

Teaching Business Policy and Strategy via a Field Trip Based Approach: Utilizing “Living Case Studies” - What We Have Learned in Nine Years

Don Daake
Olivet Nazarene University
One University Avenue
Bourbonnais, IL 60914-2345
815-939-5137
ddaake@olivet.edu

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Abstract

In an increasingly secular world, the need has never been greater for our students to go into positions of responsibility and influence. Not only do they need to understand the real world they are entering but they also need to be prepared to make a moral and ethical impact. Claiming or reclaiming the business world (or at least a portion of it for Christ) seems like a bold, audacious goal but one that our society needs.

Policy and Strategy – sometimes referred to as Administrative Policy- has been a staple offering of business programs for over 30 years in most American business schools. One of the original intentions of this “capstone” course was to encourage and/or force integration of various disciplines within the field of business into a comprehensive whole. This paper chronicles the development and refinement over nine years of a radically new approach to teaching Business Policy and Strategy at the undergraduate level. This concept was first presented at the CBFA Conference at San Diego in 2005 when the program was only two years old. Much has changed in the ensuing seven years. Significant modifications have been made. As we have established long term relationships in the field, increasingly we are seen by our host organizations as a witness (letting our lights shine) and increasingly we are being blessed by the number of Christian businessmen and women who are willing to participate and share their witness with our students within the context of their specific business environment.

We argue the relevance and application of this approach is more important than ever. At the core of this approach is the “living case” study. During a four week summer term we have had on-site visits at 12-15 companies and organizations, such as Hamburger University (McDonald’s), Caterpillar, Alcoa, State Farm, Cigna Insurance, Deere and Company, the CME/CBOT Exchange, McGraw-Hill, Whitey’s Ice Cream, the Lincoln Library & Museum and many other large and small organizations.

Many of our students have told us, “It is the best course they have had at the university.” At the core of this approach is the “living case” study. While this course has been an overwhelming success, we have had to overcome barriers and there are inevitable trade-offs we have had to make. The paper discusses a roadmap on how it has developed, been refined, and then discusses the tradeoffs and lessons learned.

Introduction -A Marketplace often Dvoid of Christ

Having spent a great deal of time in Chicago this past Christmas season, I was struck that among the tinsel, ornate decorations, large trees, Santa and his reindeer, and thousands of shoppers, that Jesus is virtually impossible to find in the modern big-city commercial environment. One can stop in at the Fourth Presbyterian Church, St. Peters Catholic Church, and various other churches and hear the good news, but in reality we are confronted by the absolute

secularization of the commercial world. We might see a few Salvation Army bell ringers and the occasional street preacher, but by and large, not only has American business neglected the “technicality” of Christmas being a sacred holiday celebrating Christ’s birth, but many large enterprises seem to have deliberately purged any mention and visibility of Jesus from the enterprise. What has happened in the last 30-40 years is truly breath-taking. Although the extrication of Christ from the business world has happened slowly over time there has been very little protest from the Christian business community.

This is not meant to be some sort of rant or “woe unto us hopelessness” but rather a call to action for those of us in Christian Higher Education to recognize that secularization is not some abstract construct but one that impacts all of us. For dedicated Christians, the apparent exclusion of our faith from the marketplace can lead to frustration and even a bit of despair. True, we are not to have the value system of the world. Yet we live in the world and have a responsibility to transform the world. This should motivate us and our students to reclaim the world-including the business world-for Christ. Too often we as Christians have bought the myth propagated by the media and their “secular missionaries” that we dare not offend someone by asserting our faith. But given the corruption of recent years, it is clear that businesses need a Christian moral compass more than ever.

Before we despair too much, however, it is important to note that many Christians are active in their faith in the business environment even though at times they are not very visible. We need to demonstrate to our students, whenever possible, that there are opportunities in the field to make the message and values of Christ known. While the original intent of the field-based strategy course (when initiated in 2004) was not primarily to advocate faith in the workplace, it has over the years become a very important part of the program. So while much of the discussion in this paper focuses on the nuts and bolts of the program, a much stronger faith-integration component is included as compared to the original 2005 paper. This is one of the most important lessons learned during the nine years!

Policy and Strategy has been a staple offering of business programs for over 30 years in most American business schools. One of the original intentions of this “capstone” course was to encourage and/or force integration of various disciplines within the field of business into a comprehensive whole. In Christian colleges and universities, there is also the possibility of integrating faith into a comprehensive whole. Martinez (2003) provides valuable insights on how we can specifically teach strategy from a Christian Perspective.

There are many different approaches to teaching the capstone course including: a traditional lecture/case analysis mode; supplementing the course with current literature such as Harvard Business Review, Business Week, and Fortune; simulations and business games; utilization of guest speakers; and far less often a limited number of short localized tours. Many CBFA members who teach strategy will also likely included supplemental readings, books and the direct use of Scripture. Sources such Michael Zigarelli’s Christianity 9 to 5 are increasingly providing us with useful and practical articles on a variety of faith integration topics. We are even seeing attempts to develop a Christian view of Strategy, as demonstrated in Leo Salgado’s 2011 JBIB article. Daake (2011), in reviewing Salgado’s work, points out that it is noble pursuit but we have not found an academic stream quite yet. He asserts, though, at least we may have

discovered the headwaters! All of this is encouraging but primarily focuses on what we do inside our classrooms, rather than interacting with the real world of business in a hands-on fashion.

Over the last 30-40 years, the adult education literature has emphasized the importance of hands-on experienced-based learning. Kolb's influential 1984 book made the case for experiential learning. Part-time programs and programs aimed at working adults have tried hard to integrate these concepts into the structure of their education. Much of traditional undergraduate business education (due to various constraints such as schedules, finances, and inflexible load formulas) has failed to utilize more experiential-based, creative approaches.

There is a continuing debate in the Academy of Management (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005) and the Christian Business Faculty Association as well, about relevance and effectiveness in management education. However, the majority of the work has focused on MBA level education. Furthermore, there is a continuing debate in the Academy about relevance and rigor. In Christian teaching institutions we struggle as well. Sometimes in the Christian academy we have been criticized for a lack of rigorous scholarship, although we perhaps do a better job at practical education.

This paper chronicles the development and refinement over nine years of a radically new approach to teaching Business Policy Strategy at the undergraduate level. As suggested earlier, a good share of what is written about management education, whether at the undergraduate or graduate level puts the university at the center of the educational universe. It is usually all about what happens *there within the confines of its ivy walls*. Matter of fact, what little interaction there is between practicing managers and academics is mostly done in an academic setting. Furthermore, this is even more true for the contact between managers and *undergraduate* students. Guest speakers occasionally come to campus. Rarely, if ever, do students go to managers on the manager's home turf.

The execution of a field trip based course is most plausible and appropriate in the summer or in a three-four week inter-term session. My course relies on a combination of approaches configured in novel ways. While no one of these approaches is revolutionary or unique, the combination of these makes it innovative. Many, if not most our students have told us, "It is the best course they have had at the university." At the core of my approach is the "living case" study. During the four week summer term we have on-site visits at 12-15 different companies and organizations, such as Hamburger University (McDonald's), Caterpillar, Alcoa, State Farm, Cigna Insurance, Deere and Company, the CME/CBOT Exchange, McGraw-Hill, Whitey's Ice Cream; Riverside Hospital, the Lincoln Library & Museum and many other large and small organizations. While we do not visit all the companies and organization each year, we have developed a core of particularly popular and useful companies. In total we have about 25-30 companies/organizations to draw upon. Over a period of time, we have found strong Christians in several of the organizations, who are not only willing, but anxious to share their faith in the work environment. Most of us likely bring Christian business people into our classrooms as guest speakers. Without in anyway discounting the efficacy of those encounters, we argue that there is something very powerful and unique about a Christian business person sharing their faith in the "natural" environment and demonstrating that Christ is found in their

business and not excluded as it appears to be too often during the Christmas season as I have “lamented” in the introduction.

We rely exclusively on readings rather than a textbook; we take overnight trips which builds camaraderie among students and faculty and gives us a chance to share our faith in an out of classroom environment; we cover many unconventional topics such as economic development, workplace violence, and manufacturing technology far beyond what is otherwise possible in a traditional format; and we feature conversations with professionals about career development and progress and when appropriate their faith walk. While this course has been an overwhelming success, we have had to overcome barriers and there are inevitable trade-offs we have had to make. This paper chronicles a nine year journey of tradeoffs and lessons learned and adjustments made.

Strategy and Policy as the Capstone Course

As mentioned earlier, one of the original intentions of the strategy “capstone” course was to encourage and/or force integration of various disciplines within the field of business into a comprehensive whole. In practice, business in the past has too often functioned in informational silos. So business schools responded by encouraging a more integrative approach to education. Some of the most important objectives of capstone courses are as follow:

- 1) To help future business leaders understand the comprehensive nature of business and business challenges. Rarely is there any such thing as a strictly management, marketing, accounting, manufacturing, finance, or technology problem. Issues are always more complex than that;
- 2) To better understand how a particular function contributes to the overall business;
- 3) To learn key concepts and develop skills in using tools of analysis from the field of strategic management (since it has developed a rich field of literature in its own right);
- 4) To update students preparing to enter the work force about the latest real world issues that they will confront;
- 5) To build and reinforce team-based skills that are increasingly being demanded by businesses today.
- 6) In faith-based institutions, like ours, demonstrate the importance of a Christian world view and hopefully develop a powerful visible witness to employees and customers alike.

Relevance in Business Education

In 1908, Henri Fayol asked, “Is there a better way to learn to manage other than by experience?” But experience is hard to come by, especially at the undergraduate level. One growing and effective way of gaining experience is through internship programs (Carson & Fisher, 2006) however internship programs are generally limited to one or two businesses and often are at the entry level.

In recent years, much attention is being given to rigor and relevance in business education. It is a very current and important theme (Wren, 2004). But so often, especially at the undergraduate level, where students only have part-time or summer jobs, it is far more difficult for them to relate to theoretical and practical applications of those theories as compared to MBA students. The Academy is not oblivious or unconcerned about management education. There is an ongoing debate and healthy examination as to the relevance of what is being taught

(Anderson, Herriott, Hodgkinson 2001; Bedeian 1998; Bennis, & O'Toole 2005; Braun, 2004; Clinebell & Clinebell 2008; Pfeffer, Fong, 2003). And yet, much of it focuses on graduate or executive education as if “mere” undergraduate education is of little real concern.

This paper chronicles an innovative approach that schools should consider. I believe the approach has great merit and is worthy of emulation. Our *business field partners* (those hosting our visits) have remarked over and over again how lucky our students are to have this type of program and their cooperation has been phenomenal. While some of these ideas were recently presented to a secular academic audience, in that environment the total story could not be told! The good news is for Christian faith-based colleges and universities, the added dimension of in-person, hands-on faith discussions is influential with our students

Phillips and Phillips (2002) argue that students not only expect an education that is relevant to their career, but also appreciate this approach and evaluate these courses higher. They have suggested that effective professors use a variety of techniques including practical examples, internships, guest speakers, classroom assignments, technology, and they encourage their students to participate in academically-related organizations. However, through an extensive research of both the academic and practitioner business instruction literature, we have not been able to find any examples of a comprehensive strategy course designed around field trips.

As stated earlier, Policy and Strategy has been the foundation capstone course for over 30 years in most business schools. This author holds a Ph.D. in strategy from Florida State University -a leading strategy institution. I have been experimenting with novel and innovative ways to teach the course over the last 20 years. The original co-developer of the course Gary Koch spent many years at Procter and Gamble, and was keenly aware of the need to make education relevant, interesting, and academically sound. He holds a Ph.D. in psychology. There are many different approaches to teaching the capstone course including:

- Traditional lecture/case analysis
- Supplementing the course with current literature such as Harvard Business Review, Business Week, and Fortune
- Simulations and business games
- Utilization of guest speakers
- Use of a limited number of short, localized tours.
- Inclusion of Christian Business persons and alumni to talk specifically about faith integration issues

While Olivet Nazarene University continues to offer the traditional strategy course with considerable success, we began to recognize several limitations in the traditional course including the following issues.

- Most case studies are hopelessly outdated even in new books. For example, even 2012 copyrighted books carry cases most of which were written with 2011 or earlier data. Use of even “new” cases usually requires considerable updating and revision. A few years ago I helped author some case notes for an Organization Theory textbook. Two of the companies featured as exemplary and cutting-edge were Enron and Tyco Industries! While classic cases are instructive, more often than not the issues are dramatically

different today. Many publishers are now coming out with non-case version books because of this problem.

- Utilizing current literature and guest speakers can be helpful, but this still lacks the realism that many students crave.
- Field visits, which are highly beneficial, are difficult to do given the normal school year scheduling. For institutions located in small communities, the quality and variety available are often very limited.
- By the time they are seniors, many students have heard the entire lingo about JIT, lean manufacturing, program planning, globalization, strategy formulation and implementation, sustainability, CSR, etc., but often question whether these things are really used in the “real world”. Many business schools and textbooks have in fact tended to de-emphasize manufacturing in recent years and our students do not have adequate exposure to these topics.
- Many of our students end up in careers in non-business environments such as non-profit institutions, government, or other types of service organizations, and most traditional strategy textbooks and courses do not adequately cover these quasi-business organizations.
- Relationship building is an important aspect of an education at institutions such as Olivet Nazarene University. Given the teaching load we have, other institutional responsibilities, and the ever increasing class sizes, it is difficult to develop the more personal relationships that both our students and we desire. Students seeing professors faith outside of the classroom has a powerful impact.

Experiential Education

For the last 30-40 years, adult education literature has emphasized the importance of hands-on experience-based learning. Technically speaking, most of our students fall outside of the age range of what has traditionally been associated with “adult” students. Nevertheless, since they are in their early twenties, much of what has been learned in the adult education field also applies to these young adults. Kolb’s (1984) landmark work suggests that experiential learning proceeds through 4 modes including: concrete experience; abstract conceptualization, reflective observation, and active experimentation. We argue that the approach we have taken in this field-based course engages students in at least the first three stages, whereas conventional classroom techniques or even the use of case studies is far less effective. The training and development profession has developed thousands of training programs that emphasize participant involvement. Part-time programs and programs aimed at working adults have strived to integrate these concepts into the structure of education. Those of us, who have attended academic conferences that build in faculty field trips as part of the conference, can testify years later to the value that we have personally gained through these trips. For example, this author has had the chance to have in-person field visits as part of the CBFA conferences at Saturn (Tennessee), Micron (Boise), Walker Manufacturing (Virginia), the NBA San Antonio Spurs, and Boeing (Seattle), and Rolls Royce (Ohio) to name a few. These trips enlighten us as professors and serve as a source of relevant examples in our classrooms for many years.

Still, so much of traditional undergraduate business education (due to various constraints such as schedules, finances, inflexible load formulas) has deterred more imaginative approaches. According to Angelidis, Tomic & Ibrahim(2004, p. 32):

“Over the years much criticism has been directed against academia arguing that it is inward focused and preoccupied with abstract ideas and fanciful ideals, that it has become isolated from the complex and dynamic social environment, and that its graduates lack the educational preparation for the real world. Among the disciplines, business is critically positioned to play a significant role in academia’s reconnection with society.”

Most of us teaching strategy have already forsaken the “pure” lecture in our classrooms for more varied and creative approaches such as discussions, team work, cases, guest speakers and perhaps the occasional field trip. Many faculty at our institutions have come out of the business world and are well aware of the need to blend sound theory with practical examples. That having been said, we also realize that many of our students have a hard time really grasping concepts like corporate culture, JIT, lean manufacturing, or global marketing without experiencing these up close and personal. Internships and service learning projects have become a popular way to bridge the gap (Angelidis, Tomic & Nabil, 2004). Stuart and Tax (1994) point out that experiential methods tend to facilitate learning by increasing the level of cognitive activity. As good as internships are, they are usually limited to one or two companies for most students or to none for those not required to take an internship.

Ironically, an extensive search of the literature reveals that most of the emphasis on industrial or business field trips is at the K-12 level and in study abroad programs (Duke 2000). Skydel (2002) writes about how Mack Trucks takes tours out to high school students to encourage technical career choices. Regarding overseas programs, Duke states that company visits are always impressive to students and they should be included. By logical extension, we would argue that the same could be said about our courses. Field trips for grade school children up through high school have become quite popular and many host organizations believe they are fulfilling an important civic responsibility in conducting these.

However, over the last 10-15 years the trend has been towards fewer tours being available to the public. This has happened for a number of reasons including:

1. Leaner staffs that don’t have time to provide these tours;
2. Tours can be disruptive to the workers at a business in many cases;
3. Homeland security issues;
4. Trade secrets and proprietary technology;
5. Regulations such as HIPPA in the medical field;
6. Insurance and liability issues.

On the other hand, companies and organizations are re-discovering tours as a potential marketing tool. Mitchell and Orwig (2002) state that the use of manufacturing tours, company museums, and company visitor centers can be used as strategic tools to strengthen the bond between consumers and brands. GM went so far as to consider putting Web-accessible cameras in its factories to allow consumers to watch the assembly of their vehicle (Mitchell and Orwig, 2002). Deere and Caterpillar both encourage their customers to watch their equipment as it is assembled. Matter of fact, John Deere has its *Gold Key Program* where the owner of a new

combine, often costing in excess of \$250,000, gets to start it up and drive it off of the line. Many organizations are looking at tours again due to the following reasons:

1. To build a connection for the brand and the company to the consumer;
2. To be used as a recruiting tool for prospective employees;
3. To be good corporate citizens;
4. To utilize the tour as a general public relations tool.

On balance, though, the net effect has been more difficulty in arranging for specialized tours for students and the general public. While not impossible, arranging good field trips became a real challenge for us.

The Genesis of a New Approach to Teaching Business Strategy

In the summer of 2004, Dr. Koch who is an industrial psychologist and Dr. Daake strategist, pioneered a new approach to the teaching our Policy and Strategy capstone course. The idea was not wholly original, but grew out of the European International Business Institute (IBI) experience pioneered by Professor Bob Bartel of Wheaton College (Illinois) over 35 years ago. I was a professor in the IBI program for seven weeks in the summer of 2003 and traveled to ten different countries. Through my observation and participation in corporate visits in Europe that ranged from Nokia in Finland to Deere in Germany, to the European Central bank in Frankfurt, Germany, it occurred to me that a “domestic” version could be just as effective and within reach financially for many more of our students. (The current cost for IBI is approximately \$18,000. Our summer course has a total cost of approximately \$1,500 for a three credit hour course). The summer format is especially attractive because we are able to have the students for four consecutive days for four weeks. Furthermore, students are only allowed to take our one summer school course because of the field trip component that often requires all day commitments as outlined below. (The only exception we make is for online courses that do not interfere with our trips.) Our original intention was to limit the class to a maximum of 20 students. But across the last eight years our average enrollment has been about 18, but it has ranged from 12-23 students.

The Nuts and Bolts of the Program Curriculum

One of the tradeoffs that we had to make was the selection of topics since our total classroom time is only about 10-12 hours. We have another 20-25 hours in corporate visits and an additional 15-20 hours in travel time. During our field trips, we frequently engage in debriefing and sense-making from our experiences. Table 2 lists some of these tradeoffs. It is necessary to compromise the depth of coverage on some traditional topics. No textbook is used so we rely on limited book chapters and many current articles from relevant journals including articles from faith-based publications and scriptural references. Still we are true to the academic literature covering key core course concepts that are essential. Most of the journals were copied for the students as part of the course fee or easily available on the Internet. We are conscious of copyright laws in doing this.

Since summer school at Olivet Nazarene University is done in a four week format, it is critical to get the course up and running very quickly. The class generally meets Monday and Tuesday from 8-10 a.m. and then from one half to all day on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

for the applied field trips. We take several out of town field trips including one overnight trip to the Quad Cities (Illinois/Iowa). A key feature (modeled after the IBI program) is that the students are required to complete two-page briefing reports in a pre-defined format over these visits. ***In the 2012 class students will also be asked to complete a short section as to how their faith could be incorporated into some aspect of what they have experienced.*** Due to the reduced amount of in-class time, most of the class time is devoted to fast-paced, compact lectures and interactive discussions.

An important element in field visits is a basic understanding of the organizations we are about to visit. Each student is required to give a 10-15 minute overview of one of the visits two to three days before the actual visit. Case studies are an important part of normal business strategy course techniques and have both detractors and supporters (Christensen & Carlile (2009). While we still endorse the use of some sort of cases studies, earlier we argued that timely, current cases are difficult to find. This class does not do extensive case studies from a text, as is often done in a typical strategy class; rather our field trips are designed to be “*living*” case studies. Not only does the course prepare students ahead of time for what they are going to see, but we also have on-site discussions among students, faculty, and hosts as well as extensive reflective time in the classroom later about what the students have heard, seen, and experienced, which is consistent with Kolb’s (1984) mode 3 of reflection. Table 1 lists a *sampling* of site visits along with the major topics that are typically discussed and some observations regarding these particular visits. Across the last eight years we have visited over 25 different organizations. We deliberately schedule tours and experiences to broaden our students’ perspective on businesses and other organizations, build group coherence, and sharpen analytical and observation skills.

Developing Field Visit Sites and Contacts

In the wake of 9/11 and the “lean and mean” environment that most businesses find themselves in, it was a challenge to find quality sites for visits especially in the early years. (Subsequent years have become somewhat easier because virtually all of the sites we have visited have been so impressed with our students and the program that we are welcomed back year after year.) Olivet Nazarene University is within driving distance of Chicago, but we still need to rely on both local and remote sites. The day of open factories and offices is fast ending. Public tours are less and less frequent. Over a period of months and weeks we started making contacts. Because of my secondary position as Director of Olivet Nazarene’s Leadership Center and being on the board of directors of the local chamber of commerce, we were able to assemble several excellent local visits, including a major medical center. At the medical center, the CEO personally took us on a tour of the facility and showed us some of the latest state of the art medical technology, including the DaVinci surgical robot. We have been able to visit the local newspaper and watch the presses run- a sight very few of us had ever seen before. To provide variety, we have the executive director of the local YMCA talk about non-profit management and a Park District Executive Director talk about his job and role in a quasi-government organization.

(See Table 1 for a more complete list) Please note “*” designates a presentation where a deliberate Christian testimony is made by the managers/owners).

Out of Town Visits

Caterpillar at Aurora-This visit was very hard to come by at first, but has become a highlight of the summer course for the last eight consecutive years. Cat personnel spend three-four hours with our students. Students, in many cases learn more about manufacturing technology and globalization in those four hours than they might in four years of course work. The Caterpillar Aurora plant has global responsibilities and is among the most modern US manufacturing factories including housing several multi- million dollar laser welding robots.

Deere and Company-Moline, Illinois*

Deere is one of those companies that still does public tours. We visit the Harvester Works Combine factory and then get a walking tour of their beautiful corporate headquarters. For the last four years, however, we have been hosted by a high level manager who directs quality services on a global basis. Because of the growing relationship with him and the company, he has also been a guest speaker for our students and business community at Olivet Nazarene University twice in the last three years. He and his wife also provide a scholarship program for our students.

Celebration Dinner Cruise-Mississippi River-The Quad Cities has undergone tremendous changes and de-industrialization. The area has worked diligently to re-invent itself into a travel destination and gaming center. This of course is very controversial, and we want our students to grapple with the tradeoffs this implies. The Celebration Cruise is a non-gambling boat; nevertheless, we were able to view the redevelopment of the cities and have frank discussions about the pros and cons of the “gaming” industry.

Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago-They give a good, but standard, overview of the Reserve System.

CME/CBOT-This is a wonderful chance to see up “close and personal” the largest active trading floor in the United States along with a short lecture. Students are also introduced to the Globex electronic trading system which is transforming commodity trading on a worldwide basis.

Chicago Architectural Foundation River Cruise- For two years this was an option for the students, but we paid for those who wanted to go. Chicago is a world-class business city and the home of much of modern architecture and the development of many business innovations and concepts.

U.S. Cellular Field (Chicago White Sox)-This is very popular with sports management students. We get a behind the scenes tour of their conference rooms, skyboxes, dining rooms and a chance to go down to the dugout area. We pay \$5.00 a person but this money is donated to the White Sox Charities Foundation. Students really start to grasp that professional sports is a big business and strategic in nature.

Hamburger University and the Hyatt Lodge at McDonald's-The hospitality business is an important industry and the staff of the hotel provided us with an overview of their work. A walking tour of McDonald's Hamburger University was also featured. Although students from around the world learn of Hamburger U., very few ever get a chance to visit the campus.

Good's Furniture-This is a nationally famous small business organization that has bucked the trend against superstores and has revolutionized the local town's economy as a result. The owners spent about 1 ½ hours with our students revealing their secrets of success.

City of Ottawa (Illinois), Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, Ottawa Economic Development While this seems like an unusual visit, it was done for two years to make our students more aware of the opportunity and responsibility they will some day have in local communities to make a significant public service contribution. Ottawa has done what very few medium size towns (population of about 19,000) have been able to do-rejuvenate its downtown and stimulate major tourism. As part of this trip, we also visited a beautiful WPA lodge at Starved Rock State Park and provided a little historical perspective for our students.

Alcoa- This is one of the world's largest rolling mills. It is one thing to talk about capital intensive industries, but quite another thing to see hundreds of millions of dollars invested in massive capital equipment.

Costs

Currently students pay our normal summer tuition of \$1200 per course + a \$375 travel/material fee. Because there is no textbook, the students still get high value. The \$375 fee includes most travel including out of town trips, several meals, admission charges, and a hotel for two nights, the dinner cruise, and all handout materials.

TABLE 1 Sample Site Visits and Topics
 While this varies from year to year, this is typical
***Faith based testimony as part of presentation**

Place or activity	Topics emphasized or covered	Additional comments
*Deere & Company- Harvester Works (Combine manufacturing) Moline, Illinois; Deere and Company Corporate Headquarters (Total of 3 hours)	JIT, lean manufacturing; advanced manufacturing techniques; downsizing and corporate re-alignment; globalization; labor relations; corporate culture; career planning <i>Christian witness in a large manufacturing firm</i>	Students get an up close view of manufacturing operations in one of the world’s most technologically advanced facilities. We also get a tour of the corporate headquarters and have the opportunity to ask questions of an experienced executive and a global strategist.
*Whitey’s Ice Cream Moline, Illinois 60 minute stop	Small business expansion and success; integrating values into the business. Christian entrepreneurs who live their faith daily	Whitey’s is a very successful mid- sized business that has 11 stores in the Quad Cities; they could have easily expanded into a regional franchise operation but instead have chosen to remain a successful small/medium size business rather than lose the character of the company.
Celebration Dinner Cruise/ (optional casino visit)	Economic redevelopment; the tourism industry; utilizing natural resources as a basis of economic redevelopment; ethics related to the gaming industry	While the primary reason is dinner and fellowship on this 2 hour cruise, we used this experience to talk about economic redevelopment, and the issue of “gaming” and the ethics related to that. For those students who wanted to do a quick walk- through of a casino, we provide that opportunity. The students found it a sobering experience to see not only the demographics but also a rather depressing atmosphere.
Good’s Furniture Kewanee, Illinois 2 hour tour	Small business innovation, marketing and advertising; inventory control; competitive advantage and distinctive competence; economic development	A premiere nationally known furniture retailer that has not only grown into a large regional distributor but has become a tourist destination and an engine to revitalize this small western Illinois town.
*City of LeClaire, Iowa (Home base of American Pickers)	Public/private partnerships; economic development; long range planning; tourism industry; marketing and advertising. Our host is Christian Advertising firm owner who shares his community involvement	Executive Director of Chamber and a member of redevelopment group did a luncheon presentation and walking tour of the city including a visit at the American Pickers Store.

*YMCA, Kankakee	Non-profit management; marketing; budget development and financial management; organizational culture. Living out the Christian mission of the YMCA-executive director is strong Christian	Executive director presented the overview and presented decisions they are facing and asked for student input.
Daily Journal Director of Advertising and news Editor of the Journal	Marketing and advertising; materials management; logistics and distribution; organizational culture; women in management; environmental concerns; strategic business alliances issues and recycling	Students get a tour of the production facility and are briefed by the Director of Advertising. Then a News Editor gave us an overview of the editorial side of the business.
Caterpillar, Aurora Large earth moving factory An amazing 4 hour tour!	JIT; Inventory control; advanced manufacturing techniques including robotics CAD/CAD; materials management; logistics; competitive advantage; globalization; labor relations; strategic alliances; corporate culture; training and development; financial analysis; career planning; energy management	Generally one of the favorite tours of most students. Three Cat personnel spend up to four hours with us. The tour is up close and we were shown several models from start to finish. Visiting two world-class manufacturing facilities gives our students the opportunity to compare and contrast the relative strengths and weaknesses of Deere and Cat.
The Hyatt Lodge at McDonald's & Hamburger University Overnight stay	High performance customer service; marketing; information systems management; an overview of the hospitality industry; culture; training and development; strategic partnerships	Staying over night at this newly renovated hotel allowed us to experience first hand Hyatt hospitality. Four Hyatt managers gave us an overview of the hospitality industry and how they use customer service, information systems, and Hyatt know-how to provide a competitive advantage.
CME/CBOT	Financial management, hedging; electronic trading; globalization of monetary system and trading; career management; HR issues related to stress management, training, avoiding workplace violence; security issues	A state of the art look at floor trading and electronic trading in real time.
The Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago	Financial markets and banking; security issues related to banking; federal policy and the basic working of the economic system	Even though this is standard public presentation, the students benefit by getting a chance to hear first-hand about the workings of the Fed and how this relates to the current business climate.

CIGNA Insurance	Human resources; training and development; an overview of the insurance industry; competitive advantage; distinctive competence; management information systems as a competitive advantage; financial comparisons to key competitors; work-at-home program	This is one of our county's largest employers and is a state of the art claims processing center. Students are given a company overview and a tour of the facility and shown the technological basis of their competitive advantage.
White Sox- U.S. Cellular Field	Sports management; training and development; hospitality and food service; marketing; advertising; community and public relations	Many of our students have an interest in sports management. This tour provides an inside look at sports management as well as marketing and management of a professional sports team.
McGraw-Hill Dubuque, Iowa Added for the first time in 2011	Technology and publishing; Team work and cooperation; Changing nature of digital media and teaching technologies	Both students and the company were appreciative, not only about learning more about each other, but in sharing career advice.

Tradeoffs

In the process of building this program we faced a number of important tradeoffs. Issues relating to content breadth of coverage, the balance between field trips and traditional classroom time, the costs to the students, evaluation methods, and several other issues had to be faced. Table 2 below summarizes the most important tradeoffs we faced and how we resolved these. We have certainly made some adjustments across the last eight years.

TABLE 2 Tradeoffs

ISSUE or TRADEOFF	STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH THIS ISSUE
The course is really a hybrid strategy Strategy Course with additional topics beyond traditional strategy topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students have to do more outside readings and are assigned take-home quizzes over readings. Students are generally not use to this level of reading in such a short time and would prefer we reduce the load, but this is one of the prices that has to be paid in this format. ✓ There is actually considerable overlap between disciplines and students learn concepts from multiple perspectives. Students learn an important lesson about discipline cross-over. ✓ The field trips often raise not only the basic topics but demonstrate complex interactions. ✓ Some topics covered in other core business courses in reality, received less emphasis.
The first two years the course was team taught. That would have continued accept Dr. Koch left for another university. Team teaching is more expensive and requires careful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ First and foremost you need to be teamed up with someone you like, respect and is willing to learn and integrate across disciplines. The utilization of ONE Blackboard program for both instructors facilitated student/faculty communication. ✓ We are fortunate that in the summer environment a course must have 6 people (per instructor) to receive full pay. In 2004 we had 17 and in 2005 we had 23. Olivet Nazarene's structure (at least

<p>coordination</p>	<p>for now) allowed for both of us to receive full summer pay. Since we now do this course solo, the issue is now moot. As of 2011, we had 12 students enrolled which covers all our costs and allows Olivet Nazarene University to still gross about \$7,000. So they are quite happy with the course!</p>
<p>No textbook, rather we relied on journal articles and 2-3 key chapters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The \$100-120 text savings makes the \$375 travel fee more palatable to the students. ✓ The cost of duplication of articles is substantial but we are able to cover that with other savings. ✓ Total readings involved about 250-300 pages over the four weeks which was a challenge for the students. ✓ Take home written quizzes are utilized to assure that students read the material. ✓ Readings are directly tied to field trips we are about to take or have just taken.
<p>Given the intensity of the course, we meet in the classroom 2 days a week for 2 hours and then meet 2-3 days a week (half and full days) for field trips. This greatly reduces the lecture time in class and forces the use of most of that time in a lecture/discussion format rather than group activities, case discussion and so forth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Our lectures are fast paced and we rely on students to read that materials without always taking time in class to go over the material. Some students want us to spend more time covering these readings. Several students suggested we extend the course to a fifth week. ✓ We shifted to individual presentations to prepare for visits. Also in 2010 started requiring personal strategic plans. ✓ Lectures are so much more productive after field trips because we have real life <i>current</i> examples the students can relate to. ✓ The use of “briefing reports” for visits is an indispensable bridge between the in-class lectures, readings, and field trips.
<p>Students were charged an additional \$375 travel fee beyond tuition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This tends to be a very reasonable fee, but in later years we have done a better job of communicating with students as to what the fee is buying. The students do not have to buy a text and we provide readings. ✓ For the fee, the students get travel costs paid including bus transportation, most meals when traveling, two overnights at a hotel, and paid admission to sites that charge. ✓ The \$375 fee is up from the initial \$200 in 2004. Still we have to very closely manage our funds to not run over the allocated budget. On balance, the students feel they get their money’s worth.
<p>Given the nature of the course we had to be creative in student evaluation and grading.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We end up utilizing several grading methods that supported the format of the course including: take-home quizzes over readings; a participation grade that emphasizes not only in-class discussion but active participation in field trip discussions; a PSP (10-12 pages); a take home final integrative exam; and the very important briefing reports.

Lessons Learned from Nine Years' Experience

Continuous quality improvement is an important aspect of education. It is an expectation of our department, institution and accrediting agencies. We have had very positive feedback, not only from our students but from our partners in the field. For example, our visit in May 2011 we got this response from our hosts at McGraw-Hill who sent this follow-up e-mail the same day of our visit.

“Professor

Thank you so much for bringing your class to visit us today! We had a blast showing you all around, answering your questions, and getting to know you guys. I was pulled aside by our Building Manager, this afternoon and she gushed over your students. She said that your students are “far above the average student. They blew us (She and our HR manager) away with their engagement and positive attitudes.” I have never heard Lori gush in the 6 years that I have worked here so that’s pretty impressive. Also, she and Dana meet with tons of students every semester and your group was outstanding! I hope that you enjoyed your trip to Dubuque and let me know if you are ever in town again.”

Along with the positive responses we have received useful suggestions from many sources and our experience has taught us much. Below is a summary of what we have learned and some useful suggestions for anyone considering a similar program.

Field-based courses are very effective in the learning process

Literature cited earlier in the paper makes the case for efficacy of field trips. One thing we have noticed that returning students (those who take it before their senior year) are much more attentive and engaged in follow-up courses. Students who take this between their junior and senior years are likely to benefit the most. Some sample comments from students are listed below:

“I loved the versatility of the class. Instead of dreading going to class in the morning, I actually looked forward to going. I learned a lot better through actually seeing what was going on.”

“Going on trips to various business facilities gave me a real world look at some of the business organizations we may be interested in working at in the future.”

“I liked the amount of diversity we were exposed to on the field trips. That kind of learning and integration of business strategies just couldn’t have been captured in the classroom.”

“The format that emphasized experiential learning especially being a capstone course, actually seeing companies acting out what we’ve been learning, is very memorable. The perspectives from two different fields were tremendous.”

Realistically, summer is the only time this approach can be used

While this sounds obvious, it cannot be over emphasized. An inter-term might work but it poses traveling difficulties. It also means that a student cannot take more than one summer class during this timeframe. We had a student or two try to do this with disastrous consequences. We have, however, considered expanding the format to allow two courses to be taught

simultaneously and sharing field trips. This would require meeting three days a week in the classroom and for three-four hours per class. That way, a student could get six hours of credit rather than just three. For now, though, we plan on staying with the current format.

This experience is financially viable for most students

Many students cannot afford expensive trips out of the country. Overseas trips or even trips across country can frequently cost thousands of dollars. At this point, we are not aware of any university in the United States doing this type of field-based experiential course. IBI's excellent overseas course now tops \$18,000. The total cost of our program including tuition, fees and travel fee is about \$1500. This cost has made a high quality field-based experience available to virtually all of our students.

Businesses are willing to support and embrace this type of program

It takes substantial efforts and relationship building over years to make these connections. One of our prime visits again this year was Caterpillar. It took a lot of creative contacts to get into Cat the first year in 2004. This year we were welcomed back with open arms. A number of our hosts remark to the students "how lucky you are to have this sort of experience" and they continue to be impressed with what they consider to be an innovative program. Frankly, Olivet Nazarene University is not as well-known as we would like to be, but now these companies know us, and it makes it far more likely that a student searching for a job will be granted an interview.

You have got to be extremely flexible and "go with the flow"

As with any travel program, flexibility is the key. Timing of multiple visits during the same day is usually necessary but the logistics can present some problems. Even though it might mean students and faculty have in between waiting time, we recommend building in plenty of slack time since showing up on time at corporate visits is absolutely essential. We are careful to give our corporate hosts our time frames for the presentations and suggested topics.

This approach to Policy and Strategy breaks lots of conventional rules but the testimonies from the students encourage us to continue the course

As outlined in Table 2, we have made several tradeoffs to make this course a reality. But overall, we believe the benefits far outweigh the liabilities. We have had overwhelming positive feedback from our students. But they continue to make suggestions which we are evaluating for the future. My experience with this course over the last eight years confirms the adult education literature that strongly endorses hands-on experiential education. The strongest endorsements come from students who highly recommend this course to their peers.

Travel and intense experiences like this build community and will be remembered and valued for years to come.

As our school continues to grow, it becomes more difficult to foster close relationships between students and faculty. This approach makes a real difference. This has been especially noticeable among students who take this course between their junior and senior years. For both the returning students and the faculty, the personal relationships endure and grow.

The field-based approach can be especially effective in a faith-integration approach.

From briefing reports, to testimonies, to seeing real business people live out their faith, this has now become a more deliberate and important objective of the program.

Above all, this course is an integrative experience that not only covers traditional strategy topics, but emphasizes larger issues like economic development, community responsibility, historical context, industry context, social and economic justice and Christian faith.

Because of the range and scope of visits, and the special emphasis on community, sustainability, and economic development we believe our students have a unique experience. Too often college students come to campus from all over the USA and isolate themselves from the day to day issues that will ultimately impact their careers, families, and communities. Ultimately we hope our graduates will not only be successful in their careers, but also become more involved in the social, economic, and development issues of their communities. If Christ is to be put back into society and Christmas (as reflected in the opening lamentation), business and commerce must lead the way.

CONCLUSION and FUTURE RESEARCH

Over the last nine years a great deal has been learned about offering a summer field-based strategy course. Modifications have been made, the list of cooperating organizations has grown, and we continually modify the course content. We continue to get strong support, not only from our students, but also from our host companies. The immediate reaction of students, based on course evaluations and verbal comments, is extremely positive. Conversations with alumni even five or six years later confirm the positive impact this course has had. That having been said, the evidence for course efficacy is largely anecdotal. The next step is a more formal research project to further explore both quantitatively and qualitatively the long range effects of the course. Does it really prepare students any better for their careers? Do our faith-integration efforts in this context really make much difference and if so in what ways? Having offered this course for nine years, we now have about 140 students who have completed this course. The next step is to track down as many of these alumni as possible and do a more formal study.

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