

Exploring the Intersection of Business Strategy and Poverty Alleviation

As you explore course options for Fall 2018, I encourage you to consider *Base of the Pyramid: Business Innovation and Social Impact (BA/STRAT 445, formerly ES/STRAT 445)*, a class focused on the opportunity to align business-oriented incentives for growth, innovation, and profits with the development community's efforts to create a more inclusive world.

Indeed, business must play a greater role in responding to society's biggest challenges. The deep poverty faced by the Base of the Pyramid (BoP) – the 4-5 billion poorest people on this planet and constituting approximately two-thirds of humanity – presents a challenge on the grandest scale. While donation-based approaches have their place, the promise of achieving both profits and social impact through market-based approaches offers an exciting alternative.

Business opportunities in health care, energy, agriculture, housing, education, consumer goods, sanitation and other impact areas can lead to a more inclusive capitalism. The challenge is to build enterprises that are sustainable at scale in an impoverished and unfamiliar market context.

Integrating concepts of strategy, international business, and development, this course is designed to provide you with a practical toolkit of strategies, frameworks, and processes for building BoP enterprises that create economic and social value. Using a carefully constructed portfolio of case studies, simulations, videos, and readings, we will apply these tools and frameworks to BoP enterprises operating in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

To help students gain a first-hand understanding of on-going work in the field, the course also includes two 3-hour lab sessions focused on interaction and shared learning. For each, I invite an enterprise leader deeply involved with BoP venture development to convey both their organization's vision and some of the obstacles they are currently facing. Recent participants include leaders from Acumen, CEMEX-Mexico, GE Healthcare, Movirtu, Oxfam, Pfizer, Unilever-India, and VisionSpring.

While I have offered a version of this course at the graduate level for the past 13 years, this is the second time it will be offered as an undergraduate course. As such, enrollment will be limited to 40 students this year.

Hope to see you in class in the Fall semester. For more information, feel free to contact me – tlondon@umich.edu

Professor: Ted London

Credits: 3.0

Mondays 6:30-9:30pm and two Thursday Sessions (Nov. 15 and Nov. 29), 6:30-9:30pm [Note: These Thursday session will replace two of our regularly scheduled Monday sessions].