

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS
ON THE ANALYSIS OF CASES

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1. Information presented. You will at times feel the information is inadequate. This will often be the case when making business decisions. One of the purposes of using cases is to learn how to operate with incomplete knowledge.
 - a. In some situations you may conclude that the time and expense of obtaining certain additional information is justified. For example, you may want to obtain information and data from USDA publications.
 - b. Because you don't have all the facts, it will frequently be necessary to make assumptions. Any time you make an assumption in developing information needed to present a solution, make the assumption explicit--both in your oral and written presentation.
2. There is no one solution. In most situations there will be more than one acceptable solution. The solution advocated is less important than the reasoning with which it is supported.
3. Questions for discussion purposes. Sometimes questions concerning a case will be posed to get you started on your analysis. These questions are presented to help locate issues. Your analysis should not be limited to the questions raised.
4. Attacking the case. Using an organized approach to study a case not only will make your task easier but will help you gain optimal learning benefits.
 - a. Definitions of the central issue or issues in the case. You should sort the trivial issues from the significant. Your analysis should focus on the key problems. Complex cases may contain many problems. Therefore, first develop the underlying problem, if any, and then the functional area problems. Functional and departmental problems are usually symptoms of more deep-rooted difficulties that lie within the administrative process and within the area of responsibility of top management.
 - b. Objectives and goals for the company, both long-run and particular objectives derived from the business problem, must be formulated and used as a guidepost for the subsequent appraisal and decision.
 - c. Define the constraints within which the decision must be made, i.e., financial, management, competition, production know-how, capacity, personnel limitations, and pricing; conditions and

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relationships with others in the channel of distribution and their policies, capacities, and possible strategy. When analyzing alternatives, keep these constraints in mind.

- d. Organization of the evidence. You should proceed to organize the facts presented in the case around the issues. It may take a serious effort to separate the irrelevant from the relevant. You may need to reorganize the facts; in the form of a break-even graph or a flow of funds statement, for example.
 - e. Determine the alternatives. In some cases the alternatives will be apparent; in other cases you will need to develop appropriate alternatives. Your goal should be to find new and better solutions to the firm's problems.
 - f. Analyze the alternatives. One of the best ways to begin is to organize the facts in a case around the alternatives. This will help you weigh the strengths and weaknesses of each alternative. Usually more rigorous methods of analysis will be required. The analysis is limited only by your imagination and the time available.
 - g. The decision. The path you have followed should lead you to a definite conclusion. Do not evade choosing the alternative which seems best to you. You should be able to organize the facts, assumptions, and the analysis in a logical flow to show why you chose the alternative. You should also develop reasons for rejecting other alternatives.
 - h. The selected alternative should then serve as a vehicle for establishing necessary policies, programs, and procedures designed to implement the decision. The implementation of the decision must include an effective control and feedback process to keep the decision-maker aware of developments.
5. Written report. When a written report is required it should include:
- a. Executive summary. A short, concisely written statement. It should include a specific statement of the problem, your proposed solution to the problem, and an explanation of the logic supporting your conclusion.
 - b. A specific statement of the problem. The central issue or issues in the case should be presented.
 - c. Relevant alternatives considered should be briefly discussed. Facts and assumptions should be drawn together in a logical chain of thought supporting the alternatives.
 - d. Presentation of material that leads to a definite conclusion. The choice of one alternative should be supported by your analysis. You may want to discuss reasons for rejecting alternatives.

- e. For completeness you may want to discuss policies and programs the firm must develop to implement your recommendations.
6. Oral report. In most cases an in-class presentation of a case should include:
- a. A brief description of the case situation.
 - b. Identification of the major issue.
 - c. Analysis of the key alternatives.
 - d. Recommendations for specific action.

In the classroom, cases are usually presented in a discussion format. You should expect questions from the instructor and other students about the case and your analysis.