Course #15.399 Entrepreneurship Laboratory (E-Lab)

SYLLABUS – Spring 2011
January 14th, 2011 v1.0

Course Introduction
E-Lab is a project-based course, in which teams of students work on projects for start-up firms. E-Lab host companies already have outside funding, working technology (although not often a specific application for it) and people. Some have revenue; others do not. E-Lab goals include:

- Gaining experience with fast-paced start-up companies;
- Providing an opportunity to apply academic knowledge in entrepreneurial situations, where firm characteristics assumed in most management courses don’t yet exist;
- Allowing you to learn quickly about, and contribute to, an industry, a technology, and a market with which you may be quite unfamiliar;
- Providing a low-risk environment for learning personal skills, and strengthening your ability to analyze technical feasibility (particularly if you are an MBA student) and new business opportunities (particularly if you are an engineer);
- Teaching specific tools and skills needed in entrepreneurial ventures -- especially for sound analysis about customers, target market selection and market entry;
- Learning how to formulate and quantify a value proposition that matches a venture’s technical capabilities to market and customer needs;
- Providing exposure to start-up environments that will be useful in career decisions;
- Providing experience of managing a consulting project in the face of many unknowns, under extreme time pressure, and ultimately delivering real value to your client.

The course is 12 units and a lot of work in a fixed period of time. Projects vary widely, but a typical project involves investigating potential markets for a new technology, defining and matching the technology to specific customer needs, and evaluating the value proposition for target customers. It is a very hands-on course, so be prepared to spend a lot of time on the telephone talking with customers and experts, and if possible meeting them as well. The aim in this course is to “learn-by-doing” as opposed to the B-school norm of “learning-by-reading”.

Harvard and MIT non-Sloan graduate students are encouraged to take the course; diversity contributes to realism and ultimately, to project success. In the past, 25-50% of students have been enrolled from outside of the MIT Sloan School. Every team has included one Engineer or Scientist with a non-business background. You should expect (and want) to work with students that have different backgrounds. This is not a course for working with your roommates.

Course Information

Classroom: E51-325
Meeting Time: Tuesday 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm.
A student style networking supper is served each evening, during which you should sit with and get to know those people not in your team.
Students are asked to contribute a small amount to cover food costs.
Primary Instructor: **Alan MacCormack**, Visiting Associate Professor, E62-469  
AlanMac@mit.edu  +1-617 253-7474  
Assistant: Erin Carlson (emcarl@mit.edu)  
Office Hours: by appointment (via Erin)

Assisting Faculty: Team Mentors will be assigned once projects are selected.

Teaching Assistants: **Tom Rose**  
elab-ta@mit.edu  
Office Hours: Entrepreneurship center, times to be announced.

E- Center Help: **Pat Fuligni**, Administrative Assistant, MIT Entrepreneurship Center  
Pfuligni@mit.edu (617)-253-8653  
E-Center, E40-196

Course Website:  
http://entrepreneurship.mit.edu/ELAB/  
Sign-up, company matching, other early activity  
Readings and communication during the semester hosted on Stellar  
http://stellar.mit.edu/S/course/15/sp11/15.399/

Readings:  
A case packet will be available for purchase at CopyTech, E52-045.  
Other material will be distributed in class and through the Stellar web site.  
Non-MBA students may be expected to do additional background reading.

**Role of Course Faculty and TAs**
Alan MacCormack is in charge of the class sessions, of all the required internal presentation/feedback sessions, and of grading for the course. He will be available during the semester for additional meetings with teams or whenever individuals require help with projects.

Assisting Faculty and the course TA(s) are the main resources for contact with host firms. They can help if teams need assistance communicating with their company. They also mentor teams and attend team presentations, offering feedback to help prepare for the final presentation.

The TAs are involved in helping to recruit host companies and matching them with teams. Once the semester starts, the TAs’ role is somewhat reduced, but you should use the TAs as a source of advice about issues such as team organization and dynamics. TAs monitor class attendance. We only meet for a small number of sessions, so it is important that you attend each one. Any request for a classroom absence should be sent to the TAs BEFORE that class is underway.

Pat Fuligni in the MIT Entrepreneurship Center (E40-196; +1-617-253-3972) is an important resource because she tends to know when and how people and things can be found!  
If you wish to have conference calls with your host company, the E-Center is open from 9AM to 5PM with free telephone services. Other times can be arranged through the TA, or Pat Fuligni.

**COURSE DETAILS**

**Before Class Begins**
Working with the course faculty, the MIT Entrepreneurship Center staff and the TAs have recruited candidate E-Lab host companies and helped those companies submit information to the course website (http://entrepreneurship.mit.edu/ELAB/). We have attempted to choose companies to match student interests. We look for companies that are relatively small (fewer
than 40 employees) that have real technology/products and real (generally venture) backing. There are more potential host firms than teams, so you will have a good choice of project.

Students are required to register for the course in advance at the E-Lab website. Information about you will be available to candidate host companies and other students. We encourage you to use the website before the first class, to look for teammates and identify companies that match your interests. Informal early contacts are encouraged. Companies can also access the website, to identify and interact with students that they think would be a good fit for their projects. While networking prior to class is actively encouraged, to ensure equal opportunities for all, students should not formally commit to working with a particular firm prior to the first class.

In forming teams, compatibility and capability are important, but diversity is critical. Seek out backgrounds and interests that complement your own. Teams operate as a whole; no individual has all the skills needed to succeed. **We do not allow teams that are too uniform** (e.g., all MIT Sloan, all HBS, all marketing experts); each team should include one engineer or scientist.

**The final portfolio of projects will be posted by 6pm Friday Jan 28th prior to the first class. By Saturday at 6pm, we ask all registered students to indicate their top three choices.** These choices will be open to all, allowing students to assess demand, network, build teams, and assess the likelihood of getting their top choices. When conflicts arise, students that have completed the ranking will be given preference over others. The data will help course faculty understand which projects may be oversubscribed and which are unlikely to get demand.

**First Class: Team Formation and Project Selection**

In the first class, students will network, form teams, and select projects. Student teams will typically consist of one engineer and three MBAs (Sloan/HBS). While some printouts of host company information will be available in class, **students MUST have reviewed the project information on the E-Lab web site prior to the class.** Students are encouraged to bring laptops to class on the first day for additional online research. The course faculty and TA will be present to discuss companies and projects, and support the matching process.

By end of the first evening, each team should submit to the TAs a form specifying:

- Team members with contact details (include a cell phone for the main contact).
- Top Choice (in most cases, we can confirm your host company that evening).
- Two backup choices, in case we have too many teams asking for one project.
- A signed “contract” from each team member agreeing to the terms of the course. We ask you in the contract to acknowledge your responsibility not to drop the course once you sign up with a team, and agree to the requirements for ethical behavior (below).

The faculty and TAs are responsible for matching teams and companies. We do our best to accommodate your interests, but sometimes it is impossible for everyone to get their first choice. **You should evaluate several projects, and come to class prepared to be flexible.** Normally, we can confirm team assignments to projects on the first evening. Once we confirm your team and project, you are free to leave and begin planning for your first company meeting. We will confirm final allocations of teams to projects the following day. Teams should immediately contact their host companies to schedule the first face-to-face meeting or call.

**By Friday February 4th at 5pm, every student should be a member of a team, be assigned a project they are excited about and have agreed the objectives for this project. In most cases, you should have talked to the host company and agreed upon a project plan and milestones.**
Class and Team Work
The first task in working with your company is to agree on the project definition, scope, milestones and working arrangements. Teams will spend the rest of the semester working on the project, with frequent, regular company contact. Class sessions, held weekly from 6.00-9.00pm for roughly half the semester, will cover topics relevant to typical projects. On days with no formal classes, the time is available for meeting with your team and with faculty coaches. Each team will have several meetings with faculty to set project expectations, discuss progress to date, update plans for future work, and discuss any issues and problems. At the end of the semester, each team makes its final presentation twice: first to faculty, and then to the company.

Working with Your Host Company
As soon as you learn your host company, call them to arrange the first meeting. Firms have been told to expect to meet you the first week of class or soon thereafter. The aim of the meeting is to specify project objectives, agree a brief project plan and major milestones, and define how you will measure success. At the second class, you must turn in a copy of your project plan, signed by the host company CEO (or sponsor) and by all E-Lab team members.

A critically important topic for your initial meeting with your host company is access -- both to top management of the company and to customers and perhaps other outsiders. Frequent high-level contact has been a key element of past successful E-Lab projects. Access to prospective or actual customers is also essential for E-Lab projects. You must address this issue up-front with your host companies, and set expectations for how much access you will have, who will be available to you, and how often you can meet face-to-face (this is especially important for host companies that are not in the Boston area). You should also ask them whom to contact if your expectations are not being met, and you need help to resolve the problem.

Front-load your projects! The semester goes by very quickly and involves a lot of work. Most teams will be working with outsiders (at the host company, with actual or potential customers, and elsewhere) so you will not have control over critical scheduling issues, hence teams need to ramp-up early. During the semester, remain in close contact with your company and the course faculty. Please let the faculty and TAs know promptly if problems arise, so we can help you. Given the turbulent life of a start-up, E-Lab projects often change in scope during the semester; but these changes can be handled fairly easily, providing that everyone involved understands why there is a need for change, and what should be done in your project as a result.

Your final formal presentation to the host company typically occurs after your final MIT presentation/feedback session. People from the company do not attend the internal MIT sessions. After your final presentation to the host, the course faculty may close the loop, checking with the senior company contact to see how they felt the project went. Your course grade will depend only on your internal MIT evaluation, not on the views of the company. But we encourage you to ask for feedback from the company as you proceed.

Class Materials and Discussions
Each class session will cover a topic that is important to the success of a typical Elab project. Given the diversity in project objectives however, not every class session will be directly relevant to your specific project. This does not mean that you can miss these classes. Each session has been designed to cover tools and concepts that every entrepreneur should understand. Students should be able to apply these tools and concepts to their host companies, even if this is not the aim of the particular project they happen to be undertaking in E-Lab.
The class materials are contained in a course packet that can be purchased from the MIT Sloan Copy Center. Please ensure that you pick up this packet before the second class. The materials for class are primarily business cases that examine the issues facing firms that are attempting to develop new products or services. You will receive preparation questions for these cases that help focus your analysis on the topics we will discuss in class. It is important that you are prepared for class discussions, and contribute when called upon. Typically, one student will be asked to open each case. Another might be called upon to wrap-up the discussion. These “cold-calls” should not be feared, but used as an opportunity to communicate your point-of-view. Don’t worry if you have a different “answer” from other participants. There is never one-way to look at a problem; we benefit from the variety in students’ perspectives.

Given the diversity in student backgrounds, part of your role in the course is that of a teacher. Engineering/science students will be important in helping their teams understand the relevant technology and trends. MBA students will help others to understand how to analyze business performance. You may find that in some classes, one of your teammates has experience of the topic we are covering (or occasionally, the specific cases we use). Tap into this knowledge, not to get the “right answer,” but for help in applying the concepts to the problems we are tackling.

The Stellar web site (http://Stellar.mit.edu) is the primary means for communication in the course. You must check it regularly for announcements. Stellar pages, including forums, have an RSS feed, making it easy to keep up with class updates, discussions etc. Contributing to forums is an important form of class participation, and will be reflected in your grade.

**Professionalism and Ethics**

On your E-Lab project, you are a representative of MIT. Your behavior will affect people’s opinions of you and their opinions of MIT. Please devote time and care to behave in a way that supports and strengthens the MIT brand. Be competent, ethical, professional, and polite.

Ethics require special attention with start-ups and technology companies. You have already agreed to maintain the confidentiality of the company information on the course website. Host companies may ask you to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA). This is normal. Just ensure that the NDA does NOT restrict your future employment (e.g., prevents you working in the same industry). You can decline to sign an NDA, but if you do, the company may redefine the project and it may be less interesting. Ask the company to be clear on the information you can or cannot share, whether or not you sign an NDA. In general, the more openly you can discuss what you are doing, the more insights you will generate, and the more useful your project will be to the company; but the company must weigh this against protecting their key information. Some companies, for example, may be in stealth mode, and cautious of revealing too much.

You absolutely may not work on a company or project where you have any conflict of interest, such as connection to a competitor. Please do not take any chances about this requirement; if there is any question whatsoever, speak with the course faculty before you choose a company.

You may face ethical issues when you interview customers, competitors and others during your field research. Start by saying that you are an MIT student working on a course project with a company. If an interview subject asks which company, tell them. If an interview subject asks for additional information, be careful with the information you release. If a potential subject refuses -- or demands inappropriate information as the price of cooperation -- politely thank them and decline. You'll find that most people will be happy to help, especially if you are straightforward with them, and make it clear why you value their opinions and what you will do with them.
E-Lab Class Schedule (NB: Check the Stellar website frequently for updates)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 29th</td>
<td>Submit top three project choices on Elab website by 6pm.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>February 1st</td>
<td><strong>First class. Team formation. Attendance is mandatory.</strong> Course introduction: Goals, sketch of typical projects Reading: 3,000 Ideas = 1 Commercial Success Submit team and company preferences to TA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>February 4th</td>
<td>Team/company matches finalized: Arrange first meeting</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>February 8th</td>
<td>Topic: Defining the Customer Value Proposition (CVP) Prepare Case: Red Hat and the Linux Revolution Reading: Customer Value Propositions in Business Markets <em>Note: Signed project plans are due in class</em></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>February 15th</td>
<td>Topic: Managing Venture Development Prepare Case: The Rise and Fall of Iridium Reading: Learning from the Market Guest Lecturer: Duncan Simester, MIT Marketing Group</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>February 22nd</td>
<td>NOTE: MIT HAS A MONDAY SCHEDULE (WE STILL MEET) Topic: Developing a Platform Technology Prepare Case: Space Data Corporation Guest Lecture: Jim Matheson, Flagship Ventures</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>March 1st</td>
<td><strong>Team Presentation 1</strong>: The Customer Value Proposition (CVP) <em>Note: Deadline for first team meeting with team mentor</em></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>March 8th</td>
<td>Project Time; no class</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>March 15th</td>
<td>Project Time; no class (SIP Week)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>March 22nd</td>
<td>Project Time; no class (MIT Spring Break)</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>March 29th</td>
<td>Project Time; no class</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>April 5th</td>
<td><strong>Team Presentation 2</strong>: Insights from Customer Interviews/Surveys <em>Note: Deadline for second team meeting with mentor</em></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>April 12th</td>
<td>Project Time; no class</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>April 19th</td>
<td>Topic: Networking (Half Class) Reading: Cocktail Party Savvy; Networking Playbook</td>
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<td>April 21st (Thur)</td>
<td><strong>Spring CEO Reception (Faculty Club; 6pm-9pm)</strong></td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>April 26th</td>
<td>Project Time; no class</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>May 3rd</td>
<td>Project Time; no class</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>May 10th</td>
<td><strong>Team Presentation 3</strong>: Elevator Pitch and Poster Session <em>Note: Deadline for sending Personal Reflection Essay to TA</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>May 9-13th</td>
<td>Final Faculty Presentations held</td>
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**Course Deliverables**
The course encompasses in-class meetings and presentations throughout the semester. Each team will be allocated a faculty mentor whom they should meet with on a regular basis. Here is a summary of the expectations with regards to project team meetings and presentations:

- **Team progress reports with faculty mentors.** These meetings allow you to demonstrate progress and resolve potential problems. There is no upper limit to how many of them you schedule – but each one should aim to accomplish specific goals, or review pieces of your ongoing analysis. As a minimum, we have set two deadlines during the term for you to check-in with faculty.

- **There are three team presentations to the class (max 5-mins, 5 slides per team).** These are intended to help you pace and front-load important activities in your project. They are not intended to generate additional work, outside of that which you need to do anyway. They allow each team to learn from the experiences of others and provide a setting where you can ask for help from classmates. Each session will cover a different topic, as follows:
  - **Presentation 1:** *Identify the target customer and present the value proposition for your product or service, in the language of the customer.* This session will give you an opportunity to articulate how your company plans to create value for customers, and outline your project objectives.
  - **Presentation 2:** *Communicate the lessons your team has learned from interviews and other primary source data gathered from customers.* This session will give you an opportunity to share insights from the work you have done interviewing and/or surveying potential (and real) customers.
  - **Presentation 3:** *Deliver an “Elevator Pitch” presentation outlining the main findings from your project, and what you have learned in E-Lab.* Furthermore, develop a Poster presentation that communicates what you have done graphically. We will allocate time for you to walk around and talk with other teams about the outcomes of their projects.

- **An important E-Lab tradition is the reception honoring CEOs of E-Lab companies.** The reception is held on a Thursday during term. Mark the date on your calendar. You will be expected to spend time calling and recruiting guests. You will network to your heart’s content during the event, while ensuring your host company’s objectives are met (as well as introducing them to E-Lab faculty).

- **Final faculty presentation and slide deck.** This is the main output of your project. You will present to the course faculty in the final week of classes. This session will last for 90 minutes, including time for questions, feedback and suggestions. The TAs will begin a sign-up process for time slots a few weeks after term starts. Final presentations to your company sponsors should be scheduled after you present to faculty, in order that our feedback can be incorporated for them. Note that all faculty presentations are regarded as confidential; in contrast, your short presentations to the class should **not** contain any proprietary data.

- **We will ask questions and offer feedback both during and after your presentation.** Please allocate 30-45 minutes of your presentation time to your responses. We will then offer suggestions for improvement, which fall into one of two types: The first are specific items that you should incorporate into your work *before* you present to your host, and hence increase the value you deliver to them; the second are general items that are geared to helping you learn from your E-Lab experiences. **Note that for evaluation purposes, we grade the presentation that you deliver to the course faculty, not any subsequent versions.** We ask however, that you send us the final version you present to your host company.
**Course Grading**

Alan MacCormack, E-Lab’s primary faculty, is responsible for grading. Grades depend largely on the work you perform in your project. Project grades do not measure team effort; they measure a team’s performance, both over the course of the semester and in the final presentation. Performance is related to a) the novel/rigorous insights/analyses you develop in your project and b) the ability to communicate these insights/analyses effectively in class and at the final faculty presentation. Note that grading naturally involves making comparisons. What each team accomplishes is measured, to some extent, against what other teams achieve.

To provide additional information about the contribution of each team member, students may be asked to hand-in a signed note giving their evaluation of the efforts and contributions of other team members (by default, we assume that all team members make equal contributions).

*Please note that when you formally join a team you are agreeing to this arrangement.*

Attendance and participation in classroom discussions is the second measure of performance. Each instructor will assess the quantity and quality of comments during their discussions. Finally, each student must hand-in a personal reflection essay (see below) at the final class.

**Allocation of Course Grade**

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Component</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td><strong>Project Content, Presentations and Individual Contribution</strong></td>
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<td>- Adding value to the host company through insightful analysis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Demonstrating this value through a well-prepared presentation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Evaluations of each member’s individual efforts and intellectual contribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td><strong>Class Participation and Attendance</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Adding value in class discussions, lectures and team presentations</td>
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<td>- Contributions to the forums on the Stellar Site (<a href="http://stellar.mit.edu">http://stellar.mit.edu</a>)</td>
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<td>- The TAs must be notified <em>in advance</em> of any absence</td>
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<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td><strong>Personal Reflection Essay (see below)</strong></td>
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<td>- Providing a thoughtful assessment of your E-lab experience</td>
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<td>- Developing broad lessons that can be applied to future situations</td>
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We have very high expectations and standards. A team of four great MIT/HBS students working on a project one day a week for three months should achieve great things. **We grade accordingly, using a curve: 50% A and 50% B.** However, if it is decided that a team’s performance has been significantly below expectations, we will award that team a C grade.

**Personal Reflection Essay**

Each student will write a short 2-3-page personal assessment of what you learned and send it to the TAs by May 13th. It is intended to help you reflect upon, generalize and synthesize the experiences in your project. Style and content are up to you. You may discuss your thoughts with others, but you should write the essay alone. Possible topics include:

- Lessons learned: Actual outcomes versus expectations.
- Theory versus practice: what happens versus what the “books” say.
- Problems you encountered, and what you learned from tackling them.
- Personal strengths and weaknesses that you have identified through your work.
- Specific tools that you learned or used for the first time, and how they can be applied.
Content and Format of the Final Faculty Presentation

Consistent with the course objectives, your final presentation should both provide real value to the host company and clearly communicate how you have arrived at your recommendations. While all projects and presentations have unique elements geared to the specific questions you are asked to address, there are common themes that run through successful efforts:

- **First, good projects bring novel insights to the host firm.** What does the company now know, that it did not at the start of the project? Typically, novelty comes from the customer facing work that you do – whether this is conducting customer interviews, or conducting surveys. Rarely do our host firms understand the market deeply enough.

- **Second, your presentation should be built on a foundation of strong, rigorous analysis.** What question were you asked to solve? What data and information did you gather? How did you use this data to arrive at your conclusions and recommendations? Make sure you are specific about data sourced from third parties (e.g., industry reports), versus data generated from primary sources (interviews and surveys).

- **Third, you should provide a clear and quantified statement of the customer value proposition for your venture.** How will this product or service create value for customers? What advantages and disadvantages does it have relative to competing solutions? What factors dictate how large the market is, and how much customers are willing to pay? While not all projects have these questions as their main focus, rarely can a team succeed without a fundamental understanding of these critical issues.

- **Fourth, your presentation should offer clear and specific recommendations for ACTION.** This is a key part of your presentation, and one that is too often ignored or given limited attention. Frequently, teams present large amounts of analysis, with little thought as to what the company should do come Monday morning. You should develop an action plan that clearly delineates short, medium and long-term actions.

- **Finally, your presentation should be objective, and not sidestep difficult issues.** Quite frequently, E-Lab teams find that the data they generate challenges some of the key assumptions of their host company. On occasion, these differences are critical to the viability of a venture, which can make for some difficult meetings. A good way to tackle this situation is to clearly separate facts and data, which are easy to agree (e.g., data from surveys) from your interpretations of the data, and subsequent recommendations.

Note that your presentation should be able to stand alone – that is, it should be readable (and understandable) without having your team there to present it or explain the analysis. This is the way that consulting firms work – typically they achieve this by delivering their analysis using PowerPoint slides with headlines that speak in “storyboard” form. Try this out on friends – can they understand the flow of work, and the key conclusions, without verbal accompaniment?

Your final faculty presentation should be developed in PowerPoint (or PDF) with supporting documentation (e.g., financial models, customer data) included as appendices. The front of your “deck” should consist of the slides you will present at the final faculty presentation. Be sure to include an Executive Summary (in PP form) at the start of this document, laying out what you were asked to do, the main conclusions from your analysis, and the plan of action you recommend. Be sure to include the names of all team members and their backgrounds on the first page, as well as the logos of both your host company and the E-Center. Bring a hard copy for all attendees when you give the presentation both to faculty and to your host company.
Case Assignment Questions (NB Check Stellar for the Latest Updates)

Case: Red Hat and the Linux Revolution

The case describes the evolution of open source software in general, and the Linux operating system in particular. In August 1999, Red Hat has just completed its IPO, and must decide what to do with the funds it has just received. Some managers want to build software applications, but Bob Young, Red Hat’s CEO, is not so sure that is a good idea.

1. Why has open source software been so successful? What are the limits to its application?

2. How should Red Hat exploit the opportunity created by the rise of open source software? What is the unique value proposition that the firm offers to potential customers?

3. What should Young do? Should he fund the development of Linux applications?

Case: The Rise and Fall of Iridium

This case describes the history of Iridium, the world's first mobile satellite service provider, which began service in 1998 and filed for bankruptcy one year later.

1. Who was to blame for Iridium's failure? At what point could you have known this project would fail? Why wasn’t it stopped? Who should have stopped it?

2. Evaluate Iridium's technical choices and the design of its organization. What did they do well? What should they have done differently?

3. What lessons does Iridium teach for managing complex projects in uncertain environments? How can you apply these lessons to your organization? What will you do differently now?

Case: Space Data Corporation

The case describes the evolution of Space Data Corporation, a firm that is developing a communications platform with the power to provide complete national coverage for paging, messaging, voice and other wireless applications. In September 2001, Space Data’s founders are faced with some difficult choices with regard to their future direction.

1. Critique Space Data's progress in developing its venture? Contrast its approach with that of Iridium. What do you learn from this comparison?

2. Evaluate Space Data's flight-testing program. Focus your analysis on Exhibit 13, which describes each test in detail. How would you characterize their approach? How could it be improved? Are they ready to fly now? If not, what additional tests should be run?

3. Which application (paging, voice, or telemetry) should Space Data focus on? In class, I will appoint a spokesperson for each choice to argue their case.
Course Packet Materials

Readings:


HBS Cases:

Red Hat and the Linux Revolution, HBS Case 600-009

The Rise and Fall of Iridium, HBS Case 601-040

Space Data Corporation, HBS Case 602-121

Activision: The Kelly Slater’s Pro Surfer Project, HBS Case 605-202