Initial Framing, List of Project Ideas/Opportunities

MBA 303.01

Professor Stuart Hart

Module 3, Spring 2016, 1 credit

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Class Meeting Times

Students are expected to complete approximately 50 hours of work on their practicum project between January 11 and 15, 2016.

Course Description

The goal of this course is to provide students with the time and support needed to frame their practicum project, in advance of the Practicum Scoping Presentation. Students are assigned a faculty who will provide guidance and collect the course deliverables.

Course Deliverables and Grade Assessment

Students must complete and send all items on the list of deliverables below to their faculty contact by January 22nd. Each item is worth 10 points for a course total of 100.

List of Deliverables

1. Define in detail the challenge/opportunity
2. Provide background and context
3. Describe specific Project Goals
4. Initial Timeline and Project Plan
5. Approved project description for SEMBA website
6. Point Person; contact Information for Point Person
7. Other Contacts and Resources
8. Non-Disclosure Agreement
9. Faculty Advisor Progress Report due January 22nd
10. Report Format– Powerpoint deck supported by written material

SEMBA 2015-2016 Practicum Projects

The Sustainable Entrepreneurship MBA (SEMBA) at the University of Vermont is a one year, AACSB-accredited program focusing on the development of the next generation of business leaders who will build, disrupt, innovate and reinvent enterprises to move us more rapidly toward a sustainable world.

SEMBA is a twelve-month program consisting of 9 months of classroom learning (August to April) and 3 months of a practicum project (May to July). The practicum project is a full-time, hands-on experiential engagement with either existing companies or new ventures (host organizations) from the US and around the world focused on real challenges and opportunities in sustainable entrepreneurship. Practicum projects are composed of teams of 1-3 SEMBA students each.

The deliverable for the practicum is a detailed and comprehensive business/action plan for the host organization. At the end of July, students pitch their business/action plans to a panel of Executives, Chief Sustainability Officers, Entrepreneurs and Financiers, along with representatives of the host organizations. A successful practicum pitch is required for graduation.

Host: Ben & Jerry's

Project: The Farm of the Future

The quintessential family dairy farm that creates the bucolic imagery we might imagine in Vermont, is an increasingly challenged model at multiple levels. It's becoming more difficult for the family farm of 150 – 300 cows to makes ends meet and meet a variety of standards that serve the farmer, farm worker, the animals, and the environment. This presents a marvelous opportunity to explore a new model, or models that could support a more sustaining, thriving family dairy farm in the future.

We imagine a low-carbon or carbon-negative model where the farmer is making a good living, the farm labor has a dignified life, the farm animals are well cared for, the soil is healthy and the watershed is not compromised. The Ben & Jerry's team has started a process to map the way there, engaging key expert stakeholders along the way. The next steps are to compile the input we've received to this point and draft a business plan of what it would take to build the farm of the future. We envision the future of the family dairy farm based three core principles:

1. Dignified livelihoods for all involved
2. Healthy and productive animals
3. Agro-ecological farming practices

This is a long term project that presents many possibilities for a SEMBA team post practicum project.

Host: Biomimicry 3.8

Project Title: Launching an Online Delivery Platform for the Built Environment

Since 1997, Biomimicry 3.8 (B3.8) has provided biological intelligence to help clients create new products and processes inspired by nature's genius. Biomimicry is an innovation method that seeks sustainable solutions by emulating nature's time-tested patterns and strategies. The "3.8" refers to the 3.8 billion years life has flourished on the Earth, adapting and evolving to changing conditions. This represents an unfathomable amount of R&D, which humankind can learn from, apply, and use to innovate for a better world. Through its innovation consulting, professional training, and educational programs work, B3.8 has established itself as a global biomimicry leader. In 2016, B3.8 and a support team of SEMBA students will roll out an online, subscription-based service that will provide clients with nature-inspired biological intelligence, curated research, and tools that can be leveraged to unlock innovation pathways to create more sustainable products and designs that will help create a more sustainable world.

This online platform will enhance B3.8's client engagement by offering preemptive biomimetic data and design concepts that can be leveraged at the conceptual stage of project development, and critically, be included in project budgets. This service will supplement existing consultancy offerings by situating B3.8 more strategically as a relevant player at the earliest stages of project conception. The successful rollout of the service will add particular value to clients in the built environment arena by aligning B3.8's services to the client's project timeline. SEMBA students will assist in comprehensive market research, gathering primary data from interviews of potential clients and secondary data from similar subscription-based online services to determine the demand and pricing models for B3.8's online platform. This data will be used to help guide a soft launch of the service in summer 2016. Subsequent work analyzing consumer reactions to content and pricing models will be done throughout the summer to improve the service offering for its full launch later in 2016.

Host: CEMEX

Project Title: Scaling Inclusive Housing Innovation

The majority of people living in extreme poverty in Mexico lack access to financing for safe, high-quality housing. As a consequence, most low-income families rely on self-construction, where homeowners manage every aspect of building, extending, or refurbishing their homes. Without technical and financial assistance, these families often pay high prices for low-quality construction materials and the process of building a home can take as long as 15 years. The Construyo Contigo initiative is designed to increase low-income families' self-building capacities by offering the training, funding, and technical assistance necessary to construct their own homes in an affordable and sustainable way. The students will work with multidisciplinary internal and external teams to enhance the business model and value proposition, as well as build partnerships with local governments, NGOs, universities, and green technology companies. In order to sustain the business model financially, the students will work to identify entrepreneurial opportunities within the communities that will improve quality of life for the Construyo Contigo families.

The goal of the initiative is to provide technical training, financial solutions, and educational assistance to build houses with families, not for families. Houses may include green technologies to provide basic services such as energy, water, and waste treatment. The initiative will have the

potential to benefit more than 8,000 families in the first year and will offer a replicable model to implement similar initiatives internationally.

Host: DIVA Development Through Impact Venture Acceleration (DIVA)

Project Title: Impact Venture Idea Screening

DIVA is a venture incubation partner that uniquely both co-develops and co-invests in impact opportunities, building strategic and venture-level coalitions with the right players. DIVA facilitates the exploration of new markets and business models, strengthening capabilities and increasing bandwidth for impact-oriented business development. As an innovative new player in the emerging corporate impact venturing ecosystem, DIVA acts as a catalyst by plugging important gaps and creating value for different key stakeholders, including foundations, corporations, and impact investors.

Traditional venture evaluation processes are linear, and assessment criteria rely heavily on financial performance indicators. A multi-stakeholder engagement approach to business development moves beyond trade-off thinking by developing a holistic framework for venture screening, evaluation and planning to create sustained value and address the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

The focus of this project is to collaborate with an experienced business developer on assessing the impact and business potential of a venture idea contributed by a multinational corporation. The main project objective is to evaluate both the business and impact potential of an idea and provide a sound basis for deciding whether to mature the venture. The preliminary evaluation of real impact venture ideas has the potential to develop into a unique process to apply to future venture candidates.

Host: Facebook (Internet.org)

Project Title: Increasing Women's Awareness and Adoption of a Paid WiFi Product in Rural India

Internet.org has a mission to help get the world's unconnected population on the Internet. One of Internet.org's initiatives is Express WiFi (XWF). XWF is a paid WiFi product that is deployed in collaboration with local ISPs around the world. XWF helps bring affordable and reliable high-speed Internet access to people in underserved villages. XWF also creates new market opportunities for the local ISPs providing the backhaul for XWF and new business opportunities for local entrepreneurs who sell XWF data packs.

XWF is the first-ever exposure to WiFi technology for many potential XWF customers (even those who are not new to the Internet). Accordingly, internet.org is working to develop a playbook for how to educate these potential customers about WiFi and set their expectations for the service. While many men in rural villages are successfully using the internet, it is not as effectively serving women. The practicum project will focus largely on developing a potential customer base of women users in rural parts of India. The challenges of this project are many, including entrenched power dynamics, cultural norms, literacy, and barriers to access. Students will spend time on the ground in India to

better understand these issues and will research to develop strategies for better providing awareness and adoption of XWF services to these women.

Host: IndustryStar Group LLC

Project Title: Accelerating Sustainable and Disruptive Innovation

How do we best create, implement, and enhance sustainable supply chain management operations and software for startup to midsize high growth technology companies which allow them to bring innovative and disruptive products to market that make a positive impact on the world?
The SEMBA team will partner with IndustryStar's CEO and team to benchmark the company's current state supply chain services, software products, and internal processes/systems. The team will then identify and carry out target customer interviews to identify, document, and summarize their biggest supply chain needs and "pain" points. This team will then collaborate with IndustryStar to best determine gaps in the current product offerings, as well as identifying and recommending product, process, and system enhancements. Lastly, the team will work to implement refined "Sell/Pitch" offerings to target customers.

Host: NativeEnergy

Project Title: Hydraid Business for Base of the Pyramid in Africa

NativeEnergy recently acquired the Hydraid® Biosand water filter technology to supply its Help Build™ clean water programs in developing countries. Utilizing NativeEnergy's impact investment model to seed-fund initial placement of filters could provide a powerful boost to establishing a profitable business that helps to meet the critical need for safe drinking water.

The SEMBA project team will assess the potential for a water filter business and create a business plan for a venture to support under-served, low-income populations in one or more countries. The team will utilize prior research conducted by TripleQuest and NativeEnergy on filter technologies and current experience across projects that were funded by NativeEnergy to install these filters in Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, India, Honduras, and Haiti. The SEMBA team and their findings will be central to NativeEnergy's strategy on investing in the Hydraid® Biosand business.

Host: Seventh Generation

Title: Low Income Green Product Portfolio

Low income consumers are greatly underserved in the Green Products Marketplace. Due to the higher costs in development, sourcing materials, production and compliance, green products cost more than conventional products of similar efficacy. As a result, many families cannot afford high quality green products. The request to the SEMBA team is to develop a comprehensive go to market strategy to sell green cleaning products to underserved, low income consumers. The SEMBA team should identify the target demographic, identify their product preferences and cleaning habits, identify barriers to use of green products by these consumers, define product attributes that will appeal to the target consumer, and develop tactics to overcome barriers to green product purchase.