A Proposal

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master in Business Administration

School of Business and Leadership

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<Date>

Capstone Project Proposal Committee:

<Name: Title; i.e. Dr. Gerard Becker, MBA Director>
Abstract

This paper provides a template and discussion on how to submit a proper proposal to either develop a business plan or present a major organizational change initiative for the Capstone project requirement. Capstone means that it is a corporate applied project whereby the various learning throughout the master’s journey should be incorporated and assimilated to demonstrate optimal learning for a practical application. This first section called an abstract should provide the reader with an introduction to the proposal and must be no longer than one hundred and fifty words. Ensure that proper sentence construction is utilized and attempt to acquaint the reader with what they should expect in reading this proposal for the Capstone project. Note that this is double spaced as is all American Psychological Association (APA) compliant written submissions. Lastly it is written in a twelve point Times New Roman font, one of the recommended fonts for APA (American Psychological Association, 2010).
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Chapter I: The Opportunity

The first chapter should be focused on a full description of the opportunity being proposed for the Capstone project. This opportunity may be the development of a full business plan for an entrepreneurial venture (Timmons & Spinelli, 2009), or it may be the presentation of a major change initiative at an existing organization. This first section comes immediately after the chapter heading and is the introduction for the chapter. There is no need to provide a section title called introduction, as it is understood that it is the introduction that follows the chapter heading.

An introduction description provides the overview for the chapter and should be clearly articulated so as to walk the reader through what will be provided in this chapter. Avoid superfluous and unimportant discussions about the opportunity that might detract and confuse the reader of this proposal. It is always a good idea to have someone review this chapter after it is completed to see if it was clear to them and whether they can clearly articulate the proposed opportunity. Typically a chapter one for a proposal of this nature should be accomplished within two to three pages, but that should not be a limiting factor if additional description is needed.

Purpose Statement

The first section after the introduction is a clear description of the purpose for the project. Typically this is the initial second level section title used. This will probably be a very short and succinct section requiring one or two paragraphs. Second level section titles break up a chapter into sub-sections and are usually included for readability purposes.
The purpose statement provides a clear description of the business venture being considered; or it would provide a clear description of the organizational change initiative being proposed (depending on which Capstone project alternative is being proposed). This description should include a few thoughts about why this proposed business venture is appropriate for the market, the void it might be addressing, and why the business plan should be developed. If it is a major organizational change initiative being proposed, the existing problem or void within the organization should be described and explained. Additional sections for this chapter may include topics pertaining to significance of the venture or change initiative, background description and any potential theoretical constructs.

Significance

This should be a very brief section explaining the relevance of this proposed venture or major organizational change initiative. It sets the context for relevancy.

Background

A brief synopsis of any relevant historical information related to how this potential business venture idea evolved, or how the major change initiative was initially conceived, should be presented in one of two paragraphs.

Theoretical Constructs

Theoretical constructs are related to underlying work that may precede this idea. It also may provide an opportunity to present a general description of how this research will be approached (i.e. a descriptive research study for the development of a business plan).
Definitions and Research Statement

The final section in this chapter should always include the definitions of terms specific to the business venture being proposed, or the major organizational change initiative. Most importantly, the definitions for the independent and dependent variables must be provided along with appropriate research question(s) and/or hypotheses for the proposed business venture or organizational change initiative. Note that the research question(s) should be posed as a question and not a statement.
Chapter II: Review of Related Literature

Note that the all chapters start on their own new page. Once again, this first section after the chapter title should provide an overview of this chapter. This chapter should review related literature appropriate for the business venture or the major organizational change being proposed. Even though this is a proposal for a practical corporate application project, all proposals need to be fortified and supported by literature that precedes and is germane to the proposal. Typically a proposal of this nature should have at least ten to twelve substantive sources that support the proposal.

Thoughts on a Literature Review

Note that this is a level-two section title for providing some thoughts on writing a literature review. Many people struggle a bit with the requirements and need for a literature review in a proposal of this nature. The struggle appears to be rooted in an inability to relate existent literature with the proposed venture or organizational change. It is very important to craft a story about why this proposed research is important, as well as to provide multiple points of view.

Quite often, research is steeped in personal bias and the literature review provides an opportunity to explore various theoretical constructs that support, and potentially refute the underlying proposed research. The ability to provide these multiple aspects will assist the reader in assuaging any potential concerns about personal bias, while allowing the underlying research to be rooted in a solid theoretical base. Therefore, providing sections on support for the existent research; potential refutation of the proposed research; and, why this research is important may be areas to consider. This can all be done with good searches in the online libraries.
Use of the Online Library

The online library should be used to find scholarly peer reviewed sources that can be described and referred to in this chapter. Use of books, magazines, internet sites, et al., should be limited in their use.
Chapter III: Research Methodology

This chapter provides a clear and concise description of the methodology that will be utilized to examine the independent and dependent variables. For the purposes of the capstone project, these variables will typically be related to a new business venture or major organizational change initiative and its relationship to the market or underlying existent organization. As reviewed in course work for research methods, there are two types of data that are applicable for data collection and analysis; primary and secondary data (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). It is strongly recommended that a combination of both primary and secondary data be utilized for the Capstone project. The following sections should always be included in this chapter and are focused on answering what data will be collected; why the data will be collected; how the data will be collected; and, what will be done with the data once it is collected.

Research Setting

This section provides facts about what data will be collected and where it will be obtained. Both primary data collection and secondary data collection must be addressed in this, and subsequent sections of this chapter. Formal names and/or locations should be avoided; rather than using a formal name, use a descriptive of the type of organization, setting, etc. (i.e. a privately owned manufacturing company located in the Northeast United States).

Selection Criteria

The selection criteria section provides a concise description as to why the data was chosen for collection. It will address questions pertaining to the targeted sources for the data; why those sources were chosen; agreements between parties pertaining to
primary data collection, including, but not necessarily limited to the method of informed consent (informed consent is covered in the first seminar for the program); and a description of the targeted sample set for the primary data collection.

**Data Collection**

The main purpose for this section is to provide detailed step-by-step descriptions of how the data will be collected for both primary and secondary data. For primary data collection, this process will allow for replication of the research at any point in the future and should be detailed enough to allow that to happen. This process description must include all aspects of administering primary data collection techniques including such things as how surveys or questionnaires will be distributed, collected, etc. Similarly, secondary data collection should be described so as to allow for replication of that analysis as well.

**Instruments and Measures**

Following the data collection section, the instrument that will be utilized for primary data collection must be fully described. It should include items such as length, categories, number of questions, targeted sample population, etc. In order to properly describe the instrument, additional secondary sections may aid readability for descriptive purposes.

**Demographics**

This secondary section may describe the demographic information that will be collected from each research participant.

<Independent Variable>
The <independent variable> section should be substituted with the name or descriptive title of the main independent variable for clarity. In this section, a full description will be provided for this variable as well as its application in the data collection survey instrument. The first item that should be provided in this section is the operational definition itself (this may seem somewhat redundant since this was also provided in the first chapter under definitions, but its description in this section will now provide its applicability to the research itself). Additional items in this section may include the layout of the survey instrument as it relates to this variable; informed consent or permission process; type of rating scale; composite scoring development; etc.

<Dependent Variable>

This section will be completed similar to the previously described section but for the dependent variable.

Data Analysis

The final section in this chapter and in the proposal itself will be a clear, brief, yet descriptive discussion of how the data will be analyzed and evaluated once it is collected. Of particular note should be the examination of the relationship between the independent and dependent variable(s). Remember, these variables will be based upon either the new venture being considered for a business plan, or for the presentation of a major organizational change initiative in an existing organization.
References

