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Case Study-Basic steps, questions and answers

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CASE

Study



A case is a scenario that gives you the opportunity to identify problems and recommend a course of action in a business situation. The case may be real or fictional, but will usually represent a complex situation with no ready solutions.

The analyst needs to:

- identify the problem(s) in the situation presented in the scenario
- analyse the key issues within the context of the theory presented in your course
- develop and compare alternative solutions to the problems
- consider the advantages and disadvantages of various possible solutions
- select the best solution and make recommendations for action
- write up your case analysis in appropriate case analysis report format.

Why are you asked to write case analyses?

You are asked to write case analyses in some of your courses to enable you to demonstrate that you can apply conceptual frameworks from your course to real situations and integrate topics in your analysis. Case analyses also enable you to improve your critical thinking and analytical abilities, your ability to evaluate sources of information and your written communication skills.

Case analyses are often used in employment interviews to assess:

- how you think
- how you structure problems
- your ability to *conceptualise, *draw clarity from ambiguity, *form views, *make recommendations.

The stages in preparing a case analysis:

- understanding the case
- identifying the core problem in the case
- analysing the issues in the context of a theoretical framework
- exploring alternative solutions with reference to a theoretical framework
- choosing the best solution
- making recommendations for action.

What do you need to do to understand the situation?

Your first task is to understand the scenario you are given. When you read the scenario you should identify the facts of the case. The following questions can guide you in doing this.

- What is the mission of the organisation?
- Who are the "stakeholders" within the organisation?
- Who are the "stakeholders" or target groups outside the organisation?
- What is the formal decision making process in the organisation?
- What are the informal decision making processes in the organisation?

- What is the process of production or service delivery?
- Who are the competitors?
- What external factors impact on the organisation?
- What is the major problem?
- What are subsequent problems and implications?
- What is the role of management in relation to the problem?
- What is the role of production/service providers in relation to the problem?

As you are reading you will also need to fill in gaps based on your knowledge of theory and of the world and ignore irrelevant details.

Steps to identifying the core problems:

As you identify the facts of the case you will begin to think about the problems and to decide which problems are core problems. In doing this you will need to;

- distinguish between symptoms of the major problems and the major problems themselves
- distinguish between immediate and longer term problems
- find evidence to support your decision about what you believe to be the core problems.

How to analyze the issues:

As you identify the core problems you will begin to analyse the issues underlying these problems. The following steps assist with this;

- Identify any bias in the way the case is described.
- Classify the factors that influence the problem as internal or external to the organisation.
- Reflect on theoretical principles from your course that might explain aspects of the case.
- Apply analytical models from your course to further illuminate the situation.

- Identify the decisions that need to be made.
- Identify strategic issues.
- Identify risk factors.
- Identify historical precedents.

Exploring alternative solutions:

As you are analyzing the issues you will begin to think about alternative solutions. You should:

- consider individual and organizational levels
- consider the long and the short term
- define the alternative possible solutions
- compare the alternative solutions in regard to *theoretical grounding, *strengths and weaknesses, *risk factors.

How do you choose the best solution?

As you explore the alternative solutions you will begin to decide on the best solution for the organisation in solving its problems. It is important at this stage to provide a justification for the solution you choose.

What are the steps in making a recommendation?

When you have decided on the best solution you will be able to make a recommendation or recommendations.

At this stage you should do the following:

- Express your recommendation(s) precisely.
- Ensure that your recommendations are complementary.
- Ensure that it is feasible to implement the recommendations.

Present your case analysis

A case analysis is presented as a report. Refer to the EDU handout on reports for

guidance on how to format a report. The following is a suggested structure for a case analysis report:

Conclusion: Identify the best solution.

Recommendations: Identify the courses of action needed to implement the best solution.

What makes a good case analysis:

- clearly identifies the core problem(s)
- provides a justification for the choice of core problem(s)
- analyses the issues underlying the problem in terms of the relevant theory
- uses appropriate terminology
- justifies the alternative solutions in terms of appropriate theory
- justifies the choice of the best solution
- presents feasible and complementary recommendations for implementing the best solution
- is presented in appropriate report format.

Is there a best answer for a case analysis?

It is important to remember that there is no one correct answers to any case analysis. As in real life, there is more than one way to interpret a case and solve problems, so there is no single answer. The approaches, interpretations and recommendations of different students will probably vary considerably. This provides a useful opportunity to compare and discuss different analyses and alternative solutions, which is a common practice in real life before finally recommending one solution.

Are all case analyses similar?

The general principles explained in this handout are relevant for all case analyses. However, there are some differences in requirements from one course or one case analysis or one lecturer to the next. Sometimes, for example, it will not be necessary to make recommendations. These notes provide a general understanding BUT you should always give priority to your lecturer's

requirements!

Case Study Template

Case Study Basic Guide



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Samuel Abia

Business Manager at First Bank of Nigeria Plc

Great job by Sasa. This is exactly what I have been looking for, it's simple, concise and direct to the point. It is a good resource for MBA students like me and other professional writing case analyses.

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James Bareham

Founder, The New Cruelty

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2016: The Year We'll Learn to Love Technology

Dec 30, 2015 | 72,516 views  540 Likes  87 Comments   

Maybe this is the year we'll become less frightened and more enlightened about the benefits of connected technology.

Back in November of 2014, I was discussing the general state of the creative industry with a great writer and friend of mine, [Graham Scott](#), who at the time was bemoaning how “technology had killed his career.” “And now it’s going to save it!” I rather over-enthusiastically retorted. Though I still stand by that statement, as we approach the end of 2015 it’s hard to deny that my enthusiastic embrace of digital technology seems to be increasingly in the minority.

While the imminent “death” of the publishing industry has been discussed ad nauseam, it strikes me that the argument is often rather one sided. It goes like this: “The Internet” has made it possible for the once paying public to read content for nothing, which in turn has systematically destroyed the careers of countless writers—and photographers, artists, musicians, designers, and pretty much any anyone else who does anything remotely “creative”—along with it.

And it’s not just individuals whose creative careers are suffering. Many companies (publishing houses; advertising and design agencies; [even multi-billion dollar media empires](#)) are also having to come to terms with ever dwindling revenue streams as a direct result of the ever increasing pervasive power of the internet.

In the 21 years since Netscape Navigator—the first commercial Internet browser—went live in 1994, we’ve seen the launch of Google (1998); Facebook (2004); YouTube (2005); Twitter (2006); Netflix streaming (2007); Instagram (2010); and a plethora of other digital platforms and apps that allow billions of people around the globe to freely consume content—creative or otherwise—in ways that were previously unimaginable to all but a few technological boffin types and forward-thinking sci-fi authors.

If anything, this rapid pace of technological change is still accelerating. As a consequence, [a growing number of people](#) are suggesting that we need to slow down and ask ourselves whether we’re building these new technological marvels because we can, not because we should.

Who can deny that taking a moment to consider the broader social and economic consequences of rampant technological change sounds like a damn fine idea? Certainly not me. But that is still only half of the argument. What’s missing is a broad, balanced and frank discussion about how that very technology that is blamed for destroying so many creative careers can be successfully harnessed to create new ones.

Over the past year, I've been having that very conversation with everyone and anyone who would listen. It's still very much a work in progress, but it has already convinced me that despite the very real challenges, those of us (yes, I very much consider myself to be one of those affected) who are striving to find new ways in which to reinvent ourselves to remain relevant in this brave new digital world, actually have a few reasons to feel reasonably optimistic.

Contrary to the mutterings of some commentators out there in the digital ether, I would argue that in many ways, it's hard to imagine a better time to be a creative. Of *any* kind. There have never been more words written and read; photographs taken and viewed, videos filmed and watched, music performed and listened to; or art created and wondered at, by more people in the entire history of humanity.

Yes, the rising tide of digital technology has directly or indirectly destroyed many careers; yes, we all have to find new ways to monetise our work; and yes, that's going to be far from easy. But it's certainly not impossible. After all, it's not like we're going through this on our own. There are literally millions of people who are also trying to figure this out, and many of them will have ideas and inspiration to share. Maybe by engaging and collaborating, we can find at least a few of the answers that so many of us are looking for.

I'm not exactly predicting that 2016 will be the year in which more of us learn to love the technological revolution. Last year I confidently stated that [everyone would be wearing an Apple Watch in 2015](#) and look how that turned out. But as 2015 draws to a close, it's certainly my *hope* for 2016. Maybe this is the year that more of us can at least grudgingly embrace technology, and forgive it for all the bad things it did when we weren't paying enough attention. After all, even though it may not be able to save everyone's creative career, it may at least connect them with someone who just might.

Happy New Year.



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