

## Case Study:

For those who are not familiar with the case study method, the purpose is to provide students with a simulation of the challenges faced by managers, and in so doing to develop analytical skills. Cases can be from 1 to 30 pages long and provide an assortment of facts, details and issues for students to consider in coming to a decision. The logical process of analyzing a case study involves: (1) Determining if the organization faces a problem that requires action on the part of managers; (2) the nature of this problem, including both direct and in-direct causes of the problem; and (3) the specific actions that should be taken in order to improve or rectify the situation that the firm faces. Students are typically asked to role-play by assuming that they are either an individual identified in the case or an individual being asked to provide specific advice to the central organization in the case study.

Specifically, students are provided with a case study document that recounts a real management challenging facing a manager/management team. Students then analyze the situation by defining the Primary Problem, developing Alternative Solutions, and creating an Implementation Plan that covers the short/medium/long term. This is a written assignment and students will prepare a report of not more than seven (7) pages in length (single-spaced, 12-point font, 1 inch margins), not including a required Executive Summary.

Case studies follow a logical process and as such must conform to the following structure (students who are familiar with alternative structures may be permitted to vary from the assigned structure however this must be agreed to before submission of the assignment). Marks are assigned per section and omission of a section will result in those marks not being awarded.

- Executive Summary (omission reduces presentation marks)
  - One page, using bullet-form where appropriate
  - Includes a statement of the Primary Problem
  - Lists numerically the alternative solutions developed
  - Identifies the recommended solution and provides a brief justification of this choice
- Primary Problem – 5 marks
  - Should be as concise as possible
  - Clearly identifies the decision that needs to made
  - Should not be framed as a question

- Will be the basis for action for each Alternative Solution
- Secondary Problems – 5 marks
  - Identifies all other (i.e. non-primary) problems that the organization and personnel are facing
- Implications on the Organization – 5 marks
  - Future oriented
  - Explains what will happen to the organization if the primary (and secondary) problem(s) is (are) not partially or fully rectified
  - This may include a consideration of the impacts on customers and suppliers
- Implications on the Personnel – 5 marks
  - Future oriented
  - Explains what the impacts will be on the personnel (executives, managers and other employees) if the primary problem (and secondary) problem(s) is (are) not partially or fully rectified
- Implications on the Environment – 5 marks
  - Future oriented
  - The Environment includes the natural (or physical) environment as well as the social environment (people and/or groups of people)
  - This does not involve the customers of the organization (they would be considered in the implications on the organization)
- Alternative Solutions – 50 marks (divided equally over solutions)
  - All alternatives must be viable/feasible
  - Should be realistic, creative, considerate of costs
  - Evaluated in terms of the extent to which the alternative solves the Primary Problem as identified by the student previously in the assignment
  - All alternatives should be titled and numbered sequentially
  - Each alternative must begin with a short description of what actions the alternative will include – i.e. what changes will be made to the strategy or operations, by whom, where and when
  - Must include a bulleted-list of Advantages and Disadvantages associated with the proposed alternative
  - Each alternative must conclude with an analysis of the specific alternative, considered in isolation from the other alternatives, and where a comparison or evaluation of the importance of the previously identified advantages and disadvantages are discussed

- You may consider including the ‘Status Quo’ as an alternative, but only if you believe that the primary problem is of a highly transient nature (i.e. it is likely to be resolved without any intervention on the part of the organization) or the problem cannot be effectively addressed through actions of the organizations
- Recommended Solution – 5 marks
  - Will clearly indicate which alternative, or possibly combination of alternatives, is being recommended for implementation (Note: While it is possible to combine perhaps 2 of your alternatives, under no circumstances should all of the suggested alternatives be combined for the final solution. This would then suggest that you have developed one solution, not distinct and separate solutions to the primary problem that you have identified)
  - Provides a well-argued justification as to why this alternative, and not another of your suggested alternative, is the most appropriate
- Implementation – 10 marks
  - Separated between the Short Term (now to six months from now), Medium Term (six months to a year from now), Long Term (over a year from now) and possible Very Long Term (over 3 years from now)
  - Should address all relevant areas of corporate activity (HR, Marketing, Operations, and Finance etc.)
- Presentation – 10 marks
  - Includes issues of formatting, spelling, grammar etc.
  - Also involves the clarity and strength of your arguments