



DRAFT SYLLABUS 30 April 2007

15.990 Prepare, act, reflect: Lab for getting things done
9 units

Instructor: Anjali Sastry
E53-329
sastry@mit.edu
617.253.0965

Course site: stellar site to come

Sign up for office hours tba

TA: tba

Class time: Mondays & Wednesdays,
September-December 2007
2:30 - 4:00 pm

Administrator:
Shiba Nema-Nasser
shiba@mit.edu
E53-360

Room: tba

Why Prepare, Act, Reflect?

This innovative class will help equip you to be the most effective manager you can be. To build this effectiveness, we'll explore tools and theory relevant to the practice of management as the art of getting things done. As part of the learning process, the class will encourage you to draw together what you have been learning in your MIT Sloan classes, in your work experiences, and in other ways you have already been working to make things happen.

The objective of 15.990 is to help you to develop your own set of skills for learning from every experience. Of course, taking action is a key part of learning from experience, so you will work on a project of your choosing throughout the semester. Each step of the way, we'll work through the prepare-act-reflect cycle in a way designed to maximize your effectiveness. And in doing so, you will start making a difference while you're still here.

Our project-centered approach highlights three sets of skills essential to managing effectively:

Feedback: How to elicit others' feedback and what to do with it, and how to offer others your feedback (and make that part of a continuing relationship).

Testing and advocating ideas: How to make an informal pitch, how to use presentation opportunities effectively, how to test if your ideas make sense, how to draw on all the data, and how to build participation and shared ownership.

Getting results at every step: How to make the most of every interaction, conversation, and meeting, how to focus your efforts and leverage what is already there or already happening to enable your project's results.

Perhaps most importantly, the course offers you multiple opportunities to build skills in each area: we've designed the class so you can learn from experience through iteration. If you iterate to learn, you benefit from testing your ideas quickly, exposing problems and opportunities earlier rather than later, working and reworking your presentation of the key ideas behind your project

to build skills in collaborating and influencing. To this end, 15.990 offers plenty of feedback, along with plenty of chances to use it to develop your own skills and insight, to improve your group's performance, and to ensure that your project creates the best results possible.

Requirements for participation in 15.990

You must be already engaged in a project by early September

You need not have your entire team take 15.990 with you, but you must be part of a team working on a specific project in which your goal is to change something in an existing organization. Projects may include development and change projects for a student club; a continuation of a summer project; or even a project you are already undertaking for another class. The timing is important, however: you need to be able to take multiple action steps throughout the fall, so GLab projects are not eligible for this course.

You must meet with the instructor by the end of Week One

Plan to meet with me in late August or early September in order to ensure a fit between your project and the goals of Prepare, Act, Reflect: Lab for Getting Things Done. We are going to get to work right away!

Tap into your passions!

This is a great opportunity for you to work on something you care deeply about, something of your choosing, while extracting the most learning and skill-building that you can from the experience. We are looking forward to hearing about the changes you want to make happen, as well as your learning goals for the experience.

Class sessions

Class sessions will be lively, interactive, and integrated with your projects. We'll often work on issues connected with your projects in class, which is another reason that projects must be squared away by the first week of class.

Expect to roll up your sleeves in many of our class sessions. We will also draw on short videos, a great set of readings, and visitors who will share their lessons learned.

Course requirements

As you work on the project, you will create materials throughout the semester that capture your learning:

- § A pair of short papers—an early one to set out your own goals, and a final personal reflection—bookend the experience.
- § You will share your favorite tools that support getting things done for you and your team.
- § Blogging on specific themes enable reflection and shared conversations.
- § There is no final project report or powerpoint due at the end of the course, but you will brief the class on your work at several points, including a session in which you present a problem to the class in order to get everyone's input on how to tackle the situation.
- § Several opportunities to give and receive feedback from others target this valuable skill.
- § And we will all share lessons learned from the experience via a website.