

1. Learning Approach and Structure

Emphasizing the inherent relevance and value of relationships, the lecture's main goal is to provide comprehensive insights into business-to-business industry dynamics from a global network perspective. The discussion of theoretical concepts is complemented by explanatory industry studies, leaving no doubt that customers, suppliers, logistics and other stakeholders are mutually dependent through their global interconnected relationships.

The case studies at the end of the chapters provide pragmatic insights into business-to-business network dynamics and aim to illuminate the firms' relationship-based strategies and business concepts against the background of ever-changing opportunities and challenges in the international markets. The case studies enable the reader, including both faculty and students, to apply what is theoretically discussed in each chapter. The chapter cases do not target to reach a 'right or wrong' conclusion. Instead, taking the perspective of the management, the reader should practice alternative and usually compromising approaches to address the issue. The chapter case studies serve to improve the understanding of a firm's competitive positioning relative to rivals in differentiated global business-to-business markets.

Similar to the eight book chapters, the lecture is divided into eight sessions. Session 1 provides an introduction to upcoming dynamics of globally integrated business-to-business markets. Moreover, the first chapter defines and clarifies relevant concepts of business relationships.

Session 2 describes, among other things, behavioural characteristics of industrial buyers and sellers, as well as the structural aspects of business-to-business markets and the corresponding implications for managers in the light of global integrated value chains. The case study of Apple Inc. delivers insights into its worldwide sourcing and corresponding supplier configurations.

The development of trust is of central importance for long-term bilateral relationships. Session 3 introduces how bilateral partnerships and, as a result, business value are jointly developed between network actors. The aim is to describe and understand the value dimensions, relationship functions and the phenomenon of incongruent value perceptions by network actors when developing sustainable business-to-business relationships. The determination of an actor's positioning in business-to-business networks requires extensive network data analysis and interpretation instruments, which are discussed in Session 4. Variables to measure relationship interdependencies and bilateral relationship intensities between actors are explained in the course of the session and corresponding book chapter.

Session 5 is devoted to a discussion of knowledge transfer between actors and how resources for product innovation can be intelligently accessed through industry networks. Session 6 discusses the challenges of foreign business operations and relevant international market entry modes in the light of trust-building resource commitments which help to reduce environmental uncertainty in the foreign target markets. The value of personal relationships developed by the entrepreneur is emphasized in Session 7. This session targets to answer the questions how integration in business-

to-business networks helps to compensate for the conventional resource drawbacks of young and innovative firms compared to experienced and large market incumbents.

The creation of customer-specific products and services necessarily requires an optimum configuration of the multi-faceted external stakeholder network with actors operating inside the focal firm. This necessity is discussed in Session 8, which is the final part of the lecture (and the book). Modern and network-based project structures such as Agile are introduced. These facilitate a relationship philosophy that aims to meet the management's overall target: creating value for the customer.