

This brief contains two case analysis approaches: (I) a general approach and, (II) an approach that focuses on the strategic aspects of case analysis.

OPTION I: A General Approach to Case Analysis

What is a Case Study?

A case study is a description of an actual administrative situation involving a decision to be made or a problem to be solved. It can be a real situation that actually happened just as described, or may include portions that have been disguised for reasons of privacy. Most case studies are written in such a way that the reader takes the place of the manager whose responsibility is to make decisions to help solve the problem. In almost all case studies, a decision must be made, although that decision might simply be to leave the situation as it is and do nothing.

The Case Method as a Learning Tool

The *case method of analysis* is a learning tool in which students and instructors participate in direct discussion of case studies, as opposed to the lecture method, where the instructor speaks and students listen and take notes. In the case method, students teach themselves, with the instructor being an active guide, rather than just a talking head delivering content. The focus is on students learning through their joint, co-operative effort.

Assigned cases are first prepared by students, and this preparation forms the basis for class discussion under the direction of the instructor. Students learn, often unconsciously, how to evaluate a problem, how to make decisions, and how to orally argue a point of view. Using this method, they also learn how to think in terms of the problems faced by an administrator. In courses that use the case method extensively, a significant part of the student's evaluation may rest with classroom participation in case discussions, with another substantial portion resting on written case analyses. For these reasons, using the case method tends to be very intensive for both students and instructor.

How to do a Case Study

While there is no one definitive "Case Method" or approach, there are common steps that most approaches recommend be followed in tackling a case study. It is inevitable that different instructors will tell you to do things differently, this is part of life and will also be part of working for others. This variety is beneficial since it will show you different ways of approaching decision making. What follows is intended to be a rather general approach, portions of which have been taken from an excellent book entitled, *Learning with Cases*, by Erskine, Leenders, & Mauffette-Leenders, published by the Richard Ivey School of Business, The University of Western Ontario, 1997.