

COMM1180 T2 2023

Assessment #2

Term Project

Introduction

Purpose

Early on in COMM1180, you are learning about several frameworks and practical tools that can help identify, measure, or even create value: for example, Porter's value chain, the Value Proposition Canvas and modern multi-stakeholder frameworks such as "Creating Shared Value" and "Grow the Pie". This term-long project will allow you to apply these frameworks to a real company case. Thus, you will need to draw on the knowledge you have acquired during lectures and the skills you have practiced during the tutorials, especially those of the first 2 weeks. You will also be asked to analyse ethical dilemmas around corporate decision making and critically review corporate actions.

An additional learning outcome is for teams to learn to collaborate effectively, incorporate different perspectives, produce quality work according to an agreed plan, and provide constructive feedback to each other.

Setting the scene

You have been hired as part of a management consulting team by ONE of the two companies listed below (take your pick) to provide an outside opinion on several value-relevant aspects of the company's activities:

Option 1: Qantas (<https://investor.qantas.com/Home/>)

Option 2: A2 Milk (<https://thea2milkcompany.com/sustainability>)

The management of the company is keen to raise its public profile and be recognised for being a good corporate citizen. To this end, they have set their eyes on an award for "Creating Shared Value"¹. Your consulting report will help management to understand their strengths and the challenges they are facing as they are getting ready to apply for this award.

You will find a lot of information that is relevant to the questions below in the annual report of your chosen company as well the linked website (e.g. values, governance, sustainability). Feel free to use other credible sources to support your arguments. For example, you might consult related information from a supplier or use product reviews to inform yourself about their product quality or level of service. If you do use additional sources, please reference them, including an URL where applicable.

¹ These awards do exist. For an example, see <http://sharedvalue.org.au/awards/application-form/apply-organisational-award/>

Timeline

In stage 1 of the project, each student will pick one of the two companies and submit a written, individual report. Note that there are several submission steps involved. Students are required to:

- 1) submit a draft of their report to [Smarthinking](#) (UNSW's free online writing support service) by Wednesday Week 4 at the latest.
- 2) upload the feedback provided by Smarthinking to Moodle by Friday of Week 4.
- 3) incorporate Smarthinking feedback into your final individual report and make the final submission by Friday of Week 5.

The first 2 steps of the assessment are formative in that the quality of your draft does not affect your mark. You are required to upload your Smarthinking feedback in time to gain access to the submission link for the final written report. The turn-around time of Smarthinking is quite fast (24-48 hours). However, this still means that you must submit your draft to Smarthinking at least 2 days before the first deadline to ensure timely receipt of feedback. Students should aim to have a well-developed draft at that point to maximize the usefulness of the feedback. Students then have until the second deadline to incorporate this feedback. You can find more details about using Smarthinking for this assignment on the Moodle course page.

In stage 2, students will form consulting teams to combine their perspectives and skill sets to work on a detailed and critical analysis of several value-related activities of the same company. This stage will start after the submission of the individual report and run until the final submission at the end of week 10.

Assessment part	Due date (11:59pm)	Weight	Deliverable
Smarthinking submission	1-2 days before first deadline	n/a	Draft of milestone
Feedback upload	Friday of Week 4	n/a	Smarthinking feedback
Milestone submission	Friday of Week 5	14%	Short individual report
Final submission	Friday of Week 10	20%	Final team consulting report

Stage 1 - Individual Milestone

Near the front of your company's annual report, you might notice that, unlike U.S. based companies, Australian companies report a lot of non-financial information, e.g., the 'shared value' they create for their various stakeholders. Many also use 'integrated reporting' - something you will learn much more about towards the end of this course – to elaborate on how they have grown along the six dimensions of capital (not just financial capital) over the reporting period.

Individual fact-finding report

In preparation for the final report described later, you are tasked with writing a short report on **ONE** non-financial stakeholder of the company (i.e., NOT shareholders or creditors!). The purpose of this report is to provide your team members with an understanding of the key issues that affect this stakeholder-company relationship.

- 1) **Stakeholder description:** Define and describe this stakeholder clearly. The stakeholder should be sufficiently specific. Examples: pick one representative supplier or a well-defined group of suppliers of a particular input that the company uses; a homogeneous group of customers that use a particular product or service; a particular community affected by the company; or some aspect of the environment.
- 2) **Stakeholder relationship with the company:** Identify and describe relevant ways in which this stakeholder interacts with the company, how they affect the company and how the actions of the company affect them. Think beyond the purely transactional here: What forms of value does the stakeholder receive from the company (this could be positive or negative e.g., in the case of pollution) and vice versa?
- 3) Use the **value chain framework** to identify and discuss at least one critical primary activity and at least one critical support activity that currently enable the company to create the value or reduce the harmful effects for your stakeholder identified in (2).

Submission format

- A preliminary report covering the 3 items above plus introduction and summary sections using the template provided.
- Length: No more than 700 words (excluding titles, headers, and reference list).
- There is a margin of +/- 10%.
- Students should include in-text citations for all references used.
- Must be 1.5 line spaced, 2.5 cm left aligned margin, 12-point font (Times New Roman or Arial) and the footer must have ZID and page numbers.
- **You must first submit a draft to Smarthinking and then upload to Moodle the feedback received from Smarthinking by end of Friday of Week 4. This will earn you access to the submission link of the finalized report. Not doing this will mean that your report may not be marked, and you have a risk of receiving ZERO in this assignment.**
- Submit the finalized report by end of Friday of Week 5.

Part 2: Team Component

Final consulting report

Following the preliminary step of identifying individual stakeholders, you and your team are now ready to tackle the big areas of concern in the eyes of management as they are on their quest to be recognised as an organisation that creates “Shared Value.” Your team’s job is to deliver a consulting report to management on how well the company is tracking along the following dimensions:

1. How well do the company’s words and actions align?
2. How well does the company serve its customers’ needs?
3. How severe are the conflicts amongst its stakeholders and the trade-offs faced by management?
4. Is there room for improvement, i.e., the potential for creating additional shared value?

Your team leader has analysed these questions and broken them up into many smaller questions and tasks for you and your teammates as follows:

I. Mission Statement and Business Purpose

To address the first question, locate the company’s mission statement or statement of purpose. It may not be explicitly stated as such, but typically the annual report will contain the relevant language in a prominent spot.

Can you extract “the why,” i.e., why does the company exist?² Which stakeholders are central to its purpose? Could the same language be applied to a firm in a completely different industry? Does the annual report (or the company’s website) contain enough evidence that these words correspond to some concrete actions? Thus, render a judgement as to the specificity and authenticity of the company’s language around its purpose.

II. Value Proposition and Market Fit

On the question of serving customers’ needs, management asks you to review whether the company is serving its existing customers well and whether it can effectively reach them.

- i) Using the skills you learnt in Week 2, identify one customer segment for your company and outline a persona for that segment.
- ii) Using the Value Proposition Canvas, identify the jobs-to-be-done, pains and gains for that persona/customer segment, and the company’s products, pain relievers and gain creators. Submit the Canvas as part of your final report.
- iii) Briefly discuss whether this value proposition-customer segment pairing aligns well with the overall mission statement identified in part I?
- iv) Discuss the technology capabilities (or perhaps lack of) in delivering this value proposition to the customer segment. What potential technologies might strengthen and sustain value delivery?

² Aside from the live lecture in week 1, you may have seen similar language in the early parts of COMM1100.

III. Stakeholder Conflicts

Consider the interplay between ONE stakeholder group and shareholders. As with stage 1, be as specific as necessary when defining this stakeholder. Outline specific conflicts due to differing interests and value expectations of these two groups as well as the trade-offs company management is facing when making decisions. If you are having trouble finding a specific conflict, the company's discussion of its business risk factors (often prominently featured in the annual report) can be extremely useful, as can be newspaper articles.

IV. Recommendation for Creating Shared Value

Finally, management is extremely interested in being able to highlight a new initiative around "Creating Shared Value" to the judges of the award and has asked your team to develop one. Management would prefer for your proposal to address some core aspect of the company's identity or business rather than some cookie-cutter CSR action as this would not be well received by the award judges.

First, based on your analysis of the stakeholder conflicts in part III, propose ONE new initiative that has the potential to create shared value and "grow the pie," respectively, for these stakeholders. Provide a qualitative (not a quantitative) discussion of costs and long-term benefits that is modelled after the "Grow the Pie" criteria, to the extent possible. You can be creative, but the initiative needs to still be realistic given your understanding of the company's value chain and should be consistent with their current business strategy.

Second, briefly consider what proponents of shareholder value maximization (SVM) might think of this proposal. Can you construct an argument to convince them of the benefits to shareholders as well?

Submission format of the final report

- A complete report covering the 4 big questions and their elements plus additional sections at the beginning and end according to the template provided (See <https://student.unsw.edu.au/report-writing-support>).
- Total length: Maximum 2,100 words (excluding titles, headers, reference list, and appendix).
- There is a margin of +/- 10%.
- Students should include in-text citations for all references used.
- Must be 1.5 line spaced, 2.5 cm left aligned margin, 12-point font (Times New Roman or Arial) and the footer must have page numbers.
- Add the Canvas in the appendix as well as any optional material you consider to be a necessary part of your overall report.
- **Submit via Turnitin link on Moodle by end of Friday of Week 10.**

Working in teams

We recommend keeping **meeting minutes** where teams record things like date and duration, attendance, issues raised, decisions made, and roles and jobs assigned to each member with due dates. Disagreements within the team should primarily be managed and resolved by team members.

COMM1180 teaching staff shall not attend to team issues and problems unless the situation has become clearly untenable AND the team is able to demonstrate that they have exhausted all avenues to resolve the issues and problems.

Hints for writing your reports

Even though you may find the questions and tasks above numbered and lettered, do not answer each small question separately. The final report, for instance, should visibly separate the 4 big parts (with headings) but further sub-headings may not be necessary. DO NOT repeat the text of the question or task before answering it. Also, do not keep the instructions or brackets provided in the templates in your submissions.

In business, being concise is a valuable skill to have. Your future boss does not have time to read emails the length of novels. You want to provide as much information as necessary to cover the outlined tasks, but you want to make every paragraph count and do not tax your reader.

You will find some simple tricks when you Google 'how to write concisely' that will help you avoid overly wordy expressions. Sometimes that is not enough, though. A more challenging task is to shorten entire paragraphs by paraphrasing them with fewer sentences. We recommend group members write their first draft with content and clarity in mind. On subsequent revisions, ideally by other team members, you can focus on conciseness. Feedback from Smarthinking (ST) will also help with this. Nothing prevents your team from also submitting the team report to ST for feedback.

Referencing

All materials used in both reports must be referenced in Harvard format. students must include in-text citation and a reference list in Harvard format. Your work cannot be marked if these are omitted. Marks may be deducted for missing or incorrect referencing. Please note that Wikipedia is not an appropriate source for academic work as it is not reliable and will result in additional deductions. For details and assistance on Harvard referencing, see <https://student.unsw.edu.au/harvard-referencing>

Academic Integrity

As a student at UNSW, you are expected to display [academic integrity](#) in your work and interactions. Where a student breaches the [UNSW Student Code](#) with respect to academic integrity, the University may take disciplinary action under the Student Misconduct Procedure.

To assist you in understanding what academic integrity means, and how to ensure that you do comply with the UNSW Student Code, it is recommended that you complete the [Working with Academic Integrity](#) module before submitting your assessment task. It is a free, online self-paced Moodle module that should take less than an hour to complete.