



## MBA 590 – Strategic Leadership & Management Capstone

### Overview

This course is based on a Realistic Problem–Based scenario. You will be asked to define and work on a group project that draws on concepts from all the specialization courses: BADM 508 Leadership and Teams, BADM 509 Managing Organizations, and BADM544 Strategic Management. **MBA590** serves as a capstone course by giving you the opportunity to research and analyze a publicly-traded company, in order to frame the problems and propose solutions for an organization. In the process, you will use your creative and critical thinking skills, apply what you have learned, and reflect on strategic Growth and development. As a highly experiential course, this Capstone is relatively unstructured, giving you ample opportunity to demonstrate leadership by providing direction and teamwork by pulling together knowledge from this specialization to deliver feasible results for your chosen organization.

The framework for our Capstone is a Growth Plan based on the analysis of a recognized publicly-traded company. It needs to be a publicly-traded company because you will be able to access more information. Your team's goal is to help your chosen company close a (hypothetical) 4% growth gap (in annual revenues) by proposing business opportunities outside the published growth plans the company has laid out for itself.

You will work with a group throughout this course. Your deliverables will consist of: (0) a team charter, (1) a group video-presentation recording link, (2) two individual reviews of other groups' video presentations, (3) a group report with the Growth Plan for your chosen company, and (4) a teammate evaluation to evaluate your team members' participation and contribution. The analysis each group provides in the presentation and the Growth Plan will be based on the concepts and frameworks of the three specialization courses.

For this project, groups can source their data from publicly available resources, starting with the company's shareholder reports. In addition, groups may use other publicly available sources to enhance their perspectives on the company and its context and performance, e.g., Industry Reports, Newspapers, Websites, YouTube videos, and the SEC Online System ([EDGAR, link here](#)). Students should not include proprietary or confidential information they have access to as employees or through other means. The [Business Information Services](#) at the University of Illinois Library provides an extensive list of sources that you can utilize to complete your assignment. Here are some recommended sources of information

- Search online for your company's name + shareholder report
- [The iMBA Guide to Digital Business Research](#)
- [Industry Information](#)



## The Problem

The expectation of enhanced Growth is one of the most important value drivers in capital markets. However, some anecdotal evidence suggests that less than 30% of large-capitalization firms were confident they could reach their growth targets. We have learned (through this specialization) how external and internal constraints make Growth and strategic renewal so hard to sustain.

There is a point when existing businesses' revenue (and profits) rise slowly. Executives try to slash costs as much as they can, but because many of the markets they have stakes in are mature, companies must find new growth opportunities elsewhere. Growth could come through **acquisitions**, which are expensive and risky, and **organic growth**, launching new initiatives internally, which brings its own managerial challenges. Unfortunately, many senior management teams see managing today's earnings as their primary job and don't spend enough time planning and building the organization and culture that Growth requires.

But not you, my fellow Illini's! You have learned the importance of strategic thinking and leadership to position organizations for Growth through your iMBA specialization courses.

## The Task

Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to build a Growth Plan for a publicly-traded company of your choosing. You only have two weeks to formulate this plan, so focus on the analysis that will lead to *broad* strategic and leadership recommendations.

You will be playing the role of a consulting firm hired to present this plan to your (chosen) company's top management team. By the end of Week 1, you will be submitting a team charter and a video presentation recording link pitching your idea for the Growth Plan, and by the end of Week 2, you will be submitting a written report with your Growth Plan.

Particularly, we are asking for recommendations to help address a growth gap of 4% in annual revenue. This means finding **non-incremental** growth opportunities that amount to at least 4% of your (chosen) company's annual revenues. These (non-incremental) growth initiatives need to be different from the incremental growth opportunities your (chosen) organization (currently) implements, and the published Growth plans the company has laid out in public announcements or their shareholders' report. You can focus on one growth initiative or propose a set of initiatives that add to at least 4% in annual revenues.

As you go through the research for your company, you will learn more about its current challenges.



## Growth Plan—Project Overview

This report is intended to be dynamic with additions and modifications as you learn more about your company and its needs and priorities. Add pages as needed. Start with some observations—answers. You should be using the concepts and frameworks you learned through the specialization courses to provide informed answers to these questions. Feel free to mix and match (and add from) the tools you learned to answer each question. When developing each part of your report, we recommend listing a top few (4–8 key aspects) that describe the most critical elements of your analysis. You can keep a brief bullet point format as long as they communicate enough thoughts to make sense.

Parts:

1. **Where are you?** Describe the most critical aspects of the company's stakeholders, history, culture, and people (from the available information). Describe the organizational design and current leadership.
2. **What do we do best?** First, consider the company's current sources of competitive advantage (VRI) and discuss some threats to the sustainability of the company's current positions.
3. **Why are you here now?** Recommend the growth initiative/s that will help address a 4% growth gap. Describe your growth initiatives, their benefits, risks, and their potential for revenue generation.
4. **Where is the industry's future going?** Applying what you have learned about external/context analysis, determine some critical external factors you need to watch for when developing and implementing your growth initiative/s.
5. **What do you need to do?** How can you:
  - a. Define your Growth initiative/s business model (VARs).
  - b. Create the conditions for Growth
  - c. Leverage the core business.
  - d. Choose the right leaders for Growth.
  - e. Establish the right metrics and milestones to track the Growth progress.