The Journey West: Expanding a Chinese Business to the U.S.
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Video Clips Embedded into Case
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Keywords:
Chinese entrepreneurship, Cross-national competitive strategy, Global entrepreneurship, Growth, Immigrant entrepreneurship, Negotiation

Case Abstract:
Fan Ye has opened a U.S. sales office for the company his father founded in China: Suns International, a manufacturer of electronic switches. While competition in China was based almost solely on cost, Fan knew this would not be enough to break into the U.S. market—particularly in Suns’ industry, where the cost of failure was high. Consequently, he decided to obtain the certifications needed to ensure Suns’ product would meet U.S. standards. This gamble paid off as Suns attracted OEM customers like Honeywell and Otis Elevator. A main issue and decision point in the case is triggered by Suns taking over the exclusive supply of foot switches to Grainger, a major electronics catalog. ProSwitch, a U.S.-based family business that lost the Grainger account to Suns, has asked to meet with Fan, presumably to talk about a possible cooperative relationship. Fan must now decide whether to compete or cooperate with ProSwitch and what approach to take in the meeting.

Learning Objectives:
1. Identify challenges associated with expanding a business into unfamiliar cultures and, more specifically, how approaches such as sales offices in these cultures overcome these challenges (or not). An associated objective is to articulate the impact of the expansion on the company: how it changes the company’s strategy, organization, and so on, not just in the new country, but at home.
2. Debate the merits of competing vs. cooperating with industry rivals.
3. Assess the cultural differences that may factor in a negotiation, on top of the conditions either party may seek in a cooperative agreement.
JumpStart: A Hop, a Leap or a Fall in Northeast Ohio?
February 2014

Daniel Isenberg, Babson Global

Keywords:
Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship policy, Entrepreneurship ecosystems, Economic development

Case Abstract:
This two-case series, JumpStart (A) and JumpStart (B), describes the activities of a business development organization that identifies and develops early-stage companies in northeast Ohio. The (A) case opens with a dramatic public meeting resulting from growing criticism of how JumpStart uses public funds. Several entrepreneurs have taken issue with how JumpStart has handled certain matters including salaries, public funds, and limited impact on employment, as well as others. JumpStart answers each criticism, but the reader will need to judge whether these answers are satisfactory.

The (A) case traces the origins of CEO Ray Leach’s involvement with JumpStart from about 2003, and it details economic development efforts by various entities to resuscitate northeast Ohio. The case describes a chronology of business strategies JumpStart has adopted. The first is as an economic development organization (EDO) stimulating regional entrepreneurship through mentoring and investing. The second is when JumpStart becomes the single umbrella organization channeling funds to other EDOs in the region. The third offers JumpStart’s emerging vision as a national player that has learned economic development principles to apply elsewhere in the United States. The much shorter (B) case highlights JumpStart achievements based on results presented by reviewing entities and announces the launch of JumpStart America to promote entrepreneurial ecosystems nationwide.

The JumpStart cases may be used in graduate and undergraduate courses on public policy, innovation, and innovation and entrepreneurship. They may also be used in executive programs or by economic development agencies in their regional training programs. The author uses the cases with in-house programs in economic development, and with entrepreneurship policy programs attended by public and private leaders from the same city.

Learning Objectives:
The JumpStart case has emerged from two related areas. One is the need for training programs for high-level policy makers. Such programs are conspicuous by their absence. For this reason, we designed and launched the first such program at Babson. A second is the author’s involvement in the World Economic Forum, in particular, its Global Agenda Council on fostering entrepreneurship, which has spawned a number of programs to support global dialog on entrepreneurship policy. One of these initiatives has loosely led to the writing of several case studies on various manifestations of entrepreneurship policy.
Massachusetts Eye & Ear Infirmary  Extending a Legacy
February 2014

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Keywords:
Competition, Health care strategy, Strategy execution, Strategy formulation, Stakeholders

Case Abstract:
Mass Eye and Ear was one of the oldest continually operating independent eye and ENT (ear, nose, and throat) infirmaries in the country. With strong ties to Harvard Medical School through faculty appointments, MEEI was determined to remain independent. Their determination to remain independent ran counter to the prevailing trend of large scale hospital consolidation.

Prior to 2007, MEEI had a divided board, substandard financial performance, and no long-term plan for remaining independent. MEEI recruited a new CEO, who united the board, increased fund raising, stabilized the institution's finances and developed a long-term plan for expansion. Faced with the uncertainty of a new federal universal health care bill, a poorly performing economy, and aggressive local competition for the eye care market, the CEO expressed concerns with the cost and timing of the expansion given the complexities associated with its execution.

This case gives students the opportunity to explore the relation between strategy formulation and strategy execution. Key stakeholders inside and outside the organization give “voice” to the various aspects of the competitive environment that concern them, which in turn impact MEEI’s ability both positively and negatively to execute their plan.

Learning Objectives:
The case explores an area that is underrepresented in case literature, the area of strategy execution. The case is intended for use in an MBA Advanced Competitive Strategy course or in an undergraduate course on Strategy Execution. The second area of interest is strategy execution under constraints imposed by conflicting stakeholder interests. Instructors can use the case to develop an understanding of the tensions between non-profit and for-profit interests, the blurring of public and private sector interests, and survival in a fast-changing environment where competing interests continually introduce ambiguity that confounds decision makers’ long-term planning.
Tips for Conducting In-depth Market Research Interviews

Background Note
February 2014

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Keywords:
Market Research, Entrepreneurial Tools, Customer Generation

Abstract:
This guide is designed for entrepreneurs who are in the process of discovering or creating new ideas or opportunities. It will help students prepare for effective one-on-one interviewing techniques.

Learning Objectives:
In-depth interviews are an extremely useful tool for the entrepreneur. Done right, they can yield a great amount of information, leading to new ideas and opportunities, new contacts, and perhaps a future customer. It is important to hone one’s skills in order to make the most and best use of interviews as a research tool. As with most skills, practice leads to better results.
Warren Buffett and his Newspaper Investments
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Keywords:
Newspaper industry, strategy, business model, acquisition, turnaround, disruptive business models.

Case Abstract:
The case describes challenges within the newspaper industry as it undergoes significant disruption and upheaval. Many newspapers have filed for bankruptcy, ceased publication, reduced publication days, or chosen to go to all-digital editions. The primary force behind this disruption is the growth of the Internet and its impact on current business models of print newspapers. This disruption has left newspapers searching for strategies and business models to cope with the growth of digital media and online content. Why is famed investor Warren Buffett acquiring newspapers? The trigger event for the case is Buffett’s acquisition of Lee Enterprises, evaluated by a consultant to Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway.

The case may be used in core courses on strategy, or in advanced or elective strategy courses dealing with business models and mergers/acquisitions. The case offers data for spreadsheet modeling. It is suitable for undergraduate and graduate students.

Learning Objectives:
The case may be used in the latter part of a core course on strategy, or in advanced or elective courses on strategy which deal with business models, or in courses on mergers and acquisitions. There is data in the case for students to do some modeling using spreadsheets to experiment with and evaluate alternative strategies and business models, especially in the context of the acquisition of Lee Enterprises. The context is especially challenging given the difficulties faced recently by so many newspapers, suggesting this is a problem for the industry as a whole and not just a problem for a single newspaper company. Through discussion of this case, students may be expected to expand their understanding of industry structure analysis and business model analysis, and also to examine in detail the financial implications of alternative strategies and business models using spreadsheets. This case demonstrates well the implications of specific strategies for the financials of a company.