

Politics of Money and Finance, Capstone Project for Catherine Walker
Consulting Mission Impossible: Making Cottage Cheese Exciting!

Background

You're working for Seurat Group and have been assigned to a new project.

Over the last decade, Greek yogurt has significantly increased its market share in health-conscious dairy snacks. To some degree, that increase in market share has come at the expense of cottage cheese. Cabot, a Vermont-based cheese cooperative, believes that because it is associated with Vermont and because Vermont is associated with cheese (but not associated with Greek-style yogurt in the same way), it has a comparative advantage in cottage cheese that it does not have in Greek style-yogurt. It would like to see cottage cheese regain market share in health-conscious dairy snacks. Cabot would like Seurat, and thus you, to craft a marketing and growth strategy to increase cottage cheese's market share within health-conscious dairy snacks and to increase Cabot's market share within cottage cheese.

Tasks

- 1) Identify the size of the market for cottage cheese in the Northeast United States. Be sure to segment the market and to discuss the relative rewards and costs that would go into each.
- 2) Identify a growth strategy for cottage cheese within health-conscious dairy snacks and for Cabot within cottage cheese in the Northeast United States.
- 3) Create a marketing strategy that will help Cabot execute that growth strategy.

Note: one big problem for Cabot is that cottage cheese has an image of being really boring and stodgy. On the other hand, one potential selling point that Cabot may have in its favor is that cottage cheese is arguably nutritionally superior to Greek yogurt: a serving of cottage cheese has less fat, fewer carbs, and more protein than a serving of Greek yogurt. These are just two of the many factors that you'll need to think about for Tasks 2 and 3.

Additional parameters

6,000-6,500 words. Format this like a report, not like a traditional college essay.

I would advise the following structure. Executive Summary (500 words), Part I (1,500 words), Part II (2,000 words), Part III (2,000 words).

Use data. Consulting firms are data-driven and they don't always have the appropriate data already in-house. They will want you to do legwork research. You will probably need to do some of that in this project.

This project is designed to mimic the challenges that arise in consulting cases.

You will want to do research on the dairy snack market in the United States. You will also want to consult some of the foundational case prep and business strategy texts like Cosentino's Case in Point and Magretta's book on Michael Porter's research, as well as other works, in order to build your answer. (I can loan you those books for the semester.)

Suggested check-in schedule: Part I week 5, Part II week 9, and Part III week 11 or 12.

Grading

Executive Summary: 10%

Part I: Market Sizing 20%

Part II: Growth Strategy 35%

Part III: Marketing Strategy: 35%

PSCI 411- Politics of Money and Finance

Capstone Project for Lucy Townend

Private Wealth Management: Family Business Transition

Background:

The founders of a small but successful family-run jewelry chain (3 stores in the Philadelphia area) are approaching retirement. The couple has two daughters and a son. Those three, plus a son-in-law, want to take over the family business; the founding couple is excited to hand over full-time responsibilities so they can enjoy retirement. They have some concerns around the following and so have approached the private wealth management firm that you work for:

- how to structure the transition of ownership
- ability of current investments to generate sufficient retirement income
- long-term health of the business

Task:

Stage 1- Conduct a structured, efficient client interview

- I'm going to make this as realistic as possible (it will probably take 45 min-1 hour)
- We'll do this late Week 2 or early Week 3

Stage 2- Based on Stage 1, develop a slide deck (20-24 slides) to pitch the client on your strategy

- We'll do this in the Week 6-Week 7 range

Stage 3- Based on Stages 1 and 2, write a ten-page (single-spaced) wealth management action plan for the client

- Due the last day of class

Stage 4- Present action plan to client and answer questions

- We'll do this early during Finals week

Grading is based on quality of preparation, thoughtfulness and professionalism of completed products, how well you incorporate information at each stage into following stages, and poise during presentations. I'll let you know how you're doing grade-wise at Stages 2, 3, and 4.

Politics of Money and Finance, Capstone Project for Steven Lillis
Examining and Addressing Puerto Rico's Financial Problems

Assume that it is February 2021, that a Democrat is President and that the Democrats control the House of Representatives while the Republicans control the Senate (a plausible scenario). Puerto Rican statehood is thus off-the-table and significant Congressional legislation is unlikely, but at the same time, non-legislative maneuvers to help Puerto Rico undertaken by the Executive will not be blocked by Congressional action (given Democrats' control of the House).

You have been asked to write a CRS-style report for the White House detailing what it could do to address Puerto Rico's fiscal problems. Your report should answer three questions.

Part I:

First, what is the current state of affairs with regards to Puerto Rico's financial situation? Many members of the administration- and thus readers of this report- will have spent the previous year campaigning and thinking about a variety of other policy issues so they need a concise background on this.

Part II:

What are the main sources of the Puerto Rico's financial problems? Why is it in the mess it is in? In this part, you should be sure to address political and non-political sources of those problems.

Part III:

What could this Democratic Administration actually do to address those problems/sources of problems given a divided Congress? What would be the political and financial costs and benefits associated with these actions?

Parameters:

- 6,000-7,000 words. Format this like a CRS report, not like a traditional college essay.
- I would advise the following structure. Executive Summary (500 words), Part I (1,000 words), Part II (2,000 words), Part III (3,000 words).
- Cite the paper as you would a normal research paper.

Suggested check-in schedule: week 6 (you should have Part I done and be started on Part II by then), week 9 (you should have Part II done and be started on Part III by then), and week 11 or 12 (so that we can make sure it's all coming together nicely).

Grading

- Executive Summary: 10%
- Part I: 20%
- Part II: 30%
- Part III: 40%

PSCI 411- The Politics of Money and Finance
Capstone Project for Justin Cooper
Digital Currencies and Geopolitics

Part I- Digital Currencies

You should write up a 5-6 page memo (single-spaced) outlining what digital currencies are and how they operate differently from more traditional currencies. Due Week 7.

Part II- Politics and Economics

You should write a 6-7 page memo (single-spaced) explaining how digital currencies might be used differently in the United States, China, and the EU. Due Week 10.

Part III- Final Product

Assemble a coherent policy paper, written in the Congressional Research Service style, that introduces the potential but also the challenges of digital currencies, explains how they differ from traditional currencies, and examines how the different financial governance of the United States, China, and the European Union shapes their respective abilities to take advantage of digital currencies.

Have a 500-word executive summary at the beginning.

The final product should be 12-14 pages single spaced.

Due December 15th.

I'll give you feedback at each stage and keep you up-to-date on where you are grade-wise.

Politics of Money and Finance, Capstone Project for Ben Slater
An Analysis of Leveraged Buy-Outs: Comparing Hilton and Toys 'R Us

Background:

The leveraged buy-out that Hilton Hotels went through is widely perceived to be one of the shining success stories of all the good things that can happen when a leveraged buy-out goes well. The leveraged buy-out that Toys 'R Us went through is widely perceived to have been a total failure and a warning of all the bad things that can happen when a leveraged buy-out goes poorly.

Task:

Your job is to draw analytic lessons from the comparison of the leveraged buy-out Hilton went through and the Toys 'R Us went. Your analysis should proceed in 4 parts.

Part I- a brief historical narrative of what happened in each leveraged buy-out. Who was doing the buy-out and why? What was the business plan for each company at the outset?, etc.

Part II- why was the Hilton buy-out so successful?

Part III- why was the Toys 'R Us buy-out so unsuccessful?

Part IV- what broader lessons does this tell analysts about leveraged-buy outs in general and what aspects of each case were idiosyncratic and thus not likely to provide helpful lessons for future scenarios.

In each part, I would like you to use real data/evidence to back up your answer. Read letters to investors, historical stock performance data, etc.

Parameters:

6,000-7,000 words. I would advise the following structure. Executive Summary (500 words) Part I (1,500 words), Part II (1,500 words), Part III (1,500 words), Part IV (1,500 words).

-Cite the paper as you would a normal research paper.

Suggested check-in schedule: Part I week 5, Part II and III week 9, and have Part IV week 11 or 12.

Grading

Executive Summary: 10%

Part I: 15%

Part II: 25 %

Part III: 25 %

Part IV: 25 %