

ENGAGE.EU Certificate
Joint Programme in Digital Transformation

Platform Strategies

Course Syllabus

Shiva Shekhar

24-25 January & 31 January - 1 February

Course Abstract

The course introduces the multi-sided platform business model and the importance of platform orchestration and governance strategies. It provides insights on the best practices to successfully interact with existing platforms and optimize the symbiotic relationship, and finally discusses evolution of new technologies into potential platforms. Students will have an opportunity to apply concepts from platform economics and organization using game theoretical tools and case studies to real world problems.

Throughout the course, participants will engage in discussions, case studies, and interactive sessions to reinforce their understanding of digital platforms and how they shape the modern business landscape. By the end of the course, participants will be equipped with the knowledge and tools to navigate the complexities of digital platforms and make informed strategic decisions in this rapidly evolving digital age.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, the students should be able to...

- ...name the most important concepts in digital platforms.
- ...illustrate the basic principles on network effects in multi-sided platform markets and types of platforms.
- ... explain how platforms are designed and how platforms orchestrate interactions between multiple sides and, thereby, create value.
- ... identify the different types of platforms.
- ...apply the insights from theories in platform markets to platforms in the real world.
- ...interpret platform pricing decisions.

- ...analyze pricing and design strategies employed by platforms and the rationale behind them.

Evaluation and Grading

The course will use a mix of lectures, case discussions and guest speakers. Mini-cases and problems will also be employed to make students apply their learning to practical situations.

Participants' grade will be composed of

30% Team assignment/presentation (team grade)

70% Written essay (individual grade)

Team assignment (30%)

The team assignment is a presentation that must be completed as a group project. You need to form groups up to five students. Each team/group is assigned a certain case study, that needs to be studied in detail and presented in class. Each team/group should be prepared to present the slides with their solutions to the individual tasks. The answers to the questions of the case should be summarized on slides. Depending on the group size, the number of slides in the presentation should be 20-30. All students are requested to be present during all team presentations. This way, we create an interactive and constructive learning environment.

The evaluation of teamwork is based on the following criteria:

- Presentation will be graded on the soundness of students' analyses and recommendations and the quality of the contribution to the discussion.
- Argumentation: The essential information in the case is used to answer the questions.
- Analysis and conclusions: Convincing analysis and conclusions supported by facts and logical argumentation.
- Link to the course: Use and application of appropriate strategy concepts and procedures discussed in the course.
- Presentation: Well-structured discussion with a clear flow and effective answers to the case questions.

Written essay (70%)

Students will write an individual essay on the contents taught in the Digital Strategy course. Details of the essay and due date will be announced in the lecture. Length: The individual essay should be between 3000 to 5000 words, excluding references and citations. This word count range allows students to delve into the topics in sufficient depth while ensuring conciseness and clarity in their arguments. You are allowed to **use ChatGPT and other tools**. Your essay will be graded on depth of its arguments.

Depth: The essay should demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the key concepts covered in the course. Students are encouraged to critically analyze and integrate the course materials, lecture discussions, and relevant external sources to support their arguments. In addition, the students are expected to demonstrate understanding of the course by providing prescriptive managerial implications. *As you are allowed to use ChatGPT, I will pay extra attention on nuances of your argument as well as basic logical errors.*

Content: Discussed in class.

Required Formatting Guidelines:

1. Font: Use a standard font such as Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri with a font size of 12. Justify your text (Ctrl + J in word)!!!
2. Spacing: Double-space the entire essay.
3. Margins: Set one-inch margins on all sides of the page.
4. Page Numbers: Include page numbers in the bottom right corner.
5. Title: Provide a clear and concise title for the essay that reflects its content.
6. Citations and References: Follow a consistent citation style (e.g., APA, MLA, or Chicago) for in-text citations and the bibliography. Provide proper references for all external sources used in the essay.
7. Submission Format: Submit the essay as a **Word document and PDF** as instructed by the course instructor.
8. Due Date: The due date for the essay submission will be announced in the lecture. Ensure timely submission to avoid any penalties.

Readings

Mandatory Readings:

Parker, Geoffrey G., Marshall W. Van Alstyne, and Sangeet Paul Choudary. *Platform revolution: How networked markets are transforming the economy and how to make them work for you*. WW Norton & Company, 2016.

Belleflamme, Paul, and Martin Peitz. *The Economics of Platforms*. Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Complementary Readings:

<https://platformchronicles.substack.com/>

Van Alstyne, Marshall W., Geoffrey G. Parker, and Sangeet Paul Choudary. "Pipelines, platforms, and the new rules of strategy." *Harvard business review* 94.4 (2016): 54-62.

Edelman, Benjamin. "How to launch your digital platform." Harvard business review 93.4 (2015): 21.

Feng, Zhu, and Iansiti Marco. "Why Some Platforms Thrive and Others Don't." Harvard Business Review (2019).

Sessions

FIRST SESSION: 24 January 2025, 12 pm – 6 pm

Course Opening: Introduction to Digital Platforms and core concepts

- What are multi-sided digital platforms
- Types of platforms.
- Network effects, types of network effects and economies of scale.
- How do platforms overcome the chicken and egg problem?

Discussion of Lecture Unit 1.1: Digital Platform Business Models

- Types of platform business models.
- “Free platforms”, “Device funded platforms”, and hybrid platforms, marketplace platforms and others.
- Ways to monetize a platform: Advertisements, data, sales.

SECOND SESSION: 25 January 2025, 9 am – 4 pm

Discussion of Lecture Unit 2.1: Platform design, governance and orchestration

- What is platform openness? What degree of openness should platforms employ?
- The opportunities and challenges presented by opening up a platform.
- How to harness network effects while protecting value creation?

Discussion of Lecture Unit 2.1: Platform participation strategies.

- What is the chicken and egg problem?
- What strategies can platforms use to overcome this challenge.
- Discussion on cases where these strategies are used.

THIRD SESSION: 31 January 2025, 12 pm – 6 pm

Discussion of Lecture Unit 3.1: The role of data in platforms

- What is the role of data on a platform?
- What are the different data types collected by platforms?
- How do platforms monetize data?
- What are data driven network effects?

Discussion of Lecture Unit 3.2: Platform pricing decisions.

- What are the different ways platforms choose to monetize?
- When are the different pricing instruments chosen by platforms?
- Which side of the market should be charged and which side should be subsidized ?
- How do network effect impact pricing decisions ?
- How can platforms leverage data to improve pricing decisions.

FOURTH SESSION: 1 February 2025, 9 am – 4 pm

Discussion of Lecture Unit 4.1: Developing a Digital transformation Strategy

- The opportunities and challenges of digital transformation into a platform?
- Digital transformation (into platforms) strategies?
- Case studies on platform digital transformation

About the Lecturer

Shiva Shekhar is an Assistant Professor in Information Systems at the Tilburg School of Economics and Management (TiSEM). Shiva's research focuses on strategies in platform markets and understanding their impact on the ecosystem supported by the platform. His re-search offers clear managerial and policy recommendations.

Shiva has a master's and a bachelor's degree in Economics and completed his PhD in 2017 at the Duesseldorf Institute for Competition Economics which was focused on platform and supply chain economics. Between 2018 and 2020, Shiva was an economist at a consulting firm and consulted with firms on Mergers and Acquisitions as well as on anti-trust issues. During his stint as a consultant, Shiva mostly focused on big tech firms and advised on anti-trust concerns. From 2021 to 2022, he had a short stint as an Assistant Professor in Information Systems at the University of Passau.