



APPLIES TO ACADEMIC YEAR 2011/2012

GRA 6436 Managing Business-to-Business Relationships

Programme

Master of Science in Business and Economics (Marketing), Master of Science in Strategic Marketing Management, Specialization Course

Responsible for the course

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Department

Department of Marketing

Term

According to study plan

ECTS Credits

6

Language of instruction

English

Introduction

Most firms have at least some involvement in business-to-business (B2B) marketing. By some estimates, between half and two thirds of all transactions in a developed economy take place in B2B relationships and more than half of all employment in most countries is found in B2B markets. B2B sourcing of products and services typically represent more than fifty percent of a company's total costs and more than ninety percent of e-commerce is B2B.

Importantly, the structure of total value added to the economy has changed considerably over recent decades. For example, in most OECD countries the share of industry has fallen while services now account for well over sixty percent of total gross value added. Notably, the majority of service value added is B2B.

With less than twenty of the OECD economy constituting what we typically think of as industry "value chains" (as introduced by Michael Porter), what models can help us understand the value creation process in B2B relationships? For example, what does it mean that sixty of the world's 100 largest companies earn most of their revenue from platform-mediated networks? Importantly, what are the consequences for managers when developing marketing strategies for these companies? E.g., how can familiar rules such as value-based pricing fail? This course is designed to answer these and other strategic marketing questions.

Learning outcome

This course is designed to provide an introduction to the area of business-to-business relationships in marketing. It will identify, review, evaluate and critique a variety of topics in the area. Considerable emphasis will also be placed on strategies for conducting empirical research on business-to-business marketing (e.g., as it relates to the thesis).

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Describe the nature, structure, and distinguishing characteristics of B2B markets.
2. Show how marketing creates value for the B2B firm and its business customers.
3. Evaluate market opportunities and effectively segment a B2B market.
4. Design effective marketing strategies for new and existing B2B products and services.
5. Recommend actions to develop and manage B2B relationships with suppliers and customers over time.

While we will draw on a number of different streams of work, the course is organized around my idiosyncratic perspective of business-to-business relationships. This course is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the literature. I have purposely restricted the required readings in order to dig deeply into each. A list of recommended readings will be provided.

Prerequisites

See study plan. It is assumed that every student is familiar with the general principles of research design, measurement, and multivariate statistical analysis.

Compulsory reading

Other:

During the course there may be hand-outs and other material on additional topics relevant for the course and the examination.

Selected articles from e.g., Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of Consumer Research, Marketing Science, Administrative Science Quarterly, Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Management Science, American Journal of Sociology, American Sociological Review, Journal of Law, Economics and Organization, Journal of Law and Economics, Journal of Financial Economics, Bell Journal of Economics, Managerial and Decision Economics, as well as a selection of book chapters.

Recommended reading

Course outline

This course is divided in four sections. In the first section we discuss how firms can better understand B2B customers and markets to deliver and capture value. In the second section we focus on the processes that B2B firms use to evaluate vendors and their offerings. In the third section we discuss marketing strategies for value creation. Finally, in the last section we elaborate on how firms can sustain value creation over time through effective relationship management.

A detailed schedule with dates will be distributed during the first meeting.

Computer-based tools

It's learning

Learning process and workload

A course of 6 ECTS credits corresponds to a workload of 160-180 hours.

A set of required readings will be assigned for each meeting. Students are expected to thoroughly read and analyze all of the required readings prior to each meeting.. My own style is to combine some lecture time with discussion time.

I will ask students to prepare discussion questions for specific readings. Depending on the number of course participants students may be asked to prepare discussion questions for more than one meeting. A copy of the questions should be distributed to each of the course participants prior to the meeting (TBD). The discussion leader(s) will have the responsibilities of leading the discussion and summarizing and synthesizing the readings with some brief closing remarks.

To a large extent, the value of this course will depend on the students' level of preparation and participation in the discussion. Course credit will be given based on quality of class participation and a term paper (see Evaluation below). Sheer quantity of comments, with little depth or relevance to the focal issues, will not be rewarded (although presumably not punished).

If students have to miss class on a particular day, it is the students' responsibility to get notes from a classmate. Let me know as soon as possible if you have to miss a class.

During the semester, if students experience any problem(s) with the class or any of the classmates I expect the students to report any problem(s) that they are not able to resolve themselves to me as soon as possible.

In this course class attendance is not mandatory. However, unexcused absence will result in a lower participation grade.

Please note that it is the student's own responsibility to obtain any information provided in class that is not included on the course homepage/It's learning or text book.

Examination

The course grade will be determined on the following basis:

- 30% - Course participation, including written reviews
- 50% - Term paper
- 20% - Presentation of paper idea and presentation of term paper

All parts of the evaluation must be passed in order to get a grade in the course.

Students will be required to write a term paper for the course. The term paper can be written as a group project, with groups consisting of no more than three members. The paper may also be completed on an individual basis.

The paper should be original work, and be written specifically for this course. An overview of the paper idea/abstract (max 3 pages) is due approx. two-thirds into the course (TBD). The abstract should focus on what the students are proposing to do (versus what others have done or literature review.) Each participant/group will then present the research idea and receive comments from the other participants. To ensure an active discussion, each participant will be

assigned one or two abstracts for written comments.

The written comments on the abstract(s) are due approx. 3 days after the abstracts are submitted (TBD). The comments are confidential and will only be shared with the author. The objective of the reviews is to be helpful to the author - not to be judgmental (i.e., this should not be a review listing pages of inadequacies.) Please follow the tradition of JCR's first editor (Bob Ferber), who felt that the "outside" reviewers' role is to see if the basic idea makes sense and whether it can be understood by an intelligent reader not in the author's immediate circle of friends, co-authors, etc. The purpose of this is to improve the translation and dissemination of knowledge.

The final paper is due on the last day of class. No incompletes will be given. The specific format for this paper will be provided in class.

Specific information regarding student evaluation beyond the information given in the course description will be provided in class. This information may be relevant for requirements for term papers or other hand-ins, and/or where class participation can be one of several elements of the overall evaluation.

This is a course with continuous assessment (several exam elements) and one final exam code. Each exam element will be graded using points on a scale (e.g. 0-100). The elements will be weighted together according to the information in the course description in order to calculate the final letter grade for the course. You will find detailed information about the point system and the cut off points with reference to the letter grades on the course site in It's learning.

Examination code(s)

GRA 64361 accounts for 100% of the final grade in the course GRA 6436.

Examination support materials

Support materials at written examinations are explained under exam information in our web-based student handbook. Please note use of calculator and dictionary.
<http://www.bi.no/studenthandbook>.

Re-sit examination

It is only possible to retake an examination when the course is next taught.

The assessment in some courses is based on more than one exam code.

Where this is the case, you may retake only the assessed components of one of these exam codes.

Where this is not the case, all of the assessed components of the course must be retaken.

All retaken examinations will incur an additional fee.

Additional information

Honor Code

Academic honesty and trust are important to all of us as individuals, and represent values that are encouraged and promoted by the honor code system. This is a most significant university tradition. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the ideals of the honor code system, to which the faculty are also deeply committed.

Any violation of the honor code will be dealt with in accordance with BI's procedures for cheating. These issues are a serious matter to everyone associated with the programs at BI and are at the heart of the honor code and academy integrity. If you have any questions about your responsibilities under the honor code, please ask.