

Wagner/NYU  
CAPSTONE: for Management Students

P11.3114-5  
LC 5 Tisch  
Mondays 4:30-6:10 p.m.

Fall 2007/Spring 2008

Professor Tony Kovner

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Office hours by appointment: students are encouraged to e-mail/call at any time.

### Course Summary and Objectives

Capstone is learning in action. Part of the core curriculum of the Masters program at the Wagner School, it provides students with both a critical learning experience and an opportunity to perform public service. Over the course of an academic year, students work in teams—either to address challenges, solve problems and identify opportunities for a client organization. Capstone contributes not only to the students' education, but is a school resource for the public good.

In architecture, the capstone is the crowning piece of an arch, the center stone that holds the arch together. Wagner's capstone integrates and enhances student learning in several areas: a content or issue area, key process skills including project management and teamwork, and methods for gathering, analyzing and reporting data. Capstone requires students to interweave their learning in these areas, and to do so in real time, in an unpredictable, complex real world environment. Although each student will be assigned to a team, the class will work as a learning community dedicated to the success of all projects.

We have identified an array of potential projects. Students will be assigned to a project team based on a number of factors including student preference and expertise as well as team size. Teams are usually comprised of 4-5 students who bring a mix of skills and experience and have expressed interest in a project. To the degree possible, students will get their first or second choice of project.

The model chosen by the professor is student ownership of the project with the client as customer and the professor as expert consultant to the student team.

### Learning Objectives

Classroom discussion and team coaching (16 classroom sessions during two semesters) will focus on three major areas:

- (1) Using an Evidence-Based Approach to Design and Implement a Management Intervention. This includes 6 steps:

- Framing the question
- Finding sources of information
- Assessing the accuracy of the information
- Assessing the applicability of the information
- Assessing the actionability of the information
- Determining whether the team has adequate information

(2) Managing the team in its relationships with an external client and other stakeholders. This includes:

- Responding appropriately to client needs, requests and expectations
- Understanding how the client organization works and its prevailing culture
- Preparing Interim and Final Reports both oral and written for the client

(3) Functioning as a Member of a Client-facing consulting team. This includes:

- Managing communication between the team and the client
- Contributing effectively to the team
- Resolving internal team conflicts

### Process Skills

Students should demonstrate the ability to: (1) carry out project management, (2) manage client relationships and (3) manage themselves as a team.

### Skill Sets:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Identify and carry out data collection methods appropriate to the project.
- Identify and carry out appropriate analytical methods for the project
- Situate their findings in the broader related literature
- Draw conclusions as warranted by their data.
- Communicate their work effectively both orally and in writing.

### Course Requirements

The class will include presentations from the instructor and guest speakers, discussion and team meetings. Course requirements include:

- Enrollment both semesters
- Attendance and participation in class activities and team meetings
- Completion of assignments on time
- Participation in field work
- Participation in meetings with clients
- Participation in preparation and presentation of findings
- All team members do NOT have to be present in all activities and meetings, some of which, unlike class, may be subject to scheduling difficulties.

### Evaluation Criteria

Final grades are assigned at the end of the second semester. Learners are graded as a team, as adjusted for individual performance. Learners are graded on:

- Work products/submitted assignments. Product and project management include deliverables—team charter, kick-off agenda, work plan, client contract, progress reports, interim client presentation, final work plan, literature and data collection, analysis and recommendations and timeliness.
  - Client satisfaction, as determined by final written evaluation done by the client.
- The team grade will be adjusted by individual performance that will include: participation in class and in team activities, peer evaluations and self reflection memo.

### Required Readings

Kovner, AR, R. D'Aquila and D. Fine, The Practice of Evidence-Based Management, Health Administration press, forthcoming.

Block, Peter. Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used, Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Wheelan, Susan. Creating Effective Teams: A Guide for Members and Leaders, Sage, 1999.

COURSE PACKET (Available at Unique Copy Center)

### CLASS SCHEDULE-First Semester (10 Classes, 15 weeks)

#### **Class 1** Course Overview

- Review of syllabus and course expectations
- Clients present their projects to the class.
- Record student project preferences
- Attempt to finalize team assignments
- Complete bio-data sheet (in class).

#### **Class 2** Evidence-Based Approach and Working Session

- Review six steps of evidence-based approach.
- Submit team information/contact sheet
- Hold first team meeting to discuss projects and set team standards
- Draft description of problem and brainstorm alternatives.

Readings for class: Kovner/Rundall, *The Promise of Evidence-Based Management*, and Rundall et al. *Using Research Evidence: Views of Health Services Managers* (See Course Packet from Unique)

Deliverables: Team charter is due no later than Monday of Class 3 at noon via e-mail.

#### **Class 3** Discussion of Case Study and Preparation for Initial Client Assessment Meeting

Reading for Class: DiSalvio Case Study (in Course Packet), Block: Chapters 1, 2, 3, 18, Appendix

In Class:

- Review of charter with teams.
- Review Evidence-based approach in DeSalvio case study.
- Guidance will be provided to help each team prepare for its first client meeting (what do you need to know and how can you help the client give you the information?)

Deliverables:

- Assemble background information on your client organization (keep track of data sources)
- Schedule kick-off client meeting (to scope project) for the Week 4. Schedule professor to attend.
- Submit kick-off meeting agenda via e-mail by noon of October 1.

#### **Class 4**      Shape the Project: Problem Definition, Client Expectations

In Class: (Jacob Victory, Guest Lecturer)

- Project Management
  - What does the client want? What are the client's expectations?
  - What problems does the client want to solve?
    - Narrow vs broad expectations about outcomes
    - Distinguish between symptoms and underlying problems
    - Understand multiple views of the problem within the organization
- Discuss how consultants identify stakeholders, develop a view of the organization, and define problems to be solved in developing a framework for the meeting.
- Discuss how the client's culture may affect the team's approach to the project.
- Preparation for upcoming kick-off meeting with the client
  - Consensus on what would constitute a successful client engagement
  - Define the overall problem, its parts, and possible approaches
  - Discuss the role of each team member at the initial meeting
  - Follow up tasks: set expectations regarding what happens after the meeting

Reading for Class: Block, Chapters 4, 5 and 19.

Deliverables:

- Prepare a two-page, double-spaced summary of kick-off meeting findings (due to professor by October 17 via e-mail at noon).

#### **Class 5**      Research Strategy: Getting and Validating the information. (David Sandman, Guest Lecturer)

In class:

- Discussion of project work plans: Purpose, Structure, Content
- How do we help the client solve the problem and get what they want?

- Project objectives, milestones, resource requirements for a successful work plan
- Discussion of data collection methods

Readings for Class: Block, Chapter 10

Deliverables:

- Prepare draft of client contract and work plan (due to professor by noon on October 19 (via e-mail), to be discussed during class of Week 6.

### **Class 6** Sources of Information (Gretchen Gano, Guest lecturer)

In Class:

- Discussion of project work plans
- Obtaining the data
- Validating the data
- Project objectives, milestones, resource requirements.

Reading for class: Block, Chapters 6,7; Wheelan, Chapters 1-4, pp 1-49. Bibliographic sources and “how to look it up,” in KDF.

Deliverables: Schedule the work plan presentation with the client by November 5. Make sure to include the professor in the attendee list.

### **Class 7** Teamwork

In class:

- Each team presents its work plan and contract (formal rehearsal of presentation to the client)
- Relevant data collection and where data can be found (interviews, surveys, on site observation, literature and Internet searches)
- Why teams succeed and fail.
- Difficult conversations

Reading for Class: Block, Chapter 11, Wheelan Chapters 5-9.

Deliverables: Revise and finalize meeting agenda, work plan and client contract, as necessary.  
Mid-semester course evaluation (in class)

### **Class 8** Work Plan Presentations

In Class:

- Each team will present the results of their work plan meeting to the class.
- Discussion of teamwork related issues
  - Types of problems that arise in teams
  - Conflict resolution techniques

- Revisit and revise team charter as necessary

Readings: Block, Chapter 14

Deliverables: Prepare a two-page, double-spaced summary memo of work plan meeting findings (due to professor by November 21 noon via e-mail).  
Submit signed client contract.

## **Class 9**      Applicability and Actionability of the Evidence

In Class:

- Key milestone check: review initial stages of client work and brainstorming
- Issues of applicability and actionability
- Client problems that teams are confronting
- Approaches to develop and sustain effective working relationships with clients

Reading: Hsu et al, Methods for Developing Actionable Evidence

Deliverables:

- Schedule interim presentation by December 10, include professor in attendee list.
- Draft interim presentation due to professor December 10 by e-mail at noon.

## **Class 10**      Semester Wrap-Up and Next steps

In Class:

- Discussion of approaches/modifications for semester break and second term
- Professor available to meet with students on 1<sup>st</sup> semester progress and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester goals.

Deliverables:

- Revise presentation based on class/professor feedback (in advance of presentation to client)
- Complete mid-year course evaluations (in class)
- Self-evaluation/self-reflection memo and peer evaluation form filled out in class.

## SPRING SEMESTER 2008

The two major products of this term are the project presentation and the project final report.

The **presentation** is the event at which the team presents the client with a summary of findings and recommendations and an overview of the methodology used. It is often an interactive session during which the team may be asked to explain or discuss findings, recommendations, or methodology.

The **final report** is the final document that states the problem, describes in more detail the methodology used to address the problem, proposes and explains the conclusions, and includes the source material used to support the report. It may contain other relevant information, such as the results of a literature search on the topic or other data that the team thinks will be valuable to the client.

**Class 11** Discussion of Case Study (TBA)

- Review syllabus for spring semester.
- Discussion of case study
- Progress report and milestone check-in
- Team meetings/professor consultations

Readings: Case study (to be available on Blackboard)

**Class 12** Discussion of Case Study (TBA)

- Discussion of problems and issues
- Work in teams.

Reading: Case Study (to be available on Blackboard)

Deliverables:

- Draft outline of final report is due via e-mail by February 25 at 5pm.
- Draft presentation slides for final report.

**Class 13 Final Report and Presentation Skills**

- Final Report Requirements
- Presentation skills

**Class 14**

Work in teams.

Rough draft of report is due via e-mail by March 11 (draft should include executive summary, background on organization, overview of methodology)

- Send second draft of report to client for review and comment.

ABSTRACTS FOR END EVENT, due March 20, 2008

**Class 15 Preparation for Final report and presentation**

Deliverables:

- Schedule final presentation to client for week 15 and include professor in attendee list.
- Class presentations of final reports.

**Class 16 Wrap-Up**

- Work in teams; final evaluation of class and client to be done in class.
- Pick up poster board from David Schachter.
- Final report and presentation are due by April 28.
- Final course evaluation (in class)

