

How to solve a case

Business



A case study is a collection of facts and data based on a real or hypothetical business situation. The goal of a case study is to enhance your ability to solve business problems, using a logical framework. The issues in a case are generally not unique to a specific person, firm, or industry, and they often deal with more than one retail strategy element. Sometimes, the material presented in a case may be in conflict. For example, two managers may disagree about a strategy or there may be several interpretations of the same facts.

In all case studies, you must analyze what is presented and state which specific actions best resolve major issues. These actions must reflect the information in the case and the environment facing the firm. STEPS IN SOLVING A CASE STUDY Analysis should include these sequential steps: 1. Presentation of the facts surrounding the case. 2.

Identification of the key issues. 3. Listing of alternative courses of action that could be taken. 4. Evaluation of alternative courses of action.

5. Recommendation of the best course of action. Presentation of the Facts Surrounding the Case It is helpful to read a case until you are comfortable with the information in it. Re-readings often are an aid to comprehending facts, possible strategies, or questions that need clarification and were not apparent earlier. In studying a case, assume you are a retail consultant hired by the firm. While facts should be accepted as true, statements, judgments, and decisions made by the individuals in a case should be questioned, especially if not supported by facts—or when one individual disagrees with another.

During your reading of the case, you should underline crucial facts, interpret figures and charts, critically review the comments made by individuals, judge the rationality of past and current decisions, and prepare questions whose answers would be useful in addressing the key issue(s). Identification of the Key Issue(s) The facts stated in a case often point to the key issue(s) facing a retailer, such as new opportunities, a changing environment, a decline in competitive position, or excess inventories. Identify the characteristics and ramifications of the issue(s) and examine them, using the material in the case and the text. Sometimes, you must delve deeply because the key issue(s) and their characteristics may not be immediately obvious. Listing Alternative Courses of Action That Could Be Taken Next, alternative actions pertaining to the key issue(s) in the case are listed. Consider courses of action based on their suitability to the firm and situation.

Thus, the promotion strategy for a small neighborhood stationery store would not be proper for a large gift store located in a regional shopping center. Proposed courses of action should take into account such factors as the business category, goals, the customer market, the overall strategy, the product assortment, competition, legal restrictions, economic trends, marketplace trends, financial capabilities, personnel capabilities, and sources of supply. Evaluation of Alternative Courses of Action Evaluate each potential option, according to case data, the key issue(s), the strategic concepts in the text, and the firm's environment. Specific criteria should be used and each option analyzed on the basis of them. The ramifications and risks associated with each alternative should be considered.

Important data not included in the case should be mentioned.

Recommendation of the Best Course of Action Be sure your analysis is not just a case summary. You will be critiqued by your professor on the basis of how well you identify key issues or problems, outline and assess alternative courses of action, and reach realistic conclusions (that take the retailer's size, competition, image, and so on into consideration). You need to show a good understanding of both the principles of strategic retail management and the case. Be precise about which alternative is more desirable for the retailer in its current context. Remember, your goal is to apply a logical reasoning process to retailing.

A written report must demonstrate this process. Anatomy of a Cold Case Murder The subject of cold case squads is a hot topic in the criminal justice world. With the popularity of television shows such as Cold Case and other shows of that ilk, the emphasis on solving old cases has taken on new importance in police departments across the country. Many obstacles hamper homicide cases in the early stages of an investigation. Overworked investigators often have sparse resources, nonexistent support staff and never-ending case loads. This frequently results in circumstances where investigators are forced to move on to another case if a crime is not solved quickly.

Conventional wisdom has always been that the first 48 hours after a crime is the most critical period and that the likelihood of solving a case drops dramatically after 72 hours. While undoubtedly that statement remains true, cold case squads across the county are learning that the passage of time can sometimes benefit their investigations as well. Cold case units attempt to

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breathe new life into old cases using all the technology and resources currently available. Cold case units scrutinize their cases, going over each one with a fine-tooth comb in an effort to determine if something was overlooked or if circumstances have changed. Investigators in a cold case unit are usually relieved of other investigative duties so that they are freed up to pursue leads that have long laid dormant. Fundamental to the success of a cold case unit is investigators who have the ability to give the case the intense sort of scrutiny which is only possible when they are freed up from the rigors of running from case to case.

Over the course of my career I've worked with several different types of cold case units. The type of cold case squad operating in any specific jurisdiction varies based on need and available resources. Cold case units can take a number of forms from a single investigator who investigates a single case to dedicated teams who do nothing but look at a number of older cases from start to finish. I've also worked with a dedicated task force team who did nothing but focus on a single case for nearly for two and a half years. The efforts of that team resulted in the murder convictions of six individuals after nearly three decades.

The teams that I have worked with as well as other cold case teams from across the country have found that while the passage of time usually hurts an investigation in some cases it can be to their advantage. As a case sits dormant on a shelf a number of things can happen. Relationships, friendships, and alliances can change and formerly uncooperative witnesses may become more willing to speak or provide information that they have not provided in the past. On the other side of the equation the passage of time

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allows for perpetrators to become cocky or complacent. After a period of time perpetrators may, and often do, speak or brag about their crimes confident that they have gotten away with their misdeeds.

Booze and drugs can fuel statements about a perpetrator's past criminal activity. Other factors can change with the passage of time as well.

Witnesses may have matured or may now need help with the criminal justice system making them more approachable and more likely to speak to investigators. Advances in technology and changes in the law can also benefit investigators working on cold case squads. But all the time and technology in the world won't solve a cold case without the right personnel behind it. This isn't a squad for rookies.

In most jurisdictions only the most talented and experienced investigators and prosecutors work cold cases. Investigators need experience on the streets. They need to know how to locate witnesses and then gain their trust. They also have to understand the nuances of difficult litigation and be prepared to overcome the practical difficulties of bringing a case to trial. Prosecutors need to be involved with the investigations from the start of the investigation and have the opportunity to attempt to flesh out areas of potential jury concern.

They need to understand that the age of the case alone is going to subject the case to more rigorous scrutiny than a current case. Prosecutors need to interact with, direct, and scrutinize the investigations to make sure that potential jury questions and considerations are addressed as well as is possible. Prosecutors also need to be very experienced, trial savvy, and

prepared to try the most difficult of cases. The reality of a cold case squad is not nearly as glamorous as what people watch on TV, and unlike TV, these cases are not solved in an hour. However, cold case squads across the country are proving every day that what might have once appeared to be the perfect crime can now be successfully investigated and prosecuted as well.

For that we all can be grateful.