

Reflection MOP

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My learning experience throughout the course and the relevance of the course content has been mixed. On the one hand I think the content provides a good baseline to support some basic understanding of the landscape within companies. On the other hand the concepts covered are mostly either outdated or simply not practiced in the real world. Although some aspects did surprise me positively.

A pinch of history

My largest learnings are related to how business changed over time. Starting from the Silk road and going up through the ages to the current business landscape was insightful, not just for the content discussed but for applying some economic thinking to an otherwise very history-heavy subject matter. Usually the analysis of history focuses on important people and how they revolutionized some aspect, but here we focused on economic principles and how to evaluate the business landscape at the time.

The next large learning is how technology and economy of scale have truly changed how business is done. Especially how they emerged - or were at least largely influenced - by events like the Great Depression and the following rules and regulations that pushed businesses ever more to become international and technologically advanced powerhouses of production. Management has to adapt constantly to ever changing technological landscapes, which will be an ever growing challenge in the future.

Another thought on economy of scale: of course everyone and their mother has heard about the industrial revolution before. Still, the impacts on modern capitalism and how the "boom and bust" cycle emerged in the business world because of it was interesting. Almost everything has happened before, so it is wise to learn of others' mistakes and look at history to learn more about how to change the future.

Cultures of the world

My next topic I want to dive into is how cooperating with people in different cultures is like. Since today's business world is more and more global and not

only contact but cooperation with people from other countries and cultures is inevitable the knowledge of how to work with multicultural teams is crucial. The course showed me how to manage a broad-cultural team of people and what important cues I should keep in mind when analyzing problems in those environments. Of course managing a diverse team is not easy and there is no one-size-fits-all solution for every situation.

Mostly conflicts from intercultural interaction comes from people not understanding where the others are coming from and are unaware of conflicting lifestyles and cultural norms. Ignoring such differences can pose significant challenges and cause problems when ignored by management. Understanding different cultures is still something I have to cover myself, that is one of the reasons I have picked South America (specifically Peru) as the destination for my semester abroad. When I eventually launch my own company or startup I want to employ a diverse team, since the benefits of better solutions and decisions is definitely worth the slight hassle of working with people from other cultures, especially since I want to be working in a global markets.

Although it might sound simple, managing people from different cultures I suspect will be difficult, simply because one has to understand everyone's background and one has to really pay attention to even the smallest queues since anything can get lost in translation. Now I know I have to be mindful of those differences and possible tensions, whether subtle or major, to excel in a leadership position.

Automagically does it

I have a strong background in technology - I study computer science next to BBE, and I've been working in software engineering for over 7 years now. Therefore, I know just how powerful software and IT can be, especially for larger corporations. But not only large companies can profit off of technology, also the smallest undertakings can leverage digital innovations to create products that would have been infeasible 10 years ago and create their niche to fill.

It was also interesting to see how much faster communication is nowadays. I'm aware that nowadays you can reach anyone in the world within seconds, but just how fast communication has sped up on a daily business is still shocking to me. Having lived in today's world, I cannot image a world anymore where people were mainly communicating with letters or just via telephone or even telegraph. The sheer speed and ultra-cheap cost of interplanetary communication is fascination.

In class, we have mostly talked about how much of a game-changer this is for companies, but I think it goes even deeper than this. When I just imagine the sheer amount of volume of requests that is handled by a typical accounting software is quite impressive. Just imagine what an accountant equipped with sophisticated software can do compared to one with just paper books. Also, currently in the western business world the end of accounting may be near, as more

and more companies don't receive and process traditional invoices anymore, but work either with a system-to-system approach without any human involvement or services where you can just scan in all your invoices and the accounting is done for you automagically are gaining more and more traction. This will be an interesting development, a world without accountants.

Also, the cloud has enabled a large amount of smaller companies to grow at unprecedented levels. The power to spin up ones entire digital infrastructure within hours on another continent including high-availability databases, web servers, storage buckets and an entire metric and logging backend is truly amazing to me. Understanding the technology and all the moving parts behind such behemoths of emergent behavior is not only deeply interesting, but is also something to admire, how many moving parts fall into place in the just right way to produce what customers need.

Management with Style!

The next topic is management styles. Here I found the course content a bit lacking. Through my long history of employment I had the chance to try out a wide selection of work arrangements - from 5.000+ employee companies to 3-person startups I have done everything so far. Therefore, I could also experience many different leadership styles within my different employers.

I understand the teaching about old-school leadership styles and how they come from military systems and I see how they are relevant for the course, since one needs to get everyone up to speed and create a baseline in all students. I would have just liked a more future-oriented approach to different emerging management styles.

My next critique about the course content is that I believe that middle-management is already failing as more and more large corporations are taking with a chainsaw at their middle management circle. Intel, Nvidia, Sony and the like are all killing off middle management and replacing them with more efficient systems. This trend has been going on for the last months, in recent weeks more and more news of mass-layoffs in middle management have hit the news outlets and I would have liked to discuss this topic more. Also during my employment history I could have largely done without the middle management that was supervising me. They were either micromanaging me and keeping me from working or forced me into way too many meetings. And when I actually needed any decision from them, they straight up asked somebody higher up in the ranks which I could have done myself easily enough. I personally consider middle management to be a curse of American consumerism and an obsolete remnant of the military roots of business structure. Also, truly new and innovative organizational structures like the Spotify model were never discussed, although parts of the model were covered with the interest groups, but that too only very briefly.

Please do not misunderstand this last point, I would have loved to delve deeper

into organizational structures that will actually be used in the future and how they will reshape the workplace and not study past and already failing management styles. The course contents did not allow me to study this any further, the only real learning I have from the content on management styles and organization structure is how broken the systems are and how badly they need to be replaced.

Conclusion

The course contents gave me a new perspective on already known historical events and phenomena and gave a new spin on old topics. I could also gain new insights into managing and working people from diverse cultures. My notions, that technology is an increasingly important success factor have been confirmed. Lastly, I have gained better insights into just how broken the current management styles in the industry are and how badly they need to be replaced with more efficient systems.