

Working Teaching Cases

Prof. Dr. Dirk Riehle

Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg

PROD A03

Licensed under [CC BY 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

The (Teaching) Case Method (Recap)

- The (Harvard Business School) Case Method is an example-based classroom teaching method used to teach concepts and practices applicable to complex real-world scenarios.
- Students prepare for and discuss in class “the case”, a (mostly) realistic representation (10-20 page paper) of a particular situation that a decision maker faced in some context (typically a company).
- The case lays out the pros and cons of a difficult decision making situation without suggesting a particular solution; it is up to the students to come up with an opinion and defend it in class.
- The case method is suitable for content-to-learn that cannot be easily captured as simple formulas; it aims at complex real-world scenarios, not complicated algorithmic problems.
- More information and PM by Case cases available at <https://wp.me/Pe4V6-1sW>

					Strategic product management										Technical PM			Other aspects					
					Product inception	Customer value (business plan)	Market assessment (business plan)	Competitive analysis (business plan)	Product roadmap	Product pricing	Organizational planning	Financial planning	Make or buy decisions	Open source software	Requirements elicitation	Requirements specification	Requirements prioritization	Working with engineering	Role and career of a PM	PM within the organization	Entrepreneurship		
2012-01	Ensuring Innovation	Method Park	y	y	x	x					x	x											
2012-02	Going Agile	Elisa	y	n													*						
2013-01	Herding Requirements	GfK	y	n										*	*	*							
2013-02	Two-sided Markets	Netdosis	y	y	x	x	x		x														
2013-03	Confused Modeling	Eva's Way	n	n		*								*	*								
2014-01	User Experience Design	Immowelt	y	y										x	x								
2014-02	Switching Suppliers	Nokia	y	y					x		x	x	x										
2014-03	Specifying 'Wow!'	Elektrobit	y	y										x	x	x							
2016-01	Licensing Choices	ownCloud	y	y		x	x		x	x													
2016-02	Stock Options	Caldera	y	y		x	x													x			
2016-03	Hard Choices	ownCloud	y	y			x	x	x	x													
2016-04	Pricing	Everest	n	y				x		x	x	x											
2017-01	SUSE Manager	SUSE	y	y	x	x	x	x			x			x									

Advice on Working Teaching Cases

- <http://goo.gl/hk3bzM>

Example Analysis Approach

1. Case question
2. Linear notes
3. Analysis framework
4. Structured notes
5. Case analysis
6. Case write-up

1. Case Question

As the first step, the student should review the questions posed by the lecturer, if any. If the questions point to unknown terms or theory, the student may want to look those up first.

In this case, the question asked is:

- Is the Netdosis business model viable?

This question should guide the student's thinking and analysis.

2. Linear Notes

As the second step, the student should read the case with the questions in mind. The student should jot down all facts that seem relevant to the questions at hand, using simple declarative statements.

In the Netdosis case, these are my notes:

- Netdosis uses a two-sided buyer-seller-market place
- Netdosis connects pediatricians to pharmaceuticals, hospitals, etc.
- Business models based on two-sided markets are difficult to realize
- Question at hand: Could Netdosis do it? How?
- Medical doctors frequently encounter difficult drug dosage problems
- Medical doctors search online for information

3. Analysis Framework

As a third step, the student should think about an analysis framework they will apply and that is supposed to lead them to a solution or some sort of answer to the questions.

In this case, the tool of choice for a question like “is this business viable” is the Marketing Requirements Document (MRD) that puts its finger on all relevant points. The case may not necessarily allow the student to derive a full MRD, but at least it may answer some of the pertinent questions. The MRD then serves as a reasonable analysis framework.

This case makes it easy for the student to use a pre-existing (taught in class) analysis framework. More difficult cases may not come with a ready-made framework. Performing multiple iterations over the case, the student may have to develop their own framework for answering the case questions.

An MRD looks like this:

- *Basic product idea*

4. Structured Notes

- Cf. structured note taking and written summary in Nailing your Thesis (NYT)
 - <https://goo.gl/0U9PJz>
- Here, you structure with a purpose, that is, to
 - Fill the analysis framework
 - Answer the case question

4. Structured Notes

As a fourth step, the notes from step 2 are put into a form suggested by the analysis framework. This should lead to a hierarchy of concepts and statement, from the most abstract to the most detailed. All statements from step 2 need to be sorted into some place in the hierarchy. Statements that are irrelevant can be pushed aside or dropped.

In this case, following the MRD structure, the concept hierarchy shown below results. Categories and summaries that are this my idea and that cannot be found verbatim in the case are set in italics. Yellow high-lighting indicates a speculative statement not substantiated by the text itself (but common sense).

- *Basic product idea*
 - *Product vision*
 - *A two-sided market of buyers and sellers of drug dosage information and related data*

5. Resulting Analysis

The fifth step, after all prior analysis, establishes new insights and facts towards answering the case questions. While the result of step 4 is still close to the case structure, step 5 is the intermediate step towards a final summary of the analysis and as such solution rather than analysis-oriented.

Such analysis work is not necessarily as explicit as presented here. More typically, it will be in the student's mind and in his or her spreadsheets or notes, which will be turned directly into the final case write-up. However, for the student performing this work for the first time, this intermediate step may be helpful.

In this case, the student is still trying to answer the question “is the (Netdosis) business model viable?” and for this has sorted all relevant facts into an analysis framework. As it turns out, many aspects of the assumed analysis framework are not addressed by facts from the case, so the student can safely assume that this implies a focus of the case on those aspects covered. (This should not stop the student from doing their own research on the Internet to possibly add additional information to the case, but this is not the focus of the case.)

6. Case Write-up

- Utilize instructions for Netdosis case at <https://goo.gl/6Mti3G>

Case opening (one paragraph)

After you performed your analysis following the overall case analysis instructions, write one summary paragraph on Netdosis, its market, the challenges ahead, and the specific case question asked. Here, the case question is: Is the Netdosis business model viable?

Market assessment (3-5 paragraphs + tables)

To answer the case question, you need to determine whether long-term Netdosis can break even or turn a profit. If so, the business model is viable, if not, it is not viable. For this, determine the different markets and the customers within and how large they are (total market size). Then, determine how much of that money Netdosis can capture to determine overall long-term steady-state revenues.

Costs and profits (1-3 paragraphs + tables)

With potential earnings defined, see whether you can determine the costs that will occur to achieve these earnings. If no information is given, try to make reasonable guesses. From revenues vs. costs you can determine whether Netdosis can ever be profitable.

Conclusions (one paragraph)

You should now have an understanding of Netdosis position and strategy and how it relates to what you found out. Finish the analysis with a comment on Netdosis strategy and if necessary, make alternative recommendations. Alternative recommendations can be anything from reorienting the business to shutting it down.

6. Case Write-up

As the last step, the analysis needs to be put into a form that can be submitted as homework. Here, the student is supposed to write prose supported by bullet items and spreadsheet-derived calculations.

A write-up for this case might look like this:

Netdosis is a healthcare startup trying to solve the off-label drug prescription problem for children. As explained in the case, there is little or no good drug dosage information for infants, children, and adolescents. Netdosis is offering a database of drug dosage information and related software and

data to pediatricians, pharmaceuticals, and hospitals. The original drug dosage database is being created by a team

PEDIATRICIANS

Total # of pediatricians	13179
Percentage addressable	50,58%
Total # addressable	6666

Homework Submission

- Keep it to the specific length limit (e.g. 2 pages max.)
- Submit on course management site in time
- Good luck “cracking the case”!

Thank you! Questions?

dirk.riehle@fau.de – <http://osr.cs.fau.de>

dirk@riehle.org – <http://dirkriehle.com> – [@dirkriehle](#)

Credits and License

- Original version
 - © 2012-2018 [Dirk Riehle](#), some rights reserved
 - Licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#)
- Contributions
 - ...