

COMM 395 – Business Forecasting

Forecasting, an important component of business operations, represents the analysis of historical data to discover underlying patterns (trends, cycles and so forth). Knowledge about such patterns can be used to make estimates of future data values.

How do we use both quantitative models and qualitative approaches in helping to develop forecasts for relevant, realistic problems? How does this contribute to the overall process of managerial decision-making? How are quantitative models constructed? What type of data do they require? What sorts of assumptions are needed to build effective models? How can the results of quantitative models be more effectively communicated? These represent a few of the questions that occupy our attention during this course.

Our approach in this course is not to delve into the mathematical theory of developing forecasting models; rather, we shall seek to better understand the application of these techniques as an aid to managerial decision-making. Through case studies and readings, we will come to appreciate the role that these techniques play in helping managers make better decisions.

There are at least eight major objectives in this course:

1. To provide a rigorous treatment of the concepts and approaches involved in business forecasting.
2. To appreciate how spreadsheet software add-ins (e.g. ForecastX) allow us to efficiently analyze forecasting problems.
3. To demonstrate the applicability of qualitative forecasting approaches.
4. To showcase the manner in which forecasting continues to be used in the analysis of problems facing a variety of organizations.
5. To develop models that can be analyzed to gain insight, understanding and (ultimately) better decision-making.
6. To illustrate how forecasting can provide a competitive advantage for organizations involved in international operations.
7. To show how the effectiveness of forecasting decisions can be measured.
8. To enhance oral and written communication skills through team presentations, term projects and assignments.

Textbook: Business Forecasting (Wilson and Keating)