

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A MANAGEMENT TEACHING CASE STUDY

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***“Cases are to management students what cadavers are to medical students,
the opportunity to practice on the real thing harmlessly”***

(Mauffette-Leenders et al. 1997: 4)

A case study is a form of research that provides a rich learning experience for the researcher that can result in the production of a robust pedagogical tool. These guidelines are intended for novice casewriters of management teaching cases. We propose a typology of 8 teaching cases, discuss what constitutes a “good” teaching case, and suggest an outline for the case and instructor’s manual. Throughout, we provide examples of cases we or other casewriters have published. Lastly, we provide a list of journals that can be publication outlets for teaching cases.

Case studies are a mainstream method of both researching and teaching management. The goal of the management teaching case is to provide a rich description of a real organization that focuses the reader’s attention on an issue or dilemma that the organization faces and elicits critical thinking and analysis from the learner (Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 2003; Naumes & Naumes 2006; Eisenhardt & Graebner 2007; Taylor & Søndergaard 2017).

The graduate business schools at Harvard, University of Virginia (Darden), University of Navarra (IESE Business School), HEC Montreal, and the University of Western Ontario (Ivey) are well known for their commitment to the case method and their extensive case libraries. Teaching case studies are also used in nursing, information systems, education, sociology, public administration, and other disciplines. Additionally, teaching cases are used in professional training outside academia (Giulioni & Voloshin 2014).

Management researchers have been preparing cases for over 100 years, starting with the decision to use the “laboratory method” of teaching in 1909 by the first Dean of the Harvard Business School, Edwin F. Gray (Corey 1988; Gurd 2001). The purpose of the case method is to stimulate discussion in the service of thinking (Christiansen 1991 as cited in Lundberg & Winn 2005). Case research is the means by which materials are generated to for the discussion. In addition, case research is one way to stay abreast of what is going on in the field. As Flyvbjerg (2006: 219) so aptly pointed out:

“[A] scientific discipline without a large number of thoroughly executed case studies is a discipline without systematic production of exemplars, and a discipline without exemplars is an ineffective one.”

Michael Porter of Harvard observed why doing case research is so important for management:

“We need to keep this balance between rigorous methodology-based academic work and case research – in-depth, clinical, longitudinal case research. We have to maintain this balance. Without this balance, we will never make progress in this field. [...] I trained as an economist. I spent the first six or seven years of my career writing articles for journals, such as The Review of Economics and Statistics. So, I did the rigorous methodology stuff. Indeed, I continue to do that. But, what I’ve come to believe is that you can’t understand the subject that we all study [Management] without doing both types of research” (Porter 2006: 2).

Kaplan (1998) argued that the case is a critical means of discovery and dissemination of new managerial practice. For example, the balanced scorecard resulted from case study interviews at companies including *Analog Devices* (Kaplan 1990); scholarly articles and books followed the case research. One of the reasons that the case study is so valuable to the researcher (and to

the discipline) is that it is a means by which one gains and shares context-dependent knowledge, and context-dependent knowledge is required to allow one to progress from “*rule-based beginners to virtuoso experts*” (Flyvbjerg 2006: 222). Moreover,

“Common to all experts ... is that they operate on the basis of intimate knowledge of several thousand concrete cases in their areas of expertise. Context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity. Such knowledge and expertise also lie at the center of the case study as a research and teaching method. [...] It is only because of experience with cases that one can at all move from being a beginner to being an expert” (Flyvbjerg 2006: 224).

What Is A Case Study?

According to Robert Yin,

“A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 1994: 13).

A management case is a written description of a real situation involving real people in a real organization (whether for-profit, nonprofit, or governmental). Thus, the unit of analysis is usually the organization, and the study describes an issue, problem, or challenge – whether already solved or yet to be solved. The case describes a given situation as fully as possible by approaching it from different perspectives, using both qualitative and quantitative data); in other words, a research design that relies on “*perceptual triangulation*” (Bonoma 1985: 2003).

When is case research an appropriate methodology?

Different research strategies serve different purposes. In **experimental research**, for example, one attempts to “control for” extraneous variables by standardizing conditions – in other words, minimize the impact of context on a relatively small number of variables. In **survey research**, although samples can be large and much data are collected, context is not very rich or informative (Yin 1994). The **case study** is a useful research approach when one intends to

explore the *context* in which something is happening. In case research, the sample size is one. However, when examined as a set, case studies can overcome the issue of sample size and generalizability in theory building (Eisenhardt & Graebner 2007; Taylor & Søndergaard 2017).

As a research paper, a case addresses one or more research questions which are sometimes, but not always, made explicit in the write up (Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 2003; Naumes & Naumes 2006; Eisenhardt & Graebner 2007; Taylor & Søndergaard 2017). The researcher can use the case study for theory discovery (describing novel or ignored phenomena), theory refinement (illustrating how theory applies and under what circumstances), or theory refutation (disconfirming an established theory in a particular situation where it does not apply) (Keating 1995). In addition, the case study can be a pedagogical tool, which we discuss next.

Two Major Components of a Teaching Case

Some cases are researched explicitly for the purpose of teaching management, so the final product of the research is a **teaching case study** and its accompanying **instructor's manual** (also called a "teaching note"). The case study tells the story and is published, while the IM provides instructors with ideas on how to teach with the case.

What Constitutes a "Good" Teaching Case?

In our experience, the best predictor of the quality of a classroom case *discussion* is the degree to which students have prepared the case and actively participate. If a case is inherently interesting to its intended audience, then students are more likely to read it, prepare it, and discuss it. Therefore, cases are "good" when students find them worthy of preparation and participation. The following are characteristics of cases worthy of thorough preparation:

- **Reality.** Since cases are packaged simulations of the real world, authenticity is important for engagement. Cases describe a real situation (Lundberg et al. 2001) and it is important that the reader is not suspicious that the situation has been fictionalized. Cases, *"although*

not perfect replicas of management realities, are as close to reality as a textual representation can get” (Mesny 2013: 60). For example, in the case *MegaToys Woos Wal-Mart* (McGuire et al. 2010), the Woo brothers received a \$63 million Easter basket order from Wal-Mart. The Woos had heard stories about other suppliers having difficulty keeping Wal-Mart satisfied. Charlie was convinced that Wal-Mart provided the company with its best opportunity for profitable growth. Peter, while excited about the possibility, wondered if it was good for MegaToys to become increasingly dependent on Wal-Mart. The case provides a realistic look at what goes on in a family business.

- **Significance.** The good case study addresses underlying issues that are important in theoretical or policy or practical terms (Yin 1994). Some cases describe exemplary practices or unique ways of doing things; others present a comparison between two alternative ways of dealing with a given problem. For example, the *Project Kaisei* case compares the use of traditional and social entrepreneurship in the same small firm seeking to save the Pacific Ocean from environmental disaster (Whaley & Perry 2012). Others cases describe *unusual* businesses, such as the private for-profit autopsy firm that was having difficulties selling franchises: *1-800-Autopsy* (McGuire & Avramchuk n.d.). If the issues in the case have unusual personal, group, organizational, or societal impact, students tend to be engaged.
- **Comprehensiveness.** The case should include a rich description of the context in which the organization is embedded and the people act. An exemplary case provides enough information to permit analysis and arriving at some sort of conclusion, if not a decision. Casewriters use multiple sources of information to achieve comprehensiveness, such as archival data on the company and the industry, reports in the press, interviews with managers, employees, ex-employees or former suppliers, survey data on customers, customer reviews on social media, and much more. Per Lynn (1999), a case has to have enough information to allow for a thorough analysis. The *dusitD2 Hotel Constance Pasadena* case (Zhang et al. n.d.) asks the reader to conclude whether buying a dusitD2 franchise was a good idea for a hotel in California, especially considering that the dusitD2

brand was unknown outside of Thailand. The case provides a full description of the hotel industry, boutique hotels, and the franchise agreements of DusitD2 and alternative franchise choices (Marriott, Aloft, etc.). The case also provides detail about the hotel's customers and the city of Pasadena – all of this to allow critical thinking that really takes into account context.

- **Alternative Perspectives.** Although case issues are often seen through the eyes of an individual decision-maker, they can also be described from other perspectives (Yin 1994). The finance case *Painting by (Financial) Numbers: The Acquisition of Valspar by Sherwin-Williams* was written from the perspective of “the average stockholder” when there were two sets of stockholders with different things at stake in the merger/acquisition (Pagani et al. 2017). In a good case, rival explanations are permitted, even encouraged. Alternative perspectives allow the student to see how well different theories explain what has happened, what actions should be taken, and by whom (Gini 1985). *Slastyona Confectionary* (McGuire 2008a, b) was written as two companion cases. The *Slastyona A* case describes in great detail the implementation of a new compensation system in a Russian chocolate company. The *Slastyona B* case provides, in the exact words of the General Manager, a viewpoint on the change process as it unfolded. Read as companions, they provide very different perspectives on what actually occurred, who did what, and why things worked or failed.
- **Backed up by Evidence.** A case is a story backed up by evidence. The evidence needs to be presented in a neutral way so that the casewriter's biases are kept – to the extent possible – out of the text. Casewriters should be aware that journal reviewers are highly critical of submissions where information needed to analyze the case is not provided in the case itself, in other words, the case lacks evidence needed for a thorough analysis.
- **Reasonably complex** (Lundberg et al. 2001); complexity – along with some ambiguity - may be essential to the process of learning how to make high quality decisions. Complexity and

ambiguity may lead to cognitive conflict, which can lead a student to consider (or better yet, generate) alternative interpretations and/or alternative courses of action that can result in higher quality decisions (Pearce 2002).

- **Emotionally rich.** Some cases more readily lead to an emotional response by the reader than others do. For example, the **Geo Listening** case begins with a tragedy: “A 15-year old boy killed himself by leaping off the roof of his high school in Glendale, California in front of horrified classmates and teachers” (McGuire et al. 2017). Emotion is an integral part of ethical and policy decision-making, and “emotional case content stimulates retention of cases and facilitates transfer of ethical decision-making principles demonstrated in cases” to other situations (Thiel et al. 2013: 265). The case **Mylan and the EpiPen** tends to generate strong emotional reactions in students about the high price of healthcare product (Peters et al. 2017). Casewriters can describe the reactions of different case characters to a situation, the relations between different characters, power dynamics (Thiel et al. 2013), trust or affect (like or dislike) for one another.
- **Composed in an engaging manner.** Emotionally rich cases are important to get the reader interested, but it takes a well-written case to keep the reader engaged from start to finish. Good writing is important, and effective storytelling is a valuable skill. Learning is stifled when students find cases boring. **The Turban and the Kirpan** case (Ghazzawi & Sharma 2017: 126) begins in such a way that few readers can resist going on to find out what happened:

“Have a safe trip, my dear Jag!” These were the only words he remembered hearing from his wife before leaving home in California in early January for a chicken delivery to Mississippi. A week later, he was handcuffed and on his way to a Mississippi police station under suspicion of being a terrorist.”

Types of Teaching Case Studies

Scholars have proposed different typologies of cases (for example, Lundberg et al. 2001; Lynn 1999; Swiercz 2000, Yin 2003) based upon the type of information included in the case, how the information is structured, the research objective, and what the casewriter intended for students to do with the case. Often the final version of a case contains elements of more than one type. Reynolds (1978: 129) pointed out:

“Certain types of case facilitate certain methods of teaching while defeating others. The determining factors are not merely the length of the case or the number of quantified facts, but the amount of mental effort the case requires ...”

Case researchers have called for more variety in the types of management cases written in order to meet different learning objectives (Lundberg et al. 2001; Mesny 2013).

“[W]e need to extend the variety of situations and contexts depicted in management cases to better reflect the business and management world. It is as important to have cases about failures as it is about successes; cases about “big” decisions as well as the mundane; those dealing with non-decision as much as decisions; and dark-side cases as much as best practice cases. [...] We need more cases whose characters are individuals being managed rather than managers ... newly appointed managers, rather than cases about top executives” (Mesny 2013: 62-63).

A broad range of types of cases might be attractive to potential casewriters. For example, the *Case Research Journal* publishes special issues with themes such as “Family Business,” “Social Entrepreneurship,” or “Spanish language cases with English translation” that seek in part to attract new casewriters with unique interests. Alternatively, researchers with an interest in multimedia, social media or virtual reality might be attracted to the possibilities of an online journal. We have observed that short cases are gaining in popularity because they take advantage of many readers’ short attention spans, cost less to print, and can be taught in a 50-75 minute class. While there is no definitive typology, and many cases fit simultaneously in more than one type, we believe that the following 8 types of management teaching cases include most of the variation we have seen:

1) **Critical incidents.** These short, compact case can be descriptive or decisional but what they have in common is brevity (1 to 4 pages), focus on one event or issue, and little context. Critical incidents are typically published at the end of a textbook chapter or in specialized journals such as the *Journal of Critical Incidents* (JCI), the *International Journal of Instructional Cases*, or the *Harvard Business Review*. JCI, for example, publishes critical incidents that do not exceed three single-spaced pages:

“...Each incident tells a story about an event, an experience, a blunder, or a success. Unlike long cases, these incidents provide only essential historical details and limited situation development. Instead, each incident provides a focal point that stimulates students to arrive at a course of action or analysis.” (JCI 2016).

The 3 ½ page ethical decision case ***Does this Milkshake Taste Funny?*** (Cousins & Benitz 1998) can be read in the classroom and discussed for many hours. An instructor can use the case to apply Kohlberg’s stage of moral development (Lawrence 2009) and/or other ethical or decision-making frameworks. This ***Milkshake*** case is a critical incident, a decision-focused case, an application case, and a contextual issue case.

Tompkins and Lacey (2015) provide superb guidelines for instructors to organize student-written international critical incidents from interviews with classmates. Similarly, Meyer and Shannon (2010) suggest that case writing uniquely facilitates reflection-in-action for education students learning what works in a given situation. Increasingly, case teaching venues exist outside academia. The quick pace of corporate training requires learning activities as short as 30 minutes, such as mini-case studies or critical incidents (Giulioni & Voloshin 2014).

2) **Descriptive Illustrations.** These cases describe actions that have been taken by an organization. Some are purely descriptive seeking to inform the reader about an organization (its history, milestones, and approaches to business) and the policies the organization has adopted. Some are intended to be “memorable examples” (Swiercz 2000: 3) of a well-known organization, whether positive or negative, typical of its industry or counter-intuitive. For

example, *The RADIT Program at St. Joseph Hospital* case (Vega & McGuire 2007) describes how an emergency department was re-organized to speed up the flow of patients, increase patient satisfaction, and improve health outcomes. Managers at other hospitals can consider adopting the RADIT approach. Other types of descriptive Illustrations document the effectiveness of leaders' plans or styles and ask students what to endorse or reject. One interesting example is the *Turnaround at Hammerhead* case (Whaley & Walker 2012), in which the reader is asked to evaluate the leadership style of a former CEO who has returned to a technology company in crisis.

Descriptive illustrations do not require a decision. Their main purpose is to get students to exercise critical thinking and analysis and to expose them to companies, policies, and managerial practices.

3) *Problem-identification cases.* The primary purpose of problem-identification cases is to get students to prioritize information and identify, define, or re-define a problem. In these cases, the real problem is not made obvious to the reader. Sometimes these cases provide a “data dump” requiring students to sift through and determine what is really important and what is not (Lundberg 2001). Other times, the case has a “presenting problem” that may not be the real problem at all. For example, in the *Norge Electronics Portugal* case (McGuire 2007), the first paragraph provides a dilemma that, upon analysis, is clearly not the underlying issue. Students need to figure out what is – and what is not – the most important problem. Cases about technology companies sometimes fall into the problem-identification category because readers may assume that the technology, rather than management, is the primary issue. For example, what looked on the surface to be a straightforward selection of the best strategic technology turned out to be a short-term cash flow issue in the *Turning the Lights Up or Down at UVM* case (Whaley 2007).

Instructors sometimes use problem-identification cases as decision-focused cases (that is, they require students to come up with an answer), but spend considerable class time discussing

what the real problem is. The syllabus instructions for preparation of a case in an MBA class read something like the following:

*Begin your paper with a statement of the **main problem**. Your problem statement should not be an exhaustive list of everything that is wrong. Rather, it should be one or two central issues around which all else is organized. You will have to a) combine related problems, and b) establish priorities. You will not be able to address everything in your case analysis. Analyze the problem you identified (and not some other problem). Organize the facts into a coherent whole as if you were presenting evidence to persuade a skeptic. Clearly state any assumptions that you've made. Provide evidence from the case to support your analysis: use quotes, numbers, and facts. Analyze the problem using a conceptual model from the readings or lectures. Draw a conclusion and provide specific recommendations for action. What should be done next? Some cases call for a specific decision or specific actions that need to be taken, while others do not. However, most cases at least call for an explanation of "what you would have done" in the situation (adapted from Newman 1998).*

Problem-identification cases are more popular in decision science and management classes with a strong emphasis on problem-solving. The myriad of tools covered in these classes (i.e., Forced Field, Fishbone, Decision Matrices, PERT, and CPM) help students to identify key problems. Given that one of the main benefits of the case method is that it can help students learn to distinguish between significant and trivial information (Swiercz 2000), we hope that more casewriters will write cases that require students to identify the problem before trying to solve it.

4) Decision-focused cases. Decision-focused cases require the reader to make a decision or advise a protagonist about what decision to make. Decision-focused cases are preferred by some journals. The *Case Research Journal* (CRJ) publishes cases with non-subtle decisions, the decision that needs to be taken is often stated explicitly in the first page of the case.

CRJ "publishes outstanding teaching cases drawn from research in real organizations, dealing with important issues in all administration-related disciplines. The CRJ specializes in decision-focused cases based on original primary research [...]. Exceptional cases that are analytical or descriptive rather than decision-focused will be considered when a decision focus is not practicable" (NACRA 2017).

When assigned a decision-focused case, the reader considers himself/ herself in the role of protagonist, arrives at a decision, justifies the decision in relation to alternatives, and predicts the consequences of implementing the decision. Although the decision-focused case is the most common type of management teaching case, it has received strong criticism. When management education programs send the message that every situation requires a decision, students may not develop an appreciation for situations where decisions cannot be made (Lundberg et al. 2001). Bridgman (2010: 311) noted that the decision-focused cases used in business ethics courses under-emphasize the social, political, and economic factors which shape managerial decisions “[... including] *structural features of capitalism and the role of government in regulating the market.*” Presenting students with repeated, discrete problems and asking them to make decisions reinforces the presumption that all problems can and should be solved.

“Because problems are presumed to be solvable, anything loosely referred to as a problem will seem to demand a solution, thus undervaluing the real frequency of paradoxes or dilemmas as well as situations simply not amenable to change. Coping and experimentation will also tend to be underappreciated. The repeated making of discrete decisions underplays how problems may be imbedded in larger systemic issues, or serially linked, or how they may cause subsequent problems” (Lundberg et al. 2001: 455).

Some casewriters conclude their decision-focused cases with a list of recommendations or perhaps alternative paths to follow. Rather than achieving the desired goal of expanding critical thinking skills, instructors have found that many students limit their recommendations only to that list. Therefore, some case journals have suggested concluding with open-ended questions or management challenges for students to address in their own way.

5) Application cases. The pedagogical goal of the application case is for students to apply a concept, theory, typology, calculation, or model and determine how well the theory fits the data provided in the case. (Occasionally, an exceptional student proposes a brand new theory to fit the exemplar.) Application cases are used for students to determine if a given theory or a conceptual framework is applicable to a real-life example. Is the theory useful in understanding

what is going on in practice? Does one theory fit the data better than a rival theory? The *New Bedford Whaling Museum* case (McGuire & Kretman 2012) describes the leadership of strategic change at the museum by an executive director over several years, as she navigated challenges and crises along the way. Among other uses, the case is ideal for seeing how well one or more theories of leading change fit one complex exemplar.

6) Contextual Issue Cases. These cases are used to explore the context around an (often) ethical and/or legal issue, such as company policy/ culture and public policy/ national culture (Lundberg et al. 2001; Swiercz 2000). While contextual issue cases may require a decision, their main purpose is to examine an issue from many different points of view and appreciate the complexity of a situation. In the *Wal-Mart Supercenter Rosemead* case (McGuire et al. 2012), members of a small city protested the opening of a Wal-Mart. The case juxtaposes residents' complaints with the pro-business perspectives of city officials and Wal-Mart representatives. The reader is asked to conclude whether, after looking the issues from different perspectives, Wal-Mart is good for that community.

So-called "dark side" cases fall into this category; they describe an ethical problem or tragedy that occurred and – rather than asking for a decision – ask students to *"analyze the interplay of political and economic factors and organizational relationships and to suggest how this tragedy might have been prevented"* (Bridgman 2011: 318). A famous example is the *Folole Muliaga* case which describes the death of a New Zealand woman after the electric company cut off power to her house for nonpayment of bills (Bridgman 2010).

In a contextual issue case, readers are required to juxtapose the demands of a real situation, the requirements of law, and their own personal and cultural values. What is the best business solution to the problem in the case? What are the legal requirements? What is the ethical response? What are the tradeoffs between compliance and organizational outcomes?

7) Live cases. The live case is the type that is closest to the original Harvard Business School format. In a live case, some information is written but much is not – instead it is provided orally by a company representative in a field visit or as a guest speaker in a classroom. Live cases can be any of the above types of cases (critical incidents, descriptive illustrations, etc.), but the student experience of the case is quite different because of the interaction with the protagonist, and the case is different every time it is presented. A variation of the live case is the so-called “living” case. In a living case, students interact with company representatives only *after* they have made their case recommendations. The interaction therefore serves as an epilogue covering the actions the company actually took. Sometimes the discussion becomes a participative post-mortem concerning what could have been done better.

8) Cases in video, multi-media, and new formats. The format of a case study is only limited by our imagination. Technology has made it feasible to use video cases for teaching that lend realism to the classroom and engage students at different cognitive levels (Naumes & Naumes 2006). For example, the PBS Frontline report *Is Wal-Mart Good for America?* (PBS 2014) can be used as a case study. In the class prior to the discussion of the *Sriracha* case (Drost et al. 2017), instructors can show the movie “*Sriracha*” (Hammond 2014).

We have found that multimedia cases can be expensive to produce at a professional level, require instructional design and technical media expertise, and can blur the traditional intellectual property boundaries associated with written cases. Nonetheless, a novice casewriter with expertise in multimedia but without case experience might find the multimedia case an interesting choice. Online journals are eager to publish well-prepared multimedia cases. A case published online can embed links to videos, databases, industry reports, and just about anything else the casewriter wants to make available to the reader. George Whaley asks casewriters to ponder two questions related to learning technology:

“How different really are computer simulation cases and cases based on video game technology?” and “Can you imagine the increased richness of the

multimedia case experience for students and faculty alike when virtual reality and learning robotics become commonplace?”

Attention to different learning styles may be an opportunity to engage students with cases and simulations (Saunders 1997). Once again, it is only our imagination that limits us. What about the comic book (graphic novel) as a learning platform applicable to management teaching cases? George Whaley is working on one of the first graphic novel case studies. He has discovered that the advantages and disadvantages of multimedia cases also apply to graphic novel cases: instruction design skills (storyboarding) and graphic artist skills are essential. Nonetheless, effective storytelling remains the core skill for the graphic novel and other nontraditional platforms.

Getting Started

Case researchers should begin by selecting an organization and/or issue that interests them. As obvious as it may sound, over and over again we find that good research is produced when the researcher is **enthusiastic** about the project. A good way to begin research is to collect publicly available information on the industry, organization, and its competitors. The organization’s own website is a useful source. Library databases can be sources of academic and practitioner articles on companies, as are newspapers and business magazines such as *Red Herring, INC, Fast Company, The Economist, Bloomberg BusinessWeek, and Fortune*.

Some casewriters became passionate about a topic simply because the opportunity arose, per serendipity (Naumes & Naumes 2006). Friends, work colleagues, alumni, research contacts, and sometimes students can suggest interesting case situations.

Data Collection

The two main approaches to data collection are primary (“hands on”) and secondary (“hands-off”). Primary data are typically collected on-site. Casewriters visit the organization, collect

documents and financial statements, interview managers and employees, observe meetings, and possibly collect survey data. When primary data are confirmed through triangulation, rather than only CEO interviews, the resulting description can be rich. In the *Sriracha* case, the city of Irwindale nearly declared the hot sauce company a public nuisance because of the powerful jalapeño odors coming from the factory (Drost et al. 2017). The casewriters used direct quotes from the company CEO, the official minutes of meetings of the Irwindale city council, and also interviewed 48 neighbors living within “smelling distance” of the factory.

Secondary data can include newspaper articles, trade journal reports, TV programs or movies, press releases, industry reports, company (and rival) websites, third party reviews or ratings, and much more.

“Hands-off” case studies are prepared using publicly available information with a minimum of personal contact with the organization. The “hands off” approach is appropriate when the organization being researched is inaccessible or the topic is both controversial and also widely reported. For example, the case *Hooters of America: Fighting the Breastaurant Wars* (McGuire & O’Brien 2016) was prepared with minimal contact with Hooters; customers and employees were interviewed, but not senior managers. Because of the well-reported scandals and lawsuits at Hooters, publicly available information was abundant. Likewise, secondary public information was plentiful for the *Monsanto* case (Whaley 2016).

Disguises

All case research is concerned with real people in real organizations, and case researchers strive to be as accurate and impartial as possible. Occasionally, it is necessary to disguise the name of the organization, people, or financial data. When organizations are concerned about revealing financial information, there are ways to disguise it (i.e., multiplying or using a constant factor) while maintaining the integrity of financial relationships. An organization might request a disguise because of its concern about its public image. Nonetheless, casewriters should avoid disguises except when absolutely necessary. There is one exception: while the names of senior

people in the organization are not disguised, increasingly the names of customers or lower-level employees are omitted or disguised in order to protect their privacy. Do note that disguising a case is not a proper substitute for obtaining a publication waiver (“case release”).

Issues

Typically, researchers embark on case research because they are captivated by a specific **research question**. It often occurs, however, that once research is underway, a multitude of other issues are uncovered. No case can cover all issues, so the researcher needs to focus on what is critical and interesting to a reader while providing rich context. Some issues that may be interesting to case researchers include:

- **Managers and entrepreneurs in development.** These cases describe the situation of a junior manager or entrepreneur who has overcome obstacles and is learning to deal with significant issues, such as growth, resource constraints, lawsuits, turning an un-motivated workforce into a motivated workforce, going international, etc.
- **Companies that do Things Differently.** These cases describe companies that use new or modern methods of management, or go against prevailing norms or habits. They might address new business models or emerging markets where challenges are quite different than they would be in established markets.
- **Companies Faced with Difficulties, Changes, or Scandal.** These cases describe organizations involved in difficulties or challenges, such as overcoming bankruptcy, lawsuits, downsizing, product obsolescence, changes, or scandal.
- **Companies Recognized as Exceptional.** These cases describe organizations that have been reported as exceptional or have received public recognition. (Sometimes researchers discover that such organizations are less exceptional than it first appears.) There are published lists of exceptional companies such as the following:

- Most Admired Companies (*Fortune Magazine*)
- America's Best Companies for Minorities
- Best Places to Work
- Fastest Growing (*INC Magazine*)
- Best Places to Work for Hispanics (*Hispanic Business*)
- Best Companies for Latinas
- Best Small Companies (*Forbes Magazine*)
- Best Employee-Owned Companies

Organizations can be exceptional and interesting case subjects because of their negative actions or reputation. Past scandals associated with the savings and loans industry, environmental disasters in the oil industry, and ethical breakdowns in the financial services industry come to mind. The *Monsanto* case (Whaley 2016) was in part inspired by what a Harris poll revealed: Monsanto was considered the least ethical company in the world (Kiser 2010; Campbell & Matthews 2015; Kano & Gonzales 2015). A negative reputation – potentially – can spur a company to turn negative perceptions into positive actions.

Case Releases

When information in the case was obtained exclusively from publicly available sources, casewriters do not seek a release from the case organization authorizing publication. When information is obtained from primary sources (interviews, company documents, observations on-site, etc.), a signed publication waiver or release is necessary. Most journals will not publish a case without a signed release. Typically, a senior manager in the organization is given a draft of the case study and asked to approve it; managers sometimes request that a given paragraph or statement be deleted or re-worded before they give permission. A sample release form is provided in Appendix. Since the IM is not published, a publication waiver is not sought for it.

Learning Objectives

Learning objectives (LOs) indicate what a student may learn by preparing and discussing the case. The casewriter must include the LOs in the IM; in fact, the IM is built around them.

Teaching cases are geared toward the learner-centric approach and focus on learning goals (rather than teaching goals). There is some evidence that the use of case studies can help students improve their critical thinking, decision-making skills, and tolerance of ambiguity (Banning 2003; Pearce 2002), discern the essential elements of a situation, analyze and interpret data, use insights to inform action, and see how theory applies in practice (Ambrosini, Bowman & Collier 2010; Merseth 1991; Wasserman 1994). Cases can to some extent provide a classroom substitute for direct experience (Garvin 2007; Mauffette-Leenders et al. 1997).

Dooley and Skinner (1977) identified eight generic educational objectives of a teaching case on a spectrum from the lowest levels - acquire knowledge - to the highest – develop mature judgement and wisdom. The highest objective is achieved through cases that present a complex, realistic, unstructured situation with many different types of information, including irrelevant facts and contradictory opinions of case characters. Lundberg et al. (2001) proposed three broad learning objectives: (1) Acquiring, differentiating, and using ideas and information; (2) Issue identification and differentiation; and (3) Action formulation and implementation.

Casewriters are expected to design a lesson around 2 to 6 learning objectives per case. This is a rule of thumb only, but a large number of LOs can lead to a cumbersome, unfocused learning experience, while a small number suggests that the IM overlooks pertinent issues. Learning objectives should ideally be expressed in line with Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, from the lowest to the highest levels: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and finally create / recommend (Anderson et al. 2001). The learning objectives are the centerpiece of the instructor's manual. LOs should be linked to the discussion questions that are typically expected in the IM. Exhibit 1 provides one case's learning objectives and discussion questions.

Exhibit 1. Sample Learning Objections and Discussion QuestionsCase: *dusitD2 Hotel Constance Pasadena* (Zhang et al. n.d.)

Bloom Level	Learning Objective	Discussion Questions
4 Analyze, 5 Evaluate	LO1. Prepare an analysis of the hotel industry using Porter's 5 forces, and determine its attractiveness to an investor.	(1) Analyze the hotel environment in the U.S. and particularly in Pasadena, CA. How attractive is the industry?
4 Analyze, 5 Evaluate	LO2. Analyze the marketing mix using the 5Ps model. Draw conclusions and recommend changes.	(2) Analyze dusitD2 Hotel Constance Pasadena's marketing mix.
2 Understand	LO3. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of a franchise (hotel).	(3) To a property owner, what are the advantages and disadvantages of a hotel franchise?
5 Evaluate	LO4. Evaluate alternative franchises against a set of criteria, in the context of a business opportunity.	(4) Was dusitD2 a good franchise for Singpoli to choose?
		(5) Identify potential franchisors (including dusitD2) that Singpoli might consider. Next, identify the most relevant criteria for evaluating a franchisor and franchise agreement (e.g., initial franchise fee, booking system, etc.). Finally, using information from the case, assess each one the franchise opportunities on your criteria and select the best franchisor for Singpoli in Pasadena.
5 Evaluate 6 Create	LO5. Demonstrate the ability to formulate logical choices to take advantage of a business opportunity, and evaluate choices against decision criteria.	(6) Formulate at least 3 choices that Singpoli could have made after it decided to open a hotel in Pasadena. Devise decision criteria for the choices, and evaluate the choices against your decision criteria. What would have been the best choice?

The Case Study Project Outline

The outline is a tool for keeping organized the moving parts of the case writing process. When co-authors are involved, the outline is important as a planning, accountability, and implementation tool. The outline should be prepared after some, but not all, research has been conducted. It describes the structure and sequence of the information that will be included in the case. The content of the case is divided into relevant sections, with headings to

organize the flow of the story. There are many formats that can be used, depending on the type of case and the target journal, but the following outline guidelines may be helpful:

I. Basic Information

a. **Title** – The case should have a title that is distinctive and informative. Other than the key words in a google search, what makes your case stand out? Sometimes it is appropriate to use only the name of the organization. Often, it is better to use the name of the organization and an indication of the subject of the case study. A catchy title helps to get the case noticed but if it is “too cute,” it can trivialize the story. For example:

- Company ABC: HR Policies (Perhaps too brief and sterile)
- Company ABC: HR Policies for Part-time Employees (Topical, distinctive, informative)
- Company ABC: HR Policies for the Emerging Indigenous and Contingent Workforce (Catchy and distinctive, but confusing)

b. **Authors** – The authors of the case, their university or professional affiliations, any advisors or mentors, etc. If the case is co-authored, it is important to get agreement regarding the sequence of author names. A concern for novice casewriter might be, should my name go first, second, or third in the list of co-authors? Contribution, status, resources, and relationships are factors to consider and early agreement on the order of names can prevent problems later. Each case needs a designated corresponding author to submit the case and correspond with the journal editor.

c. **Research Question** – The main intellectual focus of the case research. For example in the **Denny’s** case (McGuire, Mahdavian & Yavari 2015):

After racial discrimination scandals and lawsuits costing Denny’s \$54.4 million, the restaurant chain rolled out a diversity program including industry-leading racial sensitivity training. Did the program work? Did Denny’s commitment to managing diversity “fix” the discrimination problem? Did the program provide Denny’s with a competitive business advantage?

d. **Brief Purpose Statement** – The purpose of the study and any delimitations or caveats. Standard wording is preferred, and many journals have boilerplate language. For example:

Company ABC: HR Policies for Part-time Employees

This case was prepared by Anna Alexander, Burton Bell, and Clayton Conk under the direction of Professor DD of Big University. It has been prepared based upon information provided by ABC managers and employees as well as publicly available information. The case is intended to serve as a basis of class discussion rather than to illustrate effective or ineffective management.

II. Organization

a. *The organization* – its full legal name (or names) and/or that part of the organization that is addressed in the case. Since it is not always true that the organization is the unit of analysis of a management case study, it is important to be clear about what is. For a discussion of the importance of the unit of analysis, how to select it, and its relationship to the case context, see Taylor and Søndergaard (2017).

b. *Protagonists* – Typically cases are written around real people. Occasionally, the viewpoint in a case will not be an individual (i.e., average stockholder in a financial case or an average customer in a marketing case). While the case probably will have a main protagonist, casewriters should try to include views of multiple case characters. Case journals prefer direct quotes over paraphrasing case characters' comments.

c. *Organization chart* - useful, but not always required.

d. *Timeline of events* - Effective, complex stories have a pace and sequence of events that are important. When a protagonist has multiple reflections about events or a large number of events, decisions, and people are involved, it helps to place the events in chronological order. The casewriter might eventually include the timeline as an Exhibit in the case. The ***New Bedford Whaling Museum*** case (McGuire & Kretman 2012) describes a change leadership over several years. The case includes a timeline of the most important events to make it easier for the reader to follow their sequence.

III. Opening Situation/Introduction

Most cases begin with a brief description of the protagonist and the dilemma that the company faced; this is intended to focus the reader's attention, and has been called "*the hook*" (Naumes & Naumes 2006) or "*the grabber – the piece that is going to make people want to read more*" (Vega 2003:64). The opening situation can be an overview of the organization and what it has achieved. It can be a *vignette* – a brief story that summarizes the problem faced or decision that needs to be made. It can include a secondary issue or "red herring," in other words, a real or pseudo problem that good students will discover not to be the issue at all (Naumes & Naumes 2006). Generally, the opening situation is one or two paragraphs long. Rule of thumb: one page in a regular case and one-half page in a critical incident. If readers need to flip the page while reading the introduction, they may sense complexity or lose interest in reading further. The casewriter must decide if students will need to identify the problem, or if the problem will be stated plainly. The opening situation is an ideal location to point out what the student needs to do with the case (analyze something, compare two alternatives, etc.) and pay attention to as he/she reads further.

Management teaching cases are written in the past tense because the events have already occurred. (The IM can be in any appropriate tense.) There are a few exceptions to the past tense rule, such as when using a direct quote, in a table or figure, or in the verbs that discuss exhibits.

IV. Background

This section usually provides historical and background information on the organization, including (if applicable) stories, myths and facts related to its founding and growth. In complex cases, the company background, management background, and product/service background are separate sections with major headings to facilitate reading. If the reader needs to understand new technology, rare diseases, legal cases, special languages or other novel items then a brief section explaining them can be helpful. For example, a brief section on genetically modified organisms was included in the *Monsanto* case (Whaley 2016). It may be necessary to

provide definitions of terms. If the technical explanation within the body of the case becomes lengthy or is primarily for the benefit of the detail-oriented reader, then placing it in appendix or in a separate technical note is a more effective approach.

V. Business Strategy and Sector of Activity / Industry

Although not all cases require an explicit description of strategy, readers do need a sufficient understanding of the organization's purpose. The "industry" in which the organization competes is relevant context. It may be appropriate to prepare charts or tables with information on competitors or the industry. Sometimes it is unclear in what industry the company is classified. Dun & Bradstreet or industry classification codes (SIC) can help (NAICS 2012). Casewriters can begin by looking up the industry and major competitors in databases such as FACTIVA, IBISWorld, and Hoovers.com.

VI. Issues /Conceptual Frameworks

Each issue addressed by the case should be described briefly in the outline. Here is where the casewriters can draw upon theories, frameworks, or legislation to help organize the material in the case. If the casewriter's intent is to apply a theory or law, then the reader will need sufficient (but not excessive or misleading) information to be able to do so.

VII. Conclusions

This section is sometimes called the Management Challenge or the Decision-Focus. The purpose is to tell the reader what decisions need to be taken, what alternatives to consider, or what items to evaluate from the vantage point of the protagonist. The conclusion can be a reiteration of the major points described in the case, it can be the natural continuation of the issues, the protagonists' alternatives, or a series of questions to the reader. Often, the conclusion brings the reader back to the "hook" or "grabber" in the opening situation.

VIII. Appendices

Readers prefer that charts, graphs, financial reports, and other illustrations are placed in the body of the case and IM close to where the information is discussed. Appendices should contain information needed to analyze the case that does not fit in the body of the document. For example, if a certain legal issue is addressed, the relevant laws can be summarized in an appendix. Results of employee surveys, photos of products, company forms, balance sheets or profit and loss statements, or other descriptive information may also be relevant. As previously noted, technical discussions that do not fit in the Background section are sometimes moved to an appendix.

IX. Instructor's Manual

An instructor's manual (IM) accompanies a teaching case; it provides an analysis of the case within the limits of the learning objectives. It is typically written for the novice instructor. We have found that the quality of IMs varies considerably. Some are scholarly, others are quite simple, and each journal has different requirements. Journals typically do not publish IMs, but instead provide them to qualified instructors upon request. (Oddly enough, a few journals do publish IMs. Casewriters may want to avoid these journals since IMs can – and will be – accessed by students.) As a practical tip to casewriters who use cases in their retention, tenure, and promotion (RTP) package, we suggest erring on the side of scholarship. RTP committees sometimes assess the scholarly contribution of case research by looking at the IM. The minimum IM requirements include a synopsis of the case, learning objectives, a brief description of concepts or theories that apply, discussion questions with answers, and references.

a. *Case Synopsis.* The case synopsis is to a case what an abstract is to a paper. It should be brief. It summarizes the story and the main concepts that can be learned from the case. In some journals or conference proceedings, the synopsis is published on the cover page or in the table of contents. When the synopsis is used in this manner, the length should not exceed 125 words.

- b. Learning Objectives.** As previously discussed, the IM typically has 2 to 6 learning objectives: what can be learned through reading, analysis, preparation, and discussion of the case.
- c. Concepts, Theories, Laws.** Casewriters should provide a brief description of the concepts, theories, frameworks or laws that can be used to understand the case. Often, this takes the form of a brief literature review. As previously mentioned, RTP committees judge scholarly contributions to the field by examining IMs.
- d. Case Discussion Questions.** The completed IM contains a set of specific case questions with the casewriters' answers. Discussion questions should flow logically from the learning objectives, of course. In the answers to discussion questions, it is improper to introduce information that was not in the case. Casewriters need to double check that the questions really can be answered with the information provided. Some journals prefer specific answers to the questions, others like alternatives or pros and cons, and still others ask for sample "A" level and "C" level student answers. (Some instructors find that such answers help them grade case analyses.) When real student answers are included in the IM, journals ask authors to cite the students in order to avoid intellectual property issues.
- e. Epilogue.** Students are often eager to know "what really happened" at the end of a case discussion. Lundberg and Winn (2005: 270) noted, perhaps tongue in cheek: *"Having an epilogue to share enhances both case believability and, importantly, instructor credibility."* If instructors who adopt the case have access to company representatives, it is always interesting to invite them to class. Sometimes students are surprised to find the companies actually considered their outside-the-box proposals. This actually happened in both authors' MBA classes. In one of them, the company CEO said, *"That is why we hire people like you from grad school with fresh ideas."* When representatives are not able to visit the classroom, videoconferencing is a good way to provide a living case experience.

X. References

Journals require separate case and IM references. References are the basis for citations in the manuscript. Therefore, authors need to make sure that all citations in the case and IM are included in the references.

Submitting a Case Study for Publication

Cases can be submitted to (1) Peer-reviewed journals of case studies, (2) Peer-reviewed journals that include cases alongside other research, (3) Books of cases, (4) Textbooks that include cases, and (5) Case libraries, such as those at Harvard, IESE, Darden, HEC Montreal Centre de Cas, Ivey, and CaseNet. Like other academic work, often the first place where researchers present a case is a conference. Case conferences allow casewriters to get feedback and improve their cases before submitting them to a journal. Some universities and case organizations provide student travel stipends, new faculty travel grants, and scholarships that support case writing activities.

Casewriters then submit their cases for peer review and typically obtain suggestions from reviewers. After revisions (sometimes several rounds), cases can be accepted for publication. Sometimes, book authors notice what cases have been presented at conferences and invite casewriters to include a version of a case in their textbooks. For example, the author of a leading strategy textbook requested the *American Apparel* case after it was presented at a NACRA conference (Grant et al. 2010). The case was included in the textbook and used by MBA students worldwide.

Management case journals do not accept fictional or fictionalized cases. Several journals do not accept cases unless they have been tested in class. Nearly all require both the case and IM. Some prefer non-subtle decision-focused cases, while others accept all 8 of types of cases. Many do not accept disguised cases, and those that do require a justification for the disguise.

Casewriters should be interested in the target audience of the journal, the size of its readership, the turnaround time from submission to publication, the reputation of the journal and the academic “credit” authors will receive for publishing in a journal. Academic credit is based on how an institution considers cases. We cannot speak for each school, but most business schools give faculty academic credit for peer-reviewed journals that are listed in Cabell’s or other accepted directories. If a case is only “desk reviewed” by a textbook author or journal editor, it is not peer-reviewed. Institutions tend to provide more academic credit when the journal is peer-reviewed and its acceptance rate is low.

Some scholarly journals include cases that fit with their research focus alongside articles. For example, journals in healthcare management, international management, and entrepreneurship will publish cases.

Exhibit 2 provides a partial list of journals that publish management teaching cases.

Exhibit 2. Teaching Case Journals

JOURNAL	ORGANIZATION	PREFERENCE	WEBSITE
<i>Asian Case Research Journal</i>	National Univ. Singapore	Asian organizations	http://www.worldscinet.com/acri
<i>Asian Journal of Management Cases</i>	Lahore University of Management Sciences	Asian organizations	http://ajc.sagepub.com
<i>Business Case Journal</i> (BCJ)	Society for Case Research	Case + IM	http://www.sfcr.org
<i>Case Research Journal</i> (CRJ)	NACRA – North American Case Research Association	Decision cases Case + IM	http://www.nacra.net
<i>Emerald Emerging Markets Case Study Collection</i>	Emerald	Case + IM	http://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/products/case_studies/eemcs.htm
<i>IMA Educational Case Journal</i>	IMA Institute of Management Accountants	Accounting and Finance Case + IM	https://www.imanet.org
<i>IMT Case Journal</i>	Institute of Mgmt. Technology (India)		http://imtcj.ac.in/
<i>International Journal of Case Studies in Management</i> (IJCSM)	Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales (HEC) Montréal	Case + IM	http://www.hec.ca/en/case_centre/ijcsm/index.html
<i>International Journal of Instructional Cases</i>		Concise (4 pages) cases + IM	http://www.ijcases.com/
<i>International Journal of Teaching and Case Studies</i>	Inderscience Publishers		http://www.inderscience.com/jhome.php?icode=ijtcs
<i>Journal of Applied Case Research</i> (JACR)	Southwest Case Research Association	Case + IM	http://swcra.net/journal-of-applied-case-research/
<i>Journal of Business Cases and Applications</i>	AABRI - Academic and Business Research Institute		http://aabri.com/jbca.html
<i>Journal of Case Research and Inquiry</i> (JCRI)	Western Casewriters Association	Case + IM	http://www.icri.org
<i>Journal of Case Studies</i> (JCS)	Society for Case Research	Case + IM	http://www.sfcr.org
<i>Journal of Critical Incidents</i>	Society for Case Research	Cases 3-pages or smaller; CI + IM	https://www.sfcr.org/ici/
<i>Journal of Finance Case Research</i> (JFCR)	Institute of Finance Case Research	Finance cases	http://www.ifcr.org/ifcr.html
<i>Journal of Information Technology Education: Discussion Cases</i> (JITE: DC)	Informing Science Institute	Information Systems cases	https://www.informingscience.org/Publications
<i>Journal of the International Academy for Case Studies</i>	International Academy of Case Studies (Allied Academies)	Case + IM	http://www.alliedacademies.org
<i>Southeast Case Research Journal</i>	Southeast Case Research Association	Case + IM	https://secra1.wordpress.com/secra-journal/
<i>The CASE Journal</i>	The CASE Association	Case + IM	http://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/products/journals/journals.htm?id=tcj
<i>Wine Business Case Research Journal</i>	Wine Business Institute, Sonoma State University	Decision cases, wine industry Case + IM	https://wbcrj.scholasticahq.com/

Summary

Case study research provides a rich learning experience leading to the production of a scholarly paper and a pedagogical tool. High quality cases address significant issues, provide a comprehensive description of an organization, include alternative perspectives on the reasons behind what has occurred, are backed up by evidence, and are written in an engaging manner. Researchers can prepare 8 types of cases: Critical incidents, Descriptive Illustrations, Problem-identification cases, Decision-focused cases, Application cases, Contextual issue cases, Live cases, and Multi-media cases. Case studies can, of course, be of more than one type simultaneously. While all management case research deals with real organizations, some cases are prepared through primary research at the organization (interviews, obtaining documents, observation), others with a “hands-off” approach (only publicly available information), and most are completed with a combination of primary and secondary research.

Researchers should focus on organizations and issues that interest them. Some of the many possible issues that might capture the attention of management casewriters include managers and/or entrepreneurs in development, companies that do things differently, companies faced with difficulties, changes, or scandal, and companies regarded as exceptional.

Finally, we suggested an outline for a case study project and indicated possible outlets for the publication of the management teaching case study.

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**George Whaley**

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Appendix

CASE STUDY RELEASE FORM

Case Study: Title of Case

Name of Company authorizes the authors and faculty advisors (listed below) of XYZ University to submit to a case research conference a draft version of the case study attached to this release form, under the provision that changes, edits, and deletions marked in pen on the attached copy(ies) be made prior to submission.

Conference Proceedings. If the case study is accepted at the conference, a one-page abstract of the case will be published in the conference proceedings.

Submission to Journal or Book. After the conference, the authors intend to edit and revise the case study for eventual publication in a journal or book, at which time the authors will provide **Name of Company** with the revised version for review and approval.

The authors acknowledge the right of **Name of Company** to review and approve the final version of the case study prior to its publication in a journal or book, and will, at the time of submission for publication, request an additional, signed release form.

Name of Person

Name of Company

Address

Signed:

Date:

Names, Addresses, emails, telephones

Date:

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