Analyzing a Business Case

Business case analysis is a technique frequently used in management education to give students an opportunity to explore real life business situations and to put themselves in the shoes of business leaders. As in the real world situation, students are asked to apply theories and concepts to analyze the situation, determine the problem(s) facing the manager, identify and evaluate possible solutions, and make recommendations. There is rarely only one right answer and there are equally many ways to analyze a case. Here are a few best practices for case analysis:

1. **Read the case (including figures and tables) in detail and take notes as you go.** You may need to read the case two or three times looking for different information each time. Pay particular attention to:
   - Company goals and objectives
   - Financial situation
   - Corporate culture and values
   - Company market position
   - Competitor activities
   - Market conditions

2. **Identify the company’s internal strengths and weaknesses with respect to such things as:**
   - People
   - Products
   - Processes
   - Market share
   - Financial position

3. **External Opportunities and Threats**
   - New Markets
   - New Products
   - New Customers
   - Competitors
   - Substitute Products
   - Supplier issues

4. **Identify the main problem/issue or potential opportunity facing the manager.**
   Issues/problems/opportunities can relate to:
   - Customer satisfaction
   - Profitability
   - Strategic direction
   - Competitive advantage
   - Employees

5. **Propose alternative solutions to solving the problem.** There will always be more than one possible solution, but be sure the alternatives are realistic and within the scope of the manager in question.

6. **Define the decision criteria.** Profitability will always be an important factor, but there will also be others.

7. **Evaluate alternatives against the decision criteria.**

8. **Make a recommendation to management with support and evidence from the case and suggest a practical course of action.**
Writing a Case Analysis

A written case analysis will generally follow a report format and should employ concise, specific language in the active voice. To improve readability and understanding, the content should be organized using headings.

Introduction
The introduction should contain a brief overview of the company and their market. You will generally end your introduction with the definition of the problem facing the manager. Avoid restating facts from the case.

Body
The body of the report will contain:
- Your analysis of the situation including internal and external data
- Your recommendation to the manager based on consideration of alternative courses of action and an overall assessment of the strengths of the company
- A suggested action plan for achieving the desired outcome

Conclusion
The conclusion will summarize the key learning points from the case

General Tips for Effective Business Case Writing

1. Follow the guidelines and expectations of the assignment and your instructor
2. Always consider the audience you are writing for including their familiarity with the industry, and their expectations of outcomes
3. Use formal language – avoid slang, contractions, or abbreviations
4. Use descriptive headings organized logically
5. Ensure your content is accurate
6. Support all recommendations with facts
7. Maintain an objective perspective
8. Use tables and figures to support your recommendations
9. Be concise
10. Proofread for grammar and spelling – you will be judged on your presentation of the content as much as the content itself