

# Guidelines for writing the case study essay

[Business](#)



**GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE CASE STUDY** The text should be written in Times New Roman size 12. Below is an informal discussion of what to include in each section of the case analysis. These are just tips for you to look over.

Unfortunately there is no magic formula for doing case analysis. Each case study is different. However, if you try to incorporate some of these tips, your likelihood of success will probably increase. **Section I: Narrative Summary of the Case** In this section, you should discuss the key elements of the case study that are essential for understanding the central problem that must be addressed. These should include at the very least a discussion of the key players (including their roles, what may motivate them in this situation, how they can impact the situation, etc.

), organizational conditions that may impact the situation, environmental conditions that may be important to the situation, important time elements, and so on. Do not make a list of these items. They should be woven together into a narrative that clearly describes what the case is about. Do not spend time retelling the whole story—just hit the high points as described here.

It is a good idea for you (and for the readers) to include a sentence wherever you think it is appropriate that says, “ The central problem in this case is . . . ” and then make a clear, declaratory statement of just what it is in the case study that has to be fixed, in other words— the problem. It might also be a good idea to underline this sentence so that you can find it later.

This is what will drive the remainder of your case analysis. Don’t forget— case analysis is all about identifying a problem and developing a solution. This section should take no more than 30% of your total writing time. **Section**

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II: Problem Definition A. Name immediate issues and define them in a way that calls for action-oriented answers.

Be sure to identify problems not symptoms. To help identify the underlying problem, isolate the key factor, which is the one thing that needs to be changed to alleviate the symptoms. B.

Your outline should be fairly detailed here. The problem statement should appear in sentence form. Often it is helpful to think of this and state it in the form of a question. Section III: Situation Analysis A.

At this point, you will need to assess the firm's current situation, identify all factors that influence the problem and its potential solutions. This must go far beyond simple description or regurgitation of the case facts. The situational analysis is interpretive and diagnostic. Below is a list of factors the situational analysis should often consider. Each case is different so not all of these factors apply to each one, but they should be given some thought. Likewise, because the case is a real live firm and problem, you may encounter one where there are important issues that are not on this list – by all means include them: Extent of demand (absolute and relative market size, growth, relevant demand characteristics) Nature of demand (segments, decision making in purchase process) Strategy (general marketing strategy, product, promotion, distribution, and pricing strategies) Product life cycle (stage and issues) Macroenvironmental trends (sociocultural, demographic, and economic issues that affect you) Competition (who, how, intensity, strategic groups, trends) Technology (changes, stability, developments) Relevant characteristics of the product involved Firm's

resources/strengths/capabilities Firm's distinctive competencies Cost (structures, stability, characteristics) Supplier or input issues Labor or personnel issues Firm's weaknesses or problems that affect this particular situation Characteristics or factors in the firm's culture that may affect you Anything in the firm's current, past or future, internal or external situation that affects your problem and what you might do to solve it.

B. If you have trouble identifying elements of the situation that are important, you may find a SWOT analysis as a useful place to begin. Not every case works in the same way, however. Do not force the situation analysis into a SWOT format if it is not appropriate. Just use it in the preliminary brainstorming and organizing phases of your analysis. C.

Note that you are seeking more than simple facts. You are seeking relevant fact and linkages that point you toward a resolution of the case. Organize and marshal facts in the case to help understand each area and to draw some meaningful observations and conclusions about the overall situation. These can then provide the basis for addressing the problem defined earlier.

Section IV: Defining Alternatives A. Develop alternatives that will solve the problem identified above.

Put these alternatives in the strategic marketing context; that is, try to define the broad, fundamental issue. For example, alternative advertising strategies should be evaluated in the context of the organization's target market. Make sure each alternative relates to the problem. B. These alternatives should be listed from the perspective of the individual manager, recognizing all of the responsibilities and the scope of authority, as well as

the limitations associated with that position. For example, a feasible alternative may be to sell the business; however, if the manager does not have the authority to do this, it should be eliminated. C.

These alternatives also should be mutually exclusive; in other words, to reject an alternative is to reject it completely. If combinations of alternatives are to be used, they must be explicitly stated and evaluated on their own merits. Thus, you recommend only one alternative. D. At the risk of stating the obvious, a final check on the suitability of each alternative whether or not it will solve the problem at hand and how it will solve the problem at hand. If not, it should not be included in the analysis. Section V: Evaluating Alternatives A. An important first step in evaluating alternatives is to define the criteria to be used to compare those alternatives.

In other words, try to determine what factors make an alternative better than another. Some of these can be gleaned from the case materials. Perhaps, for example, the manager or firm in the case is a risk avoider; this, then will affect the reactive attractiveness of the alternatives from the manager's point of view. Other criteria, such as profitability, cost, ability to reach the target market, affect upon existing channel relations, legality of the alternative, are more general. B. Not all of the information in the case may be relevant.

You must sort through all of it, however, to get to that which is most appropriate. Furthermore, the information given may not be complete enough for your needs. When this happens and the library or other sources do not have the needed information, make reasonable assumptions to fill in

the missing data; remember that it is the process which counts, not the particular answer. Macroenvironmental trends (sociocultural, demographic, and economic issues that affect you) Competition (who, how, intensity, strategic groups, trends) Technology (changes, stability, developments) Relevant characteristics of the product involved Firm's resources/strengths/capabilities Firm's distinctive competencies Cost (structures, stability, characteristics) Supplier or input issues Labor or personnel issues Firm's weaknesses or problems that affect this particular situation Characteristics or factors in the firm's culture that may affect you Anything in the firm's current, past or future, internal or external situation that affects your problem and what you might do to solve it. B.

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