AOF Business Economics

Overview of Culminating Project

Project Description

In this project, students form consulting teams and vie for a long-term contract as management consultants to a major avocado grower and distributor. By applying basic concepts of business economics, groups learn to analyze relevant financial information in order to recommend strategies for increasing the company’s profitability. Teams present their strategic recommendations via a poster or PowerPoint presentation to their client. The driving question for the project is, “How can we, as consultants in a competitive economy, best help our potential client respond to the opportunities and threats in the marketplace?”

Students work cooperatively in groups of three or four. Each group chooses two ways to help the fictional company, Awesome Avocados, meet its goals from five possible choices: reducing production costs, investing in R & D, lobbying for protection, buying shares in foreign avocado companies, and/or purchasing land abroad and undertaking production there.

Project Components

Over the course of this project, students produce the following pieces:

* Project Guide: Know, Need to Know Chart
* An elevator pitch to show understanding of the economics behind the prices, costs, and profits of Awesome Avocados over the past two years and predict profit for the next year
* Project Guide: Competition Presentation
* Strategy recommendations letter to the CEO that includes data analysis and strategies for staying successful in an increasingly global avocado industry
* Project Guide: Planning Your Presentation
* Poster or PowerPoint presentation
* Speaker’s notes for presentation
* Oral presentation

Assessment

There are five main assessments for the project:

* The elevator pitch is assessed on understanding and synthesis of relevant information.
* A two-minute presentation about competition
* A strategy recommendations letter to the CEO
* The final poster or PowerPoint presentation
* The team presentation is assessed based on comprehension of the subject matter and persuasiveness of the presentation and supporting materials.

Advance Preparation

The advance preparation is provided in the lessons leading up to the culminating project. These lessons prepare students to understand the fundamentals of business economics. In addition, there are two long-range factors to keep in mind:

* You will need to line up NAF academy board members to help you find professionals who will participate in the project. You will be asking for experts to review student work, be willing to be interviewed, come into the classroom near the end of the course to talk about their profession, and act as the CEO and board members of Awesome Avocados for the teams’ project presentations.
* You will need to decide whether you will hold the final presentations in your classroom or in another space, such as an auditorium or conference room. Book the date and time well in advance of the event, and make sure to notify students and other attendees as soon as possible so that you have time to handle the inevitable scheduling conflicts that will arise. You can also schedule to have the presentations videotaped.

Lesson Overview

Below are the main milestones for this project, broken down according to the lesson in which they fall.

Lesson 9:

Students receive their launch letter from the CEO of Awesome Avocados and learn which groups they will be in. Each group chooses a company name and completes these tasks:

* Project Guide: Know, Need to Know Chart to prepare for the elevator pitch
* An elevator pitch to show understanding of the economics behind the prices, costs, and profits of Awesome Avocados over the past two years and predict profit for the next year
* Analysis of production tables for avocados
* Project Guide: Competition Presentation
* A two-minute presentation about competition

Lesson 13:

Students synthesize their understanding of the economics of Awesome Avocados to present to the CEO two strategic recommendations for the company to increase profitability from among these possibilities: reducing production costs, investing in R & D, lobbying for protection, buying shares in foreign avocado companies, and/or purchasing land abroad and undertaking production there. These letters of recommendation are assessed via assessment criteria. The relevant tasks in this lesson are:

* A strategy recommendations letter

Lesson 15:

Students review and discuss the rubric that will be used to assess their presentations, and they begin to plan their presentations with the help of a worksheet. Students finalize their supporting artifacts and rehearse in front of each other, exchanging and incorporating peer feedback. They then present their projects before an invited audience, followed by a reflection on both process and content. The relevant tasks in this lesson are:

* A poster or a PowerPoint presentation of the two recommended strategies
* The oral presentation, executed with the help of speaker’s notes

The Culminating Project and NAFTrack Certification

The culminating project is a required course assessment component for academies taking part in NAFTrack Certification. As students complete their culminating project, they upload a work sample for evaluation. The sample demonstrates students’ ability to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned throughout a course in an authentic way that is relevant to their academy’s industry theme.

If your students are participating in NAFTrack Certification, see below for the work sample(s) to keep in mind as your students work on this culminating project. Please note that the rubric used to assess the project in NAFTrack Certification is different from the project rubric used in the course instructional materials.

For more detailed instructions, see this course’s NAFTrack Certification Course Guide, which is included in the NAFTrack Certification section of the course.

Culminating Project Work Sample(s) for Business Economics

Students must upload one work sample for evaluation. Learning objective codes are organized by unit, lesson, and unit learning objective (e.g., 1.3.8). The NAFTrack Certification Course Guide for this course lists the curriculum learning objectives and learning objective codes.

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| **Work Sample(s)** | **Learning Objectives** |
| Poster or PowerPoint Presentation of Company Recommendations (Lesson 15, Student Resource 15.1; Teacher Resource 15.2)  **AND**  Oral Presentations of Company Recommendations  (Lesson 15, Student Resource 15.1; Teacher Resource 15.2) | 1.1.1: Infer the skills and knowledge about business economics needed to be successful in an authentic project  2.3.3: Demonstrate the ability to assess the costs and benefits of alternatives when making decisions, taking into account opportunity costs and trade-offs  3.9.8: Display understanding of different types of markets  3.9.9: Explain how businesses respond to different market conditions in order to better compete  3.9.10: Compare and contrast the impact of differing market structures on the success of a product or a service  4.13.11: Display understanding of how comparative advantage influences the structure of global trade  4.13.13: Develop a business strategy based on an understanding of concepts of international trade  5.15.4: Demonstrate the ability to give a professional presentation  5.15.5: Evaluate personal experience and performance in the course  5.15.6: Monitor personal success in learning about business economics  5.15.7: Summarize key learning across the whole subject of business economics |