. Kor, Y. Y. & Mesko, A. 2012. Dynamic Managerial Capabilities: Configuration and Orchestration of Top Executives' Capabilities and The Firm's Dominant Logic. *Strategic Management Journal*.
22. Kotter, J. P. 2007. *Leading Change*, Boston, Mass., Harvard Business School Press.
23. Levitt, B. & March, J. G. 1988. Organizational Learning. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 319-340.
24. March, J. G. 1991. Exploration and Exploitation in Organizational Learning. *Organization Science*, 2, 71-87.
25. March, J. G., Sproull, L. S. & Tamuz, M. 1991. Learning from Samples of One or Fewer. *Organization Science*, 1-13.
26. Mauboussin, M. J. 2012. *The Success Equation: Untangling Skill and Luck in Business, Sports, And Investing*, Boston, Mass., Harvard Business Review Press.
27. Mintzberg, H. 2007. *Managing*, New York, Financial Times Prentice Hall.
28. Ormerod, P. 2005. *Why Most Things Fail: Evolution, Extinction and Economics*, New York, Pantheon Books.
29. Pfeffer, J. 2015. *Leadership BS: Fixing Workplaces and Careers One Truth at A Time*, New York, Harper Business, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.
30. Pfeffer, J. & Sutton, R. I. 2000. *The Knowing-Doing Gap: How Smart Companies Turn Knowledge into Action*, Boston, Mass., Harvard Business School Press.
31. Polanyi, M. 1950. Scientific Beliefs. *Ethics*, 61, 27-37.
32. Polanyi, M. 1952. The Stability of Beliefs. *British Journal for The Philosophy of Science*, lii, 217-232.
33. Polanyi, M. 1958. *Personal Knowledge: Towards A Post-Critical Philosophy*, Chicago, Ill., University of Chicago Press.
34. Porter, M. E. 1985. *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*, New York, Free Press.
35. Prahalad, C. K. & Hamel, G. 1990. The Core Competence of the Corporation. *Harvard Business Review*, 68, 79-91.
36. Rumelt, R. P. 1997. Towards A Strategic Theory of the Firm. In: Foss, N. J. (Ed.) *Resources, Firms, And Strategies: A Reader in The Resource-Based Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
37. Sull, D. & Eisenhardt, K.M. 2015. *Simple Rules: How to Thrive in a Complex World*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
38. Teece, D. J. 1999. Design Issues for Innovative Firms: Bureaucracy, Incentives and Industrial Structure. In: Chandler, A. D., Hagström, P. & Sölvell, Ö. (Eds.) *The Dynamic Firm: The Role of Technology, Strategy, Organization and Regions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
39. Tsoukas, H. 2009. A Dialogical Approach to The Creation of New Knowledge in Organizations. *Organization Science*, 20.
40. Weick, K. E. 1993. The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organizations: The Mann Gulch Disaster. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38.
41. Weick, K. E. 1993. Collective Mind in Organizations: Heedful Interrelating on Flight Decks. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38, 357.

42. Weick, K. E. 2005. Organizing and The Process of Sensemaking. *Organization Science*, 16, 409.

Integrity

Georgia Tech endeavors to foster a community based on trust, integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, click either of these links:
<http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/>
<http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>

Any student suspected of plagiarizing or other cheating on any assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which investigates the incident and identifies the appropriate penalty for violations.

Accommodation

If you are a student with learning needs or other needs that require special accommodation, call the Office of Disability Services at 404-894-2563 or click this link:
<http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu>
Make an appointment immediately to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also email me as soon as possible so that we can discuss your learning needs.

Inclusivity

I am strongly committed to, and actively engaged with, creating an inclusive learning environment in which everyone feels welcome and safe. I rely on your feedback to achieve this goal. I invite you to talk with me about things you feel I should stop, start, and continue doing to allow everyone to feel valued and engaged in our learning community.

Expectations

It is important to establish and maintain a culture of respect, open inquiry, intellectual challenge, mindful and conscientious behavior, and responsibility. Click this link – <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> – to read an articulation of expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. Professional conduct helps create and sustain the community and environment we value.

Schedule

Note

1. Expect that preparation for each class session requires three to six hours; however, some students find they must spend substantially more time to prepare for class.
2. In the schedule below, the word *study* means, at minimum, that you: (a) read or watch each assignment thoroughly, (b) analyze all the issues critically and creatively, and (c) complete all of this before the start of the class session.
3. For every case study, including the case study for your case-study reports, make sure you use the Technical Note on Case Studies and the Technical Note on Action Plans to assist you in analyzing and organizing your work. Both technical notes are available in the Files folder in Canvas.
4. Writing a case-study report competently can require approximately 9 hours for most students.
5. Make sure that you submit your session reports and case-study reports before the deadlines in Assignments in Canvas. Canvas allows you to submit each file only once.

Monday 24 August (classroom session)

Introduction to Strategy Execution

- Purchase the course pack.
- Bring to class your questions about the syllabus and this course.
- Study
 1. Secrets to Successful Strategy Execution
 2. Turning Great Strategy into Great Performance
 3. What Is Strategy?
 4. Technical Note on Case Studies
 5. Technical Note on Action Plans

Monday 31 August (classroom)

The Balanced Scorecard

- Study
 1. Having Trouble with Your Strategy? Then Map It
 2. How to Implement a New Strategy Without Disrupting Your Organization
 3. Using the Balanced Scorecard as a Strategic Management System
 4. Volkswagen do Brasil: Driving Strategy with the Balanced Scorecard

Monday 7 September

No class session: Labor Day

Monday 14 September **via Zoom**

The Balanced Scorecard

- Study
 1. Journal articles on the Balanced Scorecard from the second class session
 2. Performance Management at Afreximbank

Monday 21 September **(classroom)**

The Balanced Scorecard

- Study
 1. Adaptability: The New Competitive Advantage
 2. Stress-Test Your Strategy: The 7 Questions to Ask
 3. Why Do Good Managers Choose Poor Strategies?
 4. TWA Parts (Abridged)

Monday 28 September (independent study session)

Case-Study Report

*This is an independent-study session for you to work on your case-study report.
There is no class session.*

- Write and submit your case-study report. The case study is *#FutureFresenius: Implementing a New Strategy to Transform the Company and Advance Patient Care*. Precisely follow the rubric (in the Assessment section of this syllabus) and submit your case-study report by uploading it to Assignments (in Canvas) before the deadline.
- Note that your case-study report and your 1st session report are due at the same time.

Monday 5 October

No class session: school holiday

Monday 12 October **(classroom)**

Sensemaking and Decision Making

- Study
 1. Leader's Framework for Decision Making
 2. Leader's Guide to Understanding Complex Organizations: An Expanded 7-S Perspective
 3. Prepare Your Organization to Fight Fires
 4. Celeritas, Inc.: Leadership Challenges in a Fast-Growth Industry
- Submit your 1st session report (on the Celeritas case study) before the deadline.

Monday 19 October *via Zoom*

Risk, Uncertainty, and Luck

- Study
 1. Countering the Biggest Risk of All
 2. How to Avoid Catastrophe
 3. Strategy Under Uncertainty
 4. Duolingo: On a "Streak"
- Submit your 2nd session report (on the Duolingo case study) before the deadline.

Monday 26 October *via Zoom*

Knowing and Doing

- Study
 1. Bring Your Breakthrough Ideas to Life
 2. Evidence-Based Management
 3. Power Play
 4. Jess Westerly at Kauflauf GmbH
- Submit your 3rd session report (on the Westerly case study) before the deadline.

Monday 2 November *via Zoom*

Leading, Following, and Managing Strategy Execution

- Study
 1. Accelerate!
 2. Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail
 3. What Every Leader Needs to Know about Followers
 4. Hawk Electronics, Inc.
- Submit your 4th session report (on the Hawk case study) before the deadline.

Monday 9 November *via Zoom*

Experimenting, Coordinating, Integrating, and Iterating

- Study
 1. How to Design Smart Business Experiments
 2. Step-By-Step Guide to Smart Business Experiments
 3. Why Businesses Don't Experiment
 4. Barber Cardiosystems
- Submit your 5th session report (on the Barber case study) before the deadline.

Monday 16 November (**classroom**)

Practical Lessons in Strategy Execution

Guest Speaker

Monday 23 November (independent study session)

Case-Study Report

This is an independent-study session for you to work on your case-study report.

There is no class session.

- Begin work on your case-study report. The case study is *Christophe Beck: Leading Ecolab into Its Next Century*. Precisely follow the rubric (in the Assessment section of this syllabus).

Monday 30 November (classroom)

Practical Lessons in Strategy Execution

Guest Speaker

Monday 7 December *via Zoom*

Review