

Title: What It Takes to Win and Sustain Growth: A Jesuit Framework

- Thematic Area: Curriculum for a Changing World: An Inspirational Paradigm for Jesuit Business Education

- Extended Abstract – 794 Words

- Preferred Presentation Format: Standard Presentation (Note: Final Assignment can be in any of the two presentation formats.)

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Winning and sustaining growth in the environment requires more than operational excellence, cost control, or incremental improvement. Markets are being reshaped by artificial intelligence, climate transition pressures, geopolitical tensions, social innovation, changing customer expectations, and competitive turbulence. In that context, the question is no longer whether organizations should change, but whether they can identify and execute the kinds of transformational initiatives required to remain relevant. This paper presents a Jesuit framework for teaching what it takes to win and sustain growth. It is designed for the “Curriculum for a Changing World” track because it translates executive growth logic into a pedagogical model that helps form students to think strategically, act courageously, and align performance with the common good (IAJU, 2020).

The framework begins with a direct proposition: organizations do not win primarily by making small adjustments to yesterday’s model; they win by identifying and implementing breakthrough or transformational initiatives. Incremental improvement remains useful, but it is rarely sufficient when customers, competitors, technologies, and value chains are changing quickly. The paper therefore distinguishes optimization from transformation. Optimization improves an existing model. Transformation changes the model itself—by redefining the value proposition, redesigning the business system, or opening entirely new pathways to growth. This distinction matters pedagogically because many business programs teach students how to improve what exists, but not what must be reinvented.

The paper’s second proposition is that transformational growth is achieved by fearless yet disciplined teams. Fearlessness, as used here, does not mean recklessness. It means challenging assumptions, taking informed risks, moving beyond comfort zones, and acting with strategic

courage even when certainty is incomplete. It also means creating climates in which difficult ideas can be proposed early rather than suppressed by bureaucracy, politics, or attachment to best practices. This emphasis responds directly to disruption. Artificial intelligence is enabling new forms of value creation and new forms of obsolescence. Climate-related change is forcing organizations to rethink supply chains, products, and investment priorities. Social innovation is broadening the definition of performance to include inclusion, dignity, and durable societal value. Leaders who cannot think beyond precedent will struggle in all three domains.

The framework aligns naturally with the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm. Context asks students to understand industry structure, stakeholder realities, and the social consequences of strategic choices. Experience gives them exposure to transformation through cases, simulations, and applied projects. Reflection requires them to examine not only what strategy should be pursued, but why it is justified and for whom it creates value. Action then asks them to formulate recommendations. Evaluation closes the loop by assessing judgment, learning, and ethical coherence. In this way, Jesuit pedagogy provides a structure for teaching strategic leadership as a reflective and morally accountable practice rather than merely a technical exercise (Kolvenbach, 2005).

The paper also emphasizes that sustainable growth depends on how organizations learn. One neglected driver of growth is the disciplined interpretation of failure. Firms that celebrate only wins often suppress the insights that would enable real improvement. By contrast, organizations that examine both failures and successes build adaptive capacity. They learn faster, identify patterns earlier, and develop the humility required for renewal. In the classroom, this implies that students should study failed transformations alongside successful ones and be

trained to ask: What assumption proved false? What signal was ignored? What habit blocked change? Such questions deepen strategic judgment.

Another contribution of the framework is its insistence that strategy must precede execution. Many organizations move too quickly to implementation without first defining what the right initiative is and why it matters. Students therefore need disciplined exposure to the distinction between strategy and tactics. Strategy determines what must be pursued and why. Tactics determine how it will be carried out. This distinction is central to sustained growth because misdirected execution, even when excellent, does not produce transformation. Drucker (1999) and Porter and Kramer (2011) together suggest that innovation, value creation, and purpose are mutually reinforcing when leaders understand both direction and contribution.

Curricularly, the paper proposes transformation-focused case teaching, structured reflection on failure and renewal, and interdisciplinary assignments that combine strategic analysis with ethical reasoning. Students should be trained to evaluate growth not only in financial terms, but also in terms of mission alignment, stakeholder dignity, and long-term value creation. Such an approach is deeply compatible with Jesuit business education because it forms leaders who can compete effectively without reducing business success to short-term gain alone.

In conclusion, this paper argues that winning and sustaining growth today requires transformational thinking, strategic courage, learning agility, and moral discernment. Jesuit business schools can play a distinctive role by teaching students how to pursue growth that is both rigorous and responsible. In a world shaped by AI, climate transition, geopolitical tensions, and social innovation, that is not an optional enrichment to business education; it is a central requirement.

References

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