# Course Activities

The activities in this course will be divided between team and individual assignments.

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| Type | Assignment | Points | Percent of Grade |
| Team | Strategy Selection | 2 points | 2% |
| Team | Business Simulation | 30 points (1+24+5) | 30% |
| Team | Industry Analyst Call | 8 points | 8% |
| Team | Company Scenarios | 4 points (x2) | 8% |
| Individual | Company Scenario | 4 points | 4% |
| Individual | Knowledge Checks (top 5 out of 7) | 2 points (x5) | 10% |
| Individual | CompXM | 20 points | 20% |
| Individual | Yellowdig Discussion | 10 points | 10% |
| Individual | Live Sessions | 6 points | 6% |
| Individual | Course Reflection | 2 points | 2% |

## Team Activities

### Strategy Selection

At the beginning of the simulation, your team faces an unusual business situation – all companies and products are identical to each other. In the real world this situation rarely if ever occurs. The closest analog might be a highly regulated industry.

Looking into the future, the simulated industry will rapidly differentiate. Nothing you can do will stop it. Given time, the industry will evolve into a state where competitors occupy defendable strategic positions. There are two important questions. “How long will the process take?” “Will two or more competitors attempt to occupy the same position?”

Let’s use an analogy. Picture a flat landscape. Now imagine several hills placed on the landscape. Each of the hills represents a strategy. Your success depends upon how quickly you can identify a hill, and how high you can climb it. Your hope is that you will choose a hill that nobody else picks, and that you can defend it against competitors. Complicating this is the fact that some hills are more attractive than others. Further, the more companies trying to climb a particular hill, the more difficult it is for each of them to successfully climb it.

Are there methods and techniques that will help you identify and select these strategic hills? Yes, the general topic is widely discussed. Let’s look at one of the most commonly referenced, Michael Porter’s “Generic Strategies”. Read the description on Capsim’s blog (<http://www.capsim.com/blog/an-introduction-to-porters-generic-strategies/>).

Next, review the Student Guide, "6 Basic Strategies."

With this as background, select or develop a strategy you would like your team to pursue. Prepare and submit an argument for your strategy. The argument should address these issues:

1. **Segments**. Which segments matter to you? How much share of those segments must you achieve to be an “average competitor” in the overall industry? For example, if you choose to play only in Traditional and Low End, you would have to command a higher share of those segments to achieve “average industry sales”.
2. Profit **potential**.
3. The **speed** at which you can create a defendable position. For example, new products typically take two years to bring to market. Significant productivity improvements could take several years.
4. **Priorities**. Which products are most important to you? Which are least important?
5. Goals and priorities for **each of the functional areas** (R&D, marketing, production, and finance).
6. **Logistics**. How your team plans to communicate and make decisions in the simulation.

### Business Simulation

To provide you with an experiential activity that will allow you to apply theories of strategic management, you will complete six (6) rounds of Capstone, a business simulation from Capsim, as a member of a team. The simulation will require you to make decisions in multiple departments (Research and Development, Marketing, Production, and Finance). In order to help you with cross-departmental decision-making, your team is encouraged to discuss all decisions for all departments, rather than having individual team members claiming sole responsibility for a particular department. This will assist you later in the course when you complete an individual exam that includes making decisions in all departments. You will be scored in both short- (round-by-round) and long-term (overall balanced scorecard) performance. *Your performance scores can be impacted by your team review of your participation using the TeamMATE assessment in Rounds 3 and 6.*

### Beyond the Numbers Company Scenarios

Associated with the simulation will be a selection of Beyond the Numbers scenarios that you will address. These will require you to pull information from the Capstone Courier and/or extrapolate beyond the simulation to make decisions related to operating your company. You will complete two (2) of the scenarios as a team and one (1) as an individual.

### Industry Analyst Call

The Industry Analyst Call will give your team the opportunity to present company performance results and answer specific questions on the operation of your company. Teams in the course will be assigned pairings. Each team will perform in the role as a management team in one call and as an industry analyst in the other call. Each call should be **no more than 20 minutes**. The video call will include a presentation and will be recorded to share with interested stakeholders. The management team should address the following issues (10-12 minutes):

1. Provide context with a brief overview of the company history (Round 0 – 6) and your strategy.
2. Provide a summary of results from your company performance. How has the performance fluctuated over the life of the company? How has the actual performance differed from your expectations? *Use data from your Courier reports to back up your claims. Be sure to address all departments.*
3. Describe your next course of action and the reasoning for your plan.

The industry analysts will ask the management team follow up questions about rival companies (e.g. which company is your strongest competitor? In what ways? Why?) and based on current and past decisions, the analysts should ask further questions about the company’s plans for future actions (e.g. what are they forgetting or overlooking? Do you agree with their recommendations?). Industry analyst questions will be evaluated as part of their respective management team’s call submission.

## Individual Activities

### Knowledge Checks

There will be regular knowledge checks in the course that will cover your understanding of information from the readings for the course. The knowledge checks will ensure that you are keeping on track with the schedule for the course materials and will assess your surface level understanding. They will be presented as quizzes that include multiple choice and true-false questions and open-ended response questions. The quizzes will be timed and the multiple-choice options pull from a pool of questions. They will all be available online in the course site and you may complete them early if you desire. There are seven (7) total checks and your top five (5) scores will be recorded in the gradebook. You are honor-bound to complete the quizzes by yourself, without assistance from any other person (see The University of Nebraska Student Code of Conduct).

### CompXM

The final element of the business simulation is a comprehensive and individual exam. Participating in the business simulation as a team should have prepared you to complete this exam as an individual. The Comp-XM industry has four market segments and as an individual you are the sole decision maker for the Andrews company. Andrews competes against three computer companies, Baldwin, Chester and Digby. The Comp-XM simulation runs for four rounds. Simulation performance is judged using a Balanced Scorecard. For each round, a score is generated based on performance measures in these categories:

* Financial
* Internal Business Process
* Customer
* Learning and Growth

At the end of Round 4, a fifth score is generated using a different set of measures that evaluate the cumulative performance for Rounds 1-4. You will also answer five sets of multiple-choice questions, called Board Queries. The questions are common for each student, but the answers are based on each individual simulation. This makes the questions comparable but the answers unique. This is considered the final exam for the course.

### Discussion

Part of thinking strategically requires you to be aware of what is happening in the world around you and to think about how those events and discussions relate to you and your firm/industry. To encourage you to relate course concepts to day-to-day events in the business world, you will follow stories and reports in business publications such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *Bloomberg Business Week*, and *Fortune*. You will use Yellowdig in Canvas to share relevant articles and videos found on the web, and specifically tie those to what you are learning in the course. In order to encourage consistent reading and commenting, you will be able to earn full credit only by participating regularly.

### Live Sessions

Each week of the course, we will conduct one synchronous meeting in Zoom. These will be opportunities for you to watch a short presentation about a topic in the course, then interact with your peers on the topic. I will also provide information about the simulation (debriefing rounds and discussing various topics such as forecasting, TQM, sales and promo budgets, etc.). You will need to either participate during the live session, or watch the recording and post a response after the session.

### Course Reflection

You will each prepare an individual course summary document reflecting on your learning in the course. Your report should include answers to the following questions:

1. What did you learn about strategy overall (include theoretical, applied, practical integrations)?
2. What did you learn about strategy from the simulation that you did not learn in the rest of the course materials?
3. How well did your team understand and anticipate the external environment to understand your competitors?
4. What did you learn about the role of financial resources in decision making?
5. Which elements of your team and individual decision making do you wish you could have improved? Of which elements of your team and individual decision making are you most proud?
6. What did you as a team do well, and what could you work on given another chance to work together?
7. What did you as an individual learn most about yourself as a decision-maker?