

Building a Better Business School

Report from
the
“Blue Sky” Team

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Who Are We?

- MIT and Sloan have played a significant role in popularizing what constitutes current management practice
- But our identity in the b-school marketplace has become confused, even to ourselves
 - **“I am still waiting for someone to figure out what we are going to be when we (Sloan) grow up?”**
- The lack of a clear identity is costing us
 - **Recruiting faculty and students**
 - **Raising money--“what am I giving money for...”**
 - **Developing executive education**
- Big opportunity to offer a new model in a market where the dominant design is increasingly ineffective

A New Identity for the School

- Having
 - Read the critiques
 - Looked at what we do well
 - What we want to do
- A direction is emerging that would:
 - Clearly differentiate us from our competitors
 - Capitalize on our unique strengths
 - Make a positive and potentially very significant contribution to the practice of and the discourse about the practice of management
 - Make coming to work a lot more fun and meaningful

The Opportunity

- The practices that create a successful organization have changed significantly in the last 25 years (as has the world in which those organizations reside)
- Much of what we teach, however, has not
 - Moreover, the implicit framework that integrates what we do has hardly changed at all
- In the meantime though, we have pioneered many of the pieces that combine to create a compelling alternative, which we call the “**Better Business**”
- Capitalizing on this opportunity requires recognizing our successes, tying them together into a cohesive package, and having the guts to be different

Better Businesses...

- **Cultivate and Engage Human Capital**
 - **People are usefully understood as people, not machines**
 - **Our position: Our faculty have done and continue to do pioneering work in several related areas, including work-family balance, leadership, innovation, and labor relations**
- **Explicitly Attend to Technology Implementation**
 - **A better mouse trap does not guarantee changes in rodent control practice**
 - **Our position: A unique Sloan capability**
- **Focus on “Big S” Sustainability**
 - **Organizations cannot afford to ignore the social, political and environmental context in which productive activity takes place**
 - **Our position: pioneering work in corporate social responsibility, environmental sustainability is an emerging theme at Sloan and strong connection to other work at MIT**

Better Businesses...

- Recognize the central role of governance
 - All the stakeholders matter
 - Our position: industry leaders
- Create value through inter-organizational relationships
 - Structure of inter-organizational relationship is an important design choice (e.g., spot markets vs. relationships)
 - Our Position: Early pioneer in supply chains, continue to be an important player in both operations and economics literatures
- Recognize mutual interaction among internal firm capabilities and external competitive environments
 - Position and resources interact
 - Our position: playing a key role in developing the ideas

Elements of the Better Business School

- Problem-focused, discipline-based research
 - **Research creates ongoing competitive advantage through ongoing curricular improvement and renewal**
- Explicitly separate analysis and management
 - **We offer a fundamentally better product by teaching students how to get things done**
- Contextualized and integrated analysis
 - **Dramatically enhance impact of analytical skills by helping students establish context and integrate insights across methods**
- Discourse and communication
 - **Produce students with both good communication skills and good interaction skills**
- Dynamics and uncertainty
 - **Enhance value analytical tools by giving students far better intuition for basic models on which they are premised**

Getting There....

- Appropriate use of technology
 - **Web-based teaching, etc.**
- Innovative Pedagogy
 - **“Unfolding case studies...”**
 - **Simulations**
 - **Field projects linked to just-in-time learning**
- Organizing some of our research around problems that managers would recognize as important
 - **Interdisciplinary groups formed around specific problems with explicit goal of delivering leading research and leading edge teaching**
- More emphasis on experimentation
 - **Can we be the 3M of management education?**