

## Homework: Telling the “Strategy Story”

wayne.smith@csun.edu

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**Course:** BUS 497a

**Title:** Capstone: Strategic Management (3 units)

“Inside an organization there are only cost centers. The only profit center is the customer whose check has not bounced.”

---Peter Drucker (1909-2005)

### Goal:

I want you to practice telling the “story of a strategy” for a firm or organization in a brief narrative using the theories, models, and frameworks from class. No single article on any subject can ever be complete. You’ll need to make assumptions and speculate as appropriate. In some cases, drawing analogies from your own experience may be helpful.

### Objective:

Find an article on a current event that you believe is an example of an organization’s strategy. Choose an article on a subject for which you have a deep, abiding interest. A passion for the subject matter and context is crucial for actionable strategic thinking.

The source of the article must be from one of the following sources: Los Angeles Times (business section), New York Times (business section), Wall Street Journal, The London Times (business section), The Economist, Fortune, Forbes, or Barron’s magazine. The article must be at least 500 words in length. For this exercise, “current event” is defined as “since you have been enrolled in college.”

*Do not* select an article that is an assigned reading for class, such as an article listed in the “Library Materials”. Also, if you study with a teammate, each person should choose a *different* article on a different company.

To make it simple, just use a single paragraph to answer each of the following questions. Additionally, just label each paragraph with the relevant question number, such as “Q1”.

- Q0. Provide a full reference (“Works Cited”) to the article. I want to read the article.
- Q1. Why did you *select* this article? What is its *visceral appeal* (gut passion) to you?
- Q2. Identify the *central organization* in the article. To be clear: an organization is *larger* than a single individual, but *smaller* than an industry or an entire society. In some cases, an *organizational unit* within a larger organization is specifically identified in the article.

- Q3. Briefly summarize a *key strategic issue* in your article. Also, is the strategic issue chiefly at the *business-level* (“the core business model”), the *product-level* (“key goods or services”) or a *functional-level* (“crucial internal processes”)?
- Q4. How do you know this issue is *truly strategic*? That is, how do you know that the issue is *long-term in nature*, is *organization-wide in scope*, and requires *substantive change in working capital* and/or labor behavior *on the part of many individuals*?
- Q5. Strategy is always “all-inclusive.” Which elements from your *prior lower-division* class study (i.e., Principles of Financial Accounting, Principles of Managerial Accounting, Principles of Micro-Economics, Principles of Macro-Economics, Business Statistics, Business Law) do you think are relevant to understanding this strategic issue? Explain.
- Q6. Again, as in Q5 above, strategy is always “all-inclusive”; that is, we use all skills, knowledge, and abilities at our disposal. Which elements from your *prior upper-division* class study (i.e., FIN 303, SOM 306, MGT 360, MKT 304) that you think are relevant to understanding this strategic issue? Explain.
- Q7. Which specific element(s) (e.g., ideas, concepts, theories, models, frameworks, etc.) on strategy *from the textbook* (i.e., Chapters 1, 2, or 3) do you think best *explains* or *predicts* an organizational outcome associated with this strategic issue?
- Q8. Draw a strong analogy from one of the assigned Library articles from class to your current event article. You can use an article from the current week or a prior week.
- Q9. Which of the two strategic measurement frameworks (Drucker’s 15 Principles or Balanced Scorecard) discussed in class would you suggest be used to evaluate the success (or failure) of the strategic issue? Explain your answer.
- Q10. Do you believe that somewhere in the firm’s addressing of this strategic issue that the *strategic vision*, *strategic mission*, or *values* of the organization is likely to change? Explain your answer.

**Length:**

This essay is to be no less than two full pages in length and no more than four full pages in length. Other relevant formatting requirements (“style guide”) are linked from the course web page. Recall also that for all written assignments in this course, 10% is deducted from the content score for each type of error in language use.

**Performance Measurement:**

The maximum number of points for content on this exercise is 1 (engagement and commitment points).