

ENGAGE.EU Certificate
Joint Programme in Digital Transformation

Platform Strategies

Course Syllabus

Shiva Shekhar

22-23 January & 29-30 January 2027

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 and case discussions. Mini-cases and problems will also be employed to make students apply their learning to practical situations.

Participants' grade will be composed of

100% Team assignment/presentation (team grade)

Team assignment (100%)

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.

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: 22 January 2027, 9:00 AM – 15:00

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: 23 January 2027, 9 am – 15:00

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: 29 January 2026, 9:00 AM – 15:00 AM

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: 31 January 2026, 9 am – 15:00

Discussion of Lecture Unit 4.1: Presentations.

About the Lecturer

Shiva Shekhar is an Associate 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 research 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.