

**MBA 565 - Strategic Management****Syllabus**

**MoWe 6:00PM-9:45PM**  
**RINEC Rm. 316, 350 Eddy St, Providence RI**

**Instructor:** Robert Johnson, MBA

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**Email:** robertf\_johnson@uri.edu

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

**Required Text:** None

**Readings and Case Studies:** See List at bottom of this syllabus, students are required to purchase these materials from Harvard Business School Publishing, other materials will be emailed or posted on Brightspace.

**Course Objective and Description**

This course centers on learning about strategy in a broad range of settings. It uses articles, case studies, guest speakers and group discussions all of which strengthen self-learning and learning from peers.

The course reviews cash, talent, ownership, governance, and culture considerations through a broad range of organizations including start-ups, mid-sized and global companies and non-profits. Additional topics include M&A, exits, dealing with decline and turnarounds, bankruptcy and liquidations.

This course provides students with the framework and analytical tools about industry structures and competitive forces. These are useful for effective strategy development and decision making.

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Diagnose competitive positioning using industry, firm, and ecosystem analysis
- Evaluate strategic alternatives using financial, organizational, and market criteria
- Formulate and defend actionable strategies in ambiguous and high-stakes contexts
- Assess governance, talent, and cultural constraints on strategy execution
- Communicate strategic recommendations persuasively to executive audiences

**Class Schedule of Topics**  
 (Subject to Change upon Notification)

Class Date	Class Contents	Readings and/or Cases to be discussed
<b>June 22 (class 1)</b>	Course intro Strategy frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Five Competitive Forces that Shape Strategy (article)</li> <li>➢ Stuck in the Middle (article)</li> <li>➢ Athena Bancorp (case)</li> </ul>
<b>June 24 (class 2)</b>	Market analysis & customer intimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Amazon Plans Megastore (article)</li> <li>➢ Peloton Interactive, Inc. (case)</li> </ul>

June 29 (class 3)	Competition & competitive analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Strategies to Crack Well Guarded Markets (article)</li> <li>➢ Competitive analysis - Strategic Group Mapping (article)</li> <li>➢ Arrogant Brewing (multi-media case)</li> </ul>
July 1 (class 4)	Ownership Governance  Quiz 1 (classes 1-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ 10 Proactive Questions Every Board Member Should be Asking (article)</li> <li>➢ Villeroy &amp; Boch: Tradition, Innovation and 270 Years of a Franco-German Alliance (case)</li> </ul>
July 6 (class 5)	Start Up's Mid-sized businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ How Fast Can Your Company Afford to Grow? (article)</li> <li>➢ Trader Joe's: At a Crossroads? (case)</li> </ul>
July 8 (class 6)	Non-profits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Lofty Missions, Down-to-Earth Plans (article)</li> <li>➢ Eagle Nest Association of Waterdown (case)</li> </ul>
July 13 (class 7)	Multi-nationals & Globals  Quiz 2 (classes 4-6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ The Tech Industry is Huge, Europe's Share of it is Very Small (article)</li> <li>➢ Sanctuary Soft: International Expansion Strategies (case)</li> </ul>
July 15 (class 8)	Dealing with decline - turnaround or other options?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Starbucks New CEO Turnaround Challenges (article)</li> <li>➢ Twinkies Returns with Less Baggage (article)</li> <li>➢ Saks Bankruptcy_What Went Wrong (article)</li> <li>➢ Tupperware: Can an Old Brand Find New Life? (quick case)</li> </ul>
July 20 (Class 9)	M&A, Exits Bankruptcy & Liquidations  Quiz 3 (classes 7-9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ A Better Approach to M&amp;A (article)</li> <li>➢ A Beginners Guide to Bankruptcy (article)</li> <li>➢ Toys "R" Us: What Went Wrong? (case)</li> <li>➢ Saks Closing Stores Amid Bankruptcy (article)</li> </ul>
July 22 (class 10) (last class)	Final Group Project Presentations	<p>Case alternatives (1 per group)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Big Apple Circus: Time to Fold the Tent?</li> <li>➢ Beyond Meat: Beyond an Uncertain Future</li> <li>➢ MoviePass: A Netflix for Moviegoers?</li> <li>➢ The Real Real: Luxury Retail Platforms and the Battle for a Profitable Business Model</li> <li>➢ Starbucks Corporation</li> </ul>

## Evaluation

### Class Preparation & Participation (10%)

There will be readings and/or business cases to prepare for each class and each class will be highly interactive through facilitated discussion. *Preparation and participation counts for 10% of the final grade.*

**Quizzes (45%)**

Three (3) quizzes will occur during the semester. Each will be a combination of multiple choice and short essay questions. *Quiz scores counts for 45% of the final grade.*

**Group Project & Reflection Paper- Final (45%)**

Towards the end of the semester, students will form teams of 3-4 for their project and each student will be required to write a short memo answering the question: "What would you send to the CEO or Board if you alone were accountable for the decision?"

The project centers on a company case study where the organization facing a turnaround situation or strategic decision. The final project cases have been preselected. Students will form their own team and each team will be assigned one case for their project. The deliverable will be a short, executive-level presentation that answers several questions including:

- What business are they in and how are they different/better than the competition?
- What are the top forces faced by this organization, why?
- How did they get into this situation?
- What strategic alternatives are available to address their situation and why?

*Group projects count for 45% of the final grade.*

**Other Information**

Each student is expected to participate actively in each class session, including reading articles and case studies in advance.

**Grade Breakdown**

93 - 100 Points	A
90 - 92.99 Points	A-
86 - 89.99 Points	B+
83 - 85.99 Points	B
80 - 82.99 Points	B-
76 - 79.99 Points	C+
73 - 76.99 Points	C
70 - 72.99 Points	C-
66 - 69.99 Points	D+
63 - 65.99 Points	D
60 - 62.99 Points	D-
59.99 Points	F

**Reasonable Accommodation**

As the instructor of this course, I am committed to provide reasonable accommodation to student with disabilities. Any student who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me personally as soon as possible. We can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the University of Rhode Island is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to any student who requires assistance to perform.

**Academic Misconduct**

Any form of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. All cases of academic misconduct will be handled according to URI policies (as outlined in the student handbook and general catalog). If you have any questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please contact me.

**Sick Policy**

If you are sick, stay home! Please send me an email (or call me) to let me know you did not simply forget to come to class. We can discuss what you may be able to do to make up for your absence.

**Known Absences**

If you know you cannot make it to class, please let me know if possible, either by telling me or via email. I expect you to come to all classes, but I understand sometimes work or personal issues may interfere.

**Cases and Readings:**

HBPS articles and cases have been assembled into a course pack (**tbd**) to make it easy for you to successfully complete this course.

**Readings:**

- The Five Competitive Forces that Shape Strategy (R0801E)
- Stuck in the Middle (article posted on Brightspace)
- Amazon Plans Megastore (article posted on Brightspace)
- Strategic Groups and Mapping (article posted on Brightspace)
- Strategies to Crack Well Guarded Markets (R0705E)
- 10 Proactive Questions Every Board Member Should be Asking (H06BYH)
- How Fast Can Your Company Afford to Grow? (R0105K)
- The Tech Industry is Huge, Europe's Share of it is Very Small (article on Brightspace)
- Lofty Missions, Down to Earth Plans (R0403)
- Starbucks New CEO Turnaround Challenges (article posted on Brightspace)
- Twinkies Returns with Less Baggage (article posted on Brightspace)
- Saks Bankruptcy\_What Went Wrong (article posted on Brightspace)
- A Better Approach to M&A (F2403A)
- A Beginners Guide to Bankruptcy (<https://www.thebalancesmb.com/beginner-guide-to-business-bankruptcy-4126049>)
- Saks Closing Stores Amid Bankruptcy (article posted on Brightspace)

**Planned Case Studies:**

- Athena Bancorp (919517)
- Peloton Interactive, Inc. (MHE-FTR-071)
- Arrogant Brewing: Strategy in the Craft Beer Market (I0043e-htm; multi-media case)
- Villeroy & Boch: Tradition, Innovation and 270 Years of a Franco-German Alliance(IM1042)
- Trader Joe's: At a Crossroads? (IM1243)
- Sanctuary Soft: International Expansion Strategies (409104)
- Eagle Nest Association of Waterdown: Decisions at the Crossroads (W20789)
- Tupperware: Can an Old Brand Find New Life? (#8275)
- Toys"R"Us, What Went Wrong? (W18475)

**Final Project cases (1 per team)**

1. Beyond Meat: Facing an Uncertain Future
2. Big Apple Circus: Time to Fold the Tent? (418050)
3. MoviePass: A Netflix for Moviegoers? (W19657)
4. The Real Real: Luxury Retail Platforms and the Battle for a Profitable Business Model (TB0730)
5. Starbucks Corporation (MH0074)

**Bio of Robert Johnson**

Robert's expertise is with strategy, marketing, and product development for tech companies such as Deloitte Consulting and CGI, Inc. His specialties are customer intimacy initiatives, new market entries and leading product line expansions that build substantial revenue streams over time. For example, in 2008 Robert was recruited by the CEO of Atrion to co-lead new product development and product marketing; revenues grew from \$30M to over \$170M during his tenure.

In Spring 2017, Robert founded Bennett Frank Associates, a strategy and marketing execution firm that helps companies in several industries pursue emerging and overlooked markets, target the right customers, and generate demand to accelerate growth.

During the Pandemic, Robert had a unique client. From June 2020 to July 2022, he was engaged by the RI Dept. of Health as a Sr. Project Manager for the State's Covid-19 Testing Team responsible for procurement, supply and vendor management. During that period, the State conducted over 8 million Covid tests.

Robert has taught URI MBA 540 from 2015 to 2017, Marketing in URI's One Year MBA program from 2017 to 2019, and MBA 565 in 2020 to 2026.

Robert has an MBA from Babson College and a BA from the University of Massachusetts, Boston.