

Briefing a Case & Legal Analysis by IRAC



OPUS COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

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FORMAT FOR BRIEFING CASES

CASE NAME

- FACTS: RELEVANT FACTUAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF CASE
PROCEDURAL HISTORY
- ISSUE(S): LEGAL QUESTIONS THAT COURT IS RESOLVING
- DECISION: DECISION OF COURT ON ISSUE(S)
RESOLUTION OF CASE
- REASONS: YOUR OWN RATIONALE FOR DECIDING THE CASE
INCLUDE RULE PLUS ANALYSIS LEADING TO CONCLUSION
- MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS: SIGNIFICANCE OF LAW/CASE TO BUSINESS

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Sample Brief

- Case Name: Caldwell v. Bechtel (1980) 631 F.2d 989
- Facts:
 - Who are the parties? Caldwell is a construction worker, "mucking in tunnel under construction for Metro," contracted silicosis (lot of silica dust in tunnels). Bechtel is consultant engineering firm
 - Who has contract? Metro and Bechtel. Who does not have a contract? Caldwell and Bechtel.
- Procedure: Trial court granted summary judgment to Bechtel, on the basis of no duty owed to Caldwell.

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Sample Brief, cont.

- Issue?
 - Court states "Basic issue is whether consultant engineering firm owed the worker a duty to protect against unreasonable risk of harm"
- Decision?
 - Bechtel owed Caldwell a duty of due care, to protect against foreseeable risk to his health posed by excessive concentration of silica dust in tunnels.

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Sample Brief: Reasons

- Reasons (yours!): This is the hard part.
- Rules – Analysis / Application of Facts – Conclusion
- Can we find a legal rule? Background – Torts: must show Duty / Breach / Causation / Damages. If no Duty, no case.
- Can we find any rule about duty?
- To whom is a duty owed? Foreseeable Plaintiff: one who might foreseeably be injured by defendant's conduct
- What Conduct? How would Facts come into play?

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Sample Brief: Reasons, Cont.

- Here's where the "art" of legal reasoning comes in. How do you construct an argument? How do we use that rule with the facts?
- As consultant, Bechtel should be responsible for checking for dangerous conditions. Now, add the rule: who might be possibly harmed if they don't do their job?
- Workers. Anyone else? General public – riders on Metro.
- Who was Caldwell? Worker in the tunnel.
- So ...

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Sample Brief: Reasons, cont.

- If Bechtel failed to do it's job, then a worker in the tunnel might foreseeably be harmed.
- Therefore, Caldwell, as a worker in the tunnel, is a foreseeable plaintiff.
- Therefore, Bechtel did owe Caldwell a duty of due care. This is your Conclusion.
- Notice: The Conclusion answers the question asked by the Issue

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- This is the format of legal reasoning: IRAC.
 - ISSUE
 - RULE
 - ANALYSIS (or APPLICATION)
 - CONCLUSION
- Use this on Exam questions.

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