

Cursera Entrepreneurship Course

Paulo César Dias Figueiredo

Activity report

Abstract—This report presents the activities of attending the online Cursera course Developing Innovative Ideas for New Companies offered by the University of Maryland. The course is composed of a series of lectures followed by weekly assignments, the average workload per week is 6 hours and the course lasted a total of 6 weeks. The course syllabus is composed by a wide variety of topics relating Entrepreneurship, using proven content methods and models for a new venture opportunity assessment and analysis, the initial steps to creating a business plan, and raising financial capital to launch a firm.

Index Terms—Entrepreneurship, Business, Company, Course, Online.

1 INTRODUCTION

THE online course is entitled Developing Innovative Ideas for New Companies: The First Step in Entrepreneurship. The course has a wide to narrow approach in what it takes to be an entrepreneur, by stating what is the entrepreneurial mindset and then by showing how to materialize the ideas into a sustainable business. Also, it is focused on helping the student develop his idea during the course.

Each week focuses on a particular aspect of entrepreneurship such as perspective, mindset and behaviours, risks, industry, business modelling and business planing.

This introductory course is offered by the University of Maryland [1], lectured by Dr. James V. Green [2] the director for Entrepreneurship Education of Maryland Technology Enterprise Institute (Mtech).

The course format is explained in Section 2, a brief overview of the syllabus of the course is presented in Section 3. Section 4 explains how the evaluation of the assignments was conducted and what they were about.

- Paulo César Dias Figueiredo, nr. 64830, E-mail: paulo.c.dias.figueiredo@tecnico.ulisboa.pt, is a student of Software Engineering and Information Systems Computer Engineering, Instituto Superior Técnico, Universidade de Lisboa.

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2 COURSE FORMAT

The course lectures consist of a series of videos, that may be viewed online or downloaded. The workload of the course is 5 to 7 hours per week. Each week, consists of 5 to 10 videos uploaded with one week in advance, to allow self-paced learning. Also, each lecture has an average duration of 30 minutes with exception the introductory and closing videos of each module.

Every lecture starts by posing the problem(s), followed by a long discussion that takes place during the classroom where the topics are discussed and ends with a brief overview of the material taught in that lecture. An end of week assignment is available each week as explained in more detail in Section 4, in order to apply and reinforce learnings from the week. The recommended book for the course is "The Opportunity Analysis Canvas" [4].

3 LECTURES - OVERVIEW

The starting lectures of this topic start by defining Entrepreneurship and explaining why people study entrepreneurship, the motivations behind it, so that by understanding the motives or goals we can begin to understand the discovery/analysis of opportunities and decision-making.

In week 2, we explored entrepreneurial motivations and behaviours. Moreover, how to mar-

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ket opportunities, and what external factors such as technology influence entrepreneurship.

In week 3, the theme focus was on industry understanding analysis, such as how to select the right industry, how to position oneself effectively in that industry and how to be strategic in the making of decisions.

The following week, is about costumer understanding analysis, how to identify and satisfy real market needs, in addition we talked about macro economic changes and what's going on in the political, environmental and regulatory landscapes.

In week 5, the topic of discussion was about business models, and how they work. Finally, business plans and financial analysis in week 6.

4 WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

After each week there were assessment activities that allowed the student to apply what has been taught in the previous week. The assignments were composed of multiple choice, true or false, numeric and short answer responses.

The deliverables due at the end of the week 1 were an opening survey about the syllabus of the course, and an assignment about "Entrepreneurial Perspective", comprised of questions such as what are the common motivators for entrepreneurs to start a new venture and questions related to strategic decision making.

The second assignment evaluated was "Entrepreneurial Mindset, Motivations, and Behaviours" about interpersonal skills, confidence and the role they play in stakeholders.

The third assignment discussed "Industry analysis", that reflected on the conditions that the market demanded for a particular business, the lifecycle stage of an industry, the competitive forces that determine industry profitability and the characteristics of industry structure.

The assignment due to end of week 4 was entitled "Customer Analysis" and focused on the factors that may make economically unattractive to produce a particular product or service, the types of macro changes that increase new venture opportunities as well as identifying demographic and psychographic changes in the market.

The last two assignments were about "Business Model Canvas", "Business Plan Evaluation", respectively. Covered aspects such as customer segments, value propositions and a revision of business model plans of real companies.

The course ended with a "Closing Survey" about some general aspects of the course.

4.1 Evaluation

Each assignment could be submitted up to 3 times, the highest score achieved would be the final score of the assignment. Furthermore, each assignment had a deadline, submission past this deadline would receive a 5 percent, per day late, penalty for up to 7 days, after which time no credit would be given.

To earn a state of accomplishment, one has to earn a grade of at least 70 percent, also students who earn a grade of at least 90 percent receive the added designation "With Distinction". My total effective score for the course was 97 percent out of 100.

5 DISCUSSION FORUMS

There are thousands of students attending this course, as it is usual with Massive Open Online Courses, so as an effective approach to allow the response of questions, the students can post and respond to them in the forum.

To administer the content and enforce correct usage of the forum, a teaching team periodically would monitor these forums, so that important questions not answered by other students would be addressed.

Each student is encourage to use this forum. In the beginning of the course the students introduced themselves in them, told where they from, what they do and what is their entrepreneurial mindset. This discussion forum also could be used to talk about the different topics lectured and allowed myself and others to understand the behaviours and struggles of different people around the world that are trying to create a sustainable business. Such as, government regulatory and compliance norms in certain areas and investment opportunities. Furthermore, the discussion forums are a great opportunity to partner up with people trying to create a business or increase social capital.

6 CONCLUSION

This introductory course is designed for anyone that has an interest in learning about ideas generation, assessment and new venture creation. It's common now more than ever for the people, especially in countries that have a high unemployment rate, to try and create a sustainable business and with this, jobs for other people.

The lectures were structured well enough to allow any student to truly grasp the concepts taught and reflect upon his own ideas to starting a company. The assignments, although automatically corrected, permitted responding to the questions by relating the concepts taught in the course with the new venture idea that each student had. In addition to that, the last assignment was specially important because it presented a varied number of real business cases in which each student had to advocate the common errors and explain some concepts of the plans.

The course also allowed the opportunity to meet and partner up with new people in the discussion forums, as well as clarifying any doubts about the topics lectured.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all my colleagues that assisted me and others in the forum of discussions of the course and especially Dr. James V. Green for helping the students in this business venture.

REFERENCES

- [1] University of Maryland, www.umd.edu, (June, 2014).
- [2] Dr. James V. Green, Course Homepage, www.coursera.org/instructor/jvgreen, (June, 2014).
- [3] Course Developing Innovative Ideas for New Companies: The First Step in Entrepreneurship, <https://www.coursera.org/course/innovativeideas>, (June, 2014).
- [4] Green, James V. The Opportunity Analysis Canvas. 2nd ed. Venture Artisans Press, 2013.

Paulo Figueiredo Student of Software Engineering and Information Systems Computer Engineering at Instituto Superior Técnico (IST).



In this type of document (technical), the conclusion should start with a summary of the subject addressed and then should highlight the results.

APPENDIX

STATEMENT OF EXECUTION

Statement of accomplishment by Coursera.



APRIL 23, 2014

Statement of Accomplishment

WITH DISTINCTION

PAULO CÉSAR DIAS FIGUEIREDO

HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK'S ONLINE
OFFERING OF



Developing Innovative Ideas for New Companies: The First Step in Entrepreneurship

This course explores how to identify and evaluate opportunities based on real customer needs, develop solid business models, and create successful companies.



DR. JAMES V. GREEN
MARYLAND TECHNOLOGY ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

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