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# CEO REPORT

The Psychology of the Unknown:  
What Great Problem-Solvers do  
When They Get Stuck

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## Executive Summary

Much of reality is made up of the “*unknown*”, the unfamiliar, rare, novel events and situations – often challenging and violating our current taken-for-granted assumptions of what works and what doesn’t work. This can be a source of great anxiety or fear as it represents lack of control and certainty. We can choose to avoid or ignore it at our own peril particularly if it is perceived as threatening or overwhelming. Yet there are some who rise to the challenge by ***thinking differently*** about uncertainty and progress forwards.

This CEO Report is about tapping into the ***psychological thought-processes*** of how great problem-solvers see, interpret and makes sense of being stuck with complexity and what they do (or fail to do) to progress. To uncover these underlying thinking patterns, we administered a rigorous and systematic interview approach from clinical psychology called, Repertory Grid Technique (RGT). Our sample consists of ***fifty (50) seasoned CEOs / Executives*** spanning a wide range of industry sectors.

Seven (7) inherent latent themes emerged from our analysis as to what are the core drivers (***habits of mind***) that help executives ***open up the alternatives*** whenever they find themselves stuck with complexity:

Executives emphasized the importance of bringing a ***Fresh perspective*** through “reframing”, reimagining and reviewing the validity of current assumptions / expectations. They look at the issues from a different perspective, thinking around, collaborating, being open-minded and staying away from current (box) frameworks.

Thinking, feeling and acting “*as if*” you are the ***Owner*** (this is my problem, my life – so what am I going to do about it?). Here they expand the solution space by speaking to trusted parties in/outside their field for feedback; spending more time to understand the context, situation and stakeholder priorities; assessing risk levels, resistance forces, always anticipating (with early warning systems), and not accepting the fact that when they find themselves stuck, that they are stuck.

Showing ***Connected-thinking*** by breaking down the problem into solvable parts and see the underlying issues; being responsive to prevailing situations from multiple sources/ different perspectives, and the connection between reasons for action, uncertainties and the consequences of inaction.

Also featured prominently in our findings is the need for ***Urgency with the end in mind***. Seeing the urgency, criticality and importance of moving forward, clearly visualizing the end-game, executing with strategic purpose / alignment, sizing up the strategic impact of the problem, making reference to other examples of successful cases and past learning.

***Leveraging off teamwork*** to establish collective intelligence through regular discussions, exploration and reviewing of alternatives; and ensuring the team continually acquires new competencies to meet the demands of changing landscapes.

Being fully ***In-the-zone*** by having a persistent mentality (never giving up), careful and thorough analysis, harnessing my strengths and perceived strengths to gain momentum and campaign, having contingency plans, experimenting with trial and error; and remaining calm and positive even if the situation looks impossible.

And finally, the importance of ***Reflective/ Reflexive Practice***. Literally walking away (for a while) and taking a step back to reflect/reflex deeply about the situation (of what we are doing and not doing), knowing where the pain-points and causes are, clear understanding of key performance indicators / critical success factors, and having faith in the process.

Taken together these seven drivers provide a powerful ***framework*** that help guide the thinking process when our visions of the world shrink. It fosters accelerated learning, constant renewal, resilience, holistic, and interconnected thinking that forms the foundation of the ***rapid response system*** used by our sample of 50 CEO / Executive problem-solvers. Cultivating them into your everyday practice will require time, patience, persistence and curiosity.

## Purpose and scope of study

Between June-December of 2022, we invited fifty (50) CEOs / Executives from across a wide range of industry sectors for one-on-one in-depth interviews to share their experience in dealing with complexity. In addition to completing a simple short survey on the topic prior to the scheduled meeting, all executives were informed that we would be using a highly structured and rigorous interview approach, grounded in clinical psychology, as a means to tap into their thinking process to better understand how they approached their toughest unsolved problems, issues and challenges (albeit successfully or not so successfully solved). Specifically, we were interested to elicit their recent experience (within the past 1-5 years) in terms of “when you find yourself stuck, what did you do (or failed to do) to better solve it?”

*Some definitions for the purpose of this study:*

A “**problem**” is defined as a situation, person or thing that needs attention and needs to be dealt with or solved.

An “**issue**” is defined as a subject or problem that people are thinking and talking about.

A “**challenge**” is defined as (the situation of being faced with) something that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person’s ability.

As such, in this study, “**complex problems, issues & challenges**” are those that are ill-defined, unstructured, non-routine, unknown, unfamiliar, unexpected, unanticipated, unplanned, unpredictable, unclear, unintended, rare, novel events and situations... (They may occur throughout our lives, love and career...).

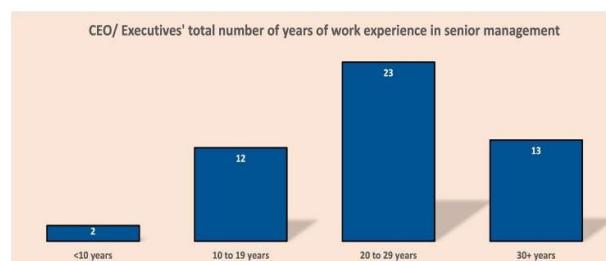
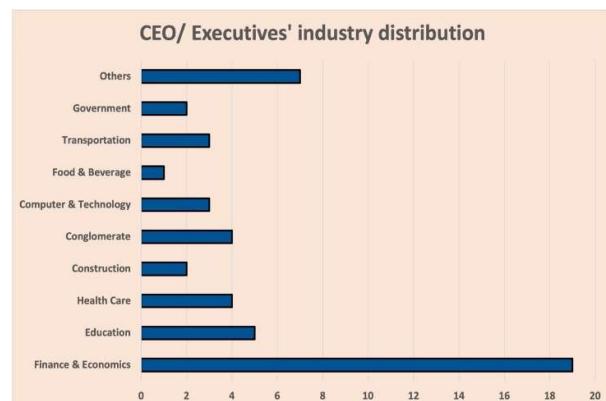
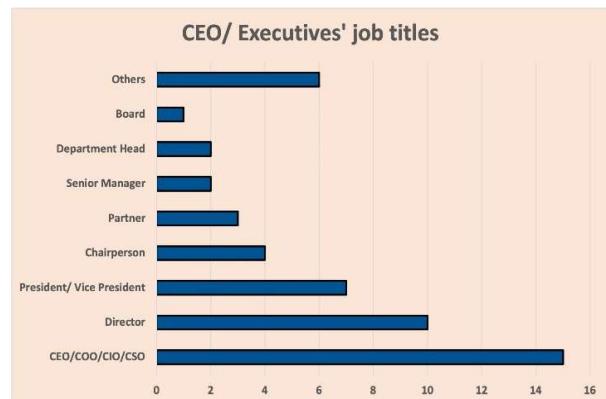
Being “**stuck**” means our ideas begin to stall, there is a tendency to cling onto our past habitual practices / routines; there is no progress, a stalemate, no new ideas, past solutions and approaches no longer considered as useful.

“**Successfully solve it**” means you would rate the outcome as being equal to or above 7 out of 10; and

“**Not able to successfully solve it**” means you would rate the outcome as being equal to or below 5 out of 10.

## Sample breakdown and preliminary findings

Our sample of experienced problem-solvers consist of 50 CEOs / senior executives from a broad range of industries (public, private, small, medium and large). They have an average of 32.5 years of work experience, 21.3 years of which in senior management roles and have worked in (on average) 3.7 different industries in their entire careers. Job titles ranged from Chairman of the Board to Chief Executive Officer, Senior Partner, Founder, Chief Operating Officer, to Philanthropist. Nineteen (19) executives were female and thirty-one (31) were male.



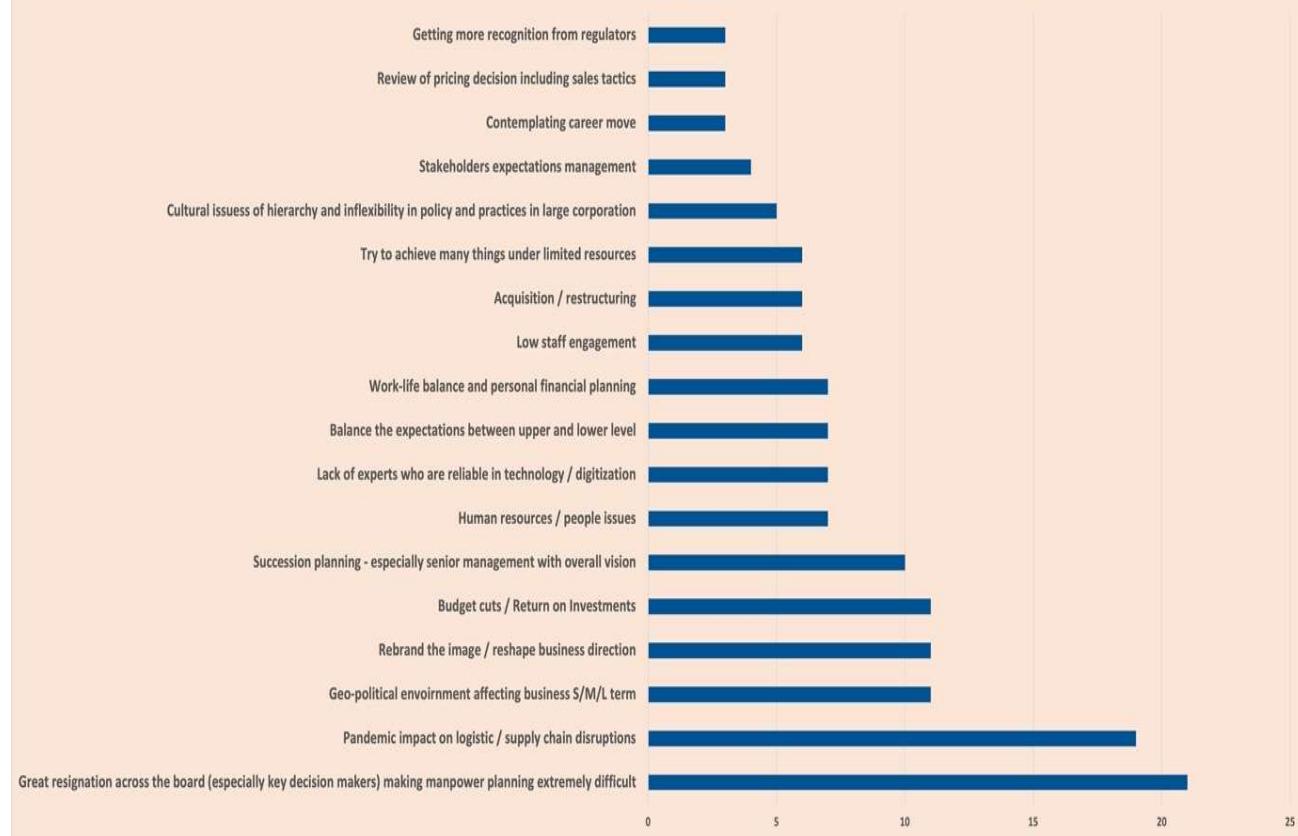
## What's keeping executives awake at night?

During the study period, we solicited a total of 147 key challenges CEOs / Executives were facing (from which 18 clusters emerged). Of utmost importance is the great resignation of personnel across the board (especially key decision makers) and this made manpower planning incredibly

difficult. The impact on logistics and supply chain issues, along with geo-political environment had clear repercussions for short-, medium- and long-term strategizing. All these issues also had impact on budget cuts, succession planning, corporate (re) branding, staff engagement, doing more with less and managing stakeholder expectations, inter alia.



### Top 3 complex problems, issues and challenges that CEO/ Executives currently facing



## Executives' top three advice on what must be done to open up the alternatives

Prior to the more in-depth clinical psychology interviews, we also surveyed CEOs / Executives on their top three (3) "must do" (advice) if we were to successfully open up the alternatives whenever we get "stuck" with complex problems, issues and challenges. To this question, we solicited a total of 212 responses with some clear overlap and consistency in their counsel – 25 clusters emerged. The most frequently occurring advice was the need to expand

the solution space by speaking with (trusted) parties (and with people more experienced). Another critical approach is to execute with strategic purpose and alignment. Brainstorming creative alternatives (solving issues at both ends), ensuring that the root causes of the problem were understood, the importance of staying calm, positive and upbeat, the value of positive "re-words" (such as reframing, re-examining, reviewing, rethinking), taking a step back to reflect deeply; to even walking away from the problem (for a while), were all critical based on executives' past experience.

### Top 3 MUST do to open up alternatives when CEO/ Executives get stuck



## Results from clinical psychology interviews

Going beyond conventional executive surveys, our in-depth face-to-face clinical psychology interviews further reveal and manifest the internal thought-processes of what seasoned CEOs / Executives do (or failed to do) to better solve complex problems, issues and challenges – especially when they find themselves stuck. From 50 executives (each interview averaged 50 minutes), we elicited a total of 300 responses ranked in terms of their frequency. The table in page 5 provides an aggregated detail breakdown on the range of bi-polar constructs elicited from executives based on their experience in dealing with complexity. Of particular note are the responses to the left of the table – which signifies what they did to open up the alternatives when they find themselves stuck. To the right of the table represent what executives failed to do (to open up the

alternatives) – which inevitably did not allow them to progress (and hence remained stuck).

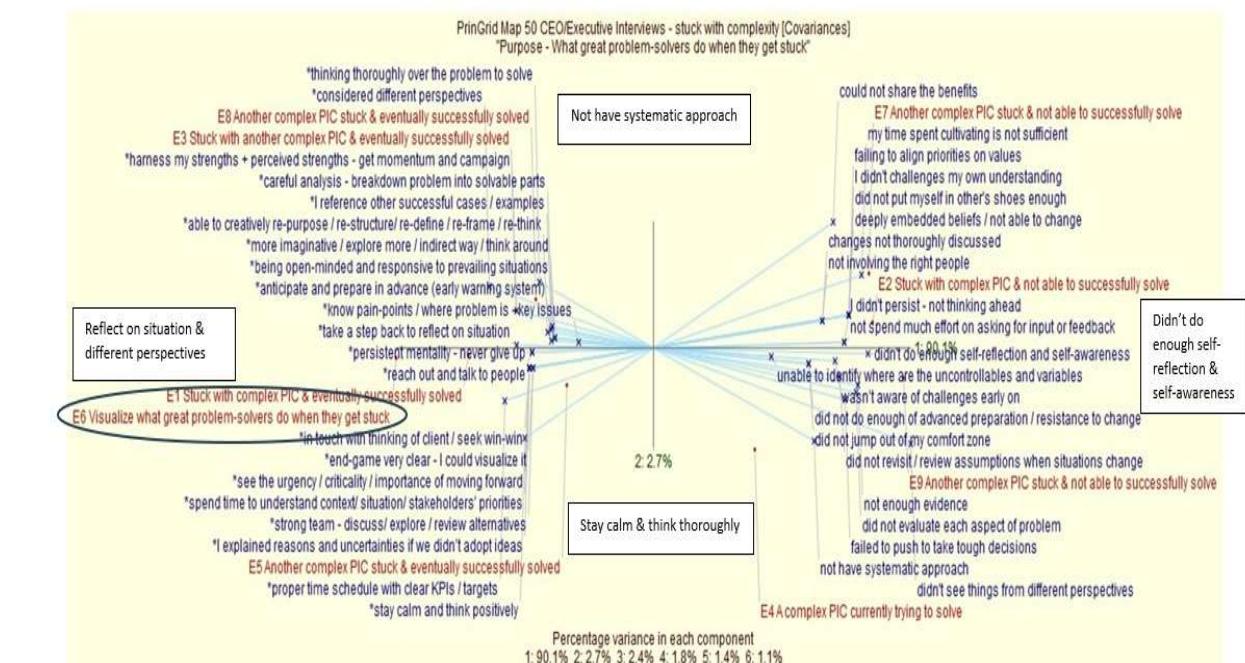
The type of actions that allowed executives to progress from being stuck ranged from being more imaginative (explore more, indirect way, thinking around), being clear on the end-game / visualizing, seeing the sense of urgency / importance of moving forward, taking a step back to reflect, knowing the pain-points of where the problem is, to staying calm and positive in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity, amongst others. On the other hand, complex problems, issues and challenges are not successfully solved when executives exhibited the following range of actions: fail to challenge their own understanding, didn't jump out of their comfort zone, not spending enough effort to ask for feedback, didn't do enough self-reflection / self-awareness, unable to identify where are the uncontrollables, to didn't see things from different perspectives, *inter alia*.

CEO / Executives: In terms of "when you find yourself stuck, what did you do (or failed to do) to better solve it?"

	Elicited Bi-Polar Constructs	Construct Frequency
What helps open up the alternatives	What doesn't help open up the alternatives	
C1 *I explained reasons and uncertainties if we didn't adopt ideas	↔ I didn't challenges my own understanding	22
C2 *harness my strengths + perceived strengths - get momentum and campaign	↔ failed to push to take tough decisions	22
C3 *more imaginative / explore more / indirect way / think around	↔ did not jump out of my comfort zone	21
C4 *spend time to understand context/ situation/ stakeholders' priorities	↔ did not put myself in other's shoes enough	20
C5 *careful analysis - breakdown problem into solvable parts	↔ did not evaluate each aspect of problem	19
C6 *being open-minded and responsive to prevailing situations	↔ did not do enough of advanced preparation / resistance to change	19
C7 *end-game very clear - I could visualize it	↔ changes not thoroughly discussed	18
C8 *persistent mentality - never give up	↔ I didn't persist - not thinking ahead	17
C9 *reach out and talk to people	↔ not spend much effort on asking for input or feedback	15
C10 *in touch with thinking of client / seek win-win	↔ failing to align priorities on values	15
C11 *anticipate and prepare in advance (early warning system)	↔ wasn't aware of challenges early on	14
C12 *proper time schedule with clear KPIs / targets	↔ my time spent cultivating is not sufficient	13
C13 *see the urgency / criticality / importance of moving forward	↔ deeply embedded beliefs / not able to change	13
C14 *take a step back to reflect on situation	↔ didn't do enough self-reflection and self-awareness	12
C15 *strong team - discuss/ explore / review alternatives	↔ not involving the right people	11
C16 *know pain-points / where problem is - key issues	↔ unable to identify where are the uncontrollables and variables	11
C17 *thinking thoroughly over the problem to solve	↔ not have systematic approach	10
C18 *I reference other successful cases / examples	↔ not enough evidence	9
C19 *considered different perspectives	↔ didn't see things from different perspectives	7
C20 *able to creatively re-purpose / re-structure/ re-define / re-frame / re-think	↔ did not revisit / review assumptions when situations change	6
C21 *stay calm and think positively	↔ could not share the benefits	6

Total number of elicited constructs from 50 CEOs/Executives 300

Collective Cognitive Map of 50 CEOs/Executives: What Great Problem-Solvers Do When They Get Stuck



- Vector lines represent the shared bi-polarity in constraining used by CEOs/Executives to describe their experience when dealing with complexity; Each construct has a preferred side marked with an "\*" indicating executives' choice of what helps them open up the alternatives when they find themselves STUCK with complexity.
- Look at these bi-polar construct lines near any one of the 9 "Role title" Elements (E1, E2, E3...E9) to see how they are described based on executives' experience with them when dealing with complexity – specifically – **what they do (or fail to do) when they find themselves stuck, so that they can progress.**
- The spread in psychological space is generated based on executives' ratings of their 9 Role title elements using their own elicited bi-polar constructs generated from our interviews. The overall output is generated using Repertory Grid Clinical Psychology software. This collective map shows we captured **92.8%** of the Total Percentage of Variance of how CEOs/Executives are thinking when they get stuck with complexity.
- Abbreviation PIC stands for a complex Problem, Issue or Challenge.

Going beyond these results, and grounded on each CEO / Executives' clinical interviews aggregated as shown in the table, we produced an overall collective cognitive map (spread in psychological space) on how they were thinking (what they did and fail to do) when they find themselves stuck with complexity. While each executive experienced their own set of complex problems, issues and challenges, our systematic and rigorous use of role title elements (E1, E2, E3... E9) (shown in red font) to elicit these complex items allows us to present this group map for demonstration purposes. The map provides some simple steps in how to read the results. Of particular importance are the bi-polar construct lines (perceptions of executives' actual experience when dealing with complexity) and their relation to the location of the nine (9) element types of problems, issues and challenges (shown in red font). To the left of the map are the preferred construct poles where executives say what really helped them progress from being stuck; to the right of the map are construct poles that hindered their progress.

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## Seven emerging latent themes – inherent thinking patterns of great problem-solvers

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Taking together all the key findings from the present study, we conducted further meta-analysis of the dataset with four expert independent coders and discovered some noticeable inherent latent themes emerging that underpins what great problem-solvers do when they find themselves stuck with complexity. These latent themes, cross-checked with extant and disparate bodies of knowledge (in practitioner and scientific research) make explicit, distinct clustering around seven (7) themes.

Specifically, and grounded in executives' own language, latent theme one consists of issues of brainstorming creative alternatives / solving problems from both ends, reframing the challenge/root cause/ re-examining assumptions, re-thinking, re-framing, looking from the "outside-in", and staying open-minded, all suggests the need to bring a **Fresh perspective** to help open up the alternatives. The next core latent theme centered around issues of spending

time to understand the context / situation / stakeholder, reaching out to talk to people to expand the solution space, assessing the risk level and "resistance forces", in touch with the thinking of clients and anticipating and being prepared in advance (setting up early warning systems). These issues suggest the importance of thinking, feeling and acting 'as if' you are the **Owner**. The third latent theme emphasized the importance of **Connected-thinking** to open up the alternatives when executives find themselves stuck with complexity: breaking down the problem into solvable parts, understanding the underlying issues and the views/needs of multiple stakeholders, considering different perspectives, and being open-minded and responsive to prevailing situations. Another set of very different responses merged around issues of executing with strategic purpose and alignment, referencing other successful cases and examples, ensuring the end-game is clear and visualized, persisting and setting the urgency, criticality and importance of moving forwards. These issues suggest the need for **Urgency with the end in mind**. Latent theme five anchors on **Leveraging off teamwork**: the value of discussing, brainstorming and exploring alternatives with your team and ensuring they have the necessary skills to perform – indeed problem-solving is a team sport.

Yet another set of clustering merged around issues of careful analysis, thinking thoroughly around the problem, persistent mentality (never giving up), having contingencies in place, the importance of trial and error/ testing the waters and staying calm and positive – suggesting the need to be fully **In-the-zone** to acquire a deep sense of the complexity at hand. A seventh core latent theme seen as critical in helping executives open up the alternatives when they find themselves stuck with complexity is the need to be **Reflective/ Reflexive** in their practice. This cluster consists of issues relating to taking a step back to reflect deeply about the situation, having faith, ensuring there are time schedules in place with clear KPIs and targets, knowing where the pain-points are, understanding the root causes of the problem, to even walking away from the problem (for a while).

These seven (7) very different and distinct sets of latent themes complement and culminate into an integrated whole. They tell us that there are seven

distinct yet interrelated ways of dealing with your toughest unsolved problems, issues and challenges; advocating both differentiation and integration to help you reach insights. It suggests a more holistic approach to thinking rather than relying on one or two approaches when you are stuck in the thick of things. Taken together, these findings represent ***timely and timeless*** insights for a better world.

### **Concluding reflections on the study**

We positioned our CEO study in the depths of our “***trained incapacities***” that repeatedly expose us to practice environments that are known, familiar, structured, routine, defined, rational, reliable, certain, controlled, linear, expected, explored and anticipated... Yet in an uncertain world, much of life is the complete opposite: unknown, unfamiliar, unstructured, non-routine, ill-defined, irrational, unreliable, uncertain, uncontrollable, non-linear, unexpected and unexplored; much of which is unanticipated.

At the heart of the matter is that when we are exposed to such complexity, our usual expectations and taken-for-granted assumptions are put to the test and challenged – often abruptly revealing they no longer have utility, become outdated and irrelevant to incoming experiences, situations and events.

At these trying times, our ideas begin to stall, our visions of the world shrink, we get STUCK in the heat of battle - unable to move and progress – and we end up resorting to our past habitual practices, reinforcing patterns and routines, often over-simplifying the complexity of the situation.

Yet, as the results of our clinical psychology interviews show, great problem-solvers “***drop their tools***”, ***reconstrue*** and ***unlearn*** to help them open up the alternatives. In the final analysis, it turns out that the problem is not the problem. The problem is the way we think about the problem.

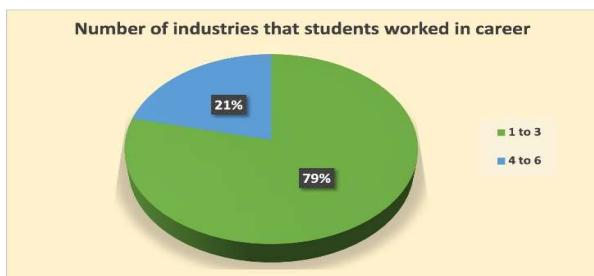
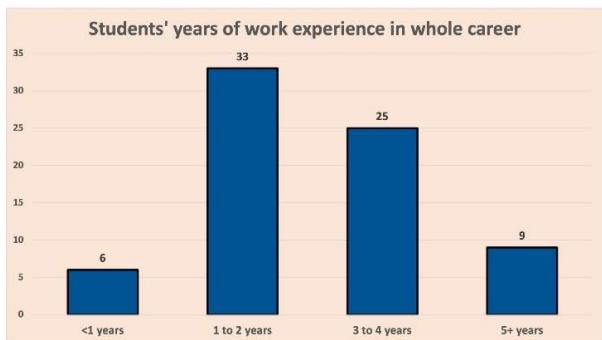
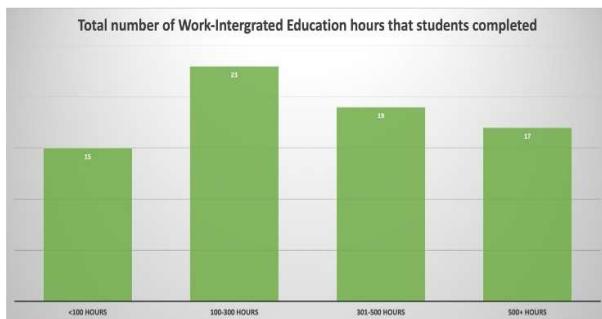
*“It isn’t that they can’t see the solution. It is that they can’t see the problem. They can’t see the problem if they are looking in the wrong places. They can’t see the problem if they are wearing blinders on; for none are so blind as those that will not see.”*

*Gilbert K. Chesterton*

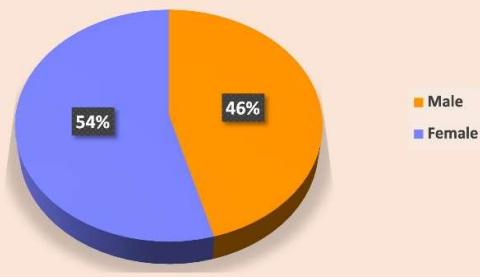
## *Extended study: Interviews with 81 senior strategy students*

### **Sample breakdown and preliminary findings**

Similar to the CEO study, we also conducted a further 81 clinical psychology interviews (each averaging 30 minutes in duration) with senior strategy students at the end of their final year Strategic Management Course taught at a leading internationally ranked business school. These students had worked ranging from less than 1-year to some acquiring more than 5-years, with the majority having 1-2 years of work experience. All students have acquired a reasonable number of Work Integrated Education (WIE) internship hours, ranging from 100-500+ hours with the majority accumulating 300-500 hours. Males accounted for 46% and female students 54% of the total sample size.



Student interviewees' gender distribution



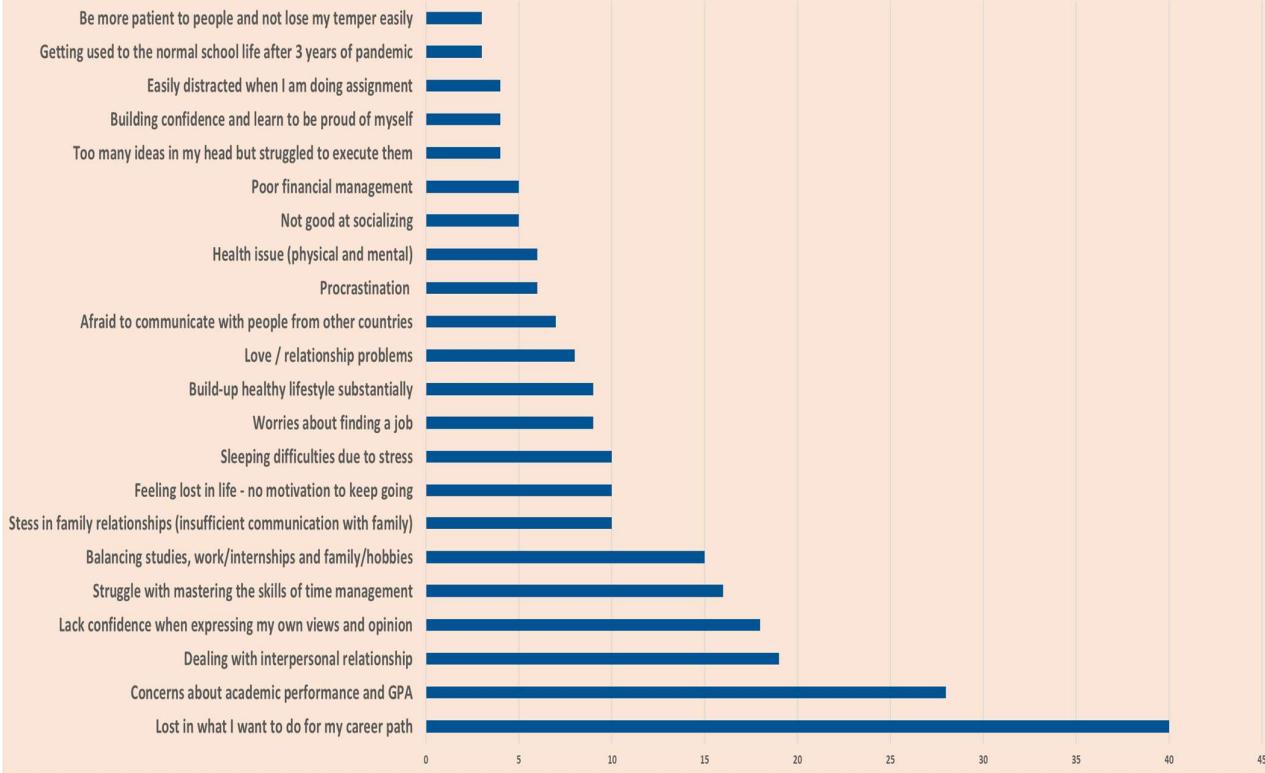
### **What's keeping students awake at night?**

During the study period, we solicited a total of 239 key challenges senior students were facing (22 clusters emerged). Issues of great concern ranged from feeling lost in their careers, concerns about academic performance, dealing with interpersonal relationships, having lack of confidence in expressing their views, struggling to master time management, balancing work/internships and family/hobbies, stress in family relationships (insufficient communication with family), to feeling lost in life – no motivation to keep going. Other areas of concern included issues relating to sleeping difficulties due to stress, procrastination, poor financial management, and being easily distracted, *inter alia*.

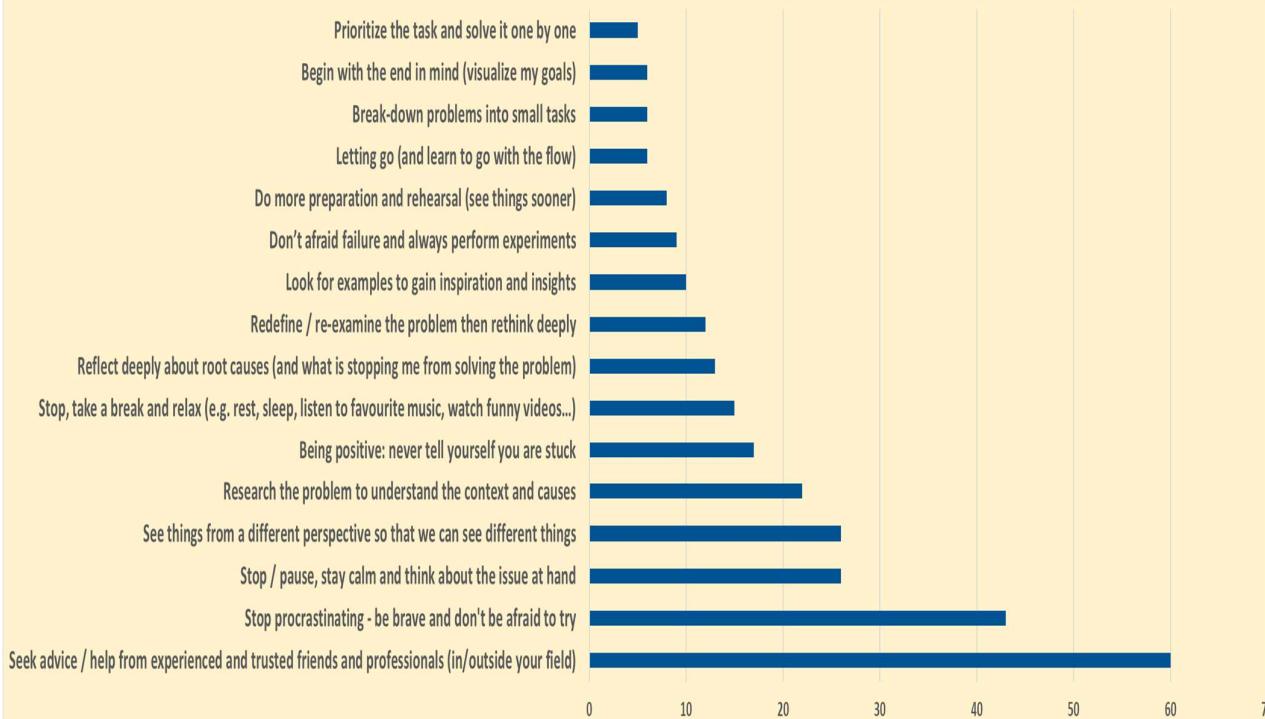
### **Senior strategy students' top three advice on what must be done to open up the alternatives**

Again, following the same protocol as we did with the CEO / Executive sample, prior to the more in-depth clinical psychology interviews, we surveyed senior strategy students on their top three (3) "must do" (advice) if we were to successfully open up the alternatives whenever we get "stuck" with complex problems, issues and challenges. To this question, we solicited a total of 284 responses with some clear overlap and consistency in their counsel (16 clusters emerged). The most frequently occurring advice was the need to seek advice / help from experienced and trusted friends and professionals (in/outside your field), stop procrastinating – be brave and don't be afraid to try, stop/ pause, stay calm and think about the issue, see things differently so you can see different things, research the problem to understand the context and causes, to being positive (never tell yourself you are stuck). A full list of their top picks can be seen in the relevant figure below.

### Top 3 complex problems, issues and challenges that students currently facing



### Top 3 MUST do to open up alternatives when students get stuck



## Results from clinical psychology interviews: 81 senior strategy students)

In-depth face-to-face clinical psychology interviews further reveal and manifest the internal thought-processes of what senior strategy students do (*or failed to do*) to better solve complex problems, issues and challenges – especially when they find themselves stuck. From 81 seniors, we elicited a total of 486 responses ranked in terms of their frequency. The table (see page 13) provides an aggregated detail breakdown on the range of bi-polar constructs elicited from these senior students based on their experience in dealing with complexity. Of particular note are the responses to the left of the table – which signifies what they did to open up the alternatives when they find themselves stuck. To the right of the table represent what students failed to do (to open up the alternatives) – which inevitably did not allow them to progress (and hence remained stuck).

The type of actions that allowed students to progress from being stuck ranged from talking to people inside and outside my field, take a moment to calm down, having the end goal in mind, try to see things differently – open your mind to see alternatives, being brave and facing the problem rather than running away, spending more time to work on the problem, practicing daily to gain confidence and taking a step back to review and rethink the problem, amongst others. On the other hand, complex problems, issues and challenges are not successfully solved when students exhibit the following range of actions: don't seek others' help – think by myself, don't take a moment to stay calm and reflect, don't have the end in mind (not thinking how to improve), don't want to think too much, afraid to step outside my comfort zone, failed to face my difficulties and not enough revision, *inter alia*.

Going beyond these results, and grounded on each senior strategy students' clinical interviews aggregated as shown in the table, we produced an overall collective cognitive map (spread in psychological space) on how they were thinking (what they did and fail to do) when they find themselves stuck with complexity. While each student experienced their own set of complex problems, issues and challenges, our systematic and rigorous use of role title elements (E1, E2, E3... E9) (shown in red font) (see page 13) to elicit these complex items

allows us to present this group map for demonstration purposes. The map provides some simple steps in how to read the results. Of particular importance are the bi-polar construct lines (perceptions of students' actual experience when dealing with complexity) and their relation to the location of the nine (9) element types of problems, issues and challenges (shown in red font). To the left of the map are the preferred construct poles where students say what really helped them progress from being stuck; to the right of the map are construct poles that hindered their progress.

## Seven latent themes emerged – inherent thinking patterns of great (student) problem-solvers

Once again, similar to the CEO study, we used the same systematic and rigorous protocol in the treatment of our dataset. Taking together all the key findings from our senior strategy student study, we conducted further meta-analysis of the dataset with four independent coders and discovered some noticeable similarities (*though different in terms of depth and substance from the CEO sample*) inherent latent themes emerging that underpins what great (student) problem-solvers do when they find themselves stuck with complexity. Consistent with the CEO study, these latent themes were cross-checked with the extant and disparate bodies of knowledge (in practitioner and scientific research) make explicit, distinct clustering around seven (7) themes.

Specifically, and grounded in strategy students' own language, latent theme one focused on a core theme of *Fresh perspective*: the importance of redefining, re-examining, re-thinking the problem; seeing things from different perspective so that we can see different things, opening our minds to alternatives and doing the opposite to what everyone else was doing. Latent theme two is a clustering of constructs to do with thinking, feeling and acting 'as if' you are the *Owner*: taking ownership and responsibility, seeking advice and help from experienced and trusted friends / professionals, talking to people in/outside of your field, identifying the problem before it happens, and conducting more context research and analysis to understand the causes.

Latent theme three emphasized the need for **Connected-thinking** to help open up the alternatives: breaking down the problem into small tasks, seeing the world more broadly, making connections to the overall directional plans and the capacity to switch mindset to see more things. Similar to our CEO sample, senior strategy students also believed having **Urgency with the end in mind** (Latent theme four) was paramount if they were to better deal with being stuck with the unknown. Key constructs that grouped to form this cluster talked about: having the end goal in mind, taking action, prioritize what is important, reorganizing schedule / timetable so not distracted, take reference from successful solutions and examples, give-up something / let go to move forward, being brave – face the problem directly without running away, stop procrastinating (don't be afraid to try), and beginning with the end in mind.

Latent theme five: **Working as a team**. Here students emphasized the importance of solving problem together / to co-create, and having more discussions and communications to better deal with complexity. **Being Engaged** also featured prominently in the findings. Here latent theme six addressed issues of practice daily to gain more confidence, spending more time with the problem, explore new ways to solve, do more preparation and rehearsals (see things sooner), don't be afraid of failure and always perform experiments, open to new experiences / outcomes, and always having a positive mindset / believe I can achieve (tell yourself you are not stuck).

And finally, latent theme seven: the importance of **Constant reflection / reflexion**. The need to stop, pause, stay calm to think about the issue / problem so that vision becomes clear and the mind not messy. This may sometime mean taking a break and relaxing (rest, sleep, listen to favorite music, watch funny videos...). The key is to reflect deeply about root causes (and what is stopping me from solving the problem). All these were considered important to progress and move forward.

*“... it is not events themselves which influence or mould people, torment or terrify them or make them deliriously happy. It is the meaning with which these events are invested by the individual which is the potent ingredient.”*

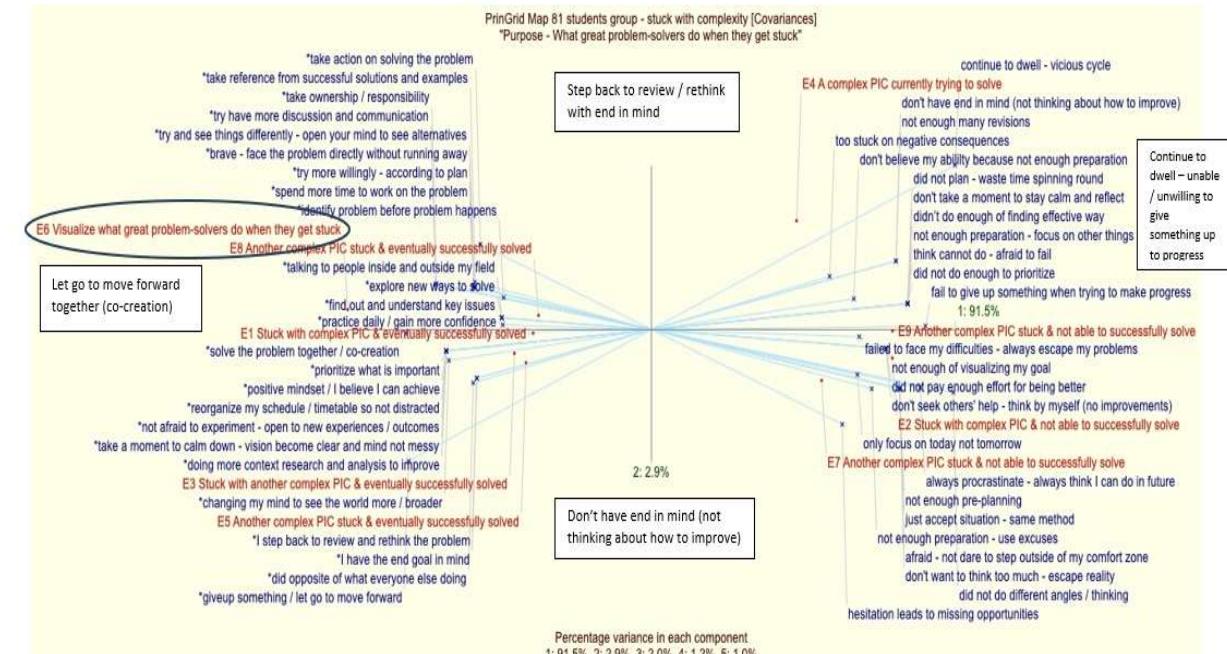
*George Kelly*

Senior Strategy Students: In terms of "when you find yourself stuck, what did you do (or failed to do) to better solve it?"

What helps open up the alternatives	Elicited Bi-Polar Constructs	Construct Frequency
What doesn't help open up the alternatives		
C1 *talking to people inside and outside my field	↔ don't seek others' help - think by myself (no improvements)	34
C2 *take a moment to calm down - vision become clear and mind not messy	↔ don't take a moment to stay calm and reflect	32
C3 *I have the end goal in mind	↔ don't have end in mind (not thinking about how to improve)	29
C4 *try and see things differently - open your mind to see alternatives	↔ don't want to think too much - escape reality	29
C5 *brave - face the problem directly without running away	↔ afraid - not dare to step outside of my comfort zone	24
C6 *spend more time to work on the problem	↔ just accept situation - same method	23
C7 *practice daily / gain more confidence	↔ failed to face my difficulties - always escape my problems	23
C8 *explore new ways to solve	↔ did not pay enough effort for being better	22
C9 *I step back to review and rethink the problem	↔ not enough many revisions	21
C10 *solve the problem together / co-creation	↔ fail to give up something when trying to make progress	20
C11 *identify problem before problem happens	↔ only focus on today not tomorrow	20
C12 *find out and understand key issues	↔ not enough of visualizing my goal	19
C13 *take action on solving the problem	↔ hesitation leads to missing opportunities	18
C14 *prioritize what is important	↔ did not do enough to prioritize	18
C15 *positive mindset / I believe I can achieve	↔ think cannot do - afraid to fail	18
C16 *reorganize my schedule / timetable so not distracted	↔ not enough preparation - focus on other things	18
C17 *try more willingly - according to plan	↔ not enough pre-planning	17
C18 *take reference from successful solutions and examples	↔ not enough preparation - use excuses	17
C19 *take ownership / responsibility	↔ always procrastinate - always think I can do in future	16
C20 *not afraid to experiment - open to new experiences / outcomes	↔ didn't do enough of finding effective way	16
C21 *try have more discussion and communication	↔ did not do different angles / thinking	15
C22 *doing more context research and analysis to improve	↔ did not plan - waste time spinning round	15
C23 *changing my mind to see the world more / broader	↔ don't believe my ability because not enough preparation	10
C24 *giveup something / let go to move forward	↔ continue to dwell - vicious cycle	7
C25 *did opposite of what everyone else doing	↔ too stuck on negative consequences	5

Total number of personal constructs elicited from 81 senior strategy students (novice problem-solvers) | 486

Collective Cognitive Map of 81 Senior Strategy Students: What Great Problem-Solvers Do When They Get Stuck



- Vector lines represent the shared bi-polarity in construing used by Senior Strategy Students to describe their experience when dealing with complexity; Each construct has a preferred side marked with an "\*" indicating students' choice of what helps them open up the alternatives when they find themselves STUCK with complexity.
- Look at these bi-polar construct lines near any one of the 9 "Role title" Elements (E1, E2, E3...E9) to see how they are described based on students' experience with them when dealing with complexity – specifically – **what they do (or fail to do) when they find themselves stuck, so that they can progress**.
- The spread in psychological space is generated based on students' ratings of their 9 Role title elements using their own elicited bi-polar constructs generated from our interviews. The overall output is generated using Repertory Grid Clinical Psychology software. This collective map shows we captured **94.4%** of the Total Percentage of Variance of how Senior Strategy Students are thinking when they get stuck with complexity.
- Abbreviation PIC stands for a complex Problem, Issue or Challenge.

## Acknowledgement

I am indebted to all the 50 CEOs / Executives who so graciously made time, given their busy schedules to share their lived experiences in being stuck with complexity and for their thought-provoking insights on what they did (*and failed to do*) to progress. I am equally grateful to the 81 senior strategy students who really prepared and engaged mindfully throughout these intense clinical psychological interviews. I too have seen further through our time together. Appreciation is also extended to Michael Harris Bond, James Grice, Devi Jankowicz, Iris LAM Yat To, Harry Procter and David Winter for stimulating insights on the psychology of the unknown. To my research assistant, Janice LAM Yin On for her exceptional support and commitment; and to Nicole LAM Yan Yee and Carson YAU Chun Hei - two outstanding junior researchers who provided the initial impetus for this study to take hold. The author takes full responsibility for any errors and/or omissions in this work. Funding for this report is generously supported by the Department of Management & Marketing Learning and Teaching Enhancement Grant of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Ethics approval has been granted through the appropriate channels at the author's university – authorization reference: HSEARS20220513003.

## Contact

For further information about this CEO Report, please contact The Faculty of Business

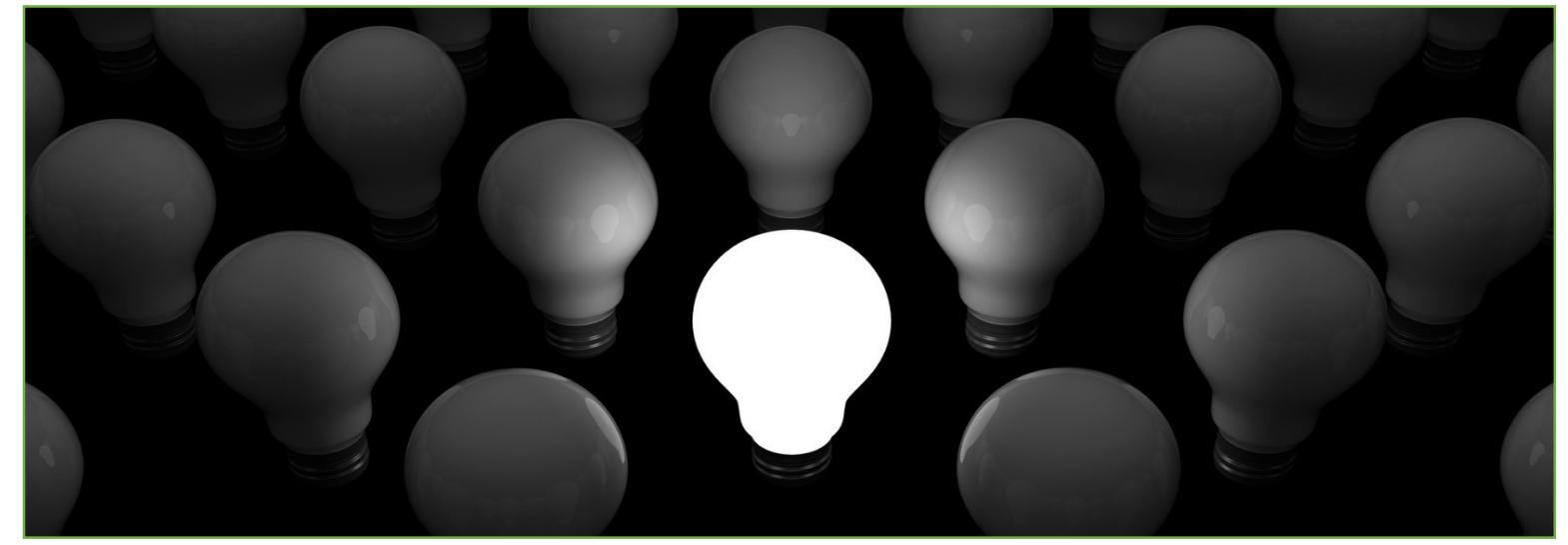
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Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong

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## **Robert's Strategic Management (SM) Class: Formal Learning Contract**

In order to nurture a whole new culture of learning that will further help elevate the good standing of PolyU business students, I fully support the need for our class to be more engaged, stimulating, thought-provoking, encouraging and based on sharing and team spirit. I support our class being video recorded (and uploaded onto our password-protect online platform) so we can reflect more deeply about our learning. In this endeavor, as a registered student in this class, I pledge that for every class I attend (physically and on-line), I will place a high priority in **demonstrating PROGRESS each week**. In this respect, I will be prepared to:

1. Bring a positive attitude to my learning experience
2. Share, discuss and engage in the true spirit of learning
3. Be a team-player and help other classmates
4. Discuss the success stories/ lessons learned from my **WIE**, Service Learning & competition experience (keeping in mind the Confidential Pledge I have signed with the organization(s))
5. Share my student exchange experience (where appropriate)
6. Share what I learned from our flipped-class mini-online video lectures and weekly handouts
7. Engage the above in class + our virtual SM Blackboard (BB) e-discussion board
8. Practice my **persuasion, convincing and influencing skills** by anchoring my points of view from authoritative sources. For example:
  - Learning from current university course (based on theories, models, frameworks, approaches, discussions, skill-sets, attributes...); Academic research papers;
  - Practitioner journals in your field (Harvard Business Review, McKinsey Quarterly...);
  - Industry reports; Newspaper sources (The Economist, Financial Times ...); News TV / radio reports (e.g.: BBC...); TED Talks; Inspiring mentor / supervisor / teacher; Life experience; and/or Training / university course(s) I have attended in the past.
9. Use **Generative AI tools** in ethical and meaningful ways
10. Practice & share my learning using the **14 pre-course whiteboard animations** and the "**Stay FOCUSED**" philosophy which forms the backbone of this class <https://www.focused-polyu.com/>
  - F** - Bring Fresh perspective
  - O** - Think, feel and act like an Owner / manager
  - C** - Show Connected-thinking
  - U** - Have a sense of Urgency
  - S** - Show team SPIRIT
  - E** - Always Engage
  - D** - Exercise Deliberate practice

**11. I also pledge to take time to reflect regularly about what we are doing each week**

Finally, I have thoroughly read our Course Outline and the Assessment Rubric, including the accompanying documents and fully understand the expectations, requirements and due dates of this course. If I am unclear about any of the expectations and requirements of the course, I will ensure to have them resolved with Robert before the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of this semester. If I experience challenges throughout the course, I will make every effort to resolve them with Robert.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Student Signature.: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**This Learning Contract is to be signed and UPLOAD to our BB within 2-8 days from your first class**



As at 1Sept, 2023

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS, THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

**STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT MM 4311**

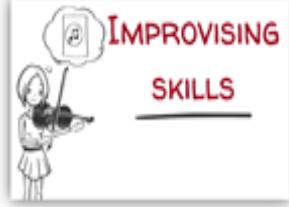
**Semester ONE (4<sup>th</sup> September – 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023)**

Dr. Robert P. Wright E-mail: [robert.wright@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:robert.wright@polyu.edu.hk)

Telephone: 2766 7378, Office: M906

Consultation Times Thurs 9-11:30am + Fridays 4-6pm **BY APPOINTMENT ONLY PLEASE**

**14 PRE-Course WHITEBOARD Animations**



Check the playlist here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGiMZgsQvtr48jBkOEoYwAw/playlists>



**14 PRE-COURSE VIDEO ANIMATIONS – MUST VIEW**

**If you can't access "YouTube" please view them on our SM Blackboard (BB) homepage left menu bar called "POLYU VIDEO")**

Our Corporate Tagline for education and research:

**“Opening Minds: Shaping the Future”**

Our university’s 6-year strategy on Teaching & Learning: We will advocate the importance of “learning to (un)learn” at all levels. A major thrust to this strategic initiative is the importance of REFLECTIVE PRACTICE. Great sports people, great musicians, writers, parents, leaders and organizations – they all reflect constantly as a habit of mind. We do learn a lot from “doing” – Yet we learn even more when we reflect about what we are doing (and not doing).

**PolyU Motto:** To learn and apply, for the benefit of mankind

**PolyU Vision:** Be a leading university that advances and transfers knowledge, and provides the best holistic education for the benefit of Hong Kong, the Nation and the world.

**PolyU Mission:**

To pursue impactful research that benefits the world.

To nurture critical thinkers, effective communicators, innovative problem solvers and socially responsible global citizens.

To foster a University community in which all members can excel in their aspirations with a strong sense of belonging and pride. *And for Faculty of Business (June2023 – FB Magazine)*:



## A. GENERAL

Why has strategic management become so important today? And in that respect, why has the study and research of this multidisciplinary field gained both theoretical and practical relevance in recent times? These questions lay the foundations of this course on Strategic Management. Irrespective of employment in the public or private sector, commercial or not-for-profit organizations, family or non-family businesses, employees at all levels are required to think and act strategically in adding value to core business activities. If you are not adding value to the achievement of your organization's mission & vision, you'll soon find

Innovation Driven Education And Scholarship

**yourself out of a job!** You must understand the business that you are in to succeed in that business! These are the realities of organizational life as it has evolved over the decades. The mindsets and core competencies needed to function effectively have drastically changed the landscapes of **old business models** and the way we **reconstruct** our view of the importance of managing people, resources, organizations, and environments in more strategic ways. This course will introduce students to the essence of strategic management based around the core conceptions of it as part of a larger strategic decision-making process. It will introduce students to the issues of situational analysis, strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation & control. Student will become conversant with the **Strategic Audit**, a valuable practical methodological tool used to help key decision makers make sound, doable strategic recommendations. Much of the learning will be independent yet collaborative in the co-creation of knowledge. An innovative pedagogical framework called “staying F.O.C.U.S.E.D.” will guide your learning and will form the backbone of your assessment rubric.



An interview with Robert Wright on the importance of Information Literacy for students across 8 tertiary institutions in Hong Kong: ***How to research for your projects / dissertations (9mins)***  
<https://video.polyu.edu.hk/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=66d94dc5-5359-4afa-ad7d-47efa54ea7df>

### **About your teacher:**

Dr Robert Wright has been a university level educator for the past 30+ years. He is a multi-award-winning teacher and researcher. He sits on the Editorial Review Boards of the *Academy of Management Learning & Education* (AMLE), *Organizational Research Methods* (ORM) and is the Associate Editor of the *Journal of Management Education* (JME). He previously served on the Editorial boards of *Academy of Management Review* (AMR) (2011-2017) and *Journal of Organizational Behavior* (JOB) (2002-2006). His research (with Paroutis, S. & Blettner, D.) on “*How useful are the strategic tools we teach in business schools?*” was awarded Best Paper of the Year (in 2014) for the *Journal of Management Studies*, and in 2016 received the Emerald Citations of Excellence Award for high impact research. In 2020 he received the Faculty award for outstanding service. In 2021, Robert spent 6-months sabbatical leave with the National University of Singapore Medical School where he introduced the FOCUSED framework for the future of medical education. During this time he also completed two books (soon to be published).

Outside of academia he is a Fellow and served on the Executive Council of the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management between 1998-2012 and was associated with them for over 30+ years. He is a Life Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management and Fellow of the Hong Kong Institute of Directors. Dr. Wright is a graduate of executive development programs in IMD in Switzerland, and the Harvard Business School.

### **B. RECOMMENDED TEXT – I “suggest” you buy as part of your professional library**

The preferred textbook is Whittington, R., Angwin, D., Regner, P., Johnson, G., & Scholes, K. 2023. ***Exploring strategy. 13<sup>th</sup> Edition***. Pearson Education Limited. (Text and Cases). The textbook has an eBook version and also has its own website which can be accessed through our own course website. Simply click on the “Our SM Textbook” icon. This textbook is used to **COMPLEMENT** our learning, building on my lecture PPTs and Video lectures, on top of the various other learning in our course. You can order via the PolyU Campus Bookstore Commercial Press:

**Print book**

ISBN: 9781292428741

Title: EXPLORING STRATEGY TEXT & CASES,13/e

Price: HKD\$545.00

Discount: 15% off for Polyu student and staff

Availability: **Out of Stock in HK**

Ordering time: 3-4 months

**Ebook**

ISBN: 9781292428833

Title: EXPLORING STRATEGY TEXT & CASES VS EB,13/e

Price: HKD\$414.00

Discount: No Discount for E-book

**Ordering time: Around 2 weeks**

The print textbooks are out of stock in HK, I suggest students order the e-textbook.

The ordering time for e-textbook take around 7-10 days.

You are also encouraged to read the ***Harvard Business Review*, *The Economist*, *McKinsey Quarterly***, Management & Strategy research journals, BBC News, Financial Times (FT), Asian Wall Street Journal (AWJ), Business Post of the South China Morning Post and other local newspapers and regional & international business magazines for more local and international case studies. If each student did this every class, this would be world-class learning. Let's take it to the next level. We can do it!

**C. COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES (these outcomes are in line with our Syllabus)**

This subject contributes to the achievement of **ONE (1) major** degree program's BBA (Hons) Outcomes. In so doing, this subject provides students with an understanding of the concepts of strategy, strategizing and strategic management, and enabling you to apply tools, concepts and frameworks to help an organization define / redefine its (temporary) sustained competitive advantage. This subject will also enable students to develop global outlook, the analysis of the business environments, critical thinking, analytical skills, and ethical awareness, inter alia.

Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:

- a. Demonstrate a global outlook and understand cultural diversity, globalization in management issues;
- b. Identify and respond appropriately to ethical issues as they arise in different business settings;
- c. analyze business situations and problems by applying conceptual frameworks drawn from different disciplines when determining the sustained competitive advantage through value co-creation of an organization;
- d. evaluate the processes and structures through which organizations plan, decide, motivate and control their activities and their impact on strategy implementation;
- e. Specify parameters of strategic choice within which business organizations set objectives and take actions;

## Innovation Driven Education And Scholarship

- f. demonstrate an understanding of entrepreneurship and its links with strategy pertaining to recognizing and creating innovative opportunities, strategic decision-making under uncertainty and impact of entrepreneurial activity on organizational performance; **(BBA Outcome 5)**
- g. Demonstrate an understanding on the applications and implications of the latest technologies to strategic options and strategic decision-making.

**Please note that “f” and “g” above are the updated versions. In the teaching of MM4311, we will assess BBA Outcome 5 as incorporating both these additions. Specifically, we will rope these overlapping items under Entrepreneurship and Innovation. As they nicely complement each other for the teaching of strategy, we will use the following criteria to help guide your assessment:**

Demonstrate an understanding on the applications and implications of the latest technologies to strategic options and strategic decision-making (BBA Outcome 10c)

- a. Demonstrate entrepreneurial mindset and its link to strategic management
- b. Explain with examples how entrepreneurial mindset and innovation (including technology) have important implications that meet market needs
- c. Evaluate how entrepreneurial mindset and innovation enables seeking and generating strategic business opportunities

### D. HOW WILL WE ASSESS THESE LEARNING OUTCOMES?

Specific assessment methods/tasks  * <u>The emphasis: SHOW PROGRESS</u> * * Please keep back-up of all submissions *	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)						
		a	b	c	d	e	f	g
<b>Continuous Assessment</b>	<b>100 %</b>							
<b>GROUP:</b>	<b>40%</b>							
Major Group Project Presentation <b>12.5 Presentation</b> <b>12.5 Written Report (est. 3000-6000 words)</b> <b>5.0 Cover Letter on ethics of your recomm.</b>	30%		✓	✓		✓		
Group (Individual) Peer Evaluation	10%				✓	✓		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>	<b>60%</b>							
Individual Reflection-on-Action <b>OR Self-Characterization Sketch</b>	15%	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Individual Write-up Assign ( <b>500-1000 words</b> ) (e.g.: <b>ENT+Technology+Strategy</b> )	15%	✓				✓	✓	✓
<b>Class Contribution / show PROGRESS</b>	30%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Total	100 %							

Please keep a copy of anything you submit for assessment (as back-up) (including your Turnit-in). There will be Recognition Awards for each of the above categories of assessment

Innovation Driven Education And Scholarship  
given to the most outstanding students, in addition to the selection of the most outstanding All-Round SM Student for Robert's Class. All winners will receive an Award Certificate.

Please kindly note that the above major breakdown of assessment for Robert's class is consistent with the percentage breakdowns of the other teachers' classes teaching MM4311 this semester. As most strategy theories and concepts are fundamentally the same, irrespective of the textbook used, each teacher will inform their respective class(es) of the textbook to be used for their particular class(es).

#### E. USE OF CLASS CONTACT TIME

Classes are designed based on "**seminar discussion style**". Our class will consist of about 30-40 students with a total of 3hrs attendance required by students per week (in-class and/or online via ZOOM depending on pandemic, e-discussion board). Students will be "assigned" into **LEARNING TEAMS** by the professor to ensure a good balance of diversity to elevate the quality of your learning. We anticipate about 3-4 groups of 8-10 students per group. Normal class format (and/or Zoom online) - with no guest speakers: (est. times below)

1. **(5mins) Students help rearrange room to “U-Shape” discussion (no need if round tables)**
2. **(10-15mins) HAND-BRAIN CONNECTION using FOCUSED dice**
3. **(15-30mins) Robert sets the scene for the week’s topic**
4. **(45 mins) OPEN class discussion on key strategy debate topic assigned**
5. **(10 mins) Break**
6. **(50 mins) Further discussion on key debate topic**
7. **(5 mins) Classmates help Robert wrap up class learning for that week’s topic**
8. **(20 mins) Student breakout into LEARNING TEAMS to discuss project (from Week 3)**
9. **(5 mins) Class end – students help re-arrange classroom to original setting (thanks)**

Class (/ Zoom online) format **IF we have guest speakers (normally from week 7/8):**

- a. **(5mins) Students help rearrange room to “U-Shape” discussion (no need if round tables)**
- b. **(10-15mins) HAND-BRAIN CONNECTION using FOCUSED dice**
- c. **(20mins) Robert sets the scene for the week’s topic**
- d. **(30 mins) OPEN class discussion on key strategy debate topic assigned**
- e. **(5 mins) Classmates help Robert wrap up class learning for that week’s topic**
- f. **(20 mins) Student breakout into LEARNING TEAMS to discuss project (from Week 3)**
- g. **(10 mins) Break**
- h. **(60 mins + 10mins networking) guest speaker session**
- i. **(5 mins) Class end – students help re-arrange classroom to original setting (thanks)**

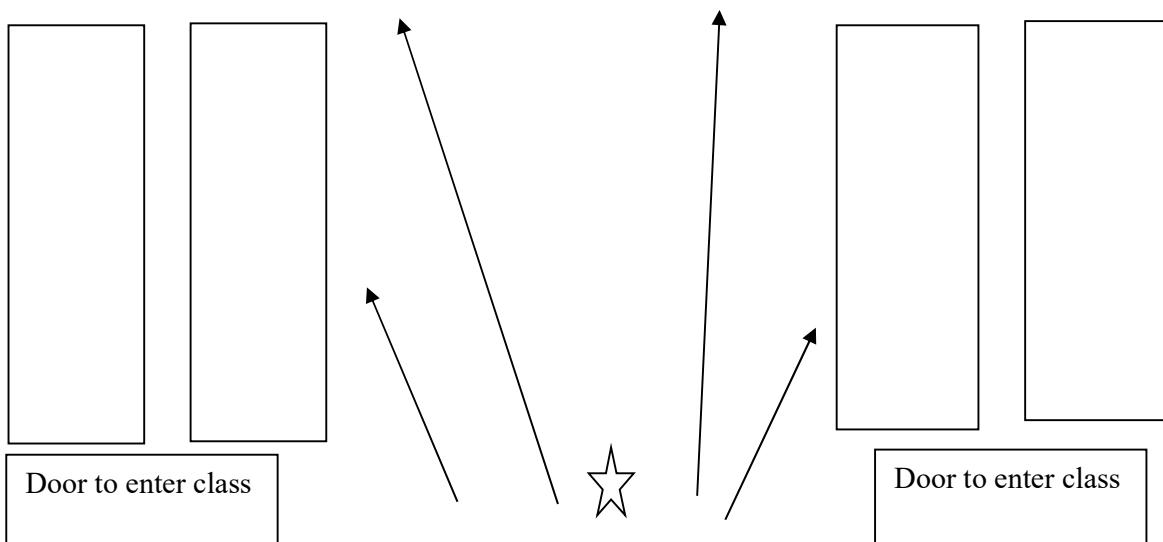
I have deliberately designed the classes in this way based of the very successful practice in the past where students get more “engaged” when they are at the cutting edge of knowledge through such research and seminar sharing. Classroom layout will be as follows (if we get a room with traditional row tables) (students please help arrange before each class commences):

**Please note:** If pandemic persists (returns) and we are forced to go online (e.g.: HYBRID MODE) and you decide to zoom-in, please ensure your video camera & audio are working. To maximize your learning, it is preferred you attend classes from a quiet space and use fixed line connection (instead of wi-fi) to provide the best internet connection. If this is the case - **To ensure we maximize and capture our learning journey throughout the term, may I please request all students attending physically to bring along their laptops and have your ZOOM links on so that we may capture both the physical and online learners together as one group. I too will do the same (smile...).**



## Student desk layout for physical class meetings

## Student desk layout for physical class meetings



Please note: our syllabus states the total student study effort should be 117 hrs. This works out to be 9hrs per week for 13 weeks. Break it down even further and this means 3hrs seminar each week and 6hrs of preparation time. Even simpler, *all you need to do is to invest 1hr per day for 6 days a week – which makes it more manageable* (smile...).

**TIME MANAGEMENT IS KEY.**

## F. OUTLINE COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Seminar	Chap. Reading (12 <sup>th</sup> edition)
Week 1 7/8Sept	<p><b>Session 1:</b> Overview of Course, Expectations &amp; BlackBoard What is strategy? And different perspectives to Strategy</p> <p><b>Students privately email robert EXCEL File by Friday 15Sept 12noon (AND UPLOAD Learning Contracts)</b></p>	Chap. 1 + Strategy Lenses + lecture video/handout
Week 2 14/15Sept	<p><b>Session 2:</b> External Environmental Analysis: Opport. &amp; Threats</p> <p><b>KEY DEBATE:</b> One of the main questions in strategy is to look at two companies in an industry and ask why one outperforms the other. It's all about the organization and its relation with the environment. What is your view?</p>	Chap. 2/3 and <b>Chap. 10 on ENT + Innov.</b> + lecture video/handout
Week 3 21/22Sept	<p><b>Session 3:</b> Internal Analysis: Strengths &amp; Weaknesses</p> <p><b>KEY DEBATE:</b> What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Resource Based View (RBV) of the firm?</p> <p><i>Importance of REFLECTIONS / REFLEXIONS – reflective practice as part of PolyU's 6-year strategy. Why it is important for your Major Strategy Project</i></p> <p><b>***** by end of week - upload group bonding activity photo 1*****</b></p>	Chap. 4 and watch Robert's MOOC video interview on main BB with Prof. Eric Tsui and <b>Chap. 10 on ENT + Innov.</b> + lecture video/handout
Week 4 28/29Sept (Learning teams 1 <sup>st</sup> zoom with Robert on progress)	<p><b>Session 4:</b> Corporate Governance &amp; Board of Directors</p> <p><b>KEY DEBATE:</b> What core competencies are needed by boards of directors today?</p>	Chap. 5 HBR article – Useem (2006) + lecture video/handout
Week 5 5/6Oct	<p><b>Session 5:</b> Business Level Strategy: Developing Competitive Advantages (Resource Strengths &amp; Organizational Capabilities)</p> <p><b>KEY DEBATE:</b> To be different or the same? (by Professor Deephouse in reading list for this week topic)</p>	Part II+Chap. 7 + lecture video/handout
Week 6 12/13Oct (Learning teams 2 <sup>nd</sup> zoom with Robert on progress)	<p><b>Session 6:</b> <b>Harvard Case Open Discussion – video taped – download HBS case from BB CONTENTS icon</b></p> <p><b>Submit Case #1 Write Up BEFORE class starts</b></p>	<b>HBS Case</b> Submit 1-page write-up BEFORE class starts; if pandemic persist / returns = via email
Week 7 19/20Oct	<p><b>Session 7:</b> Corporate Level Strategies: for Diversified Org.</p> <p><b>KEY DEBATE:</b> Look at the case of the Faculty of Business at PolyU. Can we diversify into other businesses to help us achieve our Vision and Mission?</p> <p><b>***** by end of week - upload group bonding activity photo 2*****</b></p>	Chap. 8 About FB + lecture video/handout
Week 8 26/27Oct (Learning teams 3 <sup>rd</sup> zoom with Robert on	<p><b>Session 8:</b> Implementation: Building Resource Strengths, and Capabilities</p> <p><b>KEY DEBATE:</b> Remember – Strategy is 1% plan and 99%</p>	Chap. 6+14,15 Watch 3min YouTube + lecture

progress)	implementation? How can we better executive strategy?	video/handout
Week 9 2/3Nov	<p><b>Session 9:</b> Evaluation &amp; Control</p> <p><b>KEY DEBATE:</b> "Are we measuring the right things?" Let's open up our discussion with this issue in mind and see if we can gain a deeper understanding about the importance of having the right measures in place? How do we know we have the right measures? Because senior management says so?</p>	Chap. 12 Open discuss + lecture video/handout
Week 10 9/10Nov	<p><b>Session 10:</b> Strategy-as-Practice and Strategic Tools Usefulness</p> <p><b>KEY DEBATE:</b> What is your experience in using strategy tools and techniques in helping you do better analysis so that you can make better decisions?</p> <p style="color: red;">***** by end of week - upload group bonding activity photo 3 *****</p>	Chap. 16 Robert's JMS Strategy Tools article
Week 11 16/17Nov	<p><b>Session 11:</b> - upload your PPT deck in Week 10 – Friday – so I can send to CEOs / Executives over the weekend for Week 11</p> <p><b>GROUP STRATEGIC AUDIT REPORT PRESENTATIONS IN FRONT OF REAL CEO/ SENIOR EXECUTIVES</b></p> <p>(Robert will inform students which topic will be assigned for take-home assignment for Week 13)</p>	Video-taped
Week 12 23/24Nov	<p><b>Session 12:</b> Classics in Strategy: Sun Tzu's Art of War</p> <p><b>KEY DEBATE:</b> When we open ourselves to “otherness”, we also begin to discover there are different ways of knowing. What are the main differences in thinking styles between East and West (and in-between)?</p>	
Week 13 30Nov/1Dec	<p><b>Session 13:</b> Review of course and beyond...</p> <p><b>Submit Case #2 Write Up “Reflection-on-Action” OR “Self-Characterization Sketch” via email</b></p>	<p>29Nov Wed 6-10pm for Thurs am class</p> <p>30Nov Thurs 8-12noon for Friday am class</p> <p>30Nov Thurs 6-10pm for Friday pm class</p>

\*\*\* Any late submissions will incur a “zero” grade. So please manage your time well! Lock all dates into your diary with buffer time so you can work backwards: “begin with the end in mind” (smile...).

## G. COURSE SCHEDULE AND FURTHER READINGS

### Session: 1

Overview, Requirements, Expectation, & Style of the Course + Guidelines on Project.

#### "Why Study Strategic Management, we haven't even started our careers!"

What is strategy? Different perspectives to strategy, strategizing and strategic management  
Elements that make up the Strategy-Making Process + Complicate yourself! (+ Class Photo)

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### URGENT AND IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT IN WEEK 1

*All Robert's class students need to email Robert on short answers to questions on  
Excel file (also include a CV style photo of yourself)*

*Excel template can be found in our CONTENT icon in BlackBoard (BB)*

Useful references: \*\*\* I'm not expecting you to read all these references each week! If each classmate can read and discuss any **one** of them, we would create an amazing learning environment that has the power to broaden our thinking, feeling and acting. Whilst the selected references each week are important, relevant and in some cases "relevate" the topic, (with some old classics and seminal pieces worth reading), I have highlighted those that may be more useful in the spirit of our class, to save you time. \*\*\*

BlackBoard (BB) SM main page - 10 Schools of Strategy + Robert's Strategy Research

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The importance of entrepreneurial mindset in classrooms <https://observatory.tec.mx/edu-news/the-importance-of-entrepreneurial-mindset-in-classrooms>

How to Cultivate an Entrepreneurial Mindset

<https://www.projectmanager.com/training/cultivate-entrepreneurial-mindset>

Why schools should teach entrepreneurship – Ted Talk

[https://www.ted.com/talks/linda\\_zhang\\_why\\_schools\\_should\\_teach\\_entrepreneurship](https://www.ted.com/talks/linda_zhang_why_schools_should_teach_entrepreneurship)

The Power of an Entrepreneurial Mindset

[https://www.ted.com/talks/bill\\_roche\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_an\\_entrepreneurial\\_mindset](https://www.ted.com/talks/bill_roche_the_power_of_an_entrepreneurial_mindset)

**Week 1 Seminar session:**

All students watch 14 pre-course WHITEBOARD animations uploaded in our BB:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1w94DFUPZR7z2f87RvxTztNOzyXdzSYJ> ; ***if you can't access "YouTube" I have provided another link that is available in our BB homepage in left menu bar called "POLYU VIDEO".***

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**Session: 2**  
**External Environmental Analysis: Opportunities & Threats.**

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**TOPIC FOR PREPARATION / DISCUSSION:**

**KEY DEBATE: One of the main questions in strategy is to look at two companies in an industry and ask why one outperforms the other. It's all about the organization and its relation with the environment. What is your view?**

**Open class discussion about a key assigned issue/ debate or article in the strategy field**

Robert will set the scene for each week's topic in the first 15-30mins and classmates will help do a brief summary of key takeaways at end of each class. Each individual will be marked for (informal sit down) discussion as part of his/her class contribution, which accounts for about 30% of your coursework grade. Come to class prepared to "have a conversation / to discuss" the different perspectives on the topic. Don't just COVER the facts, but UNCOVER the underlying issues so we can DISCOVER deeper insights into the WHY.

It's going to be a lot of fun and interactive. Don't be shy, just dive in to see how much we can learn from each other in an open, friendly and engaging learning environment. Key is to make your contribution in every class and ***SHOW PROGRESS*** from the previous week by demonstrating you are "***Staying F.O.C.U.S.E.D.***" (***make your own paper dice set in color to help stimulate your thinking for class discussions: <https://www.focused-polyu.com/paper-dice>***)

In these open discussions, I'll be looking to see if you are showing PROGRESS. Your sharing (for example) can come from any of the following sources: ***Chapter Reading, Harvard Business Review, The Economist, McKinsey Quarterly, TED Talks*** ... and/or any ***ONE academic research articles listed above + including the rich resources in our SM webpage***; Please also incorporate your ***WIE / Service Learning / Exchange / Competition Experience (where possible)***, as well as the success stories and lessons learned through your regular ***LEARNING TEAM project meetings*** in your sharing to bring our discussions closer to the real world! "PLAY TO WIN".

One of the key takeaways I want to achieve out of these open discussions is to encourage ***POINT-COUNTERPOINT OPPOSING PERSPECTIVES***. In these Socratic Debates, cultivate your persuading, convincing and influencing skills to make your case.

The purpose of all this sharing is to bring ongoing new insights to stimulate THINKING to help our group Strategic Audit Reports - FACTSHEET. (So it is critical we all get something from each sharing session - ***MAKE EVERY CLASS COUNT!***) (Yes – ***EVERY CLASS IS A JOB INTERVIEW!***). Make sure you ***JOIN THE DOTS***. Let the ideas (e)merge so that new ways of thinking and new ways of doing is brought to the foreground for discussion. What you share need to connect + interrelate rather than separate pieces of work. ***Your job is to visualize / realize these connections to help form “connect-thinking recommendations” for your final project presentation.*** Always remember, "***The whole is greater than the sum of its parts***!"

**Session: 3**

Internal Analysis: Strengths & Weaknesses

\*\*\*\*\* By end of week (SUNDAY) – upload group bonding activity photo 1  
 (Skype/ Zoom meeting photos is okay if CORONAVIRUS is still a concern) \*\*\*\*\*

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**TOPIC FOR PREPARATION / DISCUSSION:**

**KEY DEBATE: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Resource Based View (RBV) of the firm?**

**(Watch Robert's MOOC video interview on main BB)**

**Open class discussion about a key assigned issue/ debate or article in the strategy field**

Robert will set the scene for each week's topic in the first 15-30mins and classmates will help do a brief summary of key takeaways at end of each class. Each individual will be marked for (informal sit down) discussion as part of his/her class contribution, which accounts for about 30% of your coursework grade. Come to class prepared to "have a conversation / to discuss" the different perspectives on the topic. Don't just COVER the facts, but UNCOVER the underlying issues so we can DISCOVER deeper insights into the WHY.

It's going to be a lot of fun and interactive. Don't be shy, just dive in to see how much we can learn from each other in an open, friendly and engaging learning environment. Key is to make your contribution in every class and **SHOW PROGRESS** from the previous week by demonstrating you are "**Staying F.O.C.U.S.E.D.**" (*make your own paper dice set in color to help stimulate your thinking for class discussions: <https://www.focused-polyu.com/paper-dice>*)

In these open discussions, I'll be looking to see if you are showing PROGRESS. Your sharing (for example) can come from any of the following sources: **Chapter Reading, Harvard Business Review, The Economist, McKinsey Quarterly, TED Talks** ... and/or any **ONE academic research articles listed above + including the rich resources in our SM webpage**; Please also incorporate your **WIE / Service Learning / Exchange / Competition Experience (where possible)**, as well as the success stories and lessons learned through your regular **LEARNING TEAM project meetings** in your sharing to bring our discussions closer to the real world! "PLAY TO WIN".

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**Session: 4**

Corporate Governance and Board of Directors

---

Useful references:

1. Boivie, S., Bednar, M. K., Aguilera, R. V., & Andrus, J. L. 2016. Are boards designed to fail? The implausibility of effective board monitoring, Academy of Management Annals, 10:1, 319-407.

2. Collins, J., & Porras, J. 1996. Building your company's vision. *Harvard Business Review*, 74(5): 65-78.
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5. Dalton, C. M., Dalton, D. R. 2005. Boards of directors: Utilizing empirical evidence in developing practical prescriptions. *British Journal of Management*, 16(s1): S91-S97.
6. Hambrick, D. C. 2007. Upper echelons theory: An update. *Academy of Management Review*, 32: 334-339.
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8. Hambrick, D.C., & Mason, P.A. 1984. Upper echelons: The organization as a reflection of its top managers. *Academy of Management Review*, 16: 193-206.
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10. Hendry, K. P., Kiel, G. C., & Nicholson, G. 2010. How boards strategize: A Strategy as practice view. *Long Range Planning*, 43: 33-56.
11. Johnson, J.L., Daily, C.M. & Ellstrand, A.E. 1996. Boards of directors: A review and research agenda. *Journal of Management*, 22: 409-438.
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13. Murray, A.I. 1989. Top management group heterogeneity and firm performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 10, Special Issue: 125-141.
14. Nicholson, G. J., & Kiel, G. C. 2007. Can directors impact performance? A case-based test of three theories of corporate governance. *Corporate Governance*, 15(4):586-608.
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17. Raynor, M. E. 2007. *The strategy paradox: Why committing to success leads to failure, and what to do about it*. New York: Currency Doubleday.
18. Rindova, V. P. 1999. What corporate boards have to do with strategy: A cognitive perspective. *Journal of Management Studies*, 36(7): 953-975.
19. Stiles, P. 2001. The impact of the board on strategy: An empirical examination. *Journal of Management Studies*, 38: 627-650.
20. Useem, M. 2006. How well-run boards make decisions, *Harvard Business Review*, 84(11): 130-138.
21. Weick, K. E., & Sutcliffe, K. M. 2007. *Managing the unexpected: Resilient performance in the age of uncertainty* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Good examples of governance problems in Hong Kong can be found at **Webb-site.com**. Also the HK Institute of Directors has published a comprehensive set of guidelines on corporate governance.

#### **TOPIC FOR PREPARATION / DISCUSSION:**

**KEY DEBATE: What core competencies are needed by boards of directors today?**

**Open class discussion about a key assigned issue/ debate or article in the strategy field**

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## Session: 5

### Business Level Strategies: Developing Competitive Advantages

---

Useful references:

1. Abraham, S. C. 1999. Using "bundles" to find the best strategy. *Strategy & Leadership*, 27(4/5): 53-55.
2. Bachmann, J. W. 2002. Competitive strategy: It's O.K. to be different. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 16(2): 61-65.
3. Brunk, S. E. 2003. From theory to practice: Applying Miles and Snow's ideas to understand and improve firm performance. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 17(4): 105-108.

4. Campbell-Hunt, C. 2000. What have we learned about generic competitive strategy? A meta-analysis. *Strategic Management Journal*, 21(2): 127-154.
5. Casadesus-Masanell, R., & Ricart, J. E. 2011. How to design a winning business model. *Harvard Business Review*, 89(1/2): 101-107.
6. Chen, M-J. 1996. Competitor analysis and inter-firm rivalry: Toward a theoretical integration. *Academy of Management Review*, 21(1): 100-134.
7. Chen, M-J., Miller, D. 2013. Competitive dynamics: Themes, trends, and a prospective research platform. *Academy of Management Annals*, 6(1): 135-210.
8. Cunha, M, P. e., & Chia, R. 2007. Using teams to avoid peripheral blindness. *Long Range Planning*, 40: 559-573.
9. Deephouse, D. L. 1999. To be different, or to be the same? It's a question (and theory) of strategic balance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 20, 147-166.
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11. Hambrick, D. C. 2003. On the staying power of defenders, analyzers, and prospectors. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 17(4): 115-118.
12. Johansson, F. 2004. *The Medici Effect: Breakthrough Insights at the Intersection of Ideas, Concepts, and Cultures*. Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.
13. Ketchen, D. J. 2003. An interview with Raymond E. Miles and Charles C. Snow. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 17(4): 97-104.
14. Ketchen, D. J. 2003. Introduction: Raymond E. Miles and Charles C. Snow's Organizational Strategy, Structure, and Process. *Academy of Management Executive*, 17(4): 95-96.
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16. March, J. G. 1991. Exploration and exploitation in organizational learning. *Organization Science*, 2(1): 71-87.
17. McGrath, R. G. 2011. When your business model is in trouble. *Harvard Business Review*, 89(1/2): 96-98.
18. Mintzberg, H. 1976. Planning on the left side and managing on the right. *Harvard Business Review*, July/Aug: 49-58.
19. Nunes, P., & Breene, T. 2011. Reinventing your business before it's too late: Watch out for those S curves. *Harvard Business Review*, 89(1/2): 80-87.
20. Ocasio, W. 1997. Towards an attention-based view of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, Summer Special Issue, 18: 187-206.
21. Raisch, S., & Birkinshaw, J., Probst, G., & Tushman, M. L. 2009. Organizational ambidexterity: Balancing exploitation and exploration for sustained performance. *Organization Science*, 20(4): 685-695.
22. Raynor, M. E. 2007. *The strategy paradox: Why committing to success leads to failure, and what to do about it*. New York: Currency Doubleday.
23. Smith, W. K., Lewis, M. W., & Tushman, M. 2016. Both/and leadership: Don't worry so much about being consistent. *Harvard Business Review*, May, pp. 63-70.
24. Wright, R. P. 2016. Organizational paradoxes: When opposites cease to be opposites. In D. Winter & N. Reed, *Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Personal Construct Psychology*. UK: Wiley-Blackwell, (pp. 306-319).
25. Zajac, E. J., & Bazerman, M, H. 1991. Blind spots in strategic decision making: The case of competitor analysis. *Academy of Management Review*, 16: 37-56.

**TOPIC FOR PREPARATION / DISCUSSION:****KEY DEBATE: To be different or the same? (read reference #9 above by Professor Deephouse)**

**Open class discussion about a key assigned issue/ debate or article in the strategy field**

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## Session: 6

### HARVARD CASE OPEN DISCUSSION

#### “The Economist”

(download your paid version in BB CONTENTS icon) Session Video Taped

**Submit Case #1 Write Up *BEFORE* class start [see pp. 34-36 of this course outline](#)**

**ENTIRE CLASS WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THIS IMPORTANT CASE DISCUSSION**

Key questions for discussion are:

1. What are the reasons for The Economist's superior performance?
2. What are the opportunities and threats facing the company now?

### 3. What connect-thinking recommendations would you recommend for the company?

Each individual will be marked for (informal sit down) BASED ON THE HARVARD CASE TO HELP STIMULATE FURTHER CLASS DISCUSSION. The secret to a successful Harvard Case discussion is to not only read the case, but to read around in/outside of the case and into other sources to go beyond what is presented in front of you. Again, defend your position/ ideas – practice your persuading, convincing and influencing skills to make your case. Remember - don't just COVER the facts, but UNCOVER the underlying issues so we can DISCOVER deeper insights into the WHY.

Let's support a team culture of learning everyone; it will be a great learning experience to do a real Harvard Case. Use F.O.C.U.S.E.D. framework to guide your discussion!

**For this Harvard Case – you will also be submitting a 1-page write up in the provided format (please see latter part of this outline). As mentioned at the beginning of this outline, in the teaching of MM4311, we will assess BBA Outcome 5 as incorporating both “f” and “g”. Specifically, we will rope these overlapping items under Entrepreneurship and Innovation. As they nicely complement each other for the teaching of strategy, we will use the following criteria to help guide your assessment.** Demonstrate an understanding on the applications and implications of the latest technologies to strategic options and strategic decision-making

- a. Demonstrate **entrepreneurial mindset** and its link to strategic management
- b. Explain with examples how entrepreneurial mindset and innovation (including technology) have important implications **that meet market needs**
- c. Evaluate how entrepreneurial mindset and innovation enables seeking and **generating strategic business opportunities**

### Session: 7

Corporate Level Strategy: Strategies for Diversified Companies

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\*\*\*\*\* By end of week (SUNDAY) – upload group bonding activity photo 2  
(Skype/ Zoom meeting photos is okay if CORONAVIRUS is still a concern) \*\*\*\*\*

Useful references:

1. Birkinshaw, J., Crilly, D., Bouquet, C., & Lee, S. Y. 2016. How do firms manage strategic dualities? A process perspective. *Academy of Management Discoveries*, 2(1): 51-78.
2. Bowman, E. H., & Helfat, C. E. 2001. Does corporate strategy matter? *Strategic Management Journal*, 22: 1-23.
3. Bryce, D. J., & Dyer, J. H. 2007. Strategies to crack well-guarded markets, *Harvard Business Review*, 85(5): 84-92.
4. Child, J. 1997. Strategic choice in the analysis of action, structure, organization and environment: Retrospect and prospect. *Organization Studies*, 18: 43-73.
5. Farjoun, M. 1998. The independent and joint effects of the skill and physical bases of relatedness in diversification. *Strategic Management Journal*, 19: 611-630.
6. Guler, I., 2018. Pulling the Plug: The capability to terminate unsuccessful projects and firm performance, *Strategy Science*, 3(3): 481-497.
7. Hoskisson, R.E., & Hitt, M.A. 1990. Antecedents and performance outcomes of

- diversification: A review and critique of theoretical perspectives. Journal of Management, 16: 461-509.
8. Ketchen, D. J., Snow, C. C., & Street, V. L. 2004. Improving firm performance by matching strategic decision-making processes to competitive dynamics, Academy of Management Executive, 18(4): 29-43.
  9. Palich, L. E., Cardinal, L. B., & Miller, C. C. 2000. Curvilinearity in the diversification-performance linkage: An examination of over three decades of research. Strategic Management Journal, 21: 155-174.
  10. Park, C. 2002. The effects of prior performance on the choice between related and unrelated acquisitions: Implications for the performance consequences of diversification strategy. Journal of Management Studies, 39: 1003-1019.
  11. Ramanujam, V., & Varadarajan, P. 1989. Research on corporate diversification: A synthesis. Strategic Management Journal, 10: 523-551.
  12. Raynor, M. E. 2007. The strategy paradox: Why committing to success leads to failure, and what to do about it. New York: Currency Doubleday.

#### **TOPIC FOR PREPARATION / DISCUSSION:**

**KEY DEBATE: Look at the case of the Faculty of Business at PolyU. Can we diversify into other businesses to help us achieve our Vision and Mission?**

#### **Open class discussion about a key assigned issue/ debate or article in the strategy field**

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## Session: 8

### Implementing Strategy

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#### Useful References:

1. Beer, M., & Eisenstat, R. A. 2000. The silent killers of strategy implementation and learning. Sloan Management Review, 41(4): 29-40.
2. Bigler, W. R. 2001. The new science of strategy execution: How incumbents become fast, sleek wealth creators. Strategy & Leadership, 29(3): 29-34.
3. D'Aveni, R. A. 1995. Coping with hypercompetition: Utilizing the new 7S's framework. Academy of Management Executive, 9(3): 45-60.
4. Dutton, J., Ashford, S., O'Neill, R., & Lawrence, K. 2001. Moves that matter: Issue selling and organizational change. Academy of Management Journal, 44: 716-736.
5. Hodgkinson, G. P. & Wright, G. 2002. Confronting strategic inertia in a top management team: Learning from failure. Organization Studies, 23(6): 949-977.
6. Goold, M., & Campbell, A. 1998. Desperately seeking synergy. Harvard Business Review, September / October: 131-143.
7. Kathuria, R, Joshi, M. P., & Porth, S. J. 2007. Organizational alignment and performance: Past, present and future. Management Decision, 45: 503-517.
8. Kotter, J., & Rathgeber, H. 2016. Our Iceberg Is Melting: Changing and Succeeding Under Any Conditions. Penguin Random House.
9. Love, L. G., Priem, R. E., & Lumpkin, G. T. 2002. Explicitly articulated strategy and firm performance under alternative levels of centralization. Journal of Management, 28(5): 611-627.
10. Martin, D. 2007. Alfred D. Chandler Jr, a business historian dies at 88. New York Times Online: <http://www.nytimes.com>, May 12.
11. Michlitsch, J. F. 2000. High-performing, loyal employees: The real way to implement strategy. Strategy & Leadership, 28(6): 28-33.
12. Miller, D. 1992. The Icarus Paradox: How exceptional companies bring about their own downfall. Business Horizons, 35. 24-35.
13. Raynor, M. E. 2007. The strategy paradox: Why committing to success leads to failure, and what to do about it. New York: Currency Doubleday.
14. Staw, B. M. 1981. The escalation of commitment to a course of action. Academy of Management Review, 6: 577-587.
15. Tsoukas, H., & Chia, R. 2002. On organizational becoming: Rethinking organizational change. Organization Science, 13(5): 567-582.
16. Waterman, R. H. Jr., Peters, T. J., & Phillips, J. R. 1980. Structure is not organization. Business Horizons, 23: 14-26.

#### TOPIC FOR PREPARATION / DISCUSSION:

**KEY DEBATE: Remember – Strategy is 1% plan and 99% implementation? How can we better executive strategy?**

Please watch the 3minutes YouTube topic on “Getting Strategy Execution Right” from Harvard Business Review by the INSEAD Professor Michael Jarrett  
<https://hbr.org/video/2226915397001/getting-strategy-execution-right>  
What are your views on what is said (and not said) about strategy implementation?

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### **Session: 9**

Evaluation & Control Mechanisms: What gets measured gets, done!  
 BUT are we measuring the right things? Do we have the right measures?

Useful references:

1. Band, D. C., & Scanlan, G. 1995. Strategic control through core competencies. Long Range Planning, 28(2): 102-114.
2. Bartunek, J. M. 1988. The dynamics of personal and organizational reframing. In R. E. Quinn & K. S. Cameron (Eds.), Paradox and transformation: Toward a theory of change in organization and management: 137-162. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
3. Baysinger, B. & Hoskisson, R.E. 1990. The composition of board of directors and strategic control: Effects on corporate strategy. Academy of Management Review, 15: 72-87.
4. Daily, C. M., & Dalton, D. R. 1993. Board of directors, leadership and structure: Control and performance implications. Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 17(3): 65-81.
5. Gavetti, G., & Levinthal, D. A. 2000. Looking forward and looking backward: Cognitive and experiential search. Administrative Science Quarterly, 45(1): 113-137.
6. Gavetti, G., Levinthal, D. A., & Rivkin, J. W. 2005. Strategy making in novel and complex worlds: The power of analogy. Strategic Management Journal, 26(8): 691-712.
7. Goold, M. & Quinn, J.J. 1990. The paradox of strategic controls. Strategic Management Journal, 9(11): 43-57.
8. Harris, M., & Tayler, B. 2019. Don't let metrics undermine your business. Harvard Business Review, 97(5): 63-69.
9. Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. 1995. Using the balance scorecard as a strategic management system. Harvard Business Review, 74(1): 75-86.
10. Levinthal, D. A., & March, J. G. 1993. The myopia of learning. Strategic Management Journal, 14(4): 95-112.
11. Marginson, D. E. W. 2002. Management control systems and their effects on strategy formation at middle-management levels: Evidence from a U.K. organization. Strategic Management Journal, 23(11): 1019-1031.
12. Miron-Spektor, E., Ingram, A., Keller, J., Smith, W. K., & Lewis, M. W. 2018. Microfoundations of organizational paradox: The problem is how we think about the problem. Academy of Management Journal, 61(1): 26-45.
13. Raynor, M. E. 2007. The strategy paradox: Why committing to success leads to failure, and what to do about it. New York: Currency Doubleday.
14. Simons, R. 1991. Strategic orientation and top management attention to control systems. Strategic Management Journal, 12: 49-62.
15. Simons, R. 1994. How new top managers use control systems as levers of strategic renewal. Strategic Management Journal, 15: 169-189.

#### **TOPIC FOR PREPARATION / DISCUSSION:**

**KEY DEBATE: “Are we measuring the right things?” Let’s open up our discussion with this issue in mind and see if we can gain a deeper understanding about the importance of having better measures in place? How do we know we have better measures? Because senior management says so?**

#### **Open class discussion about a key assigned issue/ debate or article in the strategy field**

Robert will set the scene for each week's topic in the first 15-30mins and classmates will help do a brief summary of key takeaways at end of each class. Each individual will be marked for (informal sit down) discussion as part of his/her class contribution, which accounts for about 30% of your coursework grade. Come to class prepared to “have a conversation / to discuss” the different perspectives on the topic. Don’t just COVER the facts, but UNCOVER the underlying issues so we can DISCOVER deeper insights into the WHY.

It's going to be a lot of fun and interactive. Don't be shy, just dive in to see how much we can learn from each other in an open, friendly and engaging learning environment. Key is to make your contribution in every class and **SHOW PROGRESS** from the previous week by

demonstrating you are “**Staying F.O.C.U.S.E.D.**” (make your own paper dice set in color to help stimulate your thinking for class discussions: <https://www.focused-polyu.com/paper-dice>)

In these open discussions, I’ll be looking to see if you are showing PROGRESS. Your sharing (for example) can come from any of the following sources: ***Chapter Reading, Harvard Business Review, The Economist, McKinsey Quarterly, TED Talks*** ... and/or any ***ONE academic research articles listed above + including the rich resources in our SM webpage***; Please also incorporate your ***WIE / Service Learning / Exchange / Competition Experience (where possible)***, as well as the success stories and lessons learned through your regular **LEARNING TEAM project meetings** in your sharing to bring our discussions closer to the real world! “PLAY TO WIN”.

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## Session: 10

Strategy-as-Practice and Results of Robert’s Research on Strategic Tools Usefulness;  
and Some Current Topics in Strategy /

**\*\*\*\*\* By end of week (SUNDAY) – upload group bonding activity photo 3  
(Skype/ Zoom meeting photos is okay if CORONAVIRUS is still a concern) \*\*\*\*\***

Useful references:

1. Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. 2011. Generating research questions through problematization. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2): 247-271.
2. Chia, R. & Holt, R. 2008. The nature of knowledge in business schools. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 7(4): 471-486.
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<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009099592>
4. Chia, R. & MacKay, B. 2007. Post-processual challenges for the emerging strategy-as-practice perspective: Discovering strategy in the logic of practice. *Human Relations*, 60(1): 217-242.
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7. Foss, N. J., & Hallberg, N. L. 2014. Research note and commentary: How symmetrical assumptions advance strategic management research. *Strategic Management Journal*, 35: 903-913.
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9. Jay, J. 2013. Navigating paradox as a mechanism of change and innovation in hybrid organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(1): 137-159.
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12. Lam, S. Y. 2010. Research note and commentary: What kind of assumptions need to be realistic and how to test them: A response to Tsang (2006). *Strategic Management Journal*, 31: 679-687.
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14. Orlikowski, W. J. 2002. Knowing in practice: Enacting a collective capability in distributed organizing. *Organization Science*, 13(3): 249-273.
15. Paton, S., Chia, R., & Burt, G. 2014. Relevance or '**relevate**'? How university business schools can add value through reflexively learning from strategic partnerships with business. *Management Learning*, 45(3): 267-288.
16. Sandberg, J. & Tsoukas, H. 2011. Grasping the logic of practice: Theorizing through practical rationality. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2): 338-360.
17. Floyd, S. W., & Wooldridge, B. 2000. *Building strategy from the middle: Reconceptualizing strategy process*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
18. Hitt, M. A., Gimeno, J., & Hoskisson, R. E. 1998. Current and future research methods in strategic management. *Organizational Research Methods*, 1: pp 6-44.
19. Hodgkinson, G. P., & Clarke, I. 2007. Exploring the cognitive significance of organizational strategizing: A dual-process framework and research agenda. *Human Relations*, 60: 243-255.
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**TOPIC FOR PREPARATION / DISCUSSION:**

**KEY DEBATE:** Read my article on “How useful are the strategy tools we teach in business schools?” and share your thoughts on the importance of tools for business and competitive analysis and how we can better train the next generation of thought-leaders for a complicated world.

**TOPIC FOR PREPARATION / DISCUSSION:**

**KEY DEBATE:** What is your experience in using strategy tools and techniques in helping you do better analysis so that you can make better decisions?

**Open class discussion about a key assigned issue/ debate or article in the strategy field**

Robert will set the scene for each week's topic in the first 15-30mins and classmates will help do a brief summary of key takeaways at end of each class. Each individual will be marked for (informal sit down) discussion as part of his/her class contribution, which accounts for about 30% of your coursework grade. Come to class prepared to “have a conversation / to discuss” the different perspectives on the topic. Don't just COVER the facts, but UNCOVER the underlying issues so we can DISCOVER deeper insights into the WHY.

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## Session: 11

### **GROUP STRATEGY PRESENTATIONS IN FRONT OF REAL CEO / SENIOR EXECUTIVES CENTERED ON “ONE RECOMMENDATION”**

Session Video Taped

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## Session: 12

Classics in Strategy: Sun Tzu's Art of War

### Useful references for Strategy in the East:

1. Bennett, V. M., & Snyder, J. 2017. The Empirics of learning from failure, Strategy Science, 2(1): 1- 12.
2. Bollaert, H., & Petit, V. 2010. Beyond the dark side of executive psychology: Current research and new directions. European Management Journal, 28: 362-376.
3. Chen, M-J. 2008. Reconceptualizing the competition – cooperation relationship: A trasparadox perspective. Journal of Management Inquiry, 17(4): 288-304.
4. Chen, M-J. 2014. Becoming ambicultural: A personal quest-and aspiration for organizations, Academy of Management Review, 39(2): 119-137.
5. Cleary, T. 1988. The Art of War - Sun Tzu. Translated edition by Thomas Cleary, Shambhala Publications, U.S.A.
6. Feldman, M. S., & Pentland, B. T. 2003. Reconceptualizing organizational routines as a source of flexibility and change. Administrative Science Quarterly, 48:94-118.
7. Ghemawat, P. 2002. Competition and business strategy in historical perspective. Business History Review, 76(1): 37-74.
8. Li, P. P. 2016. Global implications of the indigenous epistemological system from the East: How to apply Yin-Yang balancing to paradox management. Cross Cultural Management, 23(1): 42-77.
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15. Prahalad, C. K., & Hart, S. L. 2004. The fortune at the bottom of the pyramid. Strategy & Business, 26: 54-67.
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17. Sonenshein, S. 2016. Routines and creativity: From dualism to duality. Organization Science, 27(3): 739-758.
18. Tung, R.L. 1994. Strategic management thought in East Asia. Organization Dynamics, 22(4): 55-65.

#### **TOPIC FOR PREPARATION / DISCUSSION:**

**KEY DEBATE: When we open ourselves to “otherness”, we also begin to discover there are different ways of knowing. What are the main differences in thinking styles between East and West (and in-between)?**

#### **Open class discussion about a key assigned issue/ debate or article in the strategy field**

Robert will set the scene for each week's topic in the first 15-30mins and classmates will help do a brief summary of key takeaways at end of each class. Each individual will be marked for (informal sit down) discussion as part of his/her class contribution, which accounts for about 30% of your coursework grade. Come to class prepared to “have a conversation / to discuss” the different perspectives on the topic. Don't just COVER the facts, but UNCOVER the underlying issues so we can DISCOVER deeper insights into the WHY.

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**these connections to help form “connect-thinking recommendations” for your final project presentation.** Always remember, “**The whole is greater than the sum of its parts**”!

## Session: 13 Review of course and beyond...

**SUBMIT CASE #2 WRITE-UP**  
**(“Reflection-on-Action” OR “Self-characterization Sketch”)**  
[via email: robert.wright@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:robert.wright@polyu.edu.hk)

<u>29 Nov Wed 6-10pm for Thurs am class</u>	<i>*** between time allotted (not earlier or later)</i>
<u>30 Nov Thurs 8-12noon for Friday am class</u>	<i>*** between time allotted (not earlier or later)</i>
<u>30 Nov Thurs 6-10pm for Friday pm class</u>	<i>*** between time allotted (not earlier or later)</i>

### H. GUIDELINES & EXPLANATION TO COURSE REQUIREMENTS

## Individual Assessment (60 marks)

### Class Participation – show you are making PROGRESS (30 marks)

**30marks for in-class/online:** In this program your professor will mainly facilitate knowledge rather than to teach it. In essence, the facilitator will present you with ideas, concepts and theories for you to demonstrate your critical thinking abilities (take it to the next level). As members of our **YEAR 4** class have already gained several years of experience at the undergraduate level, we strongly encourage and welcome your insights, experience sharing and views throughout all our class discussions (including Blackboard, BB). ***These sharing can come from your (authoritative sources) readings as well as from your WIE (WORK INTEGRATED EDUCATION), Service Learning, Exchange Studies, Exchange Placements, Voluntary Work, Business Competitions, our SM website, “Strategy-in-Pictures”, 14 Whiteboard Animations etc...).*** Your contribution will form a significant part of our Strategic Management Class's ultimate success.

Most of all, our past experience and student feedback / evaluation repeatedly tell us that students (at this level) learn a great deal more by interactive discussions: learning dependently, independently and inter-dependently.

**To complement your class participation,** (and aligned with PolyU’s 6-year strategy on Teaching & Learning), this year we are continuing to ***encourage future leaders to be more “reflective” in their practice*** (in/outside of the classroom) – Reflecting about things **BEFORE** doing things; Reflecting **DURING** a chosen task; and Reflection about things **AFTER** you have performed the task.

**The key is to be aware, to be prepared and know what you are doing BEFORE doing it and follow through on them!**

All great strategic leaders / organizations reflect! The bigger picture is our goal of nurturing life-long learners who can see the **value of reflections** and that thinking about what you are doing (and not doing) will help develop a habit of mind for “**being and becoming**” a better person. So take interest in our lively discussions and learn to contribute and ENJOY...

## **Two 1-Page Individual Reflective Case Write-Up (Each 15 marks) (Total 30 marks)**

At the 100<sup>th</sup> Faculty Board Meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2008, it was decided that in order to improve the “written English” of our students, more formal assessments be put into effect as of Semester 2, 2008/2009 academic year. As a result of this ruling, we introduce this part of assessment in our SM course so that it is simple and effective.

Each student in our strategy course will be required to submit two 1-page reflections of a recommended reading / course experience. This 1-page (one side) is to be single-sided / single-lined, with at least font size 11, and 0.5” margins. It is estimated that this 1-page will be anything from 300-500 words in length. The format of your 1-page submission will be as laid out in this course outline. Template can be found in our CONTENT icon of SM homepage.

### **The first 1-page Reading Reflection – Harvard Business School Case (15marks)**

DOWNLOAD PAID VERSION – HBS CASE FROM BB – CONTENTS icon

This will be due in your 6<sup>th</sup> week of class (at beginning of class – BEFORE class starts)

For this Harvard Case on The Economist – you will be submitting a 1-page write up 500-1000 words) (I would encourage you to do it within 300-500 within 1-page – saying more with less) in the provided format (please see latter part of this outline). *I highly recommend you submit in 1-page SINGLE LINED with minimum Times Roman font size of 11.* In the teaching of MM4311, we will assess **BBA Outcome 5** as incorporating **Entrepreneurship and Innovation**.

Demonstrate an understanding on the applications and implications of the latest technologies to strategic options and strategic decision-making:

- a. Demonstrate **entrepreneurial mindset** and its link to strategic management
- b. Explain with examples how entrepreneurial mindset and innovation (including technology) have important implications **that meet market needs**
- c. Evaluate how entrepreneurial mindset and innovation enables seeking and **generating strategic business opportunities**

In this respect, you will need to address it in the following format:

- A. Brief overview of the case**
- B. Why is this HBS case INTERESTING from an entrepreneurial mindset perspective?**
- C. Why is this case IMPORTANT in terms of how the company meets market needs?**
- D. What strategic opportunities would you recommend for competitive advantage?**

In each of the above (**A, B, C, D**), I want you also to extend the ideas by bringing in your own opinions about it in each section (agree / disagree; like / dislike); Is there another way of looking at this? Bring in other readings (no need to reference for this homework), subject courses you have studied, *your WIE* internship / Service Learning experience in real organizations, what you have read in other research journal papers, Harvard Business Review, The Economist, newspaper clippings etc... *In other words, learn to stretch your thinking by demonstrating multiple ideas (MTR-Thinking)* in each of the A, B, C, D above. This is not easy to do, but will train you to be more peripheral and strategic in your thinking (saying more with less).

This will be submitted in hardcopy before class starts please.

If however, pandemic persists, this will be submitted individually by email to Robert ([robert.wright@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:robert.wright@polyu.edu.hk)) in a WORD document attachment: TBA – will let you know if happens.

**The second 1-page submission – “Reflection-on-Action” or a “Self-Characterization Sketch” (15marks for submission)**

**FOR YOUR 2<sup>ND</sup> ONE-PAGE SUBMISSION, ROBERT WILL LET YOU KNOW 1-2 WEEKS BEFORE WEEK 13 WHETHER YOU WILL DO A “SELF-CHARACTERIZATION SKETCH” OR A “REFLECTION-ON-ACTION” SUBMISSION**

This will be submitted at the end of term and format will be similar to the first case submission. The task will require you to reflect upon the past 13 weeks in terms of what you learned (as well about what you learned about yourself). **OR**

**“Self-characterization sketch” (15marks for submission)**

This will be submitted at the end of term and will take the form of a “characterization sketch” about YOU in our SM course! Basically, *what I am looking for in this second submission is ‘how you saw yourself, your experiences, your successes, lessons learned, challenges, your thoughts and feelings as you went through the course from “being to becoming”*; all written in the third person – as if someone is writing all this about you – only here, **YOU** are the one writing about **YOU**.

More specifically, a “self-characterization sketch” is NOT a reflective essay; it is not about your faults or what you should be like. Instead, in a character sketch, I want you to:

1. Write a character sketch of yourself just as if you were the principal character in a play
2. Write it as it might be written by a friend who knows you intimately and sympathetically (perhaps better than anyone ever really could know you)
3. Write it in the third person. For example start out by saying, “Susan Chung is ...”
4. You can focus on any aspect / experience(s) you had throughout our SM course

This will be submitted individually by email to Robert ([robert.wright@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:robert.wright@polyu.edu.hk)) in a WORD document attachment:

29Nov Wed 6-10pm for Thurs am class  
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\*\*\* between time allotted (not earlier or later)

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\*\*\* between time allotted (not earlier or later)

\*\*\*\*\*  
In both written submissions, each student is to clearly show that they have thought about the ideas and concepts that they have read and experienced by clearly expressing their views. In particular:

1. The quality of your ideas: Have you thought about it and thought it through?
2. The clarity of your views: Is it clear in what you’re saying?
3. Are you persuasive in what you say? Are you excited / passionate about your work?

In essence, you’ll be saying a lot in this ONE page, and with a clever strategy of saying more with less. High impact writing! Let your passion flow and the words will come naturally!!!! All this will be used to judge the quality of your writing.

**Reading Reflection: Due by hand BEFORE class starts in Week 6**

**Case #1: Harvard Case on The Economist (15 Marks)**

**Brief overview of the case**

***If you missed the first class, please watch video recording uploaded in our BB main page. A Soft version of this WORD Document template is in our BB “CONTENT” icon. Please keep a copy of “Turnitin” for your submission in case I ask for it.***

**Why is this HBS case INTERESTING from an entrepreneurial mindset perspective?**

**Why is this case IMPORTANT in terms of how the company meets market needs?**

**What strategic opportunities would you recommend for competitive advantage?**

**Reflection-on-Action: Due by email ([robert.wright@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:robert.wright@polyu.edu.hk)) in Week 13**

**Case #2 Reflective / Reflexive Practice (15 Marks)**

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\*\*\* between time allotted (not earlier or later)

30Nov Thurs 8-12noon for Friday am class

\*\*\* between time allotted (not earlier or later)

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**Brief Summary of how this strategy course is designed**

**Why is this INTERESTING?**

**A Soft version of this WORD Document is in our BB “CONTENT” icon. Please keep a copy of “Turnitin” for your submission in case I ask for it.**

**FOR YOUR 2<sup>ND</sup> ONE-PAGE SUBMISSION, ROBERT WILL LET YOU KNOW 1-2 WEEKS BEFORE WEEK 13 WHETHER YOU**

**WILL DO A “SELF-CHARACTERIZATION SKETCH” *OR* A “REFLECTION-ON-ACTION” SUBMISSION**

**Why is this IMPORTANT?**

**What did you learn about the course (*and about yourself*) that you didn’t already know?**

**If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?**

1.

2.

3.

**Self-Characterization Sketch:** Due by email ([robert.wright@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:robert.wright@polyu.edu.hk)) in Week 13

**Case #2 (15 Marks)**

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30Nov Thurs 8-12noon for Friday am class

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**Write a *Character Sketch* of yourself in our SM Class**, just as if you were the principal character in a play. Write it as it might be written by a friend who knows you very *intimately* and *sympathetically*, perhaps better than anyone ever really could know. Be sure to write it in the third person. For Example, start by saying, “Susan Chung is...”

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## **Group Assessment (40 marks)**

### **Confidential Peer Appraisal (10 marks)**

Learning Teams will work together throughout the semester. At the end of the semester, each student is required to complete a Confidential Peer Appraisal form, assessing themselves and each group members' contribution to your group project with special reference to the “**Staying F.O.C.U.S.E.D.**” framework. These marks are then moderated by the teacher – groups who score themselves very high can retain that mark if the teacher-given marks are very high. However, a group which gives itself “excellent” scores but received only average scores from the teacher-given marks will have its marks reduced. The opposite also applies – groups who are too hard on themselves will have their marks raised. **PLEASE GIVE HONEST RATINGS IN THE PEER APPRAISAL.** A WORD template can be downloaded in our CONTENT icon on BB.

The central purpose of peer appraisal (apart from meeting the University’s regulations) is to identify the few “freeloaders” and the few “outstanding contributors”. Experience has shown this to be a very effective method of achieving this.

### **Group Strategic Audit (total of 30marks)**

Your PPT deck will be in TWO major parts:

- Part I is presentation style slides – enough for 10mins
- Part II – APPENDIX - will be a more detailed set of slides with your strategic tools...

SOFT COPY of PPT report uploaded onto our e-discussion board in BB – **e-box: “About our Strategic Audit Report and Presentation”**. HARD COPY submit professionally bounded before all presentations start (in class). (**\*\*\*I am planning to zoom in CEOs/ Executives to judge your presentations – so please upload your PPTs by 12noon Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November – so I can send your work to them in advanced\*\*\***)

Please note this year – the real emphasis – will be 12.5 marks for PRESENTATION and 12.5 marks for WRITTEN REPORT, and 5 marks for cover letter to CEO about your ethical consideration in doing your analysis and recommendation.

**YOU HAVE TO WORK CLEVERLY AND HARD TO USE ALL YOUR PRESENTATION CONVINCING AND INFLUENCING SKILLS TO FULL EFFECT TO MAKE YOUR CASE LIKE A LAWYER.**

### **BACKGROUND on purpose of this project (see FACTSHEET) (see p. 40)**

...is to address / solve a **strategic** business issue / problem / challenge; or more appropriately to help the organization with strategic redirection / strategic renewal or to help it (re)gain a sustained (temporary) competitive advantage in the market – **we will focus on the Faculty of Business as your organization!**

The framework to do this will be a strategic tool called, the **Strategic Audit**. We recommend that you use the very user-friendly Strategic Audit framework provided by Wheelen and Hunger (2006) as a BASIC GROUNDING to understand the whole process when thinking about your Strategic Audit Report (please see the diagrammatic flow chart shown at the end of this section).

In undertaking a strategic analysis of an organization, you are strongly encouraged to use as many of the strategic tools and techniques discussed throughout the semester (and from our flipped-class mini-video lectures) in aiding you to carry out a strategic audit of the chosen organization. *In particular, I would expect you to use about 17 tools highlighted in yellow in the list of possible strategic tools provided in this course outline. That is, in your own internal LEARNING TEAM meetings, you would need to gain experience with these tools to help you generate several recommendations. Each recommendation generated from say around 5-8 tools. Then you choose your group's ONE BEST recommendation (grounded solid references & application of 5-8 tools) for your (MAIN) presentation for assessment.*

Samples of past Poor and Excellent Strategic Audits are posted in our BB (Content icon).

Please read them carefully to ensure you know exactly what your professor is looking for. *Bare in mind that previous years' work and examples of student audit reports are based on previous year's expectations;* some project groups had access to CEO interviews, while others did not... Some companies are listed on the HKEx, others not listed, and yet others may have been non-for-profit. Nevertheless, they will give you a good feel of what was done and what the professor was looking for in assessing them!

**Start early and ask yourself:  
“What will it take to succeed?”  
“What could go wrong?”  
**Do a “premortem”****

*(...then work backwards to start your work)*

At the end of the day, we are looking for how well you identify the strategic issues, the depth and completeness of your strategic analysis using the various strategic tools and techniques, whether your recommendation follow through logically from your level of analyses (are they creative, innovative, set new rules and boundaries...) and whether you have carefully thought through how they will be implemented and evaluated to achieve sustained (temporary) competitive advantage for that organization (and don't forget to consider the \$\$\$ budget – how much will your idea cost over what period of time...?).

#### **FACT SHEET: focus of your major report PRESENTATION:**

In the next page is a brief **1-PAGE FACTSHEET** given by a real manager about an organization's UNSOLVED strategic problem / issue / challenge. This **Factsheet** will be the focus of your entire semester's group project:

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT

**TOP SECRET**

## Company/ Organization Information

**Company Name:** Faculty of Business, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, HK**Industry:** Education**Current Competitors:** Eg.: HKU, HKUST, Chinese U., HKBU, LU, CityU, ... Corporate Universities, consultancy firms, MOOCs...**Current Customers:** High school graduates, postgraduates, managers /executives -in/outside HK.**Strategic UNSOLVED problem, issue or challenge**

Name one unsolved problem, issue or challenge: We are an aspiring business school educating the next generation of thought-leaders for a complicated world. Yet, when our students engage in real-world problems during their internships, they seem to disregard most of the theories, concepts and research we teach them. As such, employers are beginning to question if our students can really add-value to their organizations. We have a problem with "transfer of learning".

Do you see this as a  Problem /  Issue /  ChallengeThe above is  Internal /  External to the organization

## Internal to the organization:

- Strategy: the plan devised to maintain and build competitive advantage over the competition.
- Structure: the way the organization is structured and who reports to whom.
- Systems: the daily activities and procedures that staff members engage in to get the job done.
- Shared Values: core values of the company that are evidenced in the corporate culture and the general work ethic.
- Style: the style of leadership adopted.
- Staff: how employees trained, developed and motivated.
- Skills: the organization's core competencies and distinctive capabilities.
- Resources: how resources are acquired and used.
- Speed of Action: how fast or slow decisions are made.

## External to the organization:

- PESTLE: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental analysis.
- Existing competitors
- Customers
- Suppliers
- Substitutes/alternative products / services
- Potential new entrants to our industry

**Current TAKEN-FOR-GRANTED Assumption about the unsolved problem, issue or challenge**

All we need to do is to share our research and knowledge to our students and they will be equipped to "Learn and apply for the benefit of mankind".

**Context of the unsolved problem, issue or challenge**

1. Why does the organization still have this unsolved problem, issue or challenge?  
We have tended to be more inward looking and placed too much emphasis on publishing research in top tier journals. While all this is important, we're not looking into the future enough...
2. How long has this unsolved problem, issue or challenge existed for the organization?  
A long time – perhaps a good five (5) years.
3. Is there a dedicated manager / team / division currently dealing with it? (Please elaborate)  
Yes, our university has a whole team on "knowledge transfer" and this is a part of our new 6-year strategy, but the emphasis here is on inventions/ innovation that have patents and applied to real world problems, issues and challenges. It's great but misses the point.
4. What are some past solutions / approaches used to deal with this particular unsolved problem, issue or challenge? Why are you still unhappy with the outcome?  
We used to place a big emphasis on Work-Integrated Education, but even that needs to be improved. We say we are an applied research university, however, some of our staff A\* research are not read by practitioners. We have regular meetings / advisory committees with the business world, but we're not sure why all these are not working... Our incentive systems are great, but it's mainly for publishing and not for knowledge transfer".

*Disclaimer: This Fact Sheet is made up of seven parts truth, three parts fiction: 免責聲明：此情況說明會內容，七分真實，三分虛構。*

**REMEMBER, you are expected to read widely to give you more ideas.**

**USE THE 48hr RULE**

**Possible bodies of literatures to read to substantiate your thinking process (in addition to the reading list in our course outline are):**

1. Work integrated education / problem-based learning
2. Transfer of learning / Transfer of training
3. Know-doing gap / Theory-practice divide (the problem of university education)
4. Organizational learning
5. Organizational forgetting
6. Organizational complacency / inertia
7. Organizational decline
8. Strategy turnaround
9. Foresight / seeing sooner
10. Crisis management
11. VUCA world
12. Skills needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century
13. United Nations 2030 Sustainable Goals



**3,000-6,000 words (I strongly recommend to aim for the lower end – so that you craft the skill to SAY MORE WITH LESS):**

So for your 12.5marks PPT WRITTEN REPORT TO SUBMIT (and 5 marks ethics cover letter): a simple suggested format is as follows – allowing you to “**say more with less**”:

Part I of your PPT Deck is in format for a 10min presentation set of slides

Part II – APPENDIX – is more detailed, outlining the following:

- A. **YOUR COVER PAGE** will have a thought-provoking title, 3 team-building / bonding photos of your Learning Team (taken for weeks 3, 7 and 10), group number, full names and student number (including English) of all your group members. This same cover page will have an **Executive Summary** of what you did, what you found **and what you SPECIFICALLY recommended** (this should be no more than half a page).
- B. Page 2 is your COVER LETTER to CEO (/Dean) about ETHICS. It is printed on the back of the cover page. This one-page letter (single-lined) will focus on the “implications” of your report’s recommendation to the organization. We want you to demonstrate that you have thought-through the **ETHICAL ISSUES + IMPLICATIONS OF YOUR RECOMMENDATION** – and so it will be given a separate and specific mark (5 out of your total 30 marks for the entire Strategic Audit Report). **In particular, we are assessing you on ETHICAL REASONINGS:**
  - Identify and respond appropriately to ethical issues as they arise in different business settings
  - Analyze ethical issues as they arise generally within the framework of corporate social responsibility

Therefore, we will look for the following:

1. clearly identify the range of ethical issues arising from your case analysis and recommendation to the CEO (/Dean) (implications)
2. highlight the possible costs and benefits of the ethical issues identified from your recommendation to the CEO (/Dean)
3. demonstrates through possible scenarios / alternatives / implications / examples on the implications of the ethical issues identified to the CEO (/Dean)

4. demonstrate to CEO (/Dean) in cover letter, what actions you have taken to ensure the impact of your recommendation are sound and ethical (both internally and externally to organization)
  5. incorporate the issues of addressing ethics within the framework of and in connection to the entire case analysis / strategic audit report
  6. some references at bottom of this letter will be useful.
- C. Page 3 is in ONE LANDSCAPE PAGE - 1 summary table with following column titles:
- a. Column 1: Business problem / issues identified - **GIVE CONTEXT + EXPLAIN WHY THIS CHALLENGE IS A STRATEGIC ISSUE NEEDING URGENT ATTENTION**
  - b. Column 2: What **ONE connect-thinking recommendation** you recommend for the one problem, issue or challenge identified
  - c. Column 3: For your ONE recommendation, identify which 5-8 strategic tools helped you generate ideas for your recommendation
  - d. Column 4: For each of these tools, provide a very brief insight that was generated **that is counter-intuitive**. A recommendation would normally be generated from the use of several tools/techniques to show better peripheral vision / 360 degree view.
- D. **Your Strategic Audit report starts on the 4<sup>th</sup> page (the next 5-8 slides)**
- \*\*\* **THIS IS WHERE YOU WILL SHOW 1-PAGE PER STRATEGIC TOOL (fill-in the boxes, FEED the boxes, have supporting references and generate the Counter-intuitive INSIGHT at the bottom of each page).** At the bottom of the page, right under the tool with boxes filled, **show your “so what question” / “insights” / “implications” (Now that we have filled in the boxes, what does this analysis tell us?)** – only 2-3 sentences!
- \*\*\* Show MTR-THINKING \*\*\* Needs to be an “aha-moment” – COUNTERINTUITIVE.
- E. Be sure to have a section on how you are going to implement & evaluate your recommendation (considering timeline and \$\$\$ budgets where necessary) (1-2 pages).

#### End the report with the following:

- **Half page DISCLAIMER – use / edit the version by Heidrick & Struggles provided in our Content icon on BB)**
- **1-pages of references – 20-30 references (get the format right!!!)**
- **2-pages of PolyU Declaration and Acknowledgments**

Demonstrate clear thinking in your PRESENTATION (and WRITTEN REPORT PPT submission). I want “clarity” in your work. This page format can also duplicate as your PPT slides for your PRESENTATION (with some adjustments)!

- F. List of Reference: Reference your work to demonstrate you have done the required reading at this level:
- a. IN-TEXT / In-PPT: please use superscript numbering system + footnotes
  - b. END-TEXT / End-PPT references in alphabetical order with “**hanging**” references for each of your different sources sub-headings. Please use either APA (American Psychological Association) format) or AMJ (Academy of Management Journal) format.

REMEMBER, you are expected to read widely to give you more ideas. Again, our FOCUSED framework, the Guest Speakers sessions (if any), our point-counterpoint research sharing

sessions and discussions throughout the course AND the rich resources in our SM homepage & 14 Whiteboard Animations should help here!!! – so take note, engage and ENJOY!

Marks awarded for the group will be the SAME MARK for each group member. SO PLEASE ENSURE THAT ALL GROUP MEMBERS PUT IN FAIR, EQUITABLE AND REASONABLE EFFORT.

**Group Project Presentation (ZOOM ?) (each 10mins + 10mins Q/A) (12.5 marks)**

Quality is more important than quantity of work. In preparing your PRESENTATION, IMAGINE the real senior executive and his/her team is present at your presentation; so we need to be conscious of not making it too long whilst at the same time demonstrating that we have done the work! The main assessment is the PRESENTATION – yet, I will also assess your PPTs/Handouts and how you respond in the Q/A session – so please submit PPT FORMAT with full references for each slide (where appropriate) and a full list at the end of your PPT!

The final analysis should be summarized in **10minutes presentation centering**

**on your ONE BEST recommendation!**

Even though this is a group project, not all members of the group need to stand up and present, but are expected to contribute in one form or another. There will be a follow-up additional 10mins Q/A immediately following your presentation to see how your whole group responds to feedback from the audience and teacher. At the end of each group's presentation, your professor will provide feedback on your work for reflection. All presenting groups should practice good structure and time management in

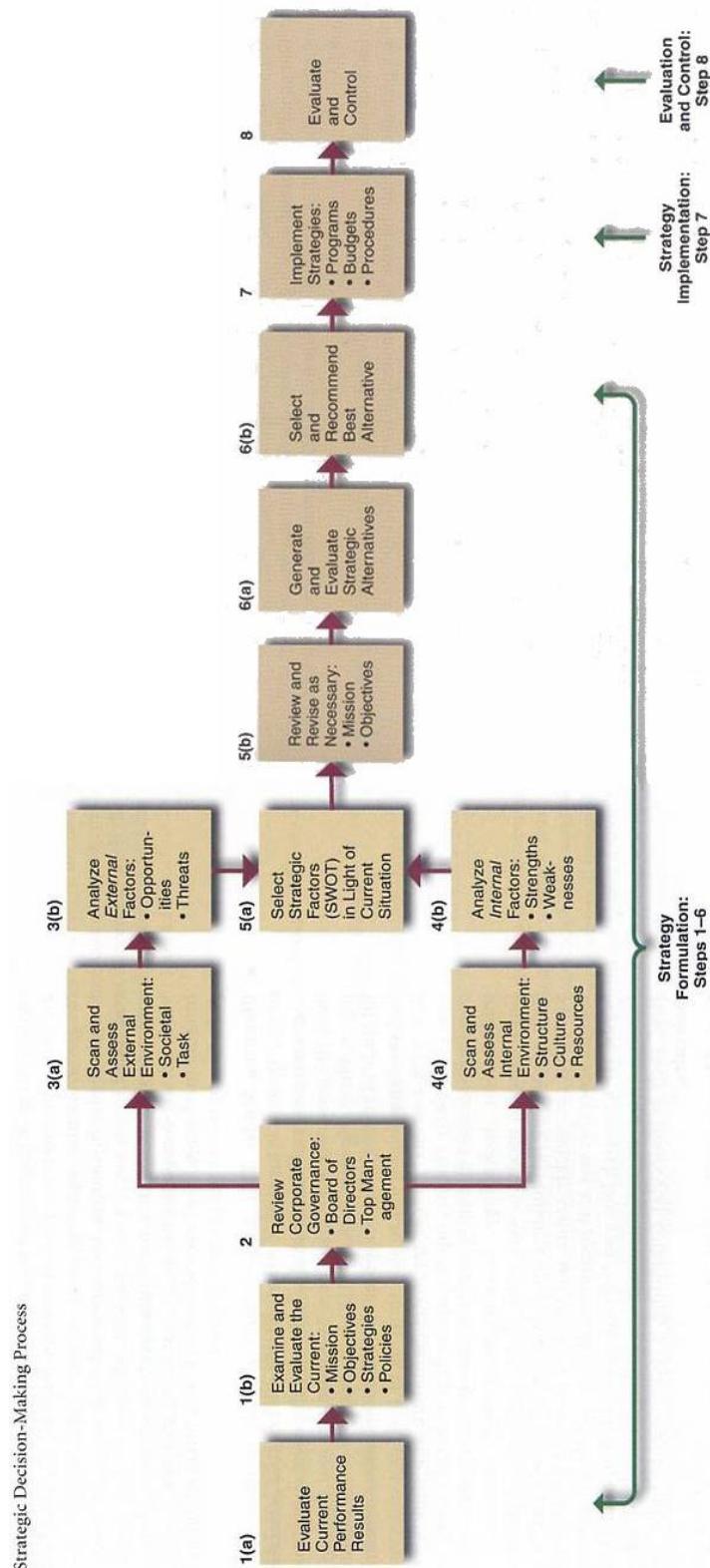
delivering their **10 minutes**. You can be as creative as you desire in your presentation style: PowerPoint, OHPs, handouts, etc... (Please provide handout and use it as back-up in case IT breaks down). **(You really got to make your case – sharpen your persuasion, convincing and influencing skills GROUNDED ON AUTHORATATIVE SOURCES).**

**Key to success is to have had your ideas bounced around many times BEFORE you do your presentation!!! (This means in/outside our classroom, in/outside your industry and at different levels in organizations; come and talk to Robert more often in/outside of class. Learn to create a peripheral view).**

Different Reference Sources Used Here's a checklist for you	Make sure clearly stated in your Reference List
Academic journal articles	
Practitioner journal articles	
Books on the subject	Use the headings in the left as
Newspaper clippings (English)	section headings in your <b>end-text</b>
Newspaper clippings (Chinese)	<b>end-PPT</b> reference list
Business magazines	
Company annual reports & coy. documents	In your <b>end-text / end-PPT</b> reference list
Internet sources from company homepages	make sure you group your
Internet sources from search engine search	references under each heading
Company databases used	<b>in alphabetical order and 'hanging' indent</b>
Textbook	And format in AMJ or APA Referencing style
Interviewed practitioners (questions attached)	
Interviewed academics (questions attached)	
Interviewed students (questions attached)	
Video, TV & radio programs	
Hong Kong Stock Exchange website	
Securities & Futures Exchange website	
Others... (please list)	

<b>Strategic Tools</b>	Page #
Please tick those used in Your Strategic Audit (citing page numbers)	
<b>ITEMS SHADED IN YELLOW BELOW "MUST" BE USED IN "PREPARING" YOUR REPORT</b>	
<b>External Analysis</b>	
Environmental Variables Scanning Map	
<b>External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS)</b>	
Industry Matrix (Weighted Competitive Strength Assessment)	
Nine-Cell Industry Attractiveness-Competitive Strength Matrix	
[Weighted Industry Attractiveness Scores Table (Industry A, B, C...) + Weighted Competitive Strength Scores for Business Units Table (Business A in Industry A, Business B in Industry B ...)]	
PEST Analysis	
Porter's Diamond (Competitive Advantage of Nations)	
Porter's 5-Force Model	
Strategic Group Map (6 different versions)	
Others... (please list)	
<b>Internal Analysis</b>	
Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS)	
Resource-based View of the Firm	
Value Chain	
Others... (please list)	
<b>Strategy Formulation: Situational Analysis &amp; Business Strategy</b>	
Bowman's Strategy Clock	
Porter's Generic Competitive Strategies	
Strategic Factor Analysis Summary (SFAS)	
SWOT Analysis	
TOWS Matrix	
Others... (please list)	
<b>Strategy Formulation: Corporate Strategy</b>	
General Electric's Business Screen	
Portfolio Analysis: BCG Growth-Share Matrix	
Others... (please list)	
<b>Strategic Choice</b>	
Hambrick & Mason's Strategic Choice Under Conditions of Bounded Rationality	
Others... (please list)	
<b>Strategy Implementation</b>	
McKinsey 7S	
Miles & Snow's Strategy Typology	
The Matrix of Change	
Others... (please list)	
<b>Evaluation &amp; Control</b>	
Balance Score Card	
Others... (please list)	
<b>Financial Analysis</b>	
Common Size Statement	
Financial Ratio Analysis	
Others... (please list)	
<b>Overall Strategy</b>	
5 Ps of Strategy	
Blue Ocean Four Action Framework	
Strategic Audit Process Worksheet	
Others... (please list)	
<b>Corporate Governance, Ethics &amp; Social Responsibility</b>	
Corporate Governance Code of Practice (HKEx)	
Stakeholder Analysis	
Others... (please list)	

## Basic Framework to Guide Your Strategic Audit Report



Wheelen T. L., & Hunger, J. D. (2006) 10th Edition, Strategic Management and Business Policy. Prentice Hall, U.S.A. p.20



香港理工大學

### Honour Declaration (For group assignment)

We declare that the work in this assignment is completely our own work. No part of this assignment is taken from other people's work without giving them credit. All references have been clearly cited. We understand that an infringement of this declaration leaves us subject to disciplinary action by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

We also declare that **Generative AI tools** have (or have not) been used to prepare the submitted work. If and when Generative AI tools have been used, the manner in which they were used are as follows:

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Student Name	Signature	Student ID	Date
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Department	Programme	
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Subject Title & Code (for the assignment concerned)

MM

As at 1 Sept, 2023

**Polite reminder on the use of Generative AI wisely**

**DO'S**

- Use GenAI for brainstorming
- Check for factual accuracy of AI-generated content
- Use AI-generated content in conjunction with other sources to ensure your work is reliable and well informed
- Include any GenAI assistance in your reference list

**DON'TS**

- Do NOT rely solely on AI-generated content as the source of information
- Do NOT ask GenAI software to write your essays
- Do NOT input any personal details or confidential information when using GenAI tools

## **CONFIDENTIAL PEER REVIEW for Group Work**

**Your name** (including English name please):

**Group Number:**

Fill-in the full names of your group members (including English name) in the tables below. Please give ratings (from the scale of 0 to 5; Zero (0) as the lowest and 5 as the highest) to yourself and to your fellow group members. DO NOT let your group mates know your scores as this is a confidential assessment. Please provide HONEST ASSESSMENT.

	Student Full Name	State the value-addedness to the team	F Brings a Fresh Perspective 0-5	O Think, feel and act "as if" an Owner/Manager 0-5	C Shows Connected-thinking 0-5	U Have a Sense of Urgency 0-5	S Shows Team-Spirit 0-5	E Always Engaged 0-5	D Exercises Deliberate Practice 0-5	Total Score out of 35
1	Your name here:									
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										

Overall, which student made the MOST CONTRIBUTION?

Overall, which student made the LEAST CONTRIBUTION?

Your signature..... Date: .....

Please submit HARDCOPY in class time in the week AFTER group presentation.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN an 'A', 'B' AND 'C' GRADES?

Based on the Faculty of Business Assessment Criteria

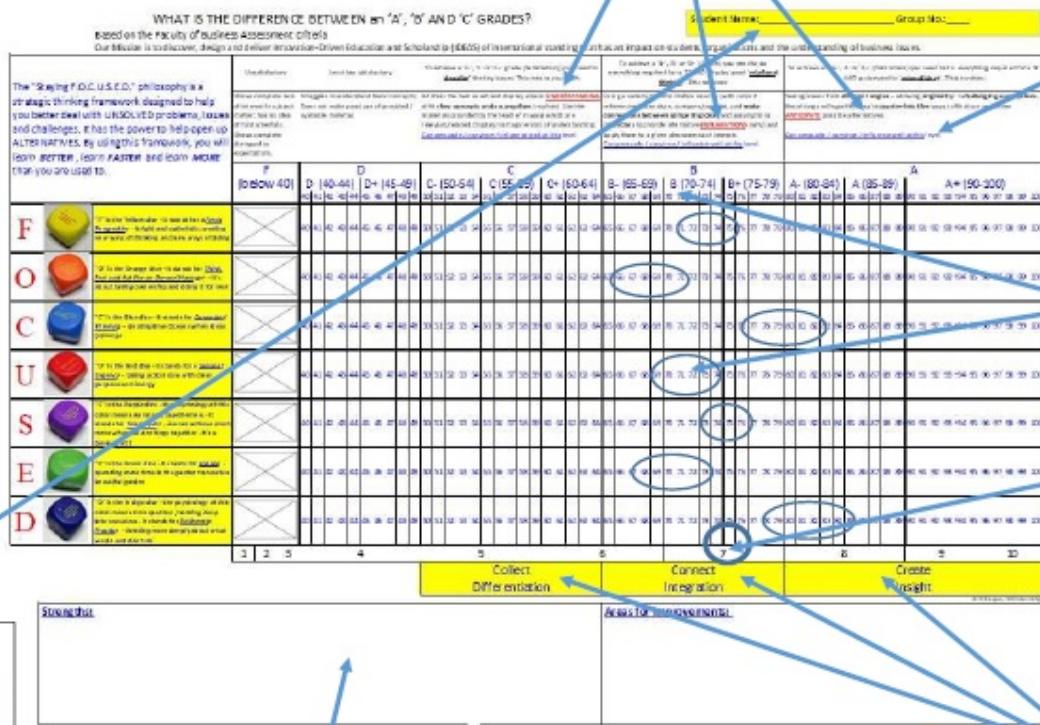
Our Mission is to discover, design and deliver innovation-Driven Education and Scholarship (IDEAS) of international standing that has an impact on students, organizations and the understanding of business issues.

			Unsatisfactory	Less than satisfactory	To achieve a 'C', 'C+' or 'C+' grade (Satisfactory) you need to <u>describe</u> the key issues. This means you must:	To achieve a 'B-', 'B' or 'B+' (Credit) you need to do everything required for a 'C' AND display good <u>relational thinking</u> . This requires:	To achieve an 'A', 'A-' or 'A-' (Distinction) you need to do everything required for a 'B' AND go beyond to <u>extend ideas</u> . This involves:							
			Shows complete lack of interest in subject matter; has no idea of fundamentals. Shows complete disregard to expectations.	Struggles to understand basic concepts; Does not make good use of provided / available material.	Address the task as set and display a basic <u>UNDERSTANDING</u> of the key concepts and assumptions involved. Use the materials provided by the teacher in ways which are relevant/related. Display no major errors of understanding. <u>Can persuade / convince / influence well at this level</u>	Using a variety of authoritative sources (with correct referencing) to analyze, compare/contrast, and make connections between competing ideas and assumptions ( <u>relevance</u> ) to provide alternative <u>EXPLANATIONS</u> (why) and apply them to a given phenomena or interest. <u>Can persuade / convince / influence well at this level</u>	Seeing issues from different angles – allowing originality in challenging assumptions, theorizing and hypothesizing in counter-intuitive ways so that we can better <u>ANTICIPATE</u> possible alternatives. <u>Can persuade / convince / influence well at this level</u>							
			F (below 40)	D (40-44)	D+ (45-49)	C- (50-54)	C (55-59)	C+ (60-64)	B- (65-69)	B (70-74)	B+ (75-79)	A- (80-84)	A (85-89)	A+ (90-100)
F		"F" is the Yellow dice - it stands for a <u>Fresh Perspective</u> - bright and optimistic; creating new ways of thinking and new ways of doing	X	40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49	50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69	70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89	90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100							
O		"O" is the Orange dice - it stands for <u>Think, Feel and Act like an Owner/Manager</u> - it's about taking ownership and doing it for real	X	40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49	50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69	70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89	90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100							
C		"C" is the Blue dice - it stands for <u>Connected Thinking</u> - creating Blue Oceans when ideas (re)merge	X	40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49	50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69	70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89	90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100							
U		"U" is the Red dice - it stands for a <u>Sense of Urgency</u> - taking action now with clear purpose and energy	X	40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49	50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69	70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89	90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100							
S		"S" is the Purple dice - the psychology of this color means warm and togetherness - it stands for <u>Team Spirit</u> - we can achieve much more when we do things together - it's a team-sport!	X	40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49	50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69	70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89	90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100							
E		"E" is the Green dice - it stands for <u>Engage</u> - spending more time in the garden to create a beautiful garden	X	40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49	50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69	70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89	90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100							
D		"D" is the Indigo dice - the psychology of this color means introspection / looking deep into ourselves - it stands for <u>Deliberate Practice</u> - thinking more deeply about what we do and don't do	X	40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49	50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69	70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89	90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100							
			1 2 3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
					Collect Differentiation		Connect Integration		Create Insight					

Strengths:

Areas for improvements:

**2.** Here we show what a student needs to do competently to achieve a certain level. Grounded on what makes great scholarship about a phenomena of interest, a student who can describe and show understanding is at the "C" level. To attain a "B" grade, one must be able to show relationship between things and hence explain what is happening. To reach an "A" level of performance, one needs to go beyond by extending existing ideas and reviewing our CURRENT taken-for-granted assumptions. Students / managers at this level are better able to anticipate.



**1.** This course evaluates you on 7 core dimensions based on the "staying F.O.C.U.S.E.D." philosophy.

**8.** At the end of the semester, this FOCUSED Assessment Rubric can also be used to summarize each individual student's performance for the course.

**7.** This comment area is separated into two sections to help you document a student's or a project group's strengths and areas for improvement.

**3.** You will also notice at each grade level, we also look for how well a student Persuade, Convince and Influence others.

4. The percentage breakdown on what constitutes a letter grade is determined by your Faculty.

**5.** If it is easier, scoring can also be performed on a 1-10 scale.

**6.** Research has proven that higher-order thinking associated with cognitive complexity requires a person to first differentiate the many possibilities before integrating / connecting the dots to produce deeper insights. These three aspects align neatly with what it takes to score a "C" grade from a "B" grade to an "A" grade.

**Let's experiment everyone!**

**Please do not sit in the same table seat you sat last class.  
Let's be open to "otherness" (smile...)**



“They say we’re not placing enough emphasis on diversity.”

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better

I would prepare better before the consultation with Dr. Robert because I remember our first consultation was not well-prepared, therefore we sort of wasted the time of Dr. Wright. If we were more well-prepared, we can answer a lot of questions what we don't know rather than pretending we already knew everything, thus Dr. Robert could give us his opinions based on what we don't know, and we could improve the quality of our report.

2.1 wish we could do the 48 hours experiment earlier because I think our report do not have abundant resources. Also, without sufficient and relevant authoritative sources from the reading list to back up our tool

and cases, we were not able to be a lawyer to state or defend our view. 3. I wish I could go through all materials and videos provided by Dr. Wright sooner because all materials are inspiring and very useful to our audit report. Therefore, it can definitely improve the quality of our work and enrich the content of our report.

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

- 1.1 Take more initiative instead of being passive: I should get myself well-prepared starting from the first lesson. This allows me to learn better since I can have a clear picture of what I am going to have in class. I am not only gaining new knowledge, but also applying it through discussion.

1.2 Say more with less: During the Q&A session, I should have all the questions in my head and ask the key one. This helps me to learn faster as it is more efficient and get all the answers right.

1.3 Reflect my learning progress regularly: As the "D" dice mentioned, if you want to change the result, you need to change the process. I should keep tracking my learning progress during the semester. Then, I can change the study method regarding the actual need.

If you had to do this course all over again, what would you do more carefully and thoroughly before the semester begins so that I can perform better and why? Please!

1. I would read the course outline carefully and follow the instructions strictly to learn better.  
*Please!*
  2. I would start to do the project sooner so that we could have more time to edit and adjust it.
  3. I would read the highlighted sources before the class starts and participate more in class so that I could get more ideas from outside the field and from different angles.

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

1. I will try to watch some random videos on YouTube, seeing whether I can see any strategies behind the content. This is to help myself cultivate the habit of using the "F.O.C.U.S.E.D." dices during my spare time and develop a sharper mindset interestingly.

2. I would connect with my team members more often via WhatsApp, better for physically meeting (e.g., a meal) before and after the lecture. I also believe the bonding picture taking is a good time for us to gather and chat like friends. Observing Group 1 playing the dice game, I feel like my team can have a better harmony as well.

3. I may encourage Robert to let us play the game set once so that we can have a better understanding of how to use the theories in action. Also, the classroom will be full of energy and we will be less shy to share.

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

1. Start Reading the Material earlier: Noted that all handout, useful reference and meaningful video in blackboard, I should start reading these sources from week 1 as earlier as possible to have multiple discussions, and persuasion with authoritative sources in class discussion and group project.

3. Ask for Advice: I should cherish the class and its meeting time with my teacher and my classmate. My team and I should set proper agenda towards strategy topics, his experience and project. My team and I should set proper agenda (U-dice), prepare questions and tools for example (U-dice) from reading well before each meeting.

This could help me help you learn BETTER, learn FASTER and learn MORE with my team.

卷之三

to do this course all over again. what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform  
why?

- sharing is thought-provoking enough, so I did not speak it up. However, I think it is important to receive other classmates' and Robert's feedback.

2. To start the conversion in group. In the beginning, our group is very quiet, partly because of the uncertainty of what to discuss and that we did not know each other at first. If I took the initiative to talk, we would have more effective discussion and get closer faster.

3. Prepare more before lesson. Although I did prepare most of the time, the content I read prior to lesson is not as much as other classmates. I found that I can gain more knowledge if I prepare more at first because I can have more ideas to exchange and share with my classmates.

—dúplex secundii. Hidraea in primis.

do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform

more active in classroom. I will always share my opinions with others. If I can do it again, I will always engage in discussion, and respond to more contribution in our strategic-audit-report. I feel shamed as I made the least contribution in my group. I will be more responsible in group by doing more

more authoritative sources from the reading lists in course outline as these sources provide

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

First, think, feel and act like an owner/manager. It makes a whole difference when we act as a manager and the professor is the boss. For instance, when posting bonding photos of our group, if I do it again, I shall post them with a clear message before the boss told us to do so, but not targeting the basic requirements only. Second spend more time together to know ourselves. It is of paramount importance to understand each other's ideas when dealing with unsolved challenges. The three bonding sessions create a higher team spirit for our learning team, and it could be better if we bond together proactively like having lunch or dinner after meetings. Lastly, take a quiet moment to stay calm, pause and reflect. When doing the final audit report, our group tried hard to finish it effectively and follow the schedule. However, it is also imperative to think more deeply, and reflect on what is going on. Misunderstandings or false assumptions could be spotted out in reflective moments.

Spent more time in the garden

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you do differently?

1. Engage more, answer more and express the idea more in the class. As all students in the class gave comments and exchange ideas actively, I can hear more ideas. As saying goes, 'best ideas always come from outside of your field.' Everyone has a different mindset, when we see things differently, we can see different thing. It can broaden our horizons. Besides, we can brainstorm ideas through exchanging our thought. It allows me to think multi-discipline, multi-level, multi-space and create connected thinking.

2. Being a leader in the group project. It is important to think and act like an owner and manager in the project. It is because leaders require to know the whole blueprint of the project. This pushes me to learn more knowledge and foster my organization skills, interpersonal skills and leadership skills. All of these skills good for my personal development.

3. Spend more time with my groupmate. Although we have two team-building activities, the time together is not so long. If we spend more time together, we will understand each other better, like our strengths, weaknesses, personalities, etc. It can create high team spirit when dealing with unsolved problems. Therefore, if I had to do this course again, I will invite my groupmate to come out and do the project together. Since there are some foreign students who come to Hong Kong and are able to come out and work together, it is a valuable chance to work with them together and learn more from their mindset. Most importantly, coming out and working together can reduce the chance of misunderstanding or conflicts and be able to finish the task more effectively. Take our project as an example, although both of us provide lots of great ideas and deliberate a same direction for the direction. However, when I do my part at home, I had discovered new problems need to tackle. I just tackle the problems by myself and the solutions maybe not be the most suitable for the case. Therefore, I think it is important to spend some time coming out and working together. It not only provides more time to know each other more but also able to tackle any problems and uncertain issues together immediately. It is a great method to show our team spirit and

AS OF 26<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2021

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE things would you do differently to perform better and why?

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE things would you do differently to perform better and why?

- If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

1. I would start sooner than later! I would ask students who had done this class about this course and what type of reading Robert gives before coming in the first class— like a professional for having a higher quality of work.

2. I would spend more time in this subject to "feed" myself instead of being "fed". 100-meter race doesn't mean research outside the field. I could run fast and far after the race. By taking the initiative to read and know— think, feel, and act as a manager!

3. I would spend more time with my teammates to build a stronger S.W.A.T. team. For example, I would invite them to have bonding activities once the group formed to know our strengths and weaknesses earlier. It helps us to leverage off each other's contribution to solving problems better. Higher team spirit also allows us to go fast.

and in the process, help make this world a better place.

and in the process, help make this world a better place.

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

- ~~SECRET~~ ~~LESS~~ ~~LESS~~ ~~LESS~~

  1. More prepare the class in advance: I wasn't always aware of everything that was discussed during the course, hence it prevented me from giving my opinion about some subjects as I did not have a lot of literature background to support what I was saying.
  2. Be more at ease to talk and express my point of view during the class, because I was not that confident about my opinions so I didn't really talk a lot. But that quite had in fact because it is by practicing that you can be more at ease to express your opinion and also more persuasive.
  3. Meet and discuss more with other people from the class. Because you can learn a lot from other, they could have shared so much things they knew with me that would have been a real opportunity for me to develop even more my point of view thanks to their examples and that would have also been a good way to debate with them in order to have stronger arguments and be more confident!

2. I will spend more time to bond with my learning

- exchange insights from the class. According to the *S* dice, if you want to go far, go together. The *S* dice reminds me about the importance of spending more time together to know ourselves in a team. Team spirit is crucial in the successful group work because we will have more powerful insights and ideas to solve the complexed problems and issues. Besides, spending more time together eliminates the possible occurrence of mistrundestandings and conflicts because we can better understand the personalities of each other.

3. I will try to have more discussions and interactions with classmates from other learning teams. The *O* dice teaches us to "Talk to more people in and outside your field for feedback". When we exchange our ideas regarding the problem of transfer of learning, we can comment on each other's idea and gain more inspiring insights from other perspectives.

2. I will spend more time to hand with my learning team members, such as meeting in the library to discuss our project.

- ~~exchange insights from the class. According to the 5 dice, if you want to go far together, you need to spend more time together to know ourselves in a team. Team spirit is crucial in the successful group work because we will have more powerful insights and ideas to solve the complexed problems and issues. Besides, spending more time together eliminates the possible occurrence of misunderstandings and conflicts because we can better understand the personalities of each other.~~

3. I will try to have more discussions and interactions with classmates from other learning teams. The 0 dice teaches us to "Talk to more people in and outside your field for feedback". When we exchange our ideas regarding the problem of transfer of learning, we can comment on each other's idea and gain more inspiring insights from other perspectives.

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

1. being less stubborn; relevance much more instead of being too critical about the usefulness of certain things/video's, articles and even the amount of time some things take), to relevance is a practical execution of being positive

2. have a higher sense of urgency; early bird catches the worm

3. prepare even better to optimize the added value of each lecture

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

1. I would definitely attend the class on time, not for the attendance marks but for the chances of discussing with other students - new insights generated from the lessons.

2. I would try to "annoy" Robert more and knock more his door as Robert is a real professional in strategic management.

3. I would try to share more ideas on class, it may help others to get a new idea or others could also identify my problems.

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

1. Be more motivated in the beginning and not leave all the work for the last 100m.
2. Be more structured and better organized on my work, maybe also create a specific work schedule for each task.
3. Involve and engage more in discussion without being afraid of being wrong.

Robert! Welcome!

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

1. Do more preparation before the class, and engaged more during the lessons to show more class contributions.
2. Participate more in the e-discussion board, e.g., share some thoughts or video clips. Thus, I can have more interactions with the classmates, and gaining feedback to broaden my horizons.
3. Utilize the resources wisely, e.g., watch more interviews shared by Robert. Thus, I can know more insights of the successful people through their story and experiences.

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

1. I would discuss the strategic audit report with my groupmates sooner and consider some alternatives recommendation so we would have more time to make our project better.
2. I would raise more questions on class because I think it is a great opportunity to learn and build confidence.
3. I would spend more time on watching the handout and Harford Business Review which can contribute more on the group project and learn more, better and faster.

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

1. I would read the recommended materials on the course outline earlier. It is because I may have more preparation time at the start of semester which the heavier workload with the time going may become an excuse for reading less materials. So, if I would like to learn more from the teaching materials provided, I will start sooner than later.
2. I would ask Robert more questions. When we first look at the guidelines of strategic audit report on course outline, we have a lot of confusion on what we need to do. However, we are afraid of ask questions at that time, which makes us take a long time to understand and less time to do the project. So, if I had to do it all over again, I would just ask questions immediately and more in order to perform the project better.
3. I would discuss more with our classmates in-class and on e-discussion board. Our classmates, both Wed and Thurs sessions, always provide wonderful insights. However, because of fear of speaking, I seldom join the discussion in the first several weeks. If I had to do it again, I should discuss more with other classmates and Robert to share my insights and to combine with other's student insights.

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to

perform better and why?

1. I would prepare more than I should by reading more and more. As Robert said, "If you take the course easy, you are probably doing it in the wrong way", if's all about the gardening.
2. I would share, discuss and engage more in the class.
3. I would spend more time with our learning group so that we could understand each other better and minimize the chance of miscommunication.

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

What would you do? You did the opposite!

1. I would discuss the strategic audit report with my groupmates sooner and consider some alternatives recommendation so we would have more time to make our project better.

2. I would raise more questions on class because I think it is a great opportunity to learn and build confidence.

3. I would spend more time on watching the handout and Harford Business Review which can contribute more on the group project and learn more, better and faster.

If you had to do this course all over again, what THREE (3) things would you do differently to perform better and why?

What would you do? You did the opposite!

1. More team activities to know ourselves because each of us has something meaningful to contribute

2. Be more positive and remind myself about what kind of stories I will tell about facing challenges

3. More diverse practice in everyday life. It seems silly to roll the dices but it actually helps

Julian R. 2007. Why schools should teach entrepreneurship. Harvard Business Review, 35(5): 56-7. [www.hbr.org](http://www.hbr.org)

Peter S. Gehr, R. & Eber, 2011. Reinforce or Relevate? How university business schools can add value through reflective learning from strategic partnerships with business. Management Learning, 45(3): 267-288.

Chris R. Aepli, R. 2008. The nature of knowledges in business schools: Academic of Management Learning & Education, 7(3): 471-486.

Not necessary for this framework - but cool - Great idea!

# Harvard Business Review



[www.hbrreprints.org](http://www.hbrreprints.org)

FORETHOUGHT GRIST

## Performing a Project *Premortem*

by Gary Klein

Reprint [F0709A](#)

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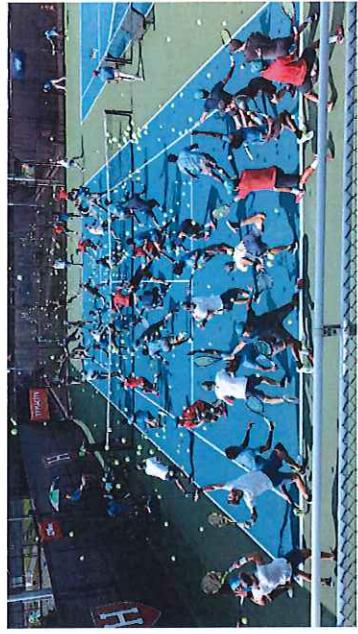
## Time Management



# Beware a Culture of Busyness

Organizations must stop conflating activity with achievement.  
by Adam Wayz

From the Magazine (March–April 2023) / Reprint R2302C



# Beware a Culture of Busyness

Organizations must stop conflating activity with achievement.  
by Adam Wayz

In my 2019 book, *The Power of Human*, I recount an anecdote about a man who immigrated to the United States and soon came to believe that the word “busy” meant “good” because when he asked people, “How are you doing?” they often responded, “Busy.” Nora Rosendahl, the chief operating officer of the performance coaching firm Hintsa, discovered the same thing when she conducted a small social experiment by documenting answers to the question “How are you?” over the course of a week. By her count, nearly eight out of 10 people said, “Busy.”

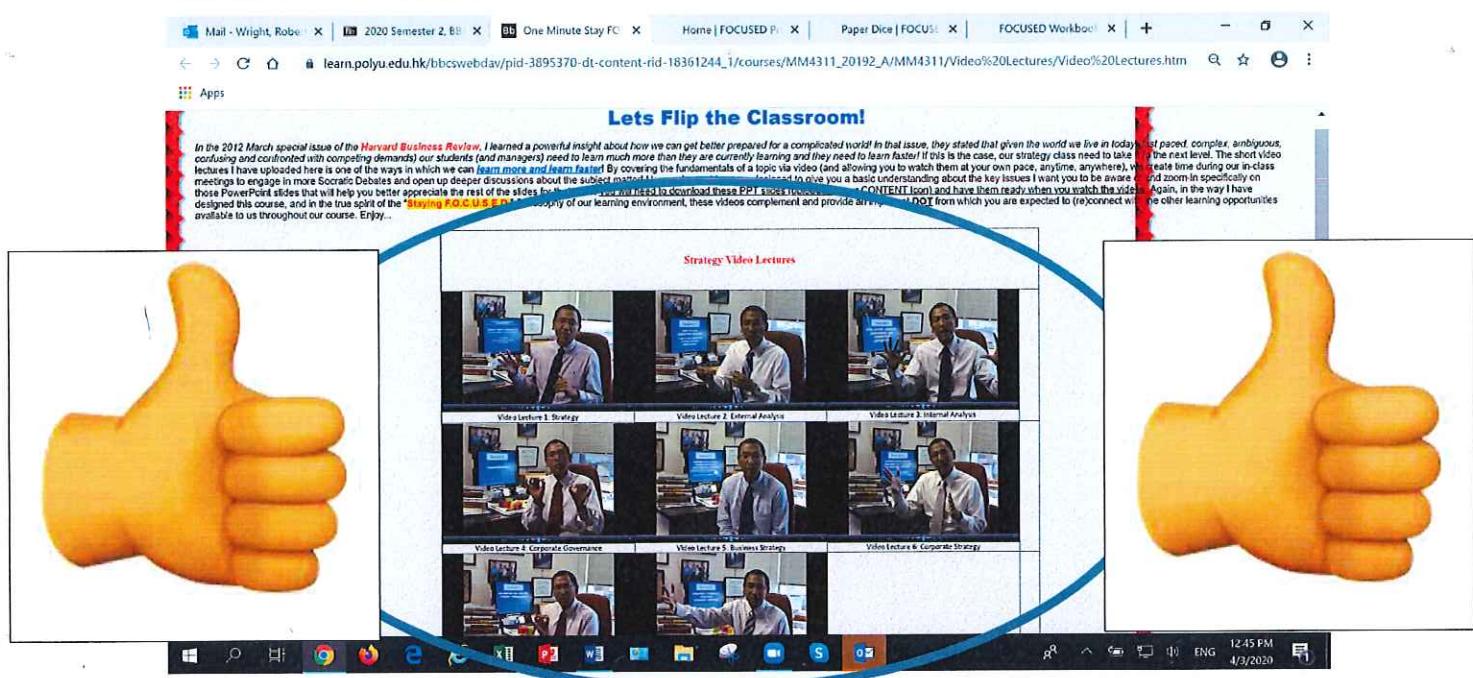
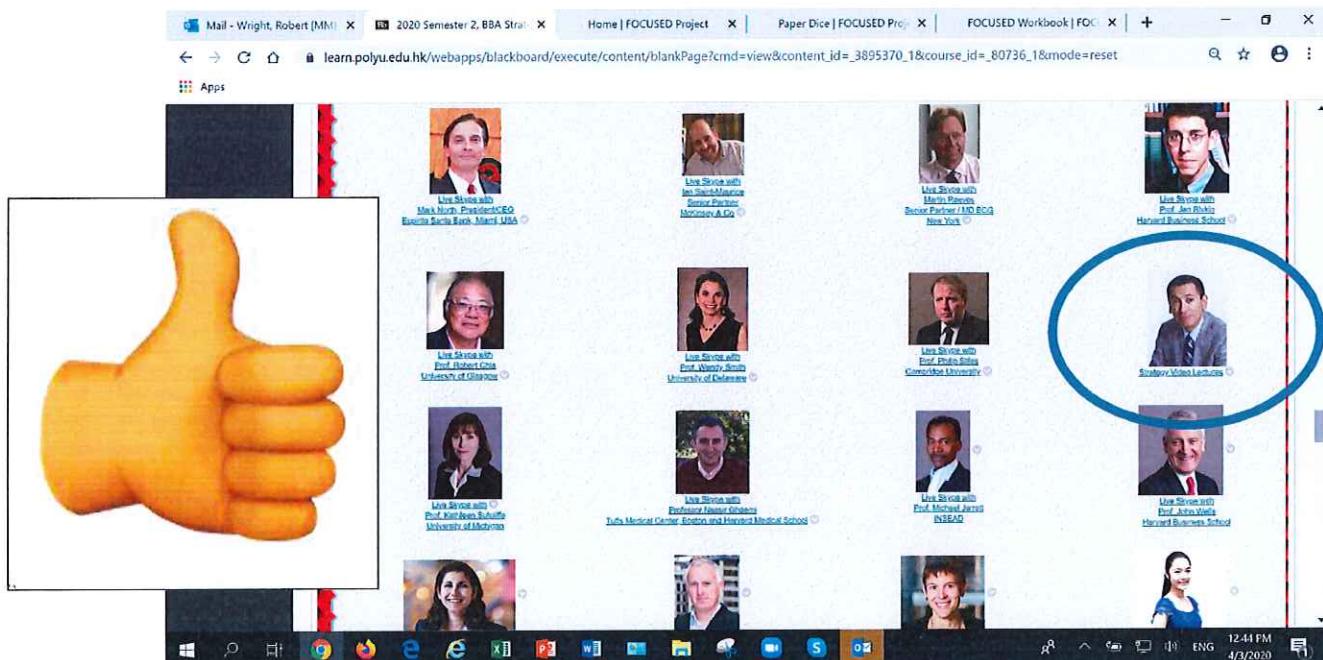
# MY NOTES

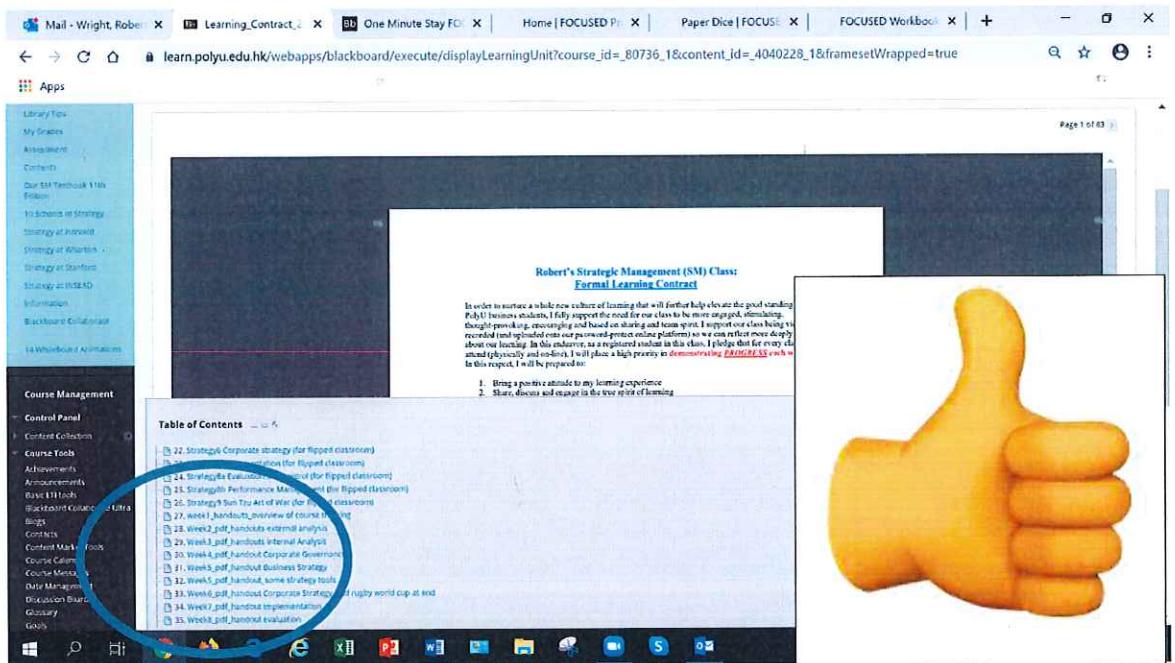
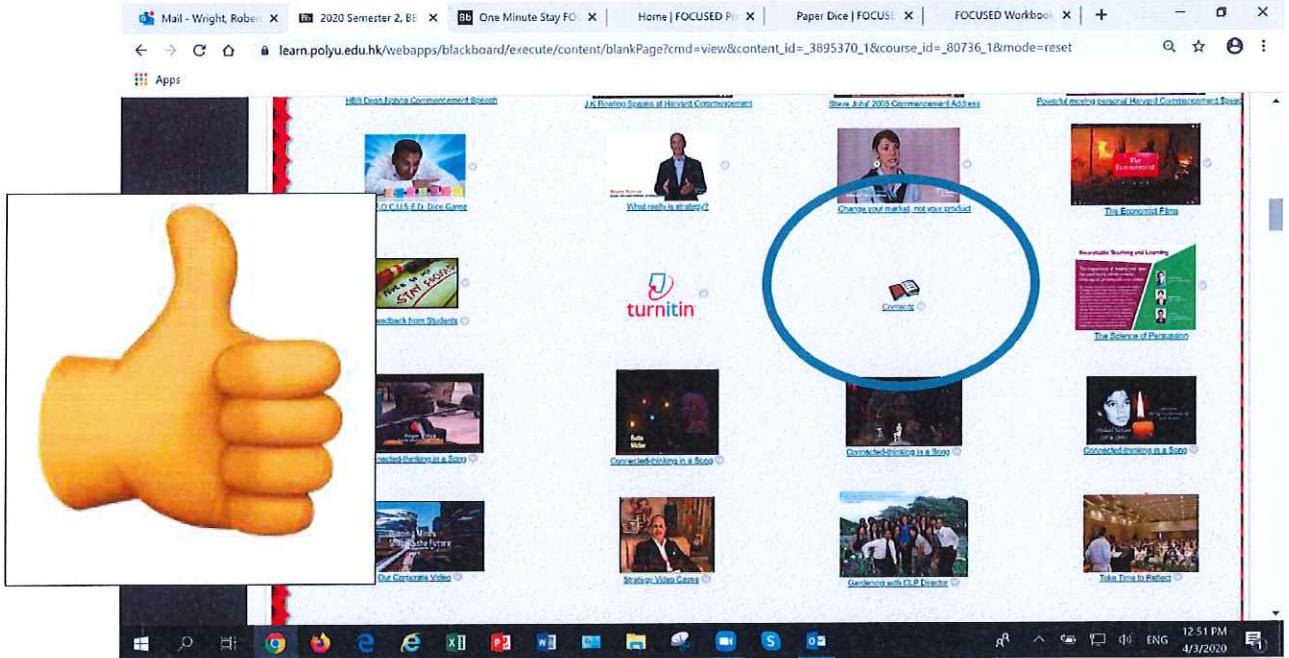
What was said / discussed	<u>My thoughts</u>

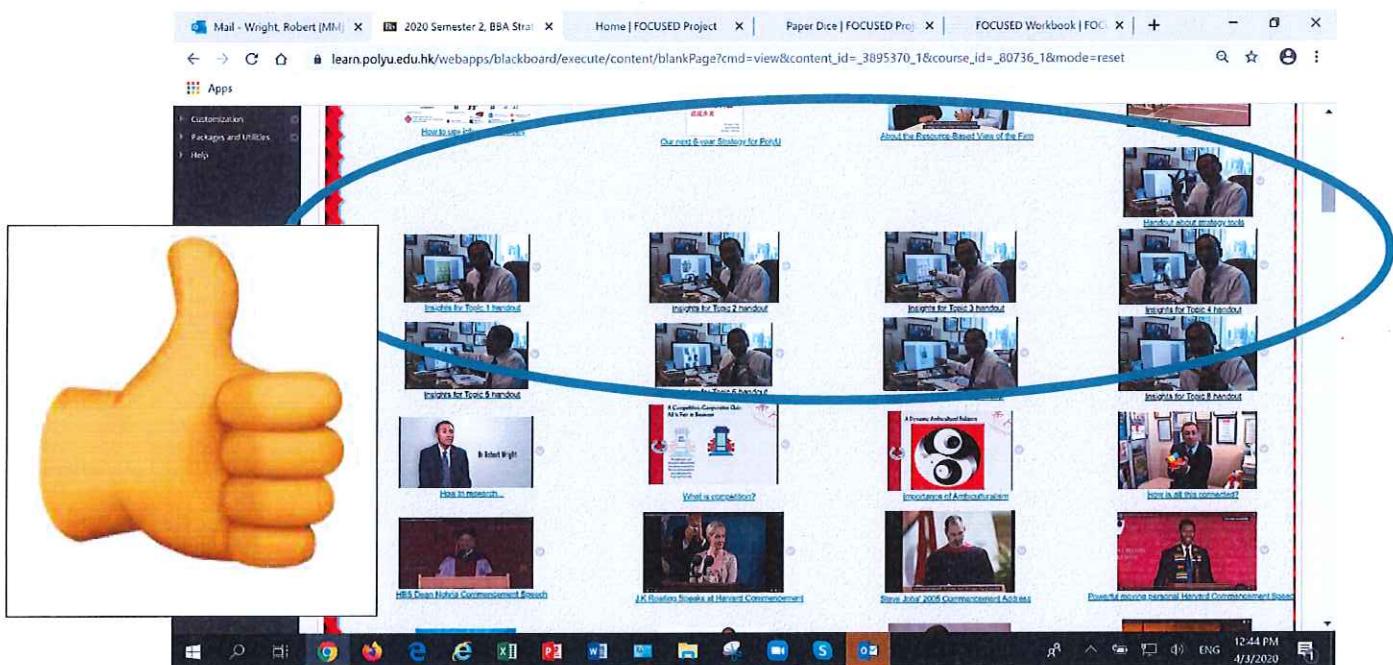
**KEY INSIGHTS**

**P.T.O.**

## Did you know that Robert has already done all the lectures and the PPTs for whole course since week 1? Please see the print screens below and where to find them on our SM Blackboard homepage

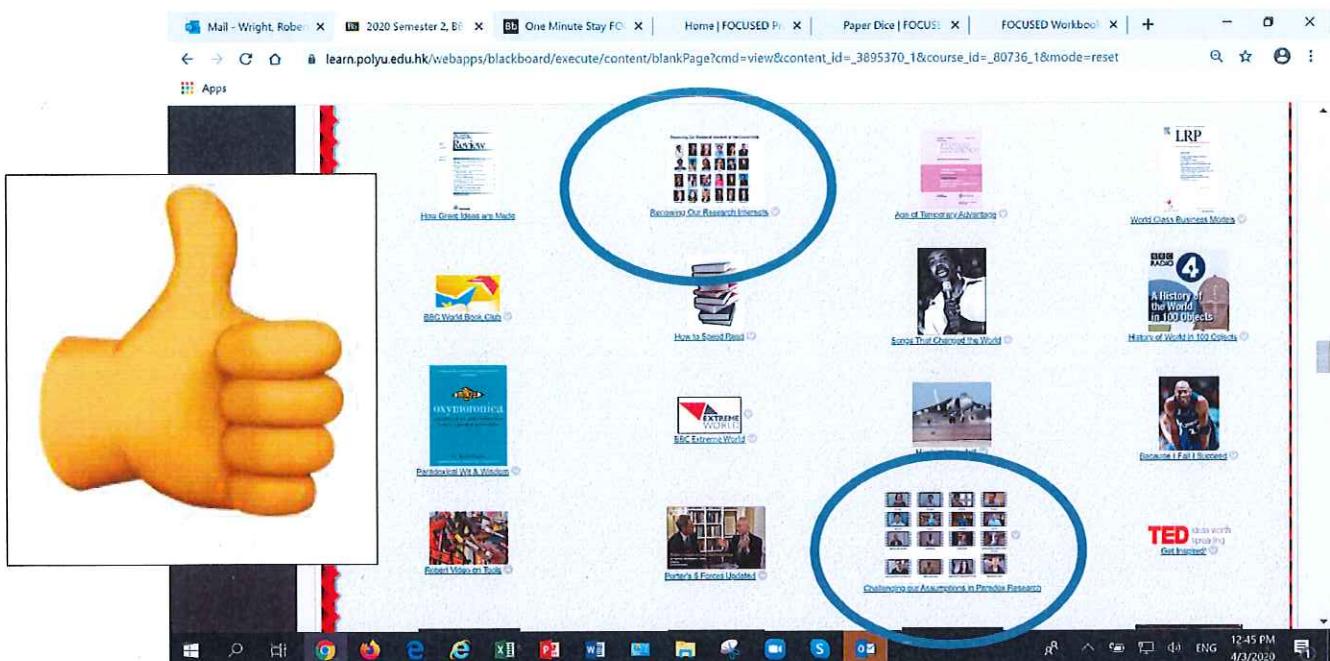




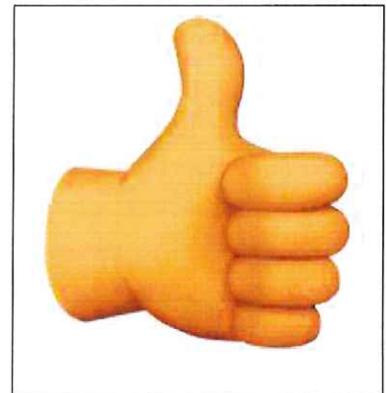
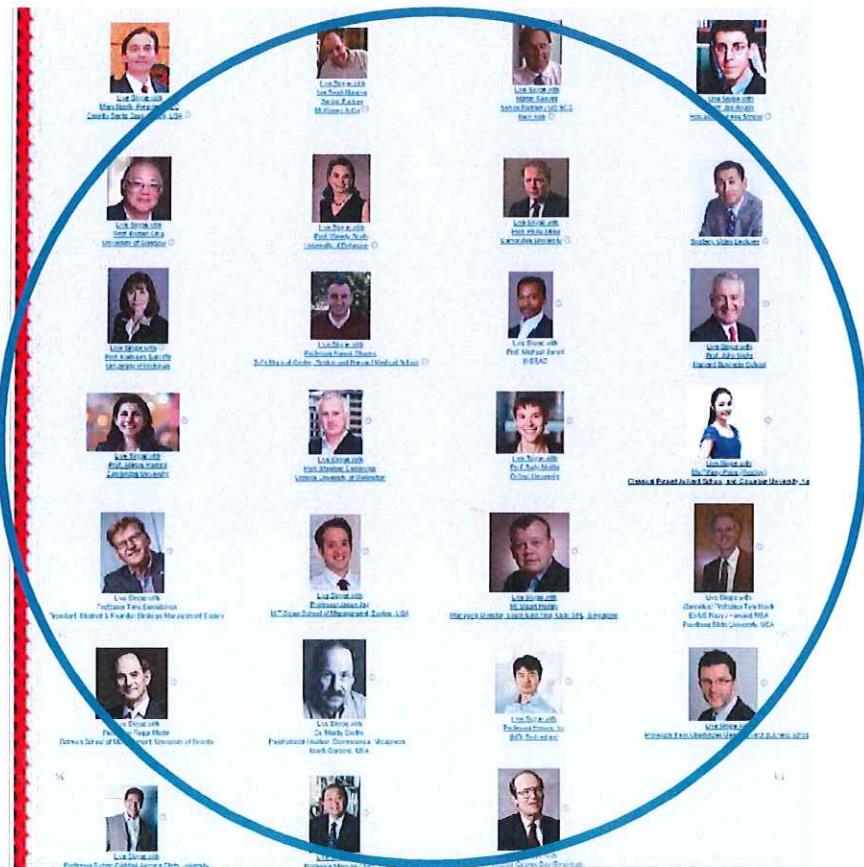


Please also surf our SM webpage for other amazing MIND-BLOWING resources such as:

1. Renewing our research interests (when our ideas stop working):
2. What are the current taken-for-granted ASSUMPTIONS in the paradox research field?



And of course, please please check out all the LIVE 20mins skypes I have done with some of the BEST OF THE BEST IN THE WORLD – ranked #1 in their respective fields from Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, MIT, etc...



There are so much for you can RELEVATE from this website I have carefully crafted for you.  
Also bring your reading from our course outline for discussion.....discuss, discuss, discuss (smile...)  
always  
robert

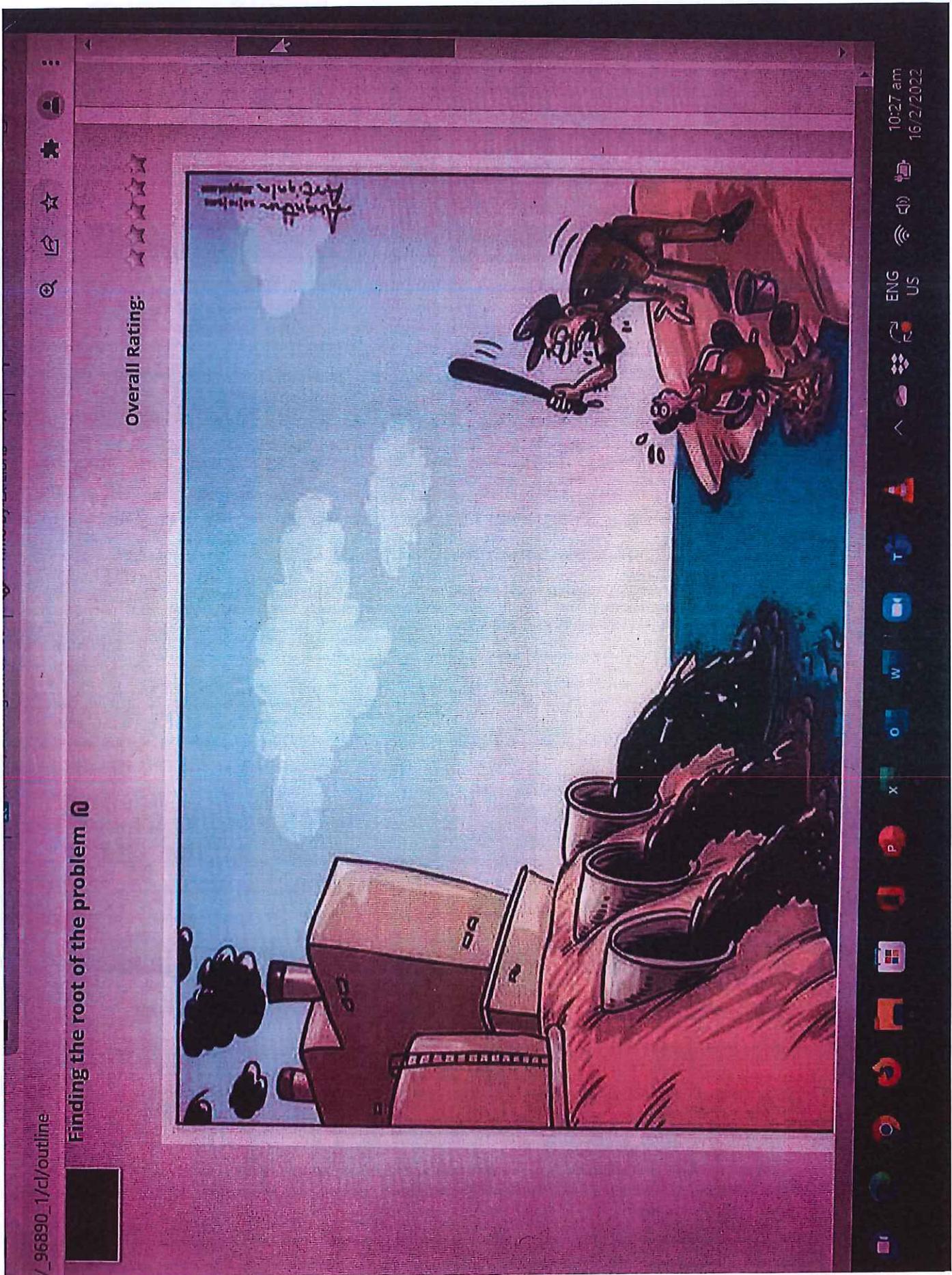
PS: if you ever get confused on what you need to do in this courses, please go back to our "Learning Contract" and our course outline. The following two icons in our SM homepage will help you (smile...)



How is all this connected?



How to research...



## Wright, Robert [MM]

**From:** Wright, Robert [MM]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 29 December 2022 3:40 PM  
**To:** Cheng, Edwin [MS]; Liu, Wu [MM]  
**Subject:** Pioneering research efforts

Dear Edwin, sir, (and Wu, sir),

It's great to bump into you now and then around the business school. Our continued progress in Research World Rankings<sup>5</sup> is really inspiring and makes us all proud to be a part of making something great together.

Thank you for your leadership on this – it is indeed breathtaking and deeply appreciated.

You will recall in our recent conversation in the lift, I shared with you some exciting things I was doing with my students: instead of setting a major assignment for them to go out into the world and solve other organization's challenges, I decided to orchestrate the course so that we look inwards at our own business school and encourage the students to work together to help make us an even a better business school (smile...). In this regard, I focused on something they all had familiarity with – Work Integrated Education (WIE) and the challenge of knowledge transfer from classroom to real world of work.

Building on "seven part truth, three part fiction"<sup>6</sup>, I positioned their challenge in a way that motivated them to come up with better ways to bridge this "knowing-doing gap" whilst at the same time, finding ways to open up research opportunities.

They were encouraged to ground their work on solid research (using A grade publications, industry reports, Harvard Business Review, The Economist, TED talks etc...).

Near the end of the semester, I invited practicing managers to ZOOM into our class to hear their presentations on their recommendations. The outcome exceeded all our expectations and I feel so proud of their pragmatism, creativity, mindfulness and the impact of their ideas! All invited practitioners were so impressed and the students themselves started to believe in themselves on the high quality of their ideas.

Every one of their ideas can not only stimulate breakthrough innovation for business school / management education, yet also provide a powerful platform from which relevant and rigorous research / scholarship can be achieved and cultivated – further advancing our world ranking in research and the scholarship of teaching & learning). To this end, I would like to share with you their brilliant ideas to help solve our "transfer of learning" challenge AND ALSO how their ideas provides a hotbed of research opportunities for our school!

Inpiration #1 Article how "I.D.E.A.S." can be better operationalized – at present our "Core Values" are not clear. VPED talked about nurturing "multifaceted future leaders". Students point towards the need for more reflective practice, the importance of questioning taken-for-granted assumptions, the need for connected-thinking, developing counter-intuitive ways of thinking, learning about better time management, *and both* thinking, anticipating the future, and learning from failure...! Most of these overlap with the "F.O.C.U.S.E.D." framework (smile...). Through a more clear and articulated set of core values, we will create a learning environment ripe for frame-breaking debates and research ideas.

Inpiration #2

Cultivate "future-mindedness" – the importance on all things *tomorrow* to better anticipate the types of problems, issues and challenges we will face in our field / discipline, about work, about challenges, about tomorrow's big issues. This approach will indeed put us "ahead" of the competition because our approach is more about "selectively forgetting the past" to allow us to better create the future. This framing will position us to look into researching the next big ideas... .

Inpiration #3

Place "failure" at the top of our research & teaching agendas. Here although everyone wants to know about success – we all know that "failure" is the better teacher. We need to study / understand why things fail – in business, in work, in careers, in products & services etc... Research has found that all High Reliability

Organizations are obsessed with failure – and this allows them to better manage the unexpected. Counterintuitively, through our research, we help key decision makers better anticipate crisis and the unexpected.

- ✓ Inspiration #4 Leverage off our entire university's alumni network – to build a resource platform of the types of problem, issues and challenges they face in different industries, occupations, different managerial levels ... This will provide a hot bed of research ideas that will make data more accessible to identify trends, patterns and insights.

- ✓ Inspiration #5 Building on Harvard Business School's FIELD Method where "teams" of students spend 1-2 weeks in real organizations and then present their solutions to senior management - PolyU business students use our professors' own research to solve our own internal problems, issues and challenges – across different departments/ schools / faculties. The challenges are presented to teams weeks in advance and are given 1 week with the division to solve the challenge (then move on to the next). This will help open up healthy intellectual Socratic Dialogues / debates on the relevance of our theorizing – constantly questioning our own current taken-for-granted assumptions to further improve the impact and sustainability of our program of research.

- ✓ Inspiration #6 Encourage inter-disciplinary learning; real world complex problems require multiple perspective-taking. As such, our learning environments are designed in such a way that more diversity across disciplinary fields exist in every course and interactions – becoming new gold standard of excellence for breakthrough thinking and research. Students encouraged to look at any given problem / project from a multi-disciplinary perspective. Such framing advances research efforts and the scholarship of teaching & learning.

- ✓ Inspiration #7 Change the evaluation system on how we measure WIE. Focus not just on the "learning" element, but also students' contribution to real world problems/ challenges. We need to set appraisal criteria that replicate real world assessment – raising the bar on expectations, on-going documentation on their progress, the types/level/difficulty/scope of work engaged with, how there are resolved - will heighten learners' motivation, engagement and aspirations. Expectations should also revert back to how much of real world learning is brought back into the classroom for deeper reflection and re-examination of what works and what doesn't work in our research/learning. Such a rich data source opens access to a wealth of research opportunities.

- ✓ Inspiration #8 Run the business school "as if" it is a real counterintuitive idea that may have merit. Meetings are conducted with clear stretch targets and accountabilities; it's about generating more revenues in creative (and ethical) ways; It's about going out to the world and promoting how we groom the next generation of multifaceted future leaders and attracting the best talent to drive the business of management education to the next level without borders. It's about innovating income business models that showcases the power and impact of our research in dealing with the big problems of the day (and those that have not yet been envisioned)... .

- ✓ All of the above present an untapped area to advance our research and scholarship (while at the same time better training our students for a complex world). I trust the above thoughts, researched by our very own students, will give us all reason for pause, reflection and the knowledge that when given the environment to flourish, our students may very well be our best teachers... ☺
- As always  
Kindly  
Robert

# When Leaders Better Anticipate the Unknown

*"The unexamined life is not worth living."*

Socrates

A few years ago, with my co-author, Professor Ken Brown (from the University of Iowa), we had a simple yet bold and courageous idea for the American Strategic Management Society. We approached some of the greatest minds in business education in the world and asked them to answer a burning question in 200-300 words: *"What will it take to educate the next generation of thought leaders for a complicated world?"* Given their incredibly busy schedules, this question caught their attention and the result was a booklet of 63 world-class educators sharing their deep insights and wisdom, giving us reason to pause and reflect for a better world. As much as there was diversity in their responses to this question, there was great convergence in what was needed to prepare for the unknown.

Whether it is to prepare the next generation of undergraduates or groom boards of directors to better manage the unexpected, the hallmarks of education for today and tomorrow are surprisingly paradoxical and counter-intuitive! Given the intensity of our VUCA world of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity, much of which is unanticipated, we need to learn BETTER, FASTER and MORE than we are currently used to.

Added to this is the importance of developing a more complicated understanding of our worldviews. Thinking at the "simple" and one-dimensional level can be a recipe for disaster. If our industry and our environments are ever changing and in a dynamic state of flux with multiple moving targets, "complicate yourself!" There is actually a technique to do this. First, look for different perspectives on a particular phenomenon of interest. In the myriad of ideas, look for integration (literally reconnect the dots) by detecting the convergence between different points of view. This will inevitably lead to the "aha-moment" (insights).

Most people are trained to look for intuitive ways of dealing with complex problems. For most of us, the blind spot is not realizing that problem setting is as much a part of problem solving as solving the problem itself. Even more counter-intuitive in what will lead us to the next level is to do the opposite: RELEVATE – making the irrelevant relevant. The best ideas (almost) always come from outside our fields. This has been the case in almost all disciplinary fields, from music to sports, to business and even to breakthroughs in academic publications (grounded in multidisciplinary research).





Similarly, if you really want to see the future, look for places where people are having the most fun. Plato had it right from the very beginning. Yet, somehow as we get more senior in our organizations and careers, "play" and the importance of "serious play" seem to be so far away. This is why children are so happy when they create new things and are curious about everything. Quite simply, they are the most creative when they are happy! When we play and are in a state of play, our mind is more open to experiment with ideas, leading to true radical learning.

Generative metaphors also play an extremely important role in dealing with complex, novel, rare and unanticipated problems, issues and challenges. Metaphors are "seeing-as", "doing-as" and "feeling-as". They allow us to establish connections and relationships with things we would not normally associate with in ways not yet imagined. In short, they help us make the unfamiliar familiar.

As we are talking about going back to our childhood days (and there is much adults can learn about how children learn), we should also look back in history and learn from what worked and what did not. Not only should we look to the future, but also deep into our roots to understand why civilizations and species not only survived but thrived. You may think that history is old and redundant in a futuristic world characterized by the Internet of Things, social media, big data and artificial intelligence. Yet history (and our past) is exactly what binds us to the present and to what tomorrow holds.

If we go back even further and look into the great philosophers: Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Confucius, Lao Tzu and many others, they can teach us great lessons about "*being and becoming*", virtues, our search for happiness, the soul, psychology, our quest for knowledge ...

and timeless perspectives that plunge deep into the human condition. These works from Antiquity to the Renaissance, to the great books and speeches of our time, move us, engulf us (for better or for worse) and in the process, make us who we are today. Reading the classics and developing a habit of reading and DISCUSSING what we read with friends and colleagues has the power to open us to "Otherness" – to other forms of reasoning, other forms of logic, other forms of explanation and other ways of knowing. Looking forward by looking back is something we need to constantly cultivate at all levels of development.

Perhaps the most important in our fast-paced world is to slow down! The great educational psychologist John Dewey once said that we learn a lot from doing, but we learn even more when we THINK about what we are doing (and not doing). Whether in an executive education course, in an undergraduate classroom or simply as part of our daily challenges, we need to make room for a quiet moment to stay calm, pause and reflect. Through such disciplined reflection, we begin to see things differently, allowing us to see different things.

*"In pursuit of knowledge,  
everyday something is acquired.  
In pursuit of wisdom,  
everyday something is dropped."*

Lao Tzu



**Dr Robert Phillip Wright**  
Associate Professor  
Department of Management  
and Marketing

# Staying F.O.C.U.S.E.D. in a Complicated World

**Dr Robert Wright**

*Associate Professor of Strategy; MM Work Integrated Education (WIE) Task Force Chair*

in association with the following executives who all contributed equally in the formulation of the core ideas in this article:

**Dr Priscilla Hung**

*Chief Financial Officer, Leahander Group*

**Dr Peter Lau**

*Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, Giordano International Limited; MM Departmental Advisory Committee Chair*

**Mr Vincent Lo**

*Director of Human Resources, Asia, ORBIS; MM Departmental Advisory Committee Member*

The real world is complicated! It is filled with the buzzing, blooming, confusing, complex problems of our times. Yet many business schools continue to educate their students using simple models and frameworks, creating an unkind disconnect upon graduation. The important issues and challenges of our time require new ways of thinking and doing if we are to make an important and meaningful impact in dealing with them as we look to the future.

This article aims to provide a different perspective in helping our future generation of thought-leaders better prepare for the real world, based on a strategic initiative undertaken by MM through the support of our Head and a special Task Force on Work Integrated Education (WIE). In the summer of 2009, MM developed a set of key behaviors to help guide our students' thinking and doing, rendering them better qualified for the real world. We surveyed 400+ students in the business school and conducted focus groups with practicing managers and executives on what they look for and expect in graduating students. The end product is an amazing set of competencies we call "**Staying F.O.C.U.S.E.D.**". Each letter represents a key behavior that is much needed in today's business world, but not often advocated. Since 2009 we have also pilot-tested the idea over 5 consecutive semesters in several selected subjects with students in our BBA programme, MSc HRM, and with MBAs with over 15 years' average work experience. Feedback from students and practitioners has been encouraging, and we thus want to share these key competencies with more of our students, so that they can demonstrate them in their learning, internships and careers. Learning to "**Stay F.O.C.U.S.E.D.**" in a complicated world means:

## F – Bringing a fresh perspective

Tell us something new. How do your ideas provide a fresh perspective to what we already know? These are key qualities senior executives look for in their people. Learning to take a different perspective can bring new and interesting insights to the issues at hand. A good way to help develop this important skill is to first know what a fresh perspective looks, sounds and feels like. One way of doing this is to take the time to read books, magazines, and research reports, and talk to people who have redefined, reinvented and reinterpreted the way we see things. Reading The Economist, Harvard Business Review and the McKinsey Quarterly will definitely help fine-tune your ability to see things from a different perspective. Another example you will notice on every floor of our business school (and in our MMRC computer lab) is the flat panel TV screens that are strategically placed near the lift lobbies, showing BBC World News around the clock. We have particularly chosen the BBC because their reporters ask different questions following in-depth analysis and commentary. Training yourself with a regular dosage of this award-winning organization will help you develop deeper insights and new perspectives on the issues of our time.

## O – Thinking, feeling and acting like an owner/manager

Too often, students walk into a classroom thinking "student"! As such, a lot of the discussions (if any) and solutions end up being neither serious nor inspiring. Instead, getting our students to THINK, FEEL and ACT like owner/managers brings a whole new perspective to our learning with real-world issues and challenges. From this perspective, we have found discussions becoming more



Dr Robert Wright (8th from right in the front) engaged with Mattel's High Potential Managers on the importance of "Staying F.O.C.U.S.E.D." at Mattel's Asia Pacific Office on 27 June 2011



engaging, thought-provoking and meaningful. Students should take full responsibility for their own learning (and in their internships), making every class and assignment count. Just as our PolyU Motto advocates: To learn and to apply, for the benefit of mankind; thus should we treat our education and careers. Ask questions on how the theories and research can help managers make better decisions. Think more critically about what you are learning and how you can put that learning to good practical use. Also, bring your internship / overseas exchange experiences back into the learning environment to enrich the development of ideas – about the success stories and lessons learned. Similarly, real owner/managers know the value of time and limited resources; everything they do must add value and make a contribution to the overall goal.

### C – Developing connected-thinking

It's all about joining the dots and making connections in order to see the links between the causes and the consequences and thus to foresee future opportunities and dangers. Connected-thinking advocates holistic thinking; about differentiating and integrating, of interdisciplinary research and cross-functional teams, and about networking at different levels in and outside of our fields. More often than not, these connections may appear unrelated and have nothing to do with the issues at hand, yet, paradoxically, they have everything to do with the issues. It encourages a "both/and" mentality for today's complicated world, rather than trade-offs between "either/or" choices that can sometimes prove costly. Indeed, time and time again, we see that the best ideas come from outside of our fields. Similar to how successful companies and managers join dots, students should also learn to integrate their learning by making connections within and between subject disciplines. Marketing problems may require human resources solutions that need to be addressed from a financial perspective, which in turn is connected to broader issues. Learning must be integrated because real-world problems are complex! In fact, developing this integrative thinking is not just confined to our present, but can, must and should also connect with our past and future in generating new ways of thinking and new ways of doing to help deal with the burning issues of our time.

### U – Demonstrating a sense of urgency

Having a sense of urgency is very different to being busy without a set objective. A sense of urgency is when you enter a class of 42 students and by the end of that lesson you walk out of that room with 42 different ideas, every time! This is world-class learning. It's making everything you do count toward an over-arching purpose. It's about being conscious of time and resources in order to do more with less! It's about writing down your "to do list for the day" and learning to prioritize that list and then crossing items off one by one as you complete them. The sense of achievement you gain from a sense of urgency can be profound. If more managers and students alike committed to a schedule with a purpose, imagine how productive we could be! At the end of the day, know that in life, there is so much to do, so much to learn, so much to achieve, so many people to meet... yet, so little time.

### S – Showing team spirit

In this world, no one ever gets anything done by themselves. Rather, it's all about getting things done through people. An African proverb says, "If you want to go fast...go alone; if you want to go far...go with others". Hence it is important to identify and understand team members' differences in personalities, strengths and weaknesses, yet still remain able to work together in harmony to achieve the common goal. Team players must stay open-minded, respectful and patient. This is the same in work teams as it is in student project teams. Learning to perform effectively with others is important for success and survival. In a world in which everyone is so preoccupied with their own goals and self-interests, it brings hope and meaning to us all when we share and take the time to care so that we can all benefit. Being a team player makes one a true professional.

### E – Engaging with the task at hand

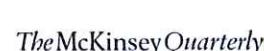
Successful organizations and managers are always engaged in what they do! They are passionate, excited, deeply involved and devote time and energy – they are in the "in-zone". The more they do what they do, the better they get at doing it and the more they love it. Learning to engage requires time, patience and an attitude to make things better. It's very much like "gardening". If you want a beautiful garden, you must spend time in it in order to understand the soil, the plants, what tools and ingredients you need to look after it, and so on... All great gardens, just like all great ideas, are not created overnight; they take time, knowledge, skills, love, care, commitment, discipline and devotion. Similarly students can really take their learning to a whole new level if they engage more in their learning and in class discussions. Remember, it is never about being perfect, rather it is all about progress – about getting better. If you are not a believer in such engagement, see how the students at Harvard Business School learn through class discussions. We can do this too at PolyU. Watching BBC programs like HardTalk is an excellent platform for getting our students up to speed in terms of what it takes to engage at a professional level.

### D – Exercising deliberate practice

Unlike "practice makes perfect", deliberate practice is more about doing something, then taking a step back to reflect and seeing how you can improve the next time. It's really about taking the time to reflect more deeply – something most managers do not do well because they are too busy dealing with urgent issues(!) By getting our students (and managers for that matter) to reflect more on things (and with others), we begin to encourage and develop deeper thinkers with broader perspectives, better ideas and more reflective practices to address the challenges of our times. Getting students to reflect more on important questions rather than seeking quick answers can be the key to unlocking complex issues. Some examples could be the following:

- What are we doing now that we should not be doing?
- What are we not doing that we should be doing?
- Why is this interesting?
- Why is this important?
- What does this tell me that I didn't already know? What's the contribution here?

We believe "**Staying F.O.C.U.S.E.D.**" as a habit-of-mind will help nurture a whole new generation of thought-leaders that will improve the practice of management and in the process make this world a better place...





## INSIGHTS

"Stay F.O.C.U.S.E.D." and Make a Real Impact to Your Work Integrated Education!



ISSUE 2  
28 SEP 2016

What do you think are the most common feedback from students about their internship experience? Not surprisingly, students say they learn a lot! They are excited about the hands-on experience they gain from observing how real managers and organizations go about their business. Students often reflect about how supportive and caring their supervisors and work colleagues are and believe that internships are more about practical things, whereas universities are more about theories. Internships are also valuable experiences to showcase in one's resume when entering the job market upon graduation...

What is striking about all this feedback is the absence of any specific examples of how the knowledge they gain from university education is translated and applied to help real managers make better decisions! What is not so obvious to most students during their internships is that university education is a hotbed of cutting-edge research findings, innovative techniques, frameworks and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) that are geared to helping practitioners *better understand, better explain and better anticipate complex phenomena*. When you think more deeply about this, you will begin to realize that what you are learning at university has the power to *add-value* during your internship. The key of course, is to ensure an iterative process between our classroom learning and real-world learning – using both to (re)examine what works and what doesn't work so that we can know which of our taken-for-granted assumptions need updating, thereby advancing our understandings and improve managerial practice.

So how can we go from simply "learning" to more "*impactful learning*" in our WIE placements? Having a framework to help you bring clarity from the confusion can make a huge difference to one's success. Over the past seven (7) years I have developed the "*Staying F.O.C.U.S.E.D.*" framework to help take my own students' learning to a higher level. What started as a teaching pedagogy is now being used by some listed companies, organizations and universities to help their managers open up the "alternatives" to unsolved problems, issues challenges. If you are looking for a competitive advantage and want to improve your contribution to your internship organization, think about using this framework. To know more about this framework and how to use it, we have a FREE App you can download in Apple Store and Google Play Store (search for "Focused dice"). A PC e-version can be accessed here: [http://www.mypolyuweb.hk/~msrobert/Stay\\_FOCUSED\\_eDice/focused\\_dice.html](http://www.mypolyuweb.hk/~msrobert/Stay_FOCUSED_eDice/focused_dice.html) Or if you want your own physical version of the FOCUSED framework, it is available at our campus bookstore <http://www.polyu.edu.hk/cpa/souvenir/dice.html>.

Given the intense competition for talent in the job market, your role is to demonstrate, beyond *reasonable doubt*, that your education at this university can add-value to an organization's existing value-base!

Dr Robert Wright, PhD, FAIM, FHKIHRM, FHKIoD  
Associate Professor, Department of Management and Marketing



## ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY

Gear up! Learn for Work, Learn from Work



University education enlightens students' thinking while internship experience prepares students for working. WIE provides opportunities for our students to unleash professional competencies and apply classroom learning to real-life working environment. What they learned at school lays a strong foundation for their career.

From our true stories, you can see that not only the students but also their employers are enjoying values brought from WIE. We are happy to see that our students can internalize what they learned and make tangible values and substantial impacts to employers .

# **Educating Tomorrow's Thought-Leaders: Distinguished Scholars Answer a Burning Question**



Edited by

**Robert P. Wright**  
Faculty of Business, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

**Kenneth G. Brown**  
Henry B. Tippie College of Business, The University of Iowa

# **Opening Up Alternatives for Managers Stuck with Complexity**

*Robert P. Wright*

## **Abstract**

Why is it that highly trained and seasoned executives fail? On the surface, this doesn't make sense because they are very successful; yet research in the organization sciences provides no shortage of evidence to prove just that. From the classic Mann Gulch fire disaster of Weick's famous collapse of sensemaking study, to studies of myopia of learning, escalation of commitment, threat-rigidity, dominant logic, the architecture of simplicity, the Icarus Paradox, to core competencies turning into core rigidities, and navigating new competitive markets using "old" cognitive maps, and many more such examples point to a ubiquitous phenomenon where highly trained and experienced professionals find themselves "stuck" in the heat of battle, unable to move and progress. On the one hand, for some, there is a desperate need for change, but are unable to do so, due to their trained incapacities. On the other hand, some simply cannot see the need for change, and continue with their "business as usual" mentality. For both, their visions of the world shrink, they have a tendency to cling onto their past habitual practices and oversimplify the complexity of the situation. In moments like these: DROP YOUR TOOLS and UNLEARN! This book chapter introduces a framework (grounded in clinical psychology) that has had consistent success in helping seasoned executives and key decision-makers open up the alternatives whenever they find themselves stuck with complexity.

**Keywords:** Cognitive aids; constructive alternativism; enabling; focused framework; hand-brain connection; playfulness.

Don't only practice your art,  
but force your way into its secrets,  
for it and knowledge can rise men to the divine.  
— Ludwig van Beethoven  
(Letter to Emilie, July 17, 1812.)

Quoted in *Musical News*, Vol. 3 (1892), p. 627)



## One-Minute Reflections on Renewing Our Research Interests

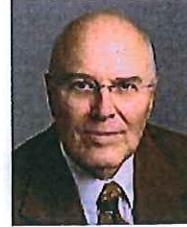
This site brings together a distinguished spectrum of seasoned scholars to share their success stories and lessons learned in staying focused on their research efforts. Key issues discussed centres round what we can do when our research activity stalls; how to stay research active; critically thinking about our research; and the importance of doing novel, interesting, important and high quality work, *inter alia*. These short video interviews, captured during the 2010 Academy of Management meeting, will appeal to all scholars needing inspiration, motivation and a desire to better their work. Enjoy...



Amy Hillman



Andy Van de Ven



Bill Starbuck



Brian Boyd



Denise Rousseau



Don Bergh



Ed Zajac



Elizabeth George



Gerard Hodgkinson



Quy Huy



Jim Westphal



Karen Locke



Livia Markoczy



Marianne Lewis



Morten Huse



Nandini Rajagopalan



Pam Barr



Raja Chattopadhyah



Rhonda Reger



Saku Mantere



Sara Rynes



Shaker Zahra



Tom Lee

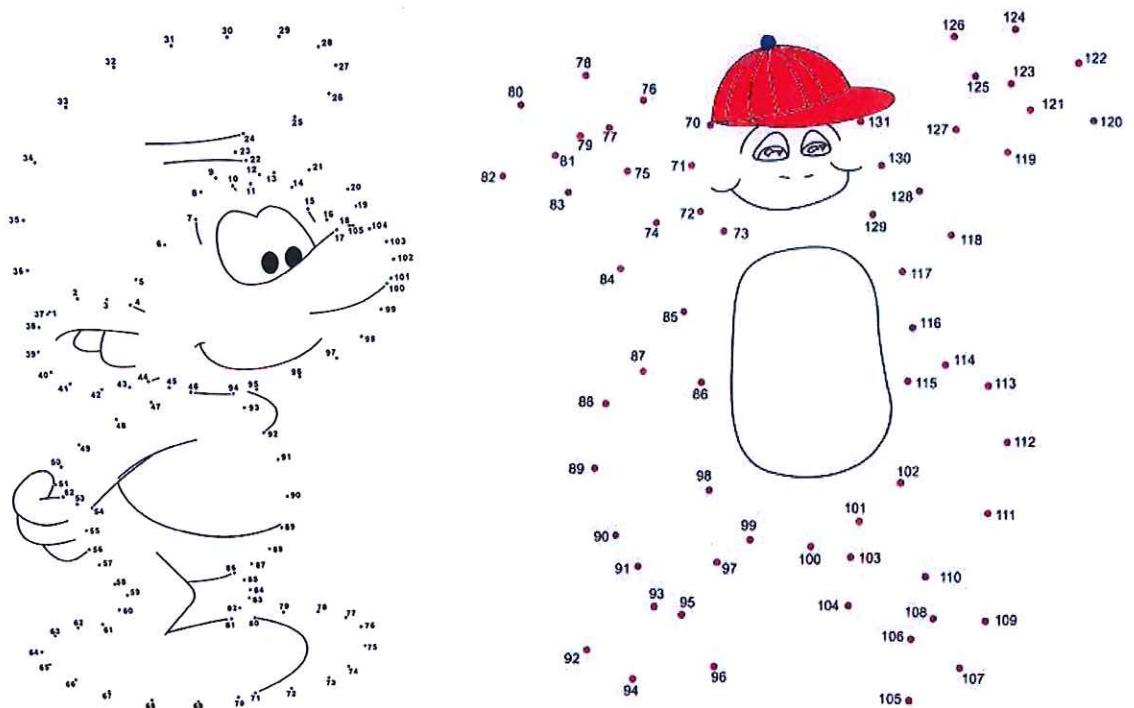


Violina Rindova

I want to thank all the scholars here who so graciously shared their insights with me given their already busy schedules at the Academy meeting in Montreal (2010). When we share, the world becomes a better place.... Indeed, in the immortal words of Sir Isaac Newton: "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."  
Robert P. Wright 18th August 2010

## Challenging our taken-for-granted ASSUMPTIONS in Paradox Research / Practice







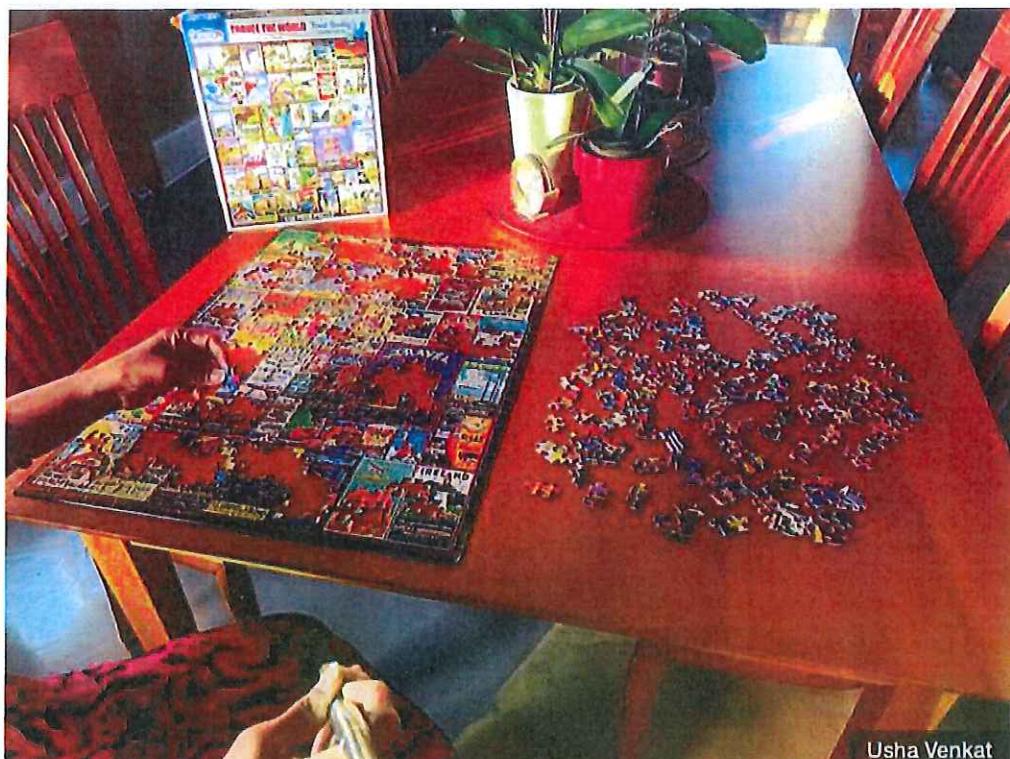


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Investment involves risk. Please refer to the offering document(s) for details, including the risk factors. This document has not been reviewed by the SFC. Issued by JPMorgan Funds (Asia) Limited.

## Usha Venkat



"My favourite hobby is to travel around the world, especially visiting a new place every year. Due to the pandemic, I am unable to travel, but have picked up a new hobby of solving puzzles at home that involve a travel theme."

## Preeti M



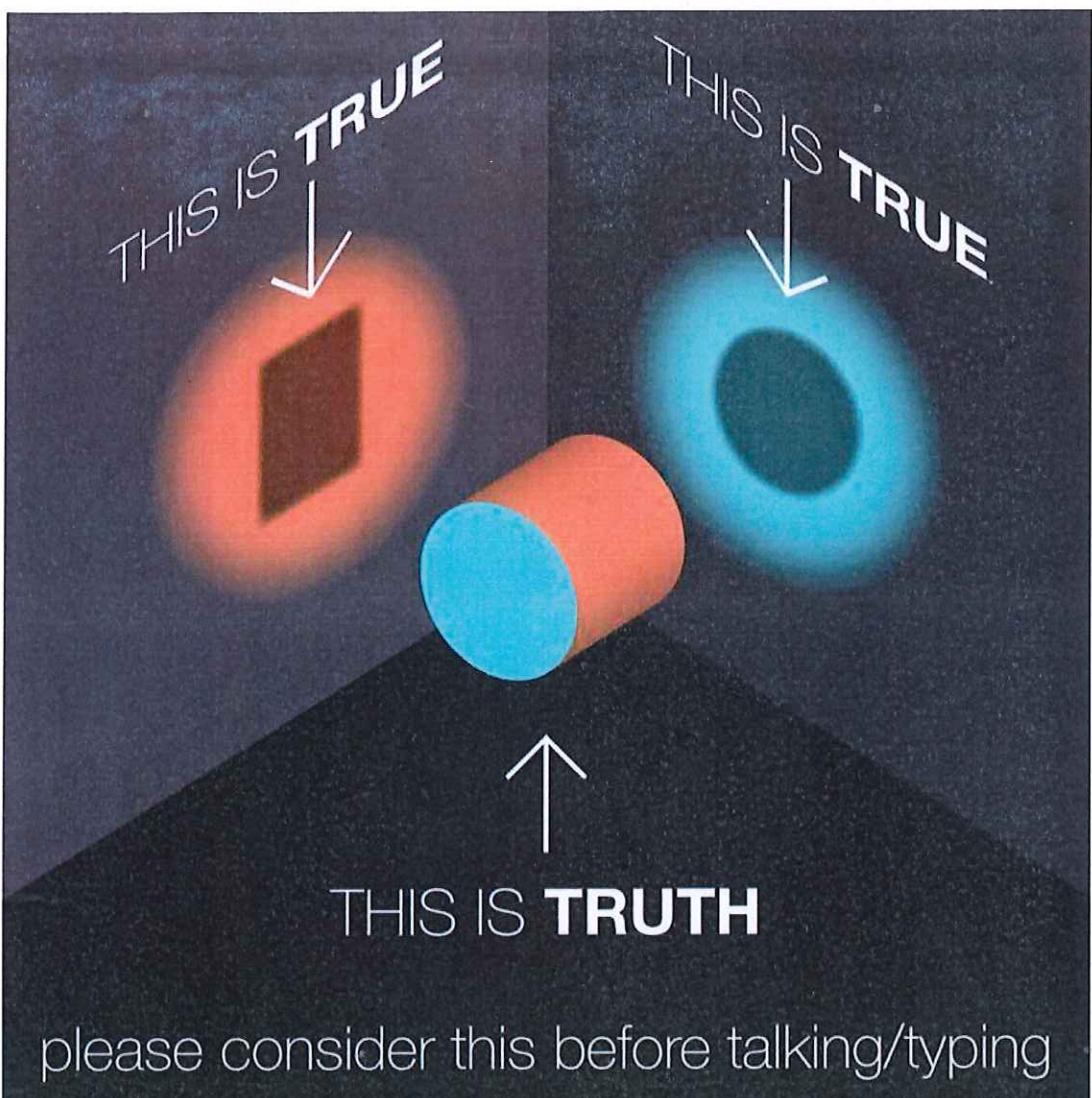


RABBIT

DUCK

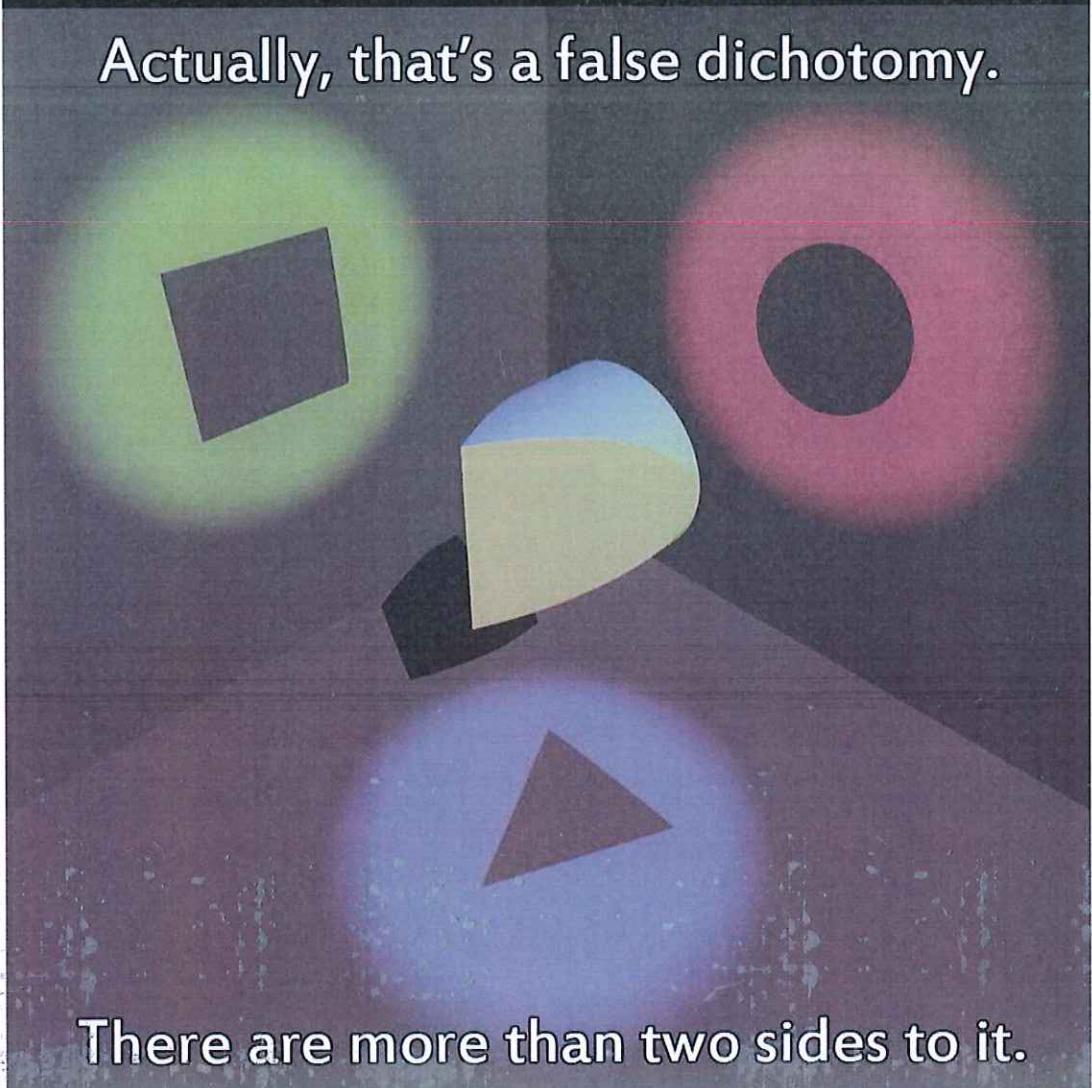
C  
Either / Or logic  
versus  
And / Both logic





please consider this before talking/typing

**Actually, that's a false dichotomy.**



# Can yellow lines save lives?

The largest cause of unnatural deaths in Mumbai is not homicide. As many as 10 people die each day in the city while crossing railway tracks.

We asked: Why don't people behave rationally? Why don't awareness campaigns work?

Our behavioral sciences research helped us uncover a crucial insight: humans systematically underestimate the speed of large moving objects. The yellow lines design provides a visual and nonconscious reference of an approaching train's speed to trespassers. Our solution brought down accidental deaths by 75%, in tests run by the Indian Railways.

If behavioral sciences led design can save lives, imagine what it can do for your organization.



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INTELLIGENCE FOR IMAGINATION

"There's been many a time in training when we go into the 11th round and I'm tired but I know I have to keep it up because I have to go the distance.

"I showed tonight that fights are won in the gym. It gets tough and boxing isn't easy. You have to have the whole package."

 Arnold Schwarzenegger · 29m  
One of the most exciting fights I've ever seen. Congrats @anthonyjoshua on the win & @klistchko on amazing battle. Hope there's a rematch.



Getty Images

**Andrew, Richhill:** The All Blacks have won the Rugby World Cup for a number of reasons. The easiest to mention is because they have the best team with the best individual players with the best execution of skills under pressure. But another big reason is because of their meticulous preparation. Before their pool stage match vs Tonga the coaches deliberately exhausted the players in training to replicate playing under mental and physical fatigue. Incredible.



SMC HK LTE

17:29

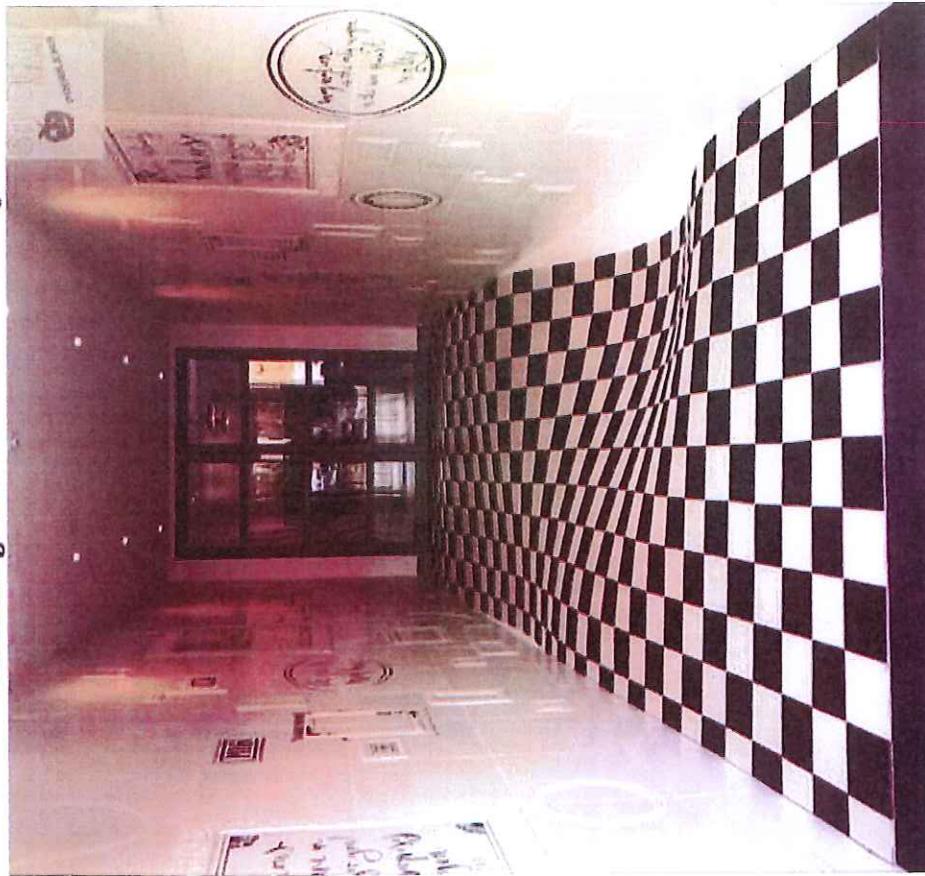
facebook.com

Joyce Choi shared a post.

8 hrs ·



How the Art Teacher prevented students running down the hallway



07:14

4G

X

hk.images.search.yahoo.com

X

AA

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AA

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## Demonstrate you are making PROGRESS each week

and/or

6. In one of Robert's reading list, I was attracted to an article on "Both/And leadership". In that article from the HBR, I learned that ....what does everyone think?

etc. etc. etc...

Dear everyone,  
Let me see if I can help take you to a whole new level from being to BECOMING a better professional (SMILE...). As you know class contribution (including e-board) is 30%. The real key is how you prepare for the face-to-face engagement. As you also know, the key for each of you is to bring ONE thing to class to share to help take the learning to a higher level. This can be about a particular week's debate topic and/or about anything you have prepared that is linked to the study and practice of strategy, strategizing and strategic management.

The gold standard is to share not just from your everyday (work/internship/service learning) experiences, but from AUTHORATIVE sources such as cutting-edge academic research (eg: from my reading list in our course outline); from the Harvard Business Review, The Economist, BBC World News, McKinsey Quarterly, TedTalks, YouTube from any of the top business schools in the world, Harvard YouTube and our SM home page where you can access skype calls I've had with world class professors and executives etc, etc...

Here is example of how to engage in class:

1. Hello Robert and everyone, I've just read an article for the Harvard Business Review - here it is (hold it up) - it was written in (year - ) XXXXX, and it is about YYYY, I was thinking about our course / class discussions, and my view is ABCD. I'd like to hear other people's view on this....

and/or

2. That's interesting because I believe we need to be doing 123, in particular if we can ....we would be able to .... This overlaps with a recent report I read from The Economist which states that.....

and/or

3. I was watching one of Robert's LIVE skype calls with a Cambridge Professor. His name was.....he mentioned that if companies do xxxx, then yyyy will happen. However I have a different take on this. For example....

and/or

4. Our living group met up with a manager friend for our strategic audit report presentation and it was interesting that when we discussed the unsolved problem / issue/ challenge we were able to come up with .....

and/or

5. My living group discussed the "taken-for-granted-assumptions" for this particular UNSOLVED problem/issue/challenge of one of our guest speakers. What we found was.....one of the assumptions didn't have value any more today so we challenged it and came up with a deeper insight: xyz... what does everyone think?

The more you can do this, the easier your work becomes for this course because you are leveraging off your classmates as they share from high quality sources... This will also BROADEN YOUR THINKING (helping you do DIFFERENTIATION and INTEGRATION - key is to help you "complicate your understanding"). In fact, you can do the same not just in our class and your meetings with me but also on this eboard AND WITH CEO GUEST SPEAKER SESSIONS (if we have any)

Once again everyone, what I am asking you is not too much! It's only ONE THING - come to class ready to share.....don't get nervous / anxious - we will all help you....learning got to be fun.....let's co-create it together; and in the process, help make this world a BETTER place (smile...). Will you join me in this journey? Nothing is ever too late. Please help take our PolyU learning environment to new heights. Lastly, if you need help, I am here for you - I'm ready, willing and able please see pic below:

Kindly  
Robert



## Lets Flip the Classroom!

I 2012 March special issue of the *Harvard Business Review*, I learned a powerful insight about how we can get better prepared for a complicated world! In that issue, they asked what given the world we live in today (fast paced, complex, ambiguous, confusing and confronted with competing demands) our students (and us) need to learn much more than they are currently learning and they need to learn faster! If this is the case, our strategy class needs to take it to the next level. The short video lectures I have uploaded here is one of the ways in which we can **learn more and learn faster!** By covering the fundamentals of a topic via (and allowing you to watch them at your own pace, anytime, anywhere), we create time during our in-class meetings to engage in more Strategic Debates and deeper discussions about the subject matter! Hence, these videos are designed to give you a basic understanding about the key issues I want you to be aware of and zoom-in specifically on those PowerPoint slides that will help you better appreciate the rest of the slides for that topic. You will need to download these files (linked in our **CONTENT** icon) and have them ready when you watch the videos. Again, in the way I have designed this course, and in the true spirit of "Moving F.O.C.U.S.E.D." Philosophy of our learning environment, these videos complement and provide an important DOT from which you are expected to interact with the other learning opportunities available to us throughout our course. Enjoy...

## Challenging our taken-for-granted ASSUMPTIONS in Paradox Research / Practice



Strategy / Video Lectures



**Every class is a JOB INTERVIEW!**

Then roll the F.O.C.U.S.E.D. DICE to help stimulate deeper insights about the issue!

- Click & Roll
- About the Dice
- Share your dice

IDEAS Faculty of Business

Department of MANAGEMENT & MARKETING

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Digital Graphic Programmer/Ds. Karen Li, Li  
Dipak Jain, Dr. Michael Hui, Marketing Faculty of the  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University  
Date of this file: 26th August, 2012

Reporting Results - Display the Future (IDEAS)

Harvard Business Review



## One-Minute Reflections on Renewing Our Research Interests

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2011 Strategy Video Cases



Educating Tomorrow's Thought-Leaders:  
Distinguished Scholars Answer  
A Burning Question

**Every class is a JOB INTERVIEW!**

What is ONE thing you have prepared to share  
for our class discussion today?

Uber

The world's most  
innovative busi-  
ness model

Alibaba

This world's largest  
ecommerce platform  
with the best expertise

Facebook

The most valuable  
company in the world

Airbnb

Something interesting is happening



# **Every class is a Job Interview - Stay F.O.C.U.S.E.D.**

- F Bring **Fresh Perspective** – change our thinking
  - O Think, feel & act **Owner / Manager** **Don't think student**
  - C Show **Connected Thinking** / practice Integrative Thinking
  - U Have a Sense of **Urgency** 40 students 40 different ideas!
  - S Show Team **Spirit** – share and help each other!
  - E Always **ENGAGE** - take an **ACTIVE part in discussions**
  - D Exercise **Deliberate Practice** – from good to "goodER"?

If you don't understand - it's okay - ask for examples, **ask for understanding...** ONLY THEN CAN YOU MAKE CONTRIBUTION

Join the "conversation" - **What story will you tell?**

If the (class) meeting is boring, make it exciting - ask questions, share views, re-direct the discussion so that you get something out of it - **take it to the next level**

Tell us what you've read from **research papers**, newspapers, **Harvard Business Review**, **The Economist**, **BBC**, **McKinsey Quarterly**, **TED Talks** (including work experience / exchange) and how they can help managers make better decisions.

  - **Why is this INTERESTING?**
  - **Why is this IMPORTANT?**
  - **What does this tell you that you didn't already know?**

Say more with less

Practice your Influencing skills – **LOGOS, ETHOS, PATHOS**

It's all about the **GARDENING...**

**Roll the F.O.C.U.S.E.D. dice to learn BETTER, learn FASTER and learn MORE than you are used to!**



We look, but we don't see;  
We hear, but we don't listen  
So much to do, so little time...

*"We are what we repeatedly do.  
Excellence then, is not an act,  
but a habit of mind." Aristotle*

©2000/ Sep 2023 Dr. Robert P. Wright

The image is a dense collage of text and concepts, likely a study aid or presentation slide. It includes the following elements:

- Top Left:** "Think MTR" (in red), "Timely and timeless Confirmation Bias" (in blue), "100m race" (in green), "Respond vs. React" (in red), "48 hr rule" (in blue), and "Fill-in the blanks" (in blue).
- Top Center:** The title "COMPLICATE YOURSELF!" in large, bold, orange letters.
- Left Side:** A vertical column of text including "古今 What type of problems do you like to solve?", "Be up to date (e)merge", "The man in the street...", "Exploitation/Exploration", "Assume", "Understand the context MMA", "Do I like it - why?", "Peripheral vision", "Abductive reasoning", and "Similar and different".
- Middle Left:** "Be a positive thinker", "Small wins", "5+5=? Alternatives", "Join the dots", "What if... Janusian", "Paradoxical thinking", "Drop your tools", "Do I disagree - why?", "Relational thinking", and "Constructive Alternativism".
- Bottom Left:** "Make something out of nothing", "Learning is also about UNLEARNING", "Best ideas come from outside of our fields", "Build on opinions of others Unknown", "Parable / Fable Value co-creation", "Aerial archaeology", "Do I agree - why?", "Temporary advantage", "Weak signals", and "Oxymoronica".
- Bottom Center:** "Quiet moment to REFLECT" (with "Inattentional Blindness" and "Icarus Paradox"), "Attention to Attention", "Either/Or" logic vs. And/Both logic", "Learn to think Inside + Outside the box", "Letting go...", "Fast is slow and slow is fast!", "Market Driven(r)", "Relevate", "Ancient technologies", "Answers hidden in plain sight", "Dualism and/or Duality?", "Synonyms / Antonyms", "VISUALIZE", "Metaphors", "When we see things differently, we see different things", "A.S.K.", "When was the article / theory written and for who?", "Counter-intuitive", "Power of 3", "Socratic debates", and "VUCA".
- Bottom Right:** "Support your ideas with authoritative sources (give them more credibility)" (with "Time, Space + Context"), "Progress" (with "If all we have is a hammer, all the world's problems are nails." (Maslow, 1966)), "Role Play", "If you want to change results, explain and anticipate reality?", "Golden Ratio", and "Detective Learning".
- Bottom Left (Illustrations):** A cartoon figure holding a stick, and a woman in a red dress.
- Bottom Right (Image):** An amazing underwater bridge picture taken between Sweden + Denmark 2008 © azulfi

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN an 'A', 'B' AND 'C' GRADES?

Based On the Faculty of Business Assessment Criteria

<b>WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN an 'A', 'B' AND 'C' GRADES?</b>  Based on the Faculty of Business Assessment Criteria  Our Mission is to discover, design and deliver Innovation-Driven Education and Scholarship (IDEAS) of international standing that has an impact on students, organizations and the understanding of business issues.	<b>Student Name:</b> _____ <b>Group No.</b> _____
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## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN an 'A', 'B' AND 'C' GRADES?

- 2.** Here we show what a student needs to do competently to achieve a certain level. Grounded on what makes great scholarship about a phenomena of interest, a student who can describe and show understanding is at the "C" level. To attain a "B" grade, one must be able to show relationship between things and hence explain what is happening. To reach an "A" level of performance, one needs to go beyond by extending existing ideas and reviewing our CURRENT taken-for-granted assumptions. Students / managers at this level are better able to anticipate.

**WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN an 'A', 'B' AND 'C' GRADES?**

Stage	Description	Key Features
1. Identification	Identify the problem or opportunity.	Problem statement, research, initial ideas.
2. Planning	Develop a detailed plan for the project.	Scope definition, timeline, resources.
3. Execution	Carry out the plan and implement the solution.	Implementation, monitoring, feedback.
4. Review	Evaluate the outcome and make improvements.	Final report, lessons learned, next steps.

**3.** You will also notice at each grade level, we also look for how well a student *Persuade, Convince and Influence others.*

**1.** This course evaluates you on 7 core dimensions based on the “staying F.O.C.U.S.E.D.” philosophy.

**8.** At the end of the semester this FOCUSED Assessment Rubric can also be used to summarize each individual student's performance for the course.

**7.** This comment area is separated into two sections to help you document a student's or a project group's strengths and areas for improvement.

**6.** Research has proven that higher-order thinking associated with cognitive complexity requires a person to first differentiate the many possibilities before integrating / connecting the dots to produce deeper insights. These three aspects align neatly with what it takes to score a "C" grade from a "B" grade to an "A" grade.

constitutes a letter grade is determined by your Faculty.

**5.** If it is easier, scoring can also be performed on a 1-10 scale.

<p><u>Suretyship:</u></p> <p>Areas for improvement:</p>	
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© Robert WRIGHT, August 2020

## CONFIDENTIAL PEER REVIEW for Group Work

**Your name** (including English name please):

Fill-in the full names of your group members (including English name) in the tables below. Please give ratings (from the scale of 0 to 5; Zero (0) as the lowest and 5 as the highest) to yourself and to your fellow group members. DO NOT let your group mates know your scores as this is a confidential assessment. Please provide HONEST ASSESSMENT.

	State the value-addedness to the team	F	O	C	U	S	E	D	Total Score out of 35
Student Full Name	Brings a Fresh Perspective	Think, feel and act "as if" an Owner/Manager	Shows Connected-thinking	Have a Sense of Urgency	Shows Team-spirit	Always Engaged	Exercises Deliberate Practice	0-5	0-5
1 Your name here:									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									

Overall, which student made the MOST CONTRIBUTION?

Overall, which student made the LEAST CONTRIBUTION?

Please submit HARDCOPY in class time in the week AFTER group presentation.

Your signature..... Date: .....

**Make or get your own “Stay F.O.C.U.S.E.D.” Dice set and/or download the FREE “focused dice” App and use it throughout the term to help you learn BETTER, learn FASTER and learn MORE than you are used to!**

**Wright, Robert [MM]**

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**From:** Man Janet  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 11, 2017 12:01 AM  
**To:** Wright, Robert [MM]  
**Subject:** RE: Janet: Distinguished Strategy Guest Speaker for robert's class

Hi Robert,

Thanks so much for having me! Pleasure is mine.

As I said, I thought they are a group of MBA students with some work experience. Therefore, I was more pushy and want to challenge their ideas to get them think a bit more. When I knew that they are just undergraduate students, my mind was blown away by the creativity and passion to find out what possible solutions might be out there. The issue itself is very difficult, even for us as leaders of the organization. So please help me to pass along my gratitude to the students for their hard work and awesome research. I really appreciate their sharing. I hope I didn't appeared not supportive though...😊

Thanks again for the opportunity, and wish the students all the best for job search! -J



## 9. Teaching strategy by not teaching strategy

**Robert P. Wright**

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### THE BROADER CONTEXT IN WHICH WE TEACH STRATEGY

Two organizations are observed competing in a highly competitive market, yet why is it that one outperforms the other? This is the classic question in the study of strategy, strategizing and strategic management. To many, the practice and study of this important aspect of organizational life is filled with confusion, complexity and difficulty. Yet, is it *really* that difficult or is it blatantly obvious what successful companies do differently that sets them apart from the rest? At the core of all strategizing (and winning) lie some fundamental truths about why organizations (and key decision-makers) not only survive but thrive in good times and bad (Reeves et al., 2012).

Yet it is so easy to miss this message in the midst of the business landscapes we experience today. Managers have no choice but to continue to (re)interpret their current taken-for-granted assumptions of what works and what doesn't work to help (re)sustain their organization's success. As our world becomes more diversified, interconnected and exposed to the unanticipated, intended, unintended and the unexpected, we end up living in an age of paradox confronted with multiple tensions, demands and dualisms that we must work with, work through and work around (Schad et al., 2016; Wright, 2016a). For example, firms are expected to be both flexible and focused, big and small, learn and unlearn, aim for exploration and exploitation, have short-term goals and long-term plans, go global and act local, compete and cooperate, encourage change and yet foster stability, *inter alia*.

Nested throughout these seemingly opposing trade-offs are rigid polarities, false dichotomies, outdated assumptions, preconceived biases, complacency and the counterintuitive nature of success leading to failure due to one's inability to (un)learn during times of crisis (Nystrom and Starbuck, 1984; Wright and Mak, 2014). Indeed the context in which we teach our students strategic management is highly Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) (Schoemaker and Day, 2009). In



Clayton Christensen, et al.

How It Messes My Life

Managers often make significant business decisions based on little more than convincing book jacket blurbs. They should hold themselves—and the experts—to a higher standard.

# Why Hard-Nosed Executives Should Care About Management Theory

by Clayton M. Christensen and Michael E. Raynor

Imagine going to your doctor because you're not feeling well. Before you've had a chance to describe your symptoms, the doctor writes out a prescription and says, "Take two of these three times a day, and call me next week."

"But—I haven't told you what's wrong," you say. "How do I know this will help me?"

"Why wouldn't it?" says the doctor. "It worked for my last two patients."

No competent doctors would ever practice medicine like this, nor would any sane patient accept it if they did. Yet professors and consultants routinely prescribe such generic advice, and managers routinely accept such therapy, in the naive belief that if a particular course of action helped other companies to succeed, it ought to help theirs, too.

Consider telecommunications equipment provider Lucent Technologies. In the late 1990s, the company's three operating divisions were reorganized into 11 "hot businesses." The idea was that each business would be run largely independently, as if it were an internal entrepreneurial start-up. Senior executives pro-

claimed that this approach would vault the company to the next level of growth and profitability by pushing decision making down the hierarchy and closer to the marketplace, thereby enabling faster, better-focused innovation. Their belief was very much in fashion; decentralization and autonomy appeared to have helped other large companies. And the startups that seemed to be doing so well at the time were all small, autonomous, and close to their markets. Surely what was good for them would be good for Lucent.

It turned out that it wasn't. If anything, the reorganization seemed to make Lucent slower and less flexible in responding to its customers' needs. Rather than saving costs, it added a whole new layer of costs.

How could this happen? How could a formula that helped other companies become leaner, faster, and more responsive have caused the opposite at Lucent?

It happened because the management team of the day and those who advised it acted like the patient and the physician in our opening vi-

# Small Wins

## Redefining the Scale of Social Problems

Karl E. Weick Cornell University

counter-intuitive

*Small Wins* (Red text)  
1984 (Blue text)  
Missing (Red text)  
Home (Red text)  
Mobile (Red text)

**ABSTRACT:** The massive scale on which social problems are conceived precludes innovative action because bounded rationality is exceeded and dysfunctional levels of arousal are induced. Reformulation of social issues as mere problems allows for a strategy of small wins wherein a series of concrete, complete outcomes of moderate importance build a pattern that attracts allies and deters opponents. The strategy of small wins incorporates sound psychology and is sensitive to the pragmatics of policymaking.

There is widespread agreement that social science research has done relatively little to solve social problems (Berger, 1976; Cook, 1979; Kohn, 1976). Common to these assessments is the assumption that social science is best suited to generate solutions, when in fact it may be better equipped to address how problems get defined in the first place.

A shift of attention away from outcomes toward inputs is not trivial, because the content of appropriate solutions is often implied by the definition of what needs to be solved. To focus on the process of problem definition is to incorporate a more substantial portion of psychology, specifically, its understanding of processes of appraisal, social construction of reality, problem finding, and definition of the situation.

Whether social problems are perceived as phenomena that have a serious negative impact on sizable segments of society (Kohn, 1976, p. 94), as substantial discrepancies between widely shared social standards and actual conditions of life (Merton, 1971), or as assertions of grievances or claims with respect to alleged conditions (Spector & Kitsuse, 1977, p. 75), there is agreement that they are big problems. And that's the problem.

The massive scale on which social problems are conceived often precludes innovative action because the limits of bounded rationality are exceeded and arousal is raised to dysfunctionally high levels. People often define social problems in ways that overwhelm their ability to do anything about them.

To understand this phenomenon, consider the following descriptions of the problems of hunger, crime, heart disease, traffic congestion, and pollution.

To reduce domestic hunger we grow more food, which requires greater use of energy for farm equip-

ment, fertilizers, and transportation, adding to the price of energy, which raises the cost of food, putting it out of the price range of the needy.

To solve the problem of soaring crime rates, cities expand the enforcement establishment, which draws funds away from other services such as schools, welfare, and job training, which leads to more poverty, addiction, prostitution, and more crime.

To ward off coronary heart disease, people who live in cities spend more time jogging and cycling, which exposes their lungs to more air pollution than normal, increasing the risk of coronary illness.

To ease traffic congestion, multilane highways are built, which draws people away from mass transit so that the new road soon becomes as overcrowded as the old road.

To reduce energy use and pollution, cities invest in mass transit, which raises municipal debt, leading to a reduction in frequency and quality of service and an increase in fares, which reduces ridership, which further raises the municipal debt (Sale, 1980).

When social problems are described this way, efforts to convey their gravity disable the very resources of thought and action necessary to change them. When the magnitude of problems is scaled upward in the interest of mobilizing action, the quality of thought and action declines, because processes such as frustration, arousal, and helplessness are activated.

Ironically, people often can't solve problems unless they think they aren't problems. If heightened arousal interferes with diagnosis and action, then attacking a less arousing "mere problem" should allow attention to be broader and action to be more complex. Responses that are more complex, more recently learned, and more responsive to more stimuli in changing situations usually have a better chance of producing a lasting change in dynamic problems.

To recast larger problems into smaller, less arousing problems, people can identify a series of controllable opportunities of modest size that produce visible results and that can be gathered into synoptic solutions. This strategy of small wins addresses social problems by working directly on their construction and indirectly on their resolution. Problems are constructed to stabilize arousal at moderate intensities where its contribution to performance of complex tasks is most beneficial.



Saw this as I was walking past the school library- how amazing this plant struggles to survive AND THRIVE against all odds. I guess it's a great example of "when there's a WILL, there is ALWAYS a way. Profound lessons about life found in simple everyday things



23:24 ✓

## Robert's Senior Level Strategy Class

1	2			3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Please insert a CV-style photo & yourself	Contact	[input] email		Family Name + Given Name	English name you prefer to be called in class	Gender: M/f	Student #	What is your Degree Major?	What is your expectation you have of this course on Strategy with Robert?	Total number of years of work / Internship experience	Your greatest strength (max 2 words)	Your greatest weakness (max 2 words)	Name of Best Book ever read	If you play Music - what is it, and what level?	Favorite sport	BEST PolyU / university subject ever taken	What is your Learning Style? Print this excel file and do the short 3-mins quiz below then type in the cell below! You are a Divergent Thinker, Converger or Accommodator	Let Robert know ONE interesting thing about you

Please complete this simple excel file above and email it back to your professor (Robert) by Friday 5Sept 12noon.

This will give me a sense of who you are and this will allow me to know you better...When I assign you into "LEARNING TEAMS" for your semester

When you email me, please use the following format:

- 1 Rename this Excel file by starting with day of your class then YOUR NAME as file name e.g.: Fri morning CHAN Siu Ming SHIRLEY.xls
- 2 Subject title of your email - start with day of your class then your name eg.: Fri morning class\_MMV4311 CHAN Siu Ming Shirley
- 3 Write me short note in your message...
- 4 Attached your renamed completed Excel file
- 5 Click Send

Robert's email: robert.wright@polyu.edu.hk

### Kolb Learning Styles (quick assessment)

Under each statement header there are four comments. Each time a comment is true about you, put a slash mark on the section of line that corresponds to your truth in the box. Sections are from end to center where all lines intersect. Do not think hard, just react.

When I need to learn:

I like to see how/ feel about it first (CE)

I like to just start, do it (AE)

I like to think about why (AC)

I like to watch and listen before I do it (RO)

I learn best when:

I just trust my hunches and feelings (CE)

I work hard to get things done (AE)

I rely on logical thinking (AC)

I listen and watch carefully (RO)

When I am learning:

I have feelings and reactions (CE)

I am usually the one responsible (AE)

I tend to reason things out first (AC)

I am quiet and reserved until comfortable (RO)

I learn by:

Feeling (CE)

Doing (AE)

Thinking (AC)

Watching (RO)

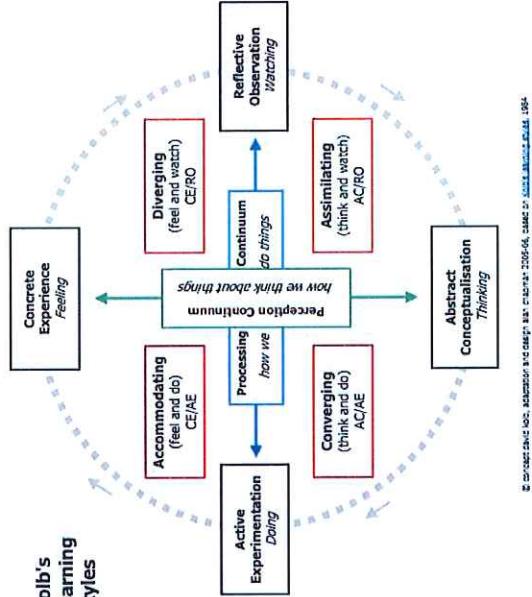
When I learn:

I get involved (CE)

I am active (AE)

I evaluate things (AC)

I observe (RO)



### Kolb learning styles definitions and descriptions

Knowing a person's (and your own) learning style enables learning to be orientated according to the 'preferred' method. That said, everyone responds to and needs the stimulus of all types of learning styles to one extent or another - it's a matter of using emphasis that best suits the given situation and a person's learning style preferences.

Here are brief descriptions of the four Kolb learning styles:

• **Diverging (feeling and watching - CE/RO):** These people are able to look at things from different perspectives. They are sensitive. They prefer to watch rather than do, tending to gather information and use imagination to solve problems. They are best at viewing concrete situations from several different viewpoints. Kolb called this style 'Diverging' because these people perform better in situations that require ideagenetic tasks, for example, brainstorming. People with a Diverging learning style have broad cultural interests and like to gather information. They are interested in people, tend to be imaginative and emotional, and tend to be strong in the arts. People with the Diverging style prefer to work in groups, to listen with an open mind and to receive personal feedback.

• **Assimilating (watching and thinking - AC/AE):** - The Assimilating learning preference is for a concise, logical approach. Ideas and concepts are more important than people. These people require good clear explanation rather than practical opportunity. They excel at understanding wide-ranging information and organizing it in a clear logical format. People with an Assimilating learning style are less focused on people and more interested in ideas and abstract concepts. People with this style are more attracted to logically sound theories than approaches based on practical value. These learning style people are important for effectiveness in information and science careers. In formal learning situations, people with this style prefer readings, lectures, exploring analytical models, and having time to think things through.

• **Converging (doing and thinking - AC/AE):** - People with a Converging learning style can solve problems and will use their learning to find solutions to practical issues. They prefer technical tasks, and are less concerned with people and interpersonal aspects. People with a Converging learning style are best at finding practical uses for ideas and theories. They can solve problems and make decisions by finding solutions to questions and problems. People with a Converging learning style are more attracted to technical tasks and problems than social or interpersonal issues. A Converging learning style enables specialists and technology abilities. People with a Converging style like to experiment with new ideas, to simulate, and to work with practical applications.

• **Accommodating (doing and feeling - CE/AE):** - The Accommodating learning style is 'hands-on', and relies on intuition rather than logic. These people use other people's analysis, and prefer to take a practical, experiential approach. They are attracted to new challenges and experiences, and to carrying out plans. They commonly act on 'gut' instinct rather than logical analysis. People with an Accommodating learning style will tend to rely on others for information than carry out their own analysis. This learning style is prevalent and useful in roles requiring action and initiative. People with an Accommodating learning style prefer to work in teams to complete tasks. They set targets and actively work in the field trying different ways to achieve an objective.

© Robert Wright, Adapted from: Kolb, D. A. (1984). Learning styles and learning processes. In P. R.豪斯 (Ed.), *Designing effective learning experiences* (pp. 248-256). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Which two sections of line do you have the most slash marks on? That answer will determine which quadrant you are part of. For example: If your two busy lines are RO and AC, you are an Assimilating learner style. Look at the Learning Styles Descriptions next to diagram to understand what that means. Type in your preferred learning style in the Excel cell above. Thanks

## **Robert's Strategic Management (SM) Class: Formal Learning Contract**

In order to nurture a whole new culture of learning that will further help elevate the good standing of PolyU business students, I fully support the need for our class to be more engaged, stimulating, thought-provoking, encouraging and based on sharing and team spirit. I support our class being video recorded (and uploaded onto our password-protect online platform) so we can reflect more deeply about our learning. In this endeavor, as a registered student in this class, I pledge that for every class I attend (physically and on-line), I will place a high priority in **demonstrating PROGRESS each week**. In this respect, I will be prepared to:

1. Bring a positive attitude to my learning experience
2. Share, discuss and engage in the true spirit of learning
3. Be a team-player and help other classmates
4. Discuss the success stories/ lessons learned from my **WIE**, Service Learning & competition experience (keeping in mind the Confidential Pledge I have signed with the organization(s))
5. Share my student exchange experience (where appropriate)
6. Share what I learned from our flipped-class mini-online video lectures and weekly handouts
7. Engage the above in class + our virtual SM Blackboard (BB) e-discussion board
8. Practice my **persuasion, convincing and influencing skills** by anchoring my points of view from authoritative sources. For example:

Learning from current university course (based on theories, models, frameworks, approaches, discussions, skill-sets, attributes...); Academic research papers; Practitioner journals in your field (Harvard Business Review, McKinsey Quarterly...); Industry reports; Newspaper sources (The Economist, Financial Times ...); News TV / radio reports (e.g.: BBC...); TED Talks; Inspiring mentor / supervisor / teacher; Life experience; and/or Training / university course(s) I have attended in the past.

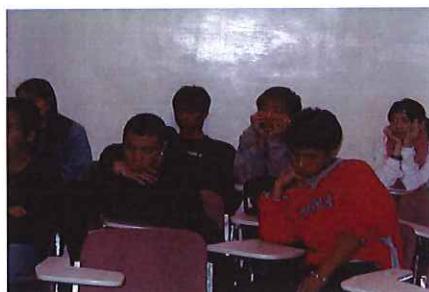
9. Use **Generative AI tools** in ethical and meaningful ways
10. Practice & share my learning using the **14 pre-course whiteboard animations** and the "**Stay FOCUSED**" philosophy which forms the backbone of this class <https://www.focused-polyu.com/>
  - F** - Bring Fresh perspective
  - O** - Think, feel and act like an Owner / manager
  - C** - Show Connected-thinking
  - U** - Have a sense of Urgency
  - S** - Show team SPIRIT
  - E** - Always Engage
  - D** - Exercise Deliberate practice

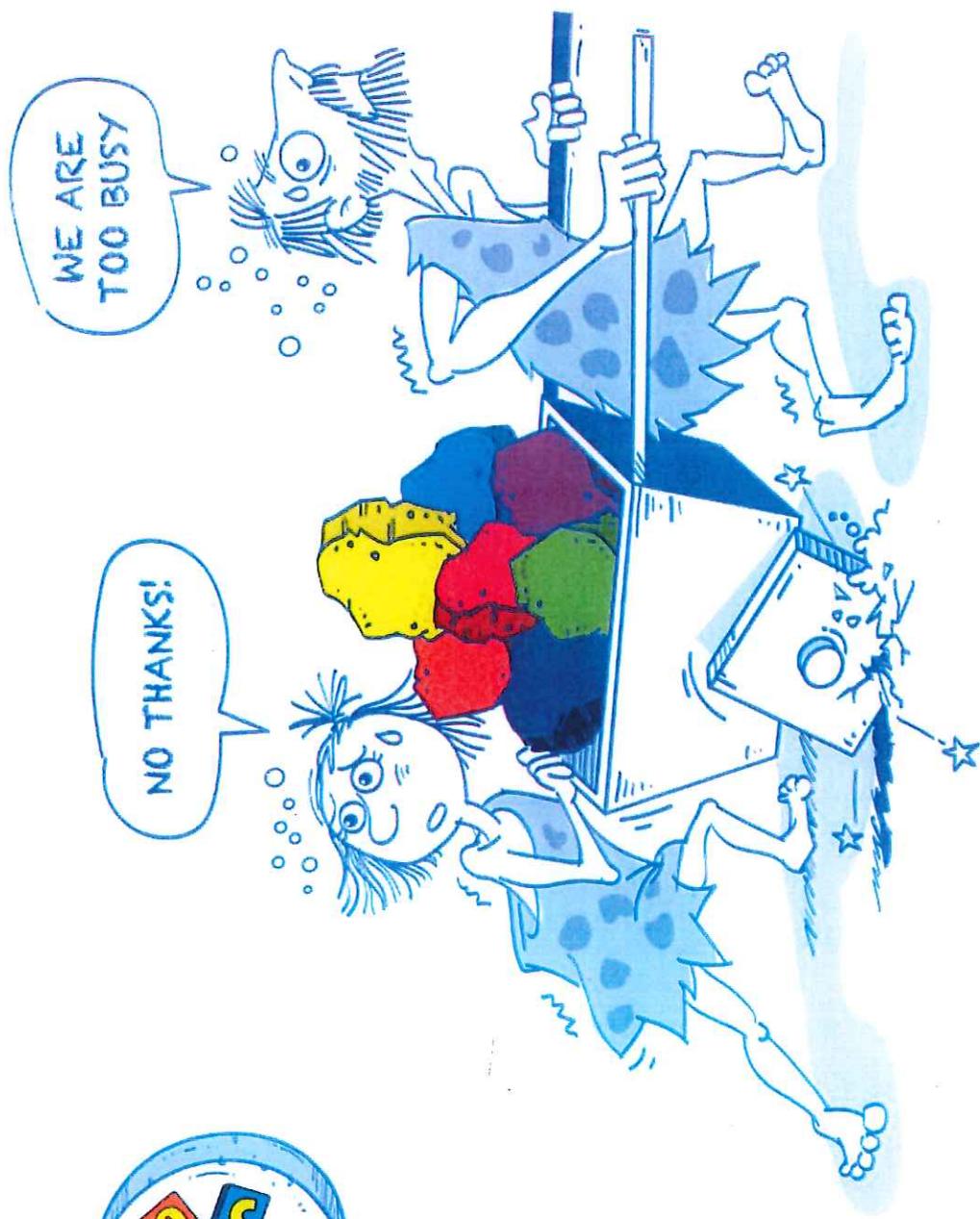
**11. I also pledge to take time to reflect regularly about what we are doing each week**

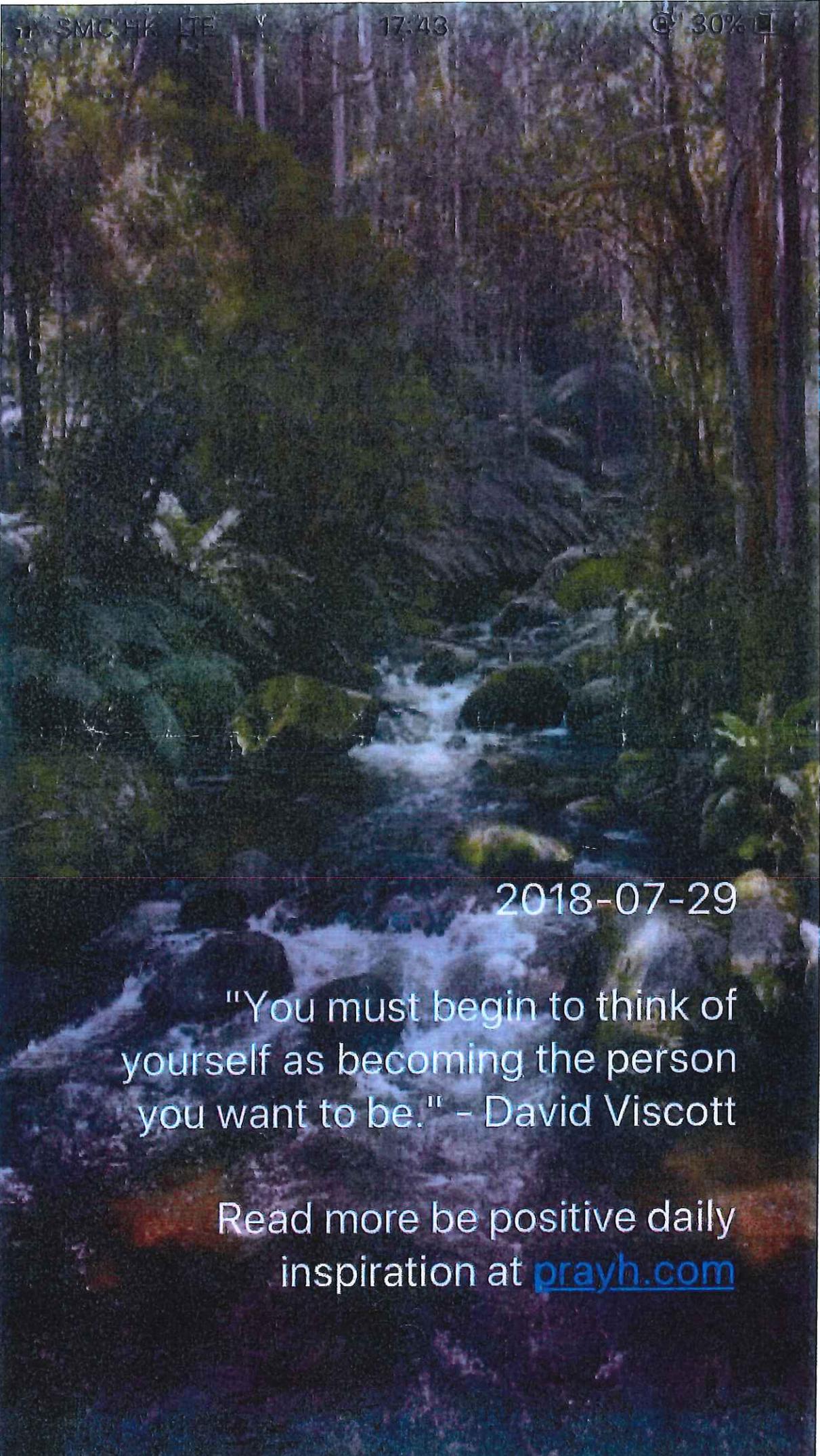
Finally, I have thoroughly read our Course Outline and the Assessment Rubric, including the accompanying documents and fully understand the expectations, requirements and due dates of this course. If I am unclear about any of the expectations and requirements of the course, I will ensure to have them resolved with Robert before the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of this semester. If I experience challenges throughout the course, I will make every effort to resolve them with Robert.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Student Signature.: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**This Learning Contract is to be signed and UPLOAD to our BB within 2-8 days from your first class**







2018-07-29

"You must begin to think of  
yourself as becoming the person  
you want to be." - David Viscott

Read more be positive daily  
inspiration at [prayh.com](http://prayh.com)