

**Assignment: Research Report**  
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[ updated: Sunday, March 23, 2008 ]

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**Course:** *Bus 550*  
**Title:** *The Contemporary Firm* (3 units)

“Men are much more likely to discover easier and readier methods of attaining any object when the whole attention of their minds is directed towards that single object than when it is dissipated among a great many things.”

---*Adam Smith (1723-1790)*

**Goal:**

The goal of this assignment is to augment the breadth material that comprises the bulk of the content in the course with some depth material in a particular area of interest to the student.

**Instructions:**

In general, your task is to write a brief “research report” paper concerning a topic of unique value to you. The only general requirements are that the subject of the paper touch upon all of the following areas—strategy, systems, and technology. The other general requirement is that I would like you to reference an idea from both of the textbooks and the HBR/supplementary readings as well.

Perusing the chapters in the textbooks and the HBR/supplemental readings should help you focus your topic. I am especially interested in papers that address topics that you feel can make a positive difference in your current or future place of employment.

Refining a broad topic into a narrower topic can be non-trivial. That is, “you can’t boil the ocean.” I will offer my suggestions as to narrowing your topic so that 1), you can finish within the requisite time, and 2), your effort can make an organizational impact.

**Project Milestones:**

Your first milestone is that I will go around the room and ask each student what topic might hold potential interest for her/him. This discussion is preliminary and does not bind any individual to any particular topic. If necessary, we may repeat this process in a subsequent class session.

Your second milestone is that I require you to submit a topic and a working outline to me by the middle of the semester (specific date to be announced in class).

**Deliverable:**

Your final paper is due two weeks before the final exam (that is, the paper is due on Tuesday, June 3). Late papers will not be accepted.

**Sections of the Paper:**

In general, your paper should contain the following sections:

1. Cover (1 page)
2. Table of Contents (1 page)
3. Executive Summary (1 page)
  - First paragraph—overview of problem (assume non-familiarity)
  - Second paragraph—study approach and key models (non-technical)
  - Third paragraph--of proposed solution/recommendations (not a mystery)
4. Body (6 to 10 pages)
  - Introduction (overview of problem and course linkages)
  - Significance of Topic (including scope and magnitude)
  - Literature Review (at least five peer-reviewed references)
  - Proposed Solution (including impacts and “systems” effects)
5. References (as many as needed—probably one or two)
6. Appendix (as many as needed)

**Length:**

The body of the paper should be no less than six pages and no more than ten pages. The page count does not include front- or back-matter, such as a cover page, executive summary, appendix, references, etc.

**Format:**

You must use the formatting guidelines posted on the class web page.

**Performance Measurement:**

The scoring rubric for this assignment is as follows:

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | - | touched upon strategy, systems, and technology                      |
| 2 | - | provided a linkage to both textbook and HBR/supplemental readings   |
| 5 | - | quality of effort towards understanding the root cause of the issue |
| 5 | - | quality of effort towards recommending a demonstrable solution      |