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## What is a Case Study? Case Study Analysis?

The following document explains:

- 1 What a **case study** is and
- 2 **Why professors use** case studies to teach and apply business concepts

The document also:

- 1 Describes the typical **five-step case analysis process** and
- 2 Provides a **format professors use** when assigning (to students/groups) and discussing (with the class) a case study

## WHAT IS CASE STUDY ANALYSIS?

A case study presents an account of what happened to a business or industry during a given situation or over a number of years. It chronicles the events that managers dealt with, such as changes in the competitive environment or internal problems, and charts management's response, which usually involved changing the business- or corporate-level strategy or policy.

Cases prove valuable in a course for several reasons:

1. Cases provide you, the student, with experience of organizational problems that you probably have not had the opportunity to experience firsthand. In a relatively short period of time, you will have the chance to appreciate and analyze the problems faced by many different companies and to understand how managers tried to deal with them.

2. Cases illustrate what you have learned. The meaning and implication of this information are made clearer when they are applied to case studies. The theory and concepts help reveal what is going on in the companies studied and allow you to evaluate the solutions that specify companies adopted to deal with their problems. Consequently, when you analyze cases, you will be like a detective who, with a set of conceptual tools, probes what happened and what or who was responsible and then marshals the evidence that provides the solution.

Top managers enjoy the thrill of testing their problem-solving abilities in the real world. It is important to remember, after all, that no one knows what the right answer is. All that managers can do is to make the best guess. In fact, managers say repeatedly that they are happy if they are right only half the time in solving strategic problems. Management is an uncertain game, and using cases to see how theory can be put into practice is one way of improving your skills of diagnostic investigation.

3. Case studies provide you with the opportunity to participate in class and to gain experience in presenting your ideas to others. Instructors may sometimes call on students as a group to identify what is going on in a case and through classroom discussion the issues in and solutions to the case problem will reveal themselves. In such a situation, you will have to organize your views

and conclusions so that you can present them to the class. Your classmates may have analyzed the issues differently from you, and they will want you to argue your points before they will accept your conclusions; so be prepared for debate. This is how decisions are made in the actual business world.

Instructors also may assign an individual, but more commonly a group, to analyze the case before the whole class. The individual or group probably will be responsible for a thirty- to forty-minute presentation of the case to the class. That presentation must cover the issues involved, the problems facing the company, and a series of recommendations for resolving the problems. The discussion then will be thrown open to the class, and you will have to defend your ideas.

Through such discussions and presentations, you will experience how to convey your ideas effectively to others. Remember that a great deal of managers' time is spent in these kinds of situations, presenting their ideas and engaging in discussion with other managers, who have their own views about what is going on. Thus, you will experience in the classroom the actual process of what goes on in a business setting, and this will serve you well in your future career.

If you work in groups to analyze case studies, you also will learn about the group process involved in working as a team. When people work in groups, it is often difficult to schedule time and allocate responsibility for the case analysis. There are always group members who shirk their responsibilities and group members who are so sure of their own ideas that they try to dominate the group's analysis. Most business negotiations take place in groups, however, and it is best if you learn about these problems now.

Following is the typical five-step case analysis process:

- 1 **Define** the case problem and write a problem statement
- 2 **Analyze** the facts and underlying assumptions
- 3 **List** possible alternatives to the assumptions in #2
- 4 **Select** a solution and prepare to defend it
- 5 **Decide** how to carry out your solution

Case analysis written reports include the above information in the following format:

#### I. Problem/Issue

- 1 History
- 2 Impact
- 3 Need

#### II. State given facts for each individual/group

- 1 How do the facts affect actions, behaviors, beliefs for each
- 2 Assumption for individual/group #1
- 3 Assumption for individual/group #2

#### III. Solutions

### 1. Solution 1

- Pros
- Cons

### 2. Solution 2

- Pros
- Cons

### 3. Solution 3

- Pros
- Cons

## IV. Recommended Solution

- 1 Why
- 2 How to deal with cons

## V. Execution

- 1 Implementation plan
- 2 Expectations

## VI. Conclusion



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