Online MHRM Capstone:
Aligning HR and Business Strategies
38:533:706:90
Fall 2025

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Virtual Class Meeting: Tuesdays 7:00 p.m.

OVERVIEW

In this course, you will apply all what you have learned in this program to design an HR strategy to support the business strategy of your firm. The primary objectives of this course are to (1) deepen your understanding of how competitive pressures and various other external forces influence the evolution of your organization's approach to managing human resources, and (2) strengthen your ability to examine why certain companies outperform their competition and gain sustainable competitive advantage through the management of human capital, and (3) identify and propose HR solutions to the ongoing challenges posed by those external and organizational pressures. The intent is to develop your conceptual understanding of strategic human resource management and your capabilities so that you can create human resource strategies and integrate them with the business challenges you will face in HR.

Class Learning Objectives

At the completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Describe how competitive pressures and other external forces influence organizations' business strategy and their approach to managing human resources.
- Examine why certain companies outperform their competition and gain sustainable competitive advantage through the management of human capital.
- Develop HR solutions to the ongoing challenges posed by those external and organizational pressures.
- Design an HR strategy aligned with the business strategy to ensure sustainable competitive advantage.

MHRM Learning Objectives

Cognitive Skills and Process

The cognitive skills and process area reflects the goal for SMLR programs to help students develop skills central to lifelong learning and participation in society and the workplace.

I) Written & Oral Communication – Communicate effectively at a level and in modes

appropriate to an entry level professional.

- Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English.
- Analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.
- Produce quality research papers with proper convention of attribution/citation.
- Produce high quality executive summaries.
- Present ideas and arguments in a logical and effective way

II) Quantitative Skills – Apply appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods for research workplace issues.

- Formulate, evaluate, and communicate conclusions and inferences from quantitative information.
- Apply qualitative methods appropriately, alone and in combination with quantitative methods.

III) Research Skills – Demonstrate an ability to collect, analyze and synthesize information to make logical and informed decisions impacting the workplace. Use evidence to evaluate hypotheses, theories, and approaches to workplace issues.

- Employ current technologies to access information, to conduct research, and to communicate findings.
- Analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.
- Assess and critique relevant evidence and research findings.
- Access high-quality historical, qualitative, and quantitative evidence or research
- Use evidence-based analysis to appraise the validity of various hypotheses, theories, and approaches to workplace issues.

Knowledge of Theory, Practice and Application

The knowledge of theory and application area reflects the goal for SMLR programs to ensure that students learn the key theoretical and foundation areas of study in their domains and realize opportunities to apply that knowledge to practice situations.

IV) Theoretical Perspectives - Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background context of a particular work situation.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the practical perspectives, theories, and concepts in their field of study.
- Evaluate and apply theories from social science disciplines to workplace issues.

V) Understanding Context - Evaluate the context of workplace issues, public policies, and management decisions.

- Analyze issues related to business strategies, organizational structures, and work

systems.
- Analyze issues related to the selection, motivation, and development of talent in a local and global context (HRM)

VI) Application – Demonstrate an understanding of how to apply knowledge necessary for effective work performance.

- Apply concepts and substantive institutional knowledge, to understanding contemporary developments related to work.
- Understand the legal, regulatory, and ethical issues related to their field.
- Develop human resource management functional capabilities used to select, motivate, and develop workers (HRM)
- Understand the internal and external alignment and measurement of human resource practices (HRM)

Professional Development –

VII) Professional Development – Demonstrate an ability to interact with and influence others in a professional manner, and to effectively present ideas and recommendations.

- Develop effective presentation skills appropriate for different settings and audiences.
- Develop career management skills to navigate one's career.
- Develop capabilities to work and lead in a multicultural and diverse environment.
- Work productively in teams, in social networks, and on an individual basis.
- Develop cultural agility competencies.
- Demonstrate lifelong personal and professional development skills.

Academic Honesty

The rights of students will be protected to ensure that all required work is related to competence in the subject matter. Therefore, all submitted work will be carefully assessed. If cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism is detected, it will be prosecuted to the limit allowed by University policies.

University Academic Integrity Policy:
http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf
Violations include cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.

Course Requirements

Required Readings
Selected Chapters
Castellano, William G. (2014). **Practices for Engaging the 21st Century Workforce: Challenges of Talent Management in a Changing Workplace**. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. ISBN 13:978-0-13-308637-9

And other selected readings will be posted in Canvas. Some required readings must be purchased at Harvard Business Publishing at the link below. First create an account with them then purchase the Fall 2025 course packet (2 papers and 1 case)

https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/1291770

The PowerPoint slides for the lectures and all other class material will be posted on the course's Canvas website.

Grading

The course employs a variety of teaching methods including lectures, discussions, in-class exercises, case studies / analyses and presentations. Your grade for this course will be based on your performance on a number of different activities:

Participation	120 points
Assignments	275 points
Case Studies	100 points
Class Project	305 points
Exam	200 points
Total:	**1000 points**

PARTICIPATION (120 points)
Active learning is one of the most powerful tools for understanding complex concepts. Students can learn a tremendous amount from each other - you should feel free (and be prepared) to provide your comments, ask thoughtful questions, and share your own experiences with the class. Research shows that students learn more when they participate actively. For these reasons, participation is an important class component. Participation grade will be based on thoughtful, accurate, and timely responses and replies to all discussion questions and timely submission of all assignments, cases, and project. Note, all discussion question answers must be submitted by end of day **Wednesday,** assignments, cases, and project must be submitted by end of day **Sunday. Late submissions will result in a reduction of grade for each day late.**

ASSIGNMENTS (275 points)
Students completing the class project as a team can complete the designated assignments as a team. Note, each student needs to individually submit all work in Canvas indicating both students' name on submitted work. Assignments must be submitted by end of day Sunday. Late submitted assignments will receive a reduction in grade. For all assignments, selected research sources must be appropriately cited when presenting trends, charts, models, etc.

Individual Assignment 1: 21st Century Trends (25 points): Research the 21st century trends creating what pundits call the new normal, e.g., technological, global, labor force, economic, and social trends. Conduct an in-depth analysis of one or more trends and present the evolution of this trend **over time to present**. Also, identify the major business threats and opportunities as a result of this trend. You can focus on your project company's business threats and opportunities or any general business threat and opportunity. Prepare a Power Point presentation of your analysis and recommendations using charts, graphs, data, assessments, etc. Typical presentations are 5 – 10 slides.

Team Assignment 2: SWOT Analysis (25 points): Describe your company's business strategy (indicate product or service leadership, operational excellence, or customer intimacy). Describe the core competencies that create your company's competitive advantage. Conduct a SWOT analysis describing your organization's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. As a result of the SWOT analysis, describe what this organization needs to do to ensure sustainable competitive advantage. Prepare a Power Point presentation of your business strategy, competitive advantage, A positions, SWOT analysis and recommendations. Typical presentations are 5 – 10 slides.

Team Assignment 3: "A Positions" and HR Objectives (25 points): Evaluate your firm's functional areas using the Mapping Human Capital Form presented in class and plot the different functions in an HR Architecture (show both in presentation). Describe the highest ranked function, e.g., technology, marketing, etc. and 1-2 "**A positions**" in that functional area that generate the core competencies and competitive advantage of this company. Also, list the objectives (not practices) of an HR system to manage talent in these "A positions" including the objectives for managing the (a) Competencies, (b) Behaviors, and (c) Work Environment to ensure sustainable competitive advantage. Prepare a Power Point presentation of your mapping human capital, HR Architecture and objectives. Typical presentations are 5 – 10 slides.

Team Assignment 4: Balanced Scorecard/PM Objectives (25 points): Create a Balanced Score Card for your project company and indicate the measurable strategic Objectives and measurable Targets for each category. Note, this is for the entire company not just for "A positions." Also, indicate which two of these measurable strategic objectives and targets will be assigned to employees in your A positions and describe the initiatives that must be performed by employees in "A positions" to achieve these objectives. Note, these measurable objectives and targets, and initiatives for employees in "A positions" must be included in the performance management and compensation plans in your HR strategy. Prepare a Power Point presentation of your balanced scorecard, specific measures and recommendations. Typical presentations are 5 – 10 slides.

Team Assignment 5: Organizational Culture and Leadership (25 points): Applying the research presented in lectures, describe the type of culture that best fits your project company's strategy and describe the employees' behaviors and mindset that need to be fostered. Describe two HR practices or policies you plan to include in your HR system that help shape your project company's organizational culture. Describe what leadership style and characteristics are ideal for this company and explain why this type of leader is needed. Prepare a Power Point presentation of your company's business strategy, culture, leadership style, and the key HR practices. Typical presentations are 5 – 10 slides.

Individual Assignment 6: 21st Century Workforce (25 points): Research the 21st century workforce and create a demographic profile of one of the generational cohorts (Gen Z, Gen Y, Gen X, or Baby Boomers) by indicating its size, characteristics, values, and work preferences. Also, identify an HRM program or benefit that is designed to engage someone with this demographic profile and explain why. Prepare a Power Point presentation of your analysis and recommendations using charts, graphs, data, assessments, etc. Typical presentations are 5 – 10 slides.

Individual Assignment 7: McKinsey & Co. HR Practices (25 points)
After reading the McKinsey case, assess the key HR practices McKinsey implemented over the years for managing knowledge and organizational learning aligned with its customer intimacy strategy. Describe at least one HR practice implemented for managing competencies, managing behaviors, and managing the work environment. Prepare a Power Point presentation of the practices you selected. Typical presentations are 5 – 10 slides.

Team Assignment 8: HR Due Diligence and Integration Plans (25 points): Describe what competencies are needed either now or in the future to ensure a sustainable competitive advantage of your project company. Describe which acquisition strategy makes the most sense for acquiring external talent, e.g. acquisition, merger, joint venture, or a strategic partnership? Most important, describe the HR due diligence and integration plans. Prepare a Power Point presentation describing needed competencies, type of strategy, and the HR due diligence and integration plans. Typical presentations are 5 – 10 Slides.

Team Assignment 9: Executing Strategy (25 points): What are the major implementation hurdles you expect executing your HR strategy? Describe the change management process for overcoming these hurdles and successfully executing your strategy. Typical presentations are 5 – 10 slides.

Individual Assignment 10: Assessing and critiquing HR strategies (50 pts.): After reviewing all class power point presentations, select and assess **two HR strategies** to improve. Specifically name at least one HR practice in each of the two HR strategies you would change or modify to improve either the internal or external alignment. Explain why your recommendations will improve either the internal or external alignment. Submit your assessment of two HR strategies in a word document, 2-3 double space pages.

CASE ANALYSISES (100 points)
Case 1 is to be completed **individually** by each student. If working in a team, Case 2 can be completed as a team. For each case, number and answer each question and submit a paper of your answers to the case questions. Papers should be 2 -3 double space pages.

Individual Case 1: Digital Gaming (50 points)
1. What do you think is the problem at DG?
2. Evaluate the HR system at DG and describe which HR practices are **not aligned** to support the product leadership strategy of the company.
3. What changes would you recommend to improve HR practices to better align with the strategy of the company? Explain why.

Case 2: Employee Engagement (50 points)
Research a noted employee engagement model/framework, other than the framework in the text, in the academic and/or consulting literature.
1. Indicate the corresponding measure of engagement, drivers and/or conditions, and outcomes of employee engagement (show the framework in the paper).
2. Applying the methods presented in lectures, describe what technique you would use to analyze and how to validate the measure of engagement (what type of analysis, how to validate)
3. Applying the methods presented in lectures, describe what technique you would use to analyze and how to validate the relationships between the engagement measure and outcomes and what is the minimum number of comparisons you need to analyze these relationships?

TEAM CLASS PROJECT (305 points)
Each team will consist of two students. The team project is the primary requirement for this class and requires students to demonstrate their ability to design an HR strategy building on the concepts of internal and external alignment. The team is to select a company (approved by the professor) in a specific industry and design an HR strategy specifically for A positions to ensure sustainable competitive advantage given the organizational and environmental challenges facing this firm.

Project Paper

I. Introduction (no more than 2 pages)

1. **Strategy**

Briefly describe your firm strategy as either: Product Leadership, Operational Efficiency, or Customer Intimacy

2. **A Positions**

Identify **2- 3 "A Positions"** that is the focus of the HR Strategy by referencing your Mapping Human Capital Form and HR Architecture. Attach both as Appendix A.

3. **HR Strategy Objectives**

Summarize the objectives (not practices) of your HR system including Managing Competencies, Managing Behaviors, and Managing the Work Environment. Ensure you provide the following information:

Managing Competencies

Objectives: What core competencies (SKAs) are needed in "A positions" for sustainable competitive advantage?

Managing Behaviors

Objectives: What specific behaviors and mindset do you need these employees to demonstrate?

Managing Work Environment

Objectives: What are your goals for job and organizational design, e.g., to promote efficiencies, innovation, risk management, solutions, teamwork, etc.

II. HR Practices

Provide a **detailed** description of the **design of all HR practices and programs** in your HR system for A positions that must be implemented to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Ensure you describe each HR practice you recommend comprehensively, e.g., design, methods, process, etc. Note, you are designing a high-commitment HR system for highly strategic and unique talent (not an HR system for traditional employees). Ensure you answer **each component** of all questions.

1. **Managing Competencies**

   Consider how to recruit, develop, and acquire highly unique and strategic talent.

   a. What is your Recruitment Plan Describe how you will recruit external highly unique talent. Describe your main competitors and how you plan to recruit their top employees. Describe who are the top universities and how will you recruit top students? Describe in detail your recruitment sources and methods, how they will be designed, who is involved, and the process for recruiting and tracking top candidates.

   b. What is your Selection Plan Describe the criteria (competencies, behaviors) for selecting top candidates. Describe what specific selection methods will be used to ensure job-person and job-organization fit, and who is involved. Describe in detail how you would design selection methods to assess each selection criteria. Finally, describe the final assessment and hiring process.

   c. What is your Succession Management Program This is how you will find internal highly unique talent. Describe the selection criteria (competencies, behaviors) and how you will identify (the process) and assess (the methods) high potential talent for the succession management program. Describe in detail the final evaluation process and the developmental plans (steps, programs, etc.) for selected employees and the process (who is involved) for movement into "A positions" (assessing and promoting)?

   d. What is your Training & Development Plan Describe what are the unique/high demand competencies your top talent in "A positions" need to possess to ensure continued success? What behaviors will also be the focus of the T&D plan? Describe in detail how you will design the training, e.g., describe how you will design the training, what methods you would use to develop each competency, how to be delivered, who will deliver the training, and the evaluation and integration process.

2. **Managing Behaviors**

a) PM System - Describe two key **strategic measurable objectives and measurable goals** (show measures and the targeted percent increase) for "A positions," and the initiatives that must be completed to achieve these objectives. Note that these objectives must also be included in the balanced scorecard for the entire company as shown in Appendix B. Also describe one behavioral objective. Describe how employees in "A positions" will be evaluated, what methods, and who will provide feedback?

b) Compensation Plan - How will you pay employees in "A positions"? Describe the base pay and key benefits. Describe in detail the variable incentive (bonus) plan based on achieving strategic objectives. Describe how the variable compensation pool will be funded. Describe the amount of bonus (or percent of compensation) that will be provided based on meeting, exceeding, or not meeting each strategic objectives. Describe the ST (cash) and LT (equity) components of the bonus (what percent ST, what percent LT). Describe the features of the LT equity component (stock options, RSU, etc.) and vesting period. Lastly, summarize the potential variance in total compensation based on meeting, exceeding, or not meeting objectives.

3. **Managing Work Environment**

Consider what type of work environment is needed to ensure employees in "A positions" have the opportunity to succeed.

a) Job Design Describe how "A positions" will be designed? Describe the key tasks and degree of standardization/complexity, amount of autonomy, decision making authority, and amount of interdependencies.

b) Organizational Structure Describe the function where the A positions are located, e.g. technology, marketing, operations, etc. Describe the structure of the organization for the A positions, e.g., hierarchical, flat, cross-functional, networked? Describe what position/who do "A positions" report into?

A successful report will:

- Follow the above format (I, 1, 2, 3) II. 1a, b, c, d, 2a, b, 3a, b) labeling all headings and subheadings and thoroughly and comprehensively describe each part of your strategy.
- Be a professional, properly cited (e.g., MLA, AMA), polished paper of approximately 20 double-spaced pages (12pt font) text (excluding supplement material and appendices). Your report should be well-written, and insightful—this is a report that will be submitted to executive management.

- Use appendices and supplements to provide supporting details related to various aspects of your report.
- Provide complete references for all sources of information used to prepare the report. Points will be deducted for poorly formatted, grammatically incorrect papers.

Power Point Presentations
Students must create a Power Point presentation of your HR Strategy. The presentation should describe each section of the paper: Strategy, HR Objectives, and HR practices. All presentations must be uploaded in Canvas for all students to review for assignment 10.

EXAM (200 points)
Students will have three days to submit a paper on designing and implementing an organizational transformation strategy focusing on the role of HR. The paper will describe the steps and HR's role of a strategic transformation of a company changing its strategic focus from a product leadership in technology to a customer intimacy strategy in IT management consulting. Describe in detail the practices, processes, and steps including 1. Applying the Star Model for a new Organizational Design; 2. Aligning your HR Objectives and HR System; 3. Transforming and Aligning Culture; and 4. Executing Strategy and Leading Change. Students **must apply the research presented in lectures and readings**. Students who submit papers based on other research found in internet searches or Chat GPT that do not apply the research presented in class will receive a failing grade.

Label each section: Organizational Design, HR Objectives and HR System, Transforming and Aligning Culture, Leading Change and provide detailed and comprehensive answers.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	To Do
Week 1 9/1	Lec. 1: Introduction / Overview Lec. 2: Technology Trends Lec. 3 Globalization Trends Lec. 4 Environmental Challenges: Economic, and Labor Force Trends	**Readings:** - *Global Technology Trends 2040* - *Future of Work* - *The Path to 2075- Slower Growth, But Convergence Remains Intact* - *AI and Life in 2030* **Submit team names and company Name (approved by professor)** **Assignment 1:** 21st Century Trends **Discussion Question:** How are the environmental trends impacting talent management?

Week 2 9/8	Lec. 1: Organizational Challenges: Strategy, Competitive Advantage, SWOT Analysis Lec. 2: Organizational Challenges: Managing the Future of Work	**Readings:** - *Jobs of Tomorrow* - *McKinsey the state of organizations 2023* - *Generative AI Reset Turning Potential into Value* **Assignment 2:** SWOT Analysis/Competitive Advantage **Discussion Question:** Which of the five forces of competition has the greatest influence on your project company? Explain how?
Week 3 9/15	Lec.1: Organizational Design Lec. 2: Principles of Effective HR Systems: Internal and External Alignment	**Reading:** - *The Star Model* - *McKinsey 7S Model* - *The Impact of HRM Practices on Turnover, Productivity, and Financial Performance* *-How does HRM Influence Organizational Outcomes?* - *Read Digital Gaming Case* **Case 1:** Digital Gaming Due **Discussion Question:** Give an example when a company must redesign one HR practice in their HR system due to a change in environmental trends to ensure external alignment. Explain how the HR practice should be redesigned to ensure external alignment.
Week 4 9/22	Lec. 1: An HR Architectural Perspective, Mapping Human Capital. Identifying positions Lec. 2: HR System Objectives Lec. 3: Designing Aligned Practices and Programs for "A Positions"	**Reading:** - *Examining the Human Resource Architecture* **Assignment 3:** A positions and HR Objectives **Discussion Question:** What are the core competencies of your project company? Give an application example.

Week 5 9/29	Lec. 1: Workforce Analytics Lec. 2: Measuring Success Lec. 3: Decision Science	**Reading:** *-Linking Balance Scorecard Measures to Your Strategy -* ***HBP*** *-The Science and Practice of Workforce Analytics* *- Three Keys to Faster and Better Decisions* *- An Executive Guide to AI* **Assignment 4:** Balanced Scorecard/ PM Objectives **Discussion Question** List your company's business strategy and two major measurable objectives and measurable goals listed in your balance scorecard.
Week 6 10/6	Lec. 1: Organizational Culture - Aligning with Corporate Strategy - Creating Employee Mindset Lec. 2: Role of Leadership - Leadership Development and Succession Planning	**Reading:** *- Five Bold Moves to Quickly Transform your Organization's Culture* *- Global Leadership Forecast* *- Succession Planning Template* **Assignment 5:** Organizational Culture and Leadership **Discussion Question:** Indicate your company's business strategy. And based on the research presented in the lectures describe what type of organizational culture and leadership characteristics are needed to support your company's business strategy. Explain why.
Week 7 10/13	Lec. 1: 21st Century Workforce Characteristics and Preferences Lec. 2: 21st Century Talent Management Challenges	**Reading** *- The Multigenerational Workforce* *- Business in Society Report* **Assignment 6:** 21st Century Workforce **Discussion Question:** What are the major challenges for organizations managing the 21st century workforce?

Week 8 10/20	Lec. 1: Employee Motivation and Engagement Lec. 2: Employee Engagement Framework - Drivers and Outcomes	**Chapters** 4, 5, 7 **Readings:** -*Great Attrition or Great Attraction? The choice is Yours* - *Work Re-Architected* - *A New Framework of Employee Engagement* **Case 2:** Employee Engagement Analysis **Discussion Question**: How is employee engagement measured in the framework you researched? (Note, if not a true measure, explain why).
Week 9 10/27	Lec. 1: Inter-Firm Collaboration Lec. 2: Managing Human, Social, and Intellectual Capital - Innovation	**Readings:** - *From Bureaucracy to Networks* - *Collaborative Leadership* - *Social Capital, Intellectual Capital and the Organizational Advantage* - *Read McKinsey & Co Case* - ***HBP*** **Assignment 7:** McKinsey & Co. HR Practices **Discussion Question:** Describe two key HR practices that help support inter-firm collaboration.
Week 10 11/3	Lec. 1: HR Planning Lec. 2: HR's Role in Mergers and Acquisitions Lec. 3: Organizational Adaptability	**Chapter 6** **Reading:** - *A New Framework of Strategic Human Resource Management* - *Reimagining the Future of Work* - *Raising the resilience of your organization* **Assignment 8:** HR Due Diligence and Integration Plans **Discussion Question** What are the two most important things to assess in an HR due diligence of a major acquisition?

Week 11 11/10	Lec. 1: Executing Strategy - Overcoming Implementation Hurdles Lec. 2: Change Management **Videos** Jack Welch on "Strategy, Execution and People" https://youtu.be/xsEtVQCHYpE John Kotter - Resistance to Change https://youtu.be/Wdroj6F3VlQ	**Reading:** - *Leading Change - **HBP*** - *The McKinsey 7-S model for Organizational Alignment and Success* **Assignment 9:** Executing Strategy **Discussion Question:** Name two strategies for overcoming employees' resistance to change.
Week 12 11/17	Lec. 1: HR Competencies Lec. 2: Role of HR - HR's Focus Lec. 3: Effective Presentations	**Readings:** *-Next Generation HR 2022* - *What's Next for 21st Century HR* - *Artificial Intelligence and HR* - *How the CHRO Role is Changing* **Discussion Question:** Based on the Ulrich Model, what should be your project company's primary HR Focus for delivering your HR strategy? Explain why.
11/24	**Thanksgiving Break**	
Week 13 12/1	Lec.1: Project Review	**All Project Papers and Power Point Presentations Are Due by 12/7** **Must also share power point presentations with students for assignment 10**
Week 14 12/8	Lec. 1: Assessing and critiquing HR Strategies Lec.2: Organizational Strategic Transformation and Exam Prep	**Assignment 10:** Assessing and critiquing HR strategies
Week 15 12/15	**Compressive Exam** **Open Book** **12/15 at 9:00a.m. to** **12/18 at 12:00p.m.**	Complete Course Feedback Forum