BBS 321: Cases in Business Sustainability

Session 4: Great Background Description & Problem Identification

What makes a great **Background** Description?

It provides an in-depth understanding of the situation:

- **Macro Environment:** Consumer Megatrends; Technology; Political, Economic & Legal factors that may affect the performance of the company.
- **Micro Environment: Competitors, Suppliers, Market drivers...**
- **Consumer profiles**: demographics, likes & wants,...

What is happening around: Opportunities & Threats

What makes a great **Background** Description?

It provides a in-depth understanding of the company:

- History and development (Products, Markets, Metrics)
- Business model & competitive positioning → Unique Proposition?
- Values, vision, past & current strategies
- Key players (people) involved
- Constraints (resources, financials, etc.)

Strengths & Weaknesses

Relevant data compilation and data presentation

All data that is needed to **understand and interpret the situation** should be incorporated in the **case Background or the problem identification**:

- **Use graphs, charts**, and/or tables to illustrate complex
Concepts
- Describe your data

All data that might be useful to **analyze the case in-depth** should appear in the **Appendix**:
- Financial statements
- Internal statistics (production, quality, turnover, etc.)
- External statistics (market data, industry, etc.)
- Product/Service information
- Etc.

Relevant data compilation and data presentation

But…

Make sure you **JUST** include

RELEVANT INFORMATION

What makes a great **Background** Description?

It profoundly describes and connects the circumstances that are relevant to interpret the situation (the case), i. e.:

- – Corporate values
- – Corporate resources
- – Market Dynamics
- – Factors influencing management decisions

It shapes the **cohesive story** (leads directly to the Problem - Identification section).

What embraces the **Problem Identification**?

A detailed description of what happened:
- What is the situation about…
- What caused it…
- Who was involved…
- Why is it relevant (present scope)…
- How will it affect the company (future scope)…

It incorporates data needed to analyze the situation, e.g.:
- Organizational charts (reporting structures)
- Process charts (work flows)
- Financials (capital budgets, cost structures, etc.)
- Potential damage (punitive, environmental, financial, etc.)

It creates a sense of urgency!