# Case Studies

The preparation of the cases in this course is different than the cases you have written in the past. These will require substantial investigation into case company’s strategies, competitive positions and actions, problems being faced, the company financials, ratios and trends. The Schedule of Activities allows for two weeks preparing each case. The case studies are about a real company's current position in the industry, the external competitive environment, the current strategies being used, and recommendations for strategies the company should use going forward. The cases should identify the major problem faced by the company, using the strategic management tools highlighted in the text, a quantitative analysis, generate realistic solutions, evaluate and select one, and then provide recommendations and the timeline to implement your recommendations. You are working to understand the company's current strategy and future direction that offers a solution to the problem of meeting the company’s shareholder requirements. Again, remember that you are fulfilling the requirements of the rubric for each of these cases.

In the BSG you have a set of prescribed goals to attain and a set of reports issued weekly to assist you in understanding how your company is doing relative to the competition and giving you an opportunity to revise your operational plans for the next period. However, in the three cases you have to look at a company’s performance over the past few years and understand how their performance is changing and identify underlying problems. You are to identify trends in performance, problem areas, and how the company is performing using all of the tools that you have learned throughout your MBA program. Remember that you are working to meet or exceed the shareholder expectations.

The perspective for your report analysis should be directed to the company’s Board of Director’s (BoD). Remember that the BoD is familiar with the company’s history, its management structure and the strategies deployed in the past. Recycling old history about the formation of the company, its previous management, management succession or problems will not be looked upon favorably. Remember that your case study must be brought up to date with the most current 10K report or other financial information. Use Web financial resources to get at the critical issues and report on them. Remember that in business situations do not come with a set of questions. The questions sometimes have to be generated and then researched to find solutions to those questions. Success in the cases is important to your final grade in that the three cases constitute 35% of your course grade.

Case Preparation:

Remember, the cases are graded per the rubric. The BoD would want your recommendations with the proper support. Any analysis details should be covered in an appendix. Do not go to the Internet to find, for example, a SWOT analysis and use it for your case. Do your own research and develop your own strategic analysis.

In doing your cases you will need a minimum of five references outside the Case material from Thompson. The Thompson information is to get you started. (Do not use just the data from the case.) One of the references must be the company’s latest 10K report. Wikipedia and QuickMBA type sources do not count. Use current business websites to find out about recent developments. Certainly do not use websites that develop term papers or do strategy analysis on these cases and publish them. This could lead to charges of plagiarism and the associated consequences.

The case study analysis allows you to apply your knowledge to the real world. Your goal is to identify the major problem confronting the subject company and provide a strategic solution for the problem. Each of the companies that you will be studying faces different situations in the marketplace. Your analysis of the case using strategic management tools and tools that you have learned in other classes will allow you to interpret what is going on in the companies in the marketplace. To fully understand the case you will need to collect data and interpret it. You must also isolate the critical issues that the company faces. Remember that in the words of Lord Kelvin, "that anything that cannot be expressed in numbers represents knowledge that is of a poor and uncertain kind." You will have to get into the numbers, ratios, annual performance change, etc.

After identifying the critical issues you can generate alternatives to address the company's competitive situation. Evaluating these alternatives allows an organization to select one course of action. With a course of action defined the strategic manager can then provide a plan for implementation this is what you are to do on the case studies. Always refer to the rubric for the critical points to cover. The format for the case studies should be as follows.

In addition to the APA cover page, you need a one page, single spaced executive summary for the case as noted below. This one-page report must use headings and subheadings s indicated in the following format to identify the critical issues. Begin with your understanding of the situation in a problem statement. Follow this with a concise presentation of your analysis and the alternatives you see. Recommend one course of action and support that recommendation with facts and other information, such as competitor’s moves. The last item is presents a plan for implementation. After the one-page summary you proceed with the body of your presentation. The summary page should encapsulate your understanding to the problems facing the company, a brief summary of the strategic analysis, financial analysis, the alternatives considered and a single recommendation with an implementation plan.

After the executive summary page, you are to use standard APA formatting and a 5 to 6 page expansion upon the points you have made in the executive summary. Tables, charts, graphs, etc. are to be put in the appendix and referenced from the body of your paper. Deductions will be taken for papers where the body is longer than six pages. Remember, in management you must get your thoughts across quickly if you expect your work to be read. Long reports generally wind up in a stack awaiting reading at some future date (which never comes).

Case Study Report Format:

Your report must include:

I. **Cover page** (1 page in length). It will present the name of the case and the author(s) of the report.

II. Executive Summary (1 page in length).

The Executive Summary is a concise overview of the report. The Case Study Executive Summary and Report should be written from the *perspective of an outside consultant, writing to the Board of Directors of the firm*. The essential points of the report and must have the following sections:

1. Problem Statement: State the main problem facing the firm (or industry) in one, succinct sentence.
2. Analysis: Summarize the main findings of your analysis. You may use bullet points, bold, italics – any means to convey and highlight the key factors you have determined based on your analysis. Don’t repeat items from the body of your report like the SWOT. Summarize the major issues.
3. Alternatives: State briefly (one sentence or a bullet point each) 2 or 3 alternative courses of action that could be implemented
4. Recommendation: Choose one course of action and support your choice.
5. Implementation: Briefly (2 or 3 sentences) present how the plan would be implemented. This tests the viability of the choice. For example, your plan would demonstrate that the company has the people, financial resources and time to implement your recommendation.

These bullets should appear in your paper. The following is a precise format for the Case Executive Summary and Case Studies.

FORMATTING for Executive Summary:

* Single-space
* One inch all margins
* Use bullet points, lists, or other means to convey information briefly. Further explanation can be found in the main body of the report.
* Use headings and subheadings to organize the material in an easy to read and understandable manner that highlights the essential points of your analysis.
* Do not include a summary or overview of the firm in your report. The Board of Directors are knowledgeable and need no background presented.

The body of your paper should be in standard APA format, with appropriate references, but not exceeding six pages.

Remember that cases are graded per the rubric.