

Exercise:
Telling the “Strategy Story”
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Course: MGT 360
Title: Management and Organizational Behavior (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)

“The best CEOs that I know are teachers, and at the core of what they teach is strategy.”

---Michael Porter (1947-)

Goal:

I want you to practice telling the “story of a strategy” for an 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 driving 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, or Fortune 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 “Supplemental Materials”. Also, if you study with a teammate, each person should choose a *different* article on a different company.

Print out the article in its entirety. On a separate sheet, answer the following questions. Staple your answers and the article together (with your answers on top), so that you can turn in this bundle as a single unit.

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”.

Q1. Why did you *select* this article? That is, what is its *visceral appeal* 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 entire society. In some cases, an *organizational unit* within a firm is specifically identified in the article.
- Q3. Briefly summarize a *key strategic issue* illuminated 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. Strategy is always “all-inclusive”; that is, we use all skills, knowledge, and abilities at our disposal. Are there any elements from our *prior* class study (e.g., decision-making, culture, diversity, HR, ethics/CSR, the role of managers, etc.) that you think are relevant to understanding this strategic issue?
- Q5. 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 on the part of many individuals?
- Q6. Which specific element(s) (i.e., ideas, concepts, theories, models, frameworks, etc.) on strategy *from the textbook* (i.e., Chapters 10, 4 or 8) do you think best *explains* or *predicts* an organizational outcome associated with this strategic issue?
- Q7. Which specific element(s) (i.e., ideas, concepts, theories, models, frameworks, etc.) on strategy from the *non-textbook materials* (e.g., Porter’s Value Chain, PESTEL Analysis, Economic Drivers, RBV Analysis, VRIO Analysis) do you think best *explains* or *predicts* an organizational outcome associated with this strategic issue?
- Q8. Do you believe that somewhere in the firm’s addressing of this strategic issue that either the *strategic vision* or the *strategic mission* 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 three 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 (participation points).