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Guidelines for the Production of Case Studies[1]

Document prepared by Professor **Anne MESNY**[2]

What Is a Case Study?

A case study is a rich description of a real-life management situation for the purpose of generating specific learning outcomes in students, such as, notably, the development of judgment and critical thinking skills in the management field. The case study method of teaching is based on a theory of learning that emphasizes two key characteristics of learning activities: engagement and problem solving. On the one hand, in order for students to learn effectively, it is believed that they must feel "engaged" and have a sense that they are involved, beyond simple intellectual listening. On the other hand, it is thought that activities that involve solving concrete problems are most likely to generate learning in students. By describing actual management situations, many of which require problem solving or decision making, and by depicting the actions of employees, managers or leaders with whom students can often identify, case studies seek to fulfil these two key characteristics of learning.

Teaching using the case study method is also based on a particular conception of management, which is considered a *practice* that is neither an art nor a science: in other words, management does not depend solely on the talent or "intuition" of managers, nor is it based on the discovery and application of a set of general rules. Rather, "good" management depends primarily on the manager's sense of judgment. Accordingly, professors of management seek to develop good judgment in their students. The use of case studies can be interesting in this regard to the extent that their purpose is to foster skills that contribute to the development of good judgment; more than a "simple" understanding or "application" of general principles, the pedagogical aims of cases include developing a capacity for analysis and synthesis, an appreciation for context, exposing students to a large number of situations and to decision making in a situation of limited information, developing a sense of urgency, categorizing problems, and fostering a creative approach to the search for answers and solutions, etc.

[1] Although this guide was developed specifically for authors wishing to submit their cases to the HEC Montréal Case Centre Catalogue or to the *International Journal of Case Studies in Management* (IJCSM), it can also be used as a more general reference.

[2] Anne Mesny is an Associate Professor in management at HEC Montréal, Director of the HEC Montréal Case Centre and Chief Editor of the *International Journal of Case Studies in Management* (IJCSM). Contact: anne.mesny@hec.ca.

Case study versus exercise

A case study is *not* an exercise. In an exercise, the aim is to identify the one *right* solution to a problem. As such, in an exercise, there is no beating around the bush about which answer or solution is right or wrong. On the other hand, in a case study, there are often several possible answers, solutions or points of view, and the issue of which is the "best" one is completely open to debate. If there is nothing to discuss, it cannot be called a case study.

Even when an exercise is "embellished" by adding a context, it remains an exercise. If the context is not used to call into question or add nuance to "the" right answer, it is an exercise, not a case.

The distinction between a case and an exercise does *not* extend to the distinction between qualitative data and quantitative data. It is possible, for example, to produce excellent cases in the area of finance, accounting or logistics[1] even if the discussion is based on figures. On the other hand, a management "case" based on a qualitative description of a manager's facts and actions, where the sole aim is to "classify" the activities based on Fayol's PODC model qualifies as an exercise, not a case.

This is not, of course, to deny the pedagogical value of exercises. On the contrary, they certainly have a role to play in the management instructor's pedagogical toolbox. However, it is important to understand the differences between an exercise and a case study, particularly in terms of the teaching objectives pursued. In this regard, it often happens that authors submit "cases" to the HEC Montréal Case Centre that are, in fact, exercises.

In concrete terms, case studies in management are most often in the form of a written text (varying in length from as little as two to as many as 50 pages!). Multimedia cases combining text, audio, video, web, etc. are becoming increasingly common as the costs associated with producing quality video clips, for example, drop.

Thus, a "case" is, first and foremost, a "real-life story" related to the field of management. And, like any good story, a case must be exciting, rich, intriguing and interesting. Put even more simply, the first criterion of a good case is that it arouses the curiosity, interest and engagement of the reader – in this case, the student. A "good" case generates two effects: you want to read it to the end and you want to discuss it afterward.

Teaching case versus research case

A teaching case is not the same thing as a research case. Although the two share similarities in terms of their production, there is a major difference in the "final product" related to their respective objectives and purpose. The objective of a teaching case is to describe a management situation in a manner that allows students to acquire skills and knowledge. The objective of a research case is to describe and shed light on a "subject" of research based on a specific conceptual and theoretical framework that is integrated in the case itself. Research cases are thus often aimed at generating or supporting a research proposal or hypothesis. In this regard, the tone of the research case is one of "demonstration," whether it be the

[1] The IJCSM regularly publishes these types of cases. Visit the website at: http://web.hec.ca/revuedecas/parutions/en_cours.cfm.

demonstration of the relevance of a particular concept or theory, the demonstration of the analytical skills of the case author, etc.

On the other hand, if there is one tone that a teaching case seeks to avoid, it is that of "demonstration." Even though any description necessarily has a conceptual or theoretical grounding, the conceptual or theoretical models that could be used to comprehend the management situation described should be as discreet as possible.[1] In a teaching case, the emphasis is placed on providing as "neutral" a description as possible of the management situation, so as to closely reflect the *manner in which the managers depicted would describe the situation themselves*,[2] as well as on the "unique" character of the situation and its context. In a research case, the priority is to reveal or confirm a hypothesis or a proposal and to demonstrate the "typical" nature of the situation described in relation to a more general category of situations.

In the teaching case, the spotlight is on the management situation, on the "facts" and on the empirical material, all of which are centre stage, whereas the concepts and theories are behind the scenes, in the wings. In a research case, on the other hand, it is the ideas, hypotheses, theories and concepts that occupy centre stage, while the empirical material and the "specific case" play a supporting role in the background.

Given the importance of research in an academic career, management professors sometimes tend to submit teaching cases that in fact more closely resemble research cases.[3] For example, an author might use a corporate or management situation to show how the theory of resources can help the reader understand what happened in the case. In this case, the spotlight is on the theory of resources as opposed to the concrete situation, which serves mainly to "illustrate" this theory. The theory of resources is thus integrated into the description itself of the concrete situation. In the end, the only option students have with this type of case is to approve the "demonstration" offered; they cannot really contest the analysis (most such cases do not provide the factual elements necessary to do so), nor can they take it upon themselves to discover how the theory of resources can shed light on what happened in the case and to reflect on this, since the case authors have already done this for them.

It should be noted, however, that the empirical approach (data collection and analysis) is the same for both teaching cases and research cases. As such, there are important links to be established between qualitative research and the production of teaching cases. The field work that goes into producing a teaching case could very well be converted into "data" for research purposes.[4] Conversely, the qualitative data gathered in the context of a research project can effectively serve as the basis for the production of a teaching case. Thus, despite the basic distinction that must be made between their respective "final products," there are real synergies between teaching cases and research cases.

[1] It is in the teaching notes as opposed to the case itself that these conceptual frameworks can be presented.

[2] This is why it is relevant to include quotations from the protagonists in the case.

[3] This is one of the most frequent reasons for the refusal of cases submitted to the IJCSM.

[4] It is important to note that the rules of research ethics that govern the collection of data for research purposes require the informed consent of all participants at the time of data collection. If you are planning to use data gathered during the production of a teaching case for a future research project, it is therefore essential to inform the respondents and to ensure that the data collection complies fully with the rules of research ethics. For Canada, refer to the Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans: http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.pdf.

Different Types of Teaching Cases

There are different types of teaching cases. While not exhaustive, the following list makes important distinctions between these case categories, each of which has its own merits[1] as well as limitations.

1. Decision-making case

A decision-making case is one that concludes at the moment when one or more protagonists – most commonly a manager or company leader – must make a decision about the situation or issue described in the case. In a decision-making case, students are encouraged to put themselves in the shoes of these characters and to decide what they would do if they were in the same position.[2]

In a decision-making case, the question put to students to kick start the discussion is always of the type: "What would you do if you were in X's shoes?" One of the main advantages of a decision-making case is that it elicits the involvement and participation of students by asking them to identify with the decision maker.

2. Descriptive or analytical case

A descriptive or analytical case presents events or situations that took place in the past, including actions and decisions implemented by the actors in the case. The goal is to understand and assess the actions taken in light of the specific context described in the case.[3]

In descriptive cases, students are asked questions such as: "What do you think happened?" "How would you evaluate the measures taken by X?" "How would you explain the success/failure of this project/enterprise?"

Decision-making case versus analytical case

Many advocates of the case study method swear by decision-making cases. When there is a decision or choice to be made or a problem to be solved, students are thought to get more involved in the discussion, to provide more accurate and concrete arguments, to be more aware of the context and more action oriented. In short, the in-class discussion of a decision-making case is said to be more dynamic than in the case of an analytical case, and the learning outcomes tend to be more detailed and diversified.

While there is undoubtedly some truth in these observations (although there is a lack of research confirming them), both descriptive and analytical cases have their place in the instructor's arsenal of teaching tools. Moreover, it is entirely possible to add a decision-making aspect to most analytical cases. For example, rather than being content to ask the

[1] The types of cases listed here correspond to the different types of cases considered eligible for publication by the HEC Montréal Case Centre.

[2] For an example of a decision-making case published in the IJCSM, see the case "Tour Planning at Cirque du Soleil," by Marie-Hélène Jobin and Jean Talbot (Vol. 9, No. 1, March 2011).

[3] For an example of a descriptive case published in the IJCSM, see the case "L'approche Timpson par 'l'absence' de contrôle," by Sophie Tessier and Luis Cisneros (Vol. 10, No. 2, May 2012).

question: "What do you think of what happened?", the discussion can be taken in a more concrete direction by asking: "What would need to be done to replicate this project in another company?"

An example of how a predominantly descriptive case can be converted into a decision-making case can be found in the Musi-Blox case,[1] which describes the actions and reflections of a new project manager who is having problems moving forward on a project for the creation of music composition software. There is no decision to be made, but an assessment is required of the role of a project manager in such a context. At the end of the case, however, the author introduces an interesting shift toward decision making:

"Last week, I received an email from my manager. He had just signed a contract on the West Coast of the U.S. to design licensed learning software for French punctuation aimed at the high school market. He announced that he had a candidate in mind to head up this project. This person has a master's degree in French and a bachelor's degree in education, but virtually no experience in management. My manager has therefore asked me to use my experience to develop a project management training plan for this new hire. He wants me to assume the role of coach. I was hoping that, based on everything I just told you, you might be able to help me establish the outlines of this training plan?"

Moreover, before deciding on a decision-making case that describes the decisions and actions taken, the authors can always ask themselves whether, from a pedagogical perspective, it wouldn't be more interesting to "stop" the case before the decision or action is taken (even if it means moving the description of the decision or action into a "Part B" to which students would only have access after having "resolved" Part A, which would thereby become a decision-making case.)[2]

3. Success cases, best practice cases and showcase cases

Some descriptive cases present the success stories of firms or managers based on an account of good or best practices. These are called best practice cases. Such cases, in which the firms and individuals are most commonly clearly identified by name, represent an advantageous showcase for them.[3]

In this type of case, students can be asked questions such as: "How would you explain the success?" "What are some of the factors that led to the success?" "Is it possible to replicate this success in any other firm?"

[1] Produced by Laurent Simon, published in the IJCSM (Vol. 1, No. 3, November 2003).

[2] For an example of a case in which Part A has decision-making elements and Part B is analytical and describes what happened following the situation described in Part A, see the case "Putting on the Best Face for the Customers!" by Maurice Lemelin and Virginia Bodolica, published in the IJCSM (Vol. 5, No. 1, April 2007).

[3] For an example of a "best practice case" published in the IJCSM, see the case "Les Services d'accès Desjardins : le 'triangle du succès' d'un centre d'appels," by Jacqueline Dahan and Sylvie St-Onge (Vol. 9, No. 2, June 2011).

4. Failure cases and "Dark Side" cases

Contrary to best practice cases, other cases describe situations marked by failure[1] or offer a glimpse into the darker, less attractive or even outright unethical aspects of the management practices of certain managers or firms. The latter are referred to as "Dark Side" cases. Unless they are based on publicly available information (for example, if the case deals with an "affair" or "scandal" that has been made public, most failure cases and Dark Side cases are disguised to conceal the identity of the individuals and companies involved.[2] Indeed, with some exceptions, companies are rarely willing to see their dirty laundry aired for all to see…

When considering failure cases or Dark Side cases, students can be asked questions such as: "How do you explain this failure?" "What do you think went wrong?" "What would need to be done to prevent a similar situation from occurring?"

Showcase case versus Dark Side case

Some journals publish only undisguised cases in which the companies or individuals are clearly identified.[3] In choosing this approach, they present almost exclusively "showcase" cases depicting aspects of firm management that range from relatively neutral to outright flattering. While it is undoubtedly pedagogically relevant to have students work on cases that present good or "best" practices in management, we believe that it is very risky to focus exclusively on such cases. Failure cases and Dark Side cases are also an indispensable and extremely valuable teaching tool.

On the one hand, the cases to which students are exposed during their management training must provide a portrait that is at least minimally "representative" of the reality of the business world. However, in the real world of business, failures are at least as numerous as successes, and practices that are undistinguished, less than stellar and sometimes even unacceptable are unfortunately quite common. As such, it is useful for students to be confronted with this type of case during their training. The very credibility of the case method of teaching depends on it.

On the other hand, just as we can learn more from our failures than from our successes in real life, students can learn a great deal from cases that describe the failures, blunders, mistakes or erring ways of managers or leaders. These cases help demystify the profession of manager, making it more accessible and "human" and less intimidating, while also, crucially, generating ideas and debates on the issue of values.

[1] For an example of a "failure case" published in the IJCSM, see the case "Strategic Planning at Saint Francis de Sales Schools," by Malvina Klag, Hélène Giroux and Ann Langley (Vol. 10, No. 2, May 2012).

[2] For an example of a Dark Side case based on public documents and published in the IJCSM, see "The Dark Side of Light-Handed Regulation: Mercury Energy and the Death of Folole Muliaga," by Todd Bridgman (Vol. 9, No. 4, November 2011). For an example of a Dark Side case based on private data, see "Intolérances," by Vincent Calvez and Vanessa Duthu (Vol. 7, No. 3, September 2009).

[3] This is the case, for example, of the *Revue des cas en gestion* (http://www.revuecasgestion.com/RCG1S22009.pdf).

5. Brief cases

Some cases are deliberately short (three pages or less) and can be read in a mere five to 10 minutes.[1] Most often, these are decision-making cases. Pedagogically speaking, this type of case has several advantages, including allowing for an on-the-spot discussion with students immediately after they have read the case in class (as opposed to reading the case at home in preparation for the class). Since such cases necessarily present only a limited amount of information about the situation described, they also meet the pedagogical objectives of problem-based learning to the extent that they require students to reflect on the information that is missing from the case and on what they need to know to develop an approach to the situation.

In a brief case, the questions put to students are often the same as those for decision-making cases: "What would you do if you were in X's shoes?" Another interesting question would be: "If you had access to additional information before giving your view on the case, what would it be?" or "If you could ask one of the actors in the case a question, what would it be and who would you put it to?"

6. Multimedia cases

By combining written text, images, photos, audio and video, multimedia cases have the advantage of breaking away from the monotony of exclusively text-based cases to present "raw" data, which can include a video excerpt of a meeting, an audio recording of an interview with a leader, photos of a factory, etc. As such, these cases often succeed better than written cases in developing students' ability to select, interpret and synthesize disparate information and diverse data.

Producing a multimedia case requires more time and resources than a traditional case. In many cases, it is more difficult to update a multimedia case than a traditional one. Given the short shelf life of many teaching cases, case authors should think twice before embarking on the production of a multimedia case in order to ensure that their case does not become obsolete prematurely. Finally, despite the current popularity of all things multimedia, from a pedagogical perspective, it is not always apparent that cases of this type are systematically more interesting than traditional cases.

Steps to Producing a Case Study

The steps described in the following section apply to cases that require the collection of non-public data directly from the "respondents." For cases based on the consultation of public documents, some of the steps are different (see Table 1 below), but the general logic is the same.

[1] For an example of a brief case published in the IJCSM, see "Intolérances," by Vincent Calvez and Vanessa Duthu (Vol. 7, No. 3, September 2009).

Steps for producing a case involving first-hand data collection	**Steps for producing a case based solely on public documents**
1. Come up with the "idea" for the case and the main challenge or issue	*1. Idem*
2. Establish preliminary contact with the firm and individuals	2. Locate and browse the documents on which the case will be based
3. Determine or validate the narrative and the type of case	*3. Idem*
4. Proceed with data collection	4. Read the documents in-depth
5. Draft a preliminary version of the case	*5. Idem*
6. Obtain the authorization of the individuals concerned and produce a second version of the case	*Not applicable*
7. Test the case in class	*6. Idem*
8. Produce the final version of the case	*7. Idem*

Table 1 – Steps to producing cases based on first-hand data collection and cases based on public documents

1. Come up with the "idea" for the case and the main challenge or issue

There are two ways of finding the "idea" for a teaching case and identifying the potential theme or issue at the centre of the case. There are two main approaches to initiating the production of a case:

a) Take advantage of opportunities. Most management instructors like to keep one foot in the business world and maintain contact with various managers or businesspeople. The best cases are often the result of unexpected or unplanned opportunities that arise: for instance, a manager might tell you about a delicate situation he encountered; a student might confide in you about problems she is having with a superior; a business leader might contact you for advice on a problem involving your area of expertise; a company you know well might be facing a major strategic challenge; one of your MBA students might have talked to you about a firm he launched a few years earlier, etc. For this type of case, the initial impetus is a management situation you have caught wind of and that you judge to be sufficiently interesting, typical or unusual, revolting or admirable, but in any case complex, to warrant producing a case about it.

These types of opportunities offer at least two advantages:

(1) The author does not approach the organizational reality in question with a predefined framework in mind: faced with a complex management situation, their priority is to describe the situation as faithfully as possible and to attempt to understand it without reducing it to a "typical problem" or to the illustration of a theory or concept. In other words, cases that emerge in this way are often very rich and can be used to serve several teaching objectives.

(2) The author is already in contact with one of the individuals involved in the situation in question, giving them privileged access to certain data. This makes the task of

convincing the individuals or firms involved to participate in the production of the teaching case (cf. step 2) easier.

Of course, both of these advantages also have the potential to become disadvantages or limitations in certain cases:

(1) Authors who take advantage of an opportunity to describe a complex management situation may find themselves in a position where the "elucidation" of the situation exceeds their skills or expertise. In such a case, they could turn to one or more colleagues for assistance in producing the teaching notes. Because such cases are not undertaken with specific teaching objectives in mind, the case could ultimately very well diverge from the themes taught by the author(s). The case can therefore be used by instructors other than just the authors, although this can complicate the step involving the initial testing of the case in class (cf. step 7).

(2) The fact of having an "inside contact" who provides their "version" of the situation can sometimes have too strong an influence on how that situation is presented in the case. The author must therefore either diversify the information sources to ensure that the case is not based on a single point of view, or indicate through the writing technique used in the case itself that the situation is being presented from the perspective of this particular actor (this technique can also be very rich from a pedagogical point of view).

b) Actively seek out "cases" based on specific teaching objectives. In the second approach to finding the "idea" for a case study, the author starts with a particular pedagogical "need" and looks for an "environment" that can fulfil this need. For example:

- "In my course on mergers and acquisitions, I don't have any cases on the financial aspects of the acquisition decision. Let's try and produce a case on this theme."
- "There is much talk in the media lately about the success of company X. We should produce a case about it."

Unlike cases based on "opportunities," the main theme or the primary teaching objectives of needs-based cases are determined in advance (ex.: "understand the financial issues associated with an acquisition decision"). As with the first approach, this can represent both an advantage (data collection is more targeted, the author remains in his area of expertise, the production of teaching notes is facilitated, etc.) and a disadvantage (it can lead to "monolithic" cases that focus too narrowly on a single teaching objective, the organizational reality may be deliberately truncated or overly simplified, the predefined teaching objectives can act as blinkers, preventing the author from considering other aspects of the situation, etc.).

In addition, when producing this type of case, authors do not always have specific individuals or firms in mind. Therefore, they have to search for an appropriate setting, identify firms and contacts and convince them to participate in the production of a case focusing on them. This can make it harder to access the data required.

2. Establish preliminary contact with the firm and individuals

Once the "idea" and general theme of the case have been determined, one of the next steps is to secure the cooperation of two categories of people: (1) those who will be directly involved in the collection of data; and (2) those who have the power to authorize publication of the case. These two categories are often merged into one. For example, if the case focuses on a firm and if the data collection requires conducting interviews with the firm's leader in addition to accessing internal corporate documents, the leader will be both the interview respondent and the person authorizing publication of the case.

However, it is not always the case that respondents also have the authority to approve a case's publication. For example, if the case focuses on project management and involves observing and interviewing members of a project team within a firm, who should sign the official publication authorization? Any member of the team? All members of the team? The team leader, if there is one? The head of the firm? The director of communications and public relations?

There is no simple answer to this question.[1] It depends on several factors, including:

1) Do the respondents involved in data collection have middle- or upper-management status?

   If the answer is yes, we can assume that they are authorized to act "on behalf of their organization" and that they can personally authorize publication of the case. Otherwise, it will likely be necessary to obtain the authorization of a manager or company executive in addition to the consent of the individuals who participated as respondents.

2) Does the case deal with a theme or a delicate situation that could harm the reputation or competitiveness of the individuals or companies involved?

   If so, it is crucially important to clearly determine, jointly with the individuals and the company, the terms and conditions for the writing and distribution of the case, in particular as regards the potential anonymization and masking of data.

3) Can the names and some data be easily disguised in order to make it impossible to identify the firms or individuals, but without compromising the proposed teaching objectives?

   If the data can be easily masked without affecting the teaching objectives, it is generally recommended that this be done, as it can greatly help reassure respondents and firm leaders. However, in many management cases, it is impossible to remove all identifying elements and, in some cases, using the company's real name (although this is rarely the case for individuals) and actual data is indispensable to meeting the teaching objectives. In such cases, these conditions must be clearly established in advance with the firm and the individuals involved in order to avoid the possibility of the company changing its mind later.

[1] These questions are similar to those that apply when collecting data within a firm as part of a research project. The rules of research ethics regarding the consent of individuals and organizations to participate in research therefore also apply to participation in the production of teaching cases: http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.pdf.

Virtually all professors who regularly produce case studies have encountered this type of frustrating situation where, after investing a great deal of time and energy to produce a case, they discover that it will never be used or published because the individuals involved refuse to sign the publication authorization. It is therefore important for case authors to minimize the chances of this happening.

The first contact with the individuals or firms thus involves first confirming that there is suitable "material" present to produce a case and, second, ensuring the collaboration of potential respondents and of the person who will sign the case publication authorization.

3. Determine or validate the narrative and the type of case

Following the first contact with the firm and, often, an initial gathering of public and private documents regarding the situation to be described in the case, the author can prepare a synopsis of approximately two pages containing the following elements:

- The anticipated content of the case (What is the "story" we want to tell?);
- The type of case: decision-making or analytical, disguised or undisguised;
- The planned data collection procedure: the collection method (interviews, observation, documents, etc.), the individuals from whom data will be collected, the type of documents to which the author would like to have access, the data collection timetable, etc.

It is recommended that this synopsis be sent to the contact person in the firm for validation.

4. Collect data

Data collection for a case study is very similar to that required to produce a research case. Interviews, if applicable, must be carefully prepared, preferably recorded (with the consent of respondents) and transcribed. During the interviews or observation periods, the reflexivity of the case writer is the same as that of the researcher. While the notions of data reliability and validity apply mainly to research cases, the producer of a teaching case must nonetheless be concerned with the credibility of the data gathered, as well as with their quality, completeness, richness, etc.

The amount and scope of data required to write a "good" teaching case vary greatly. At one end of the scale, we have cases based on a single interview. At the other extreme, we have cases based on multiple interviews with many different stakeholders, site visits and observations, internal documents, etc. Cases in the latter category are not necessarily "better." It all depends on the teaching objectives targeted, on the particularities of the situation described and, finally, on the availability of data.

If we were to describe the "average" or most "typical" data collection method for the production of a good management case study, we would say that it is usually necessary to conduct several interviews and to complement them with information collected from both internal and public documents.

5. Draft a preliminary version of the case

Using the data gathered in the previous steps, a first version of the case can now be written. In this step, the following elements must be taken into account:

- ***Review the type of case during production.***
  While writing the first draft of the case, the author has the opportunity to modify the storyline or the nature of the case if needed. For example, an author may decide to turn what was initially supposed to be a decision-making case into an analytical case (or vice-versa). In other cases, the author may determine that it would be better to divide the case into several parts. Alternatively, an author may realize that the masked data contain too many identifying elements, making it very difficult to produce a convincing disguised case. And so on.
- ***Determine whether any important information is missing from the case.***
  Is the point of view of another person required? Would it be useful to add quantitative data? Generally speaking, are the data collected sufficiently rich to support the targeted teaching objectives?
- ***Don't "overdue" it.***
  Contrary to the previous point, there is often a tendency to "overdue" it by adding information that may be unnecessary. Just because the author has collected data he thinks will be useful doesn't mean he has to include it in the case. It is important to ask the following questions: Do the students need these elements for a clear understanding of the situation? Are these data necessary to help students achieve the teaching objectives established for the case?
- ***Avoid importing the analysis into the case.***
  At this stage, it is essential to ensure that the analysis or interpretation of the facts described is not surreptitiously imported into the case. During the data collection and case writing process, authors gradually develop their own comprehension and analysis of the situation, but these elements must be reserved for the teaching notes and should not interfere in the case.

6. Obtain authorization from the individuals concerned and produce a second version of the case

Once the author is satisfied with the first version, it can be sent to the persons concerned for approval, notably the person responsible for signing the publication authorization. In some cases, the respondents or person in authority may ask for changes to be made to the case or they may have comments or wish to provide new information that the author can choose to include in the case.

At this stage, it is a good idea to ask the person in charge to sign the authorization for publication of the case. Even if further modifications are made to the case at a later time, they are usually minor and do not affect the authorization (if substantial changes are made, the author can always request a new authorization based on the new version of the case).

7. Test the case in class

The first use of the case in class is a critical test and can lead to substantial changes, not only in the teaching notes, but also in the case itself. Students sometimes run into difficulty understanding an aspect of the situation that would gain from further development; at other times, they have questions regarding cultural elements that are not sufficiently explained by the author; in some cases, students may detect errors or incongruities in the quantitative data, which can "contaminate" the discussion, etc.

Testing the case in the classroom thus offers a last opportunity to go back to the questions listed in step 5 concerning the suitability of the case's narrative, its type (decision-making or analytical) and its structure. Is any information missing? Are there any sections that are not useful? Are students being unduly "steered" in one direction or another due to the interference of conceptual or theoretical elements in the case? Most importantly, the in-class testing of the case is an opportunity to validate whether or not the case "works"; in other words, does it generate interest and foster discussion?

If it is not possible to conduct a preliminary test of the case in class, it is recommended that the author have it read by a student or other individual who closely matches the profile of the students for whom the case is intended.

8. Produce the "final" version of the case

After the case has successfully passed the in-class test, the author can produce the final version. However, it should be noted that there are still several factors that can influence this final version. For example, if the case is submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal (ex.: the *International Journal of Case Studies in Management*) or in a case catalogue (ex.: that of the HEC Montréal Case Centre or Ivey Publishing), there is a good chance that further modifications will be necessary. In addition, in order to prolong the shelf life of the teaching case, it can be a good idea to update it after a few years. In short, the final version is still a work in progress…

Structure of a Teaching Case

The form and structure of teaching cases can vary widely. This variety is important, however, as students risk losing interest if they are constantly served the same types of cases course after course, even if the cases themselves are interesting. As such, without wishing to stifle the creativity of case writers, the indications below are intended as a guide to help support and enhance that creativity.

Title of the case

A "good" title has several notable characteristics:

It must be catchy, meaning that is must capture the attention or arouse the curiosity of readers, making them want to read the case. For example, titles such as "Danièle Sauvageau : l'or"

(2005);[1] "Fired Because of a $20 Loan";[2] "Quand Victor Sanschagrin découvre Wikipédia";[3] or "Diriger des électrons libres"; [4] are intriguing and pique the curiosity of the reader.

The title should not "give away" the case; in other words, it shouldn't reveal the outcome of the case or the "right" assessment of the situation and it shouldn't indicate a suitable theoretical framework to guide reflection on the case. For example, titles such as "The Bad Decisions of Mr. ABC, Manager" or "The Conflict Opposing Firm X and Organization Y: An Illustration of Stakeholder Theory" (both titles are made up) unduly influence how the reader reads and judges the case.

The advantage of using a relatively "neutral" title is that it allows other professors to use the case to shed light on elements that may be very different from what the case writer had in mind. For example, if, contrary to the case author, a professor believes that the manager ABC makes the right decisions in some respects and wants to discuss them with his students, a title such as "The Decisions of Mr. ABC, Manager" makes this possible, whereas the title "The Bad Decisions of Mr. ABC, Manager" creates unnecessary "noise." Similarly, if a professor has no intention of using stakeholder theory to explore the conflict between firm X and organization Y, it is better if this theory is not mentioned in the case title.

However, the title can be sufficiently clear to give an idea of the general theme or main issue at the centre of the case (thereby also facilitating a search by key words in the case catalogue). For example, the title: "The Future of Espoir Cafés: Balancing Human Resources and Marketing"[5] is preferable to simply "The Future of Espoir Cafés." Without going into too much detail, the reader knows right away that the case deals with human resources and marketing.

The first lines

It is a well-known fact that the fate of a case is determined in the first lines: will it be read, or, in the case of students who are "forced" to read it to the end, will they read it with pleasure and interest, or with reluctance?

The first lines (comprising the first paragraph or, if they are short, the first two or three paragraphs) should not be a summary of the case. Rather, their purpose is to "set the table" by giving the readers a general idea of what the case is about and what is expected of them. If it is a decision-making case, the first paragraph should give a clear indication of the type of decision required as well as of the decision maker. If it is an analytical case, the first paragraph provides information on the type of events that readers will be called upon to analyze. If there is a "twist" to the case, it should not be revealed in order to keep an element of surprise regarding the outcome. This is also where a broad outline of the case context should be given, with information on the type of firm, area of activity, etc.

[1] Case produced by Laurence Prud'Homme and Laurent Lapierre, (IJCSM, Vol. 4, No. 5, Dec. 2006).

[2] Case produced by Maurice Lemelin and Virginia Bodolica, (IJCSM, Vol. 5, No. 3, Dec. 2007).

[3] Case produced by Yves-Marie Abraham, Olivier Irrmann and Antoine Roy-Larouche, (IJCSM, Vol. 5, No. 3, Dec. 2007).

[4] Case produced by Chantale Mailhot and Anne Mesny, (IJCSM, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2008).

[5] Case produced by Normand Turgeon, Sara Loudyi and Michel Tremblay, (IJCSM, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2012).

The following text provides what we consider to be a "good" start to a decision-making case.[1]

> – Where?
>
> – Istanbul.
>
> – Which show?
>
> – I don't know. We have to discuss it. The promoters behind the proposals we received suggested names of shows, but I believe that the choice of show is open for discussion.
>
> Louise Murray, Vice-President, Tour Planning and Partnerships at Cirque du Soleil, considers the information given to her by Ines Lenzi, the Director of Partnership Management, before answering: "Let me think about it a little longer. It seems like an interesting project, but we're not very familiar with the region. I'm going to take a close look at the proposals you've given me and we'll talk about it again after the Christmas holidays. By the way, Happy New Year in 2009! Ciao!" She hangs up the phone, deep in thought. Cirque du Soleil regularly receives unsolicited business proposals. But receiving two serious proposals for the same city one right after the other could be interpreted as a strong signal.

Main body of the text

We cannot be too specific about what should go into the main body of the case, as it is this part of the document that varies the most from one case to another. However, there are a few elements that authors should keep in mind:

- **The "macrostructure" of the text,** that is, its division, where applicable, into clearly identified and subtitled sections. These subtitles are important "signposts," but, as with the title of the case, the author must be careful not to give too many indications to the reader.
- **Figures, tables and images.** Sometimes it makes sense to include tables, figures or images in a case. Here again, the important thing is to strike the right balance and to consider the teaching objectives. How far does the author want to go in "facilitating" the reading of the case and structuring the information provided?
- **Quantitative data.** Even cases that deal with "soft" management issues can benefit from a certain amount of numerical data. However, unless one of the teaching objectives is for students to learn how to select relevant figures out of a large mass of information, it is important not to bombard readers with quantified data that may be of limited use.
- **Quoting protagonists.** If the case is based on interviews, it is usually a very good idea to quote the protagonists interviewed. In fact, some cases are based exclusively on quotations, without the presence of a "narrative" to frame them.

Ultimately, just as if he were telling a story, the author must give careful attention to the manner in which the case unfolds, its fluidity and the pace it sets for the reader. In some cases, a section can have the effect of disrupting the plot or causing the reader to lose interest. In such cases, the author should consider either moving these sections to the exhibits, shortening them,

[1] Excerpt from the case "Tour Planning at Cirque du Soleil," by Marie-Hélène Jobin and Jean Talbot, (IJCSM, Vol. 9, No. 1, March 2011).

redistributing them throughout the case, converting them into a diagram or table… or simply suppressing them.

The final paragraph

The last paragraph, like the first, is crucially important in that it determines the other half of the "fate" of the case; that is, whether or not it triggers reflection and discussion. Even descriptive cases frequently conclude with one or several questions. However, it is important to distinguish these questions from those the author wants to put to students, which belong in the teaching notes rather than the case itself. The reason, here again, is to preserve the versatility of the case, allowing it to be used for different purposes. Depending on the instructor, the questions asked of students in relation to the same case can be very different.

The questions or preoccupations that are often placed at the end of a case are the same as those facing the protagonists themselves. Here are two examples of a final paragraph, the first concerning a decision-making case, and the second a descriptive case:

(Decision-making case)

"Upon assuming his new role, Martin Valiquette told himself that Liberté had undeniable advantages that would enable it to overcome the challenges of the sector. He was already planning his next meeting with Roger Dickhout to present Liberté's future strategic directions. Following his reflection on the future of Liberté products, he still had several questions on his mind: Should he include sustainable development in this strategy? If so, what would the organizational consequences be? Would it be sufficiently profitable to do so? And, how would Roger Dickhout react to this idea?"[1]

(Descriptive case)

"On a December afternoon, faced with all these concerns and with the opposition triggered by his project, the mayor, disappointed but not discouraged, is contemplating what he should do: Abandon the project? Revise it and submit a new version of the "New Deal," as several members of his municipal team were recommending? Or answer the call from federal Liberals to enter politics at the federal level (an opportunity offered by the upcoming federal election)? Before answering these questions, as well as several others he can think of, Glen Murray wants to understand: understand what it was about the "New Deal" that didn't work, understand what he could have done to ensure that the project was accepted by the population of Winnipeg, and, finally, understand the lessons to be drawn from this experience."[2]

Exhibits

If the author chooses to include exhibits, they must be relevant and useful. Each exhibit must be referenced in the main body of the text. Given the technological tools available today, with some exceptions, there is often no need to present screen shots of Web pages or entire articles in the exhibits: the tendency now is to simply add a reference to these pages or articles.

[1] Translated excerpt from the case "La réorientation stratégique de Liberté vers le développement durable (A)," by Florence Leport and Serge Poisson-de Haro (IJCSM, Vol. 7, No. 4, Dec. 2009)

[2] Translated excerpt from the case "La Nouvelle Donne du maire Murray : les péripéties d'un changement radical à la Ville de Winnipeg," by Jacob Atangana-Abé (IJCSM, Vol. 8, No. 1, February 2010).

Finally, from two-page cases to 50-page cases, from storytelling to simulations, from neutral narration to confessional writing in the first person, from monologues to multiple voices – there is a vast variety of forms teaching cases can take, and it is important to nurture this diversity.

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