**Case Write-Ups**

*Purpose and Guidelines*

Case write-ups are required for every case discussed in this class. Each will focus on a broad range of marketing problems related to topics we will discuss in class, as well as many that you may experience in your careers. Remember that you are being assessed on the quality of the answers that you provide to questions asked during class. Performing these quick case write-ups will help you to properly prepare. Some of the case studies you perform will be collected for a grade. Others may not be. Be ready! Each write-up is ***due in Canvas (in “Assignments,” and numbered) by the deadline posted in the syllabus***. **Late assignments will NOT be accepted**. The requirements for the write-up are listed below.

*Instructions*

The key to performing a good case write-up is to ground your analyses and recommendations on sound strategic principles: take what you learned from the readings and apply it to the analysis of the case. You must be able to justify your position, not just recommend a position. Cases should be no more than 1 page, single-spaced, 12pt font, 1 inch margins. In most organizations, top management has a very short attention span. It is critical to for you to be able to make a coherent argument to your boss within 1 page for your ideas to get attention.

Your write-up is to be broken into three distinct parts (please provide headings for each part):

1. Problem summary (1-2 concise sentences summarizing problem)

2. Analysis of problem (Expand upon multiple facets of problem)

3. Recommendations (Build upon any data analysis you may need to do to outline feasible recommendations, using facts from the case.)

*Assessment*

Among the critical aspects that you will be assess on are the quality and thoroughness of your review and recommendations, the clarity of your writing. Consider two important points emphasized by our BizComm specialists:

1.) Your job as a writer is to deliver the most accurate information with the least amount of work required on the reader's part (write in plain English).

2) Don't make your reader ask, "Why are you telling me this?" (Don't burden the reader with information he or she doesn't want or need).

Remember to use data, where necessary, to *support your recommendations*. “Pie in the sky” recommendations are not tolerated. Clear and concise articulation of your thoughts is paramount. Use professional tone in your writing (No “I, me, and my”)

*Examples*

Examples of both good and poor case write-ups appear on the pages that follow. Please note my comments in the margins, as well as the structure/formatting used, proper grammar, and the general quality of the write-up. In the good example, statements are backed up with facts.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rubric for Case Analysis** | | | | |
| **Criteria** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Needs Improvement** | **Unacceptable** |
| **1. Identification of the Main Problem(s)**  **25%** | Clearly identifies the main problem(s), demonstrating ability to prioritize problems. Reports this in a concise (1-2 sentence) manner | Problem identification is clear, but prioritization is not. Reporting is longer than necessary. | Problem identification and prioritization are not clear. Reporting is longer than necessary, or incomplete. | Problem identification and prioritization are not clear or misidentified. Reporting is longer than necessary, or incomplete. Section is missing entirely. |
| **2. Identification and Analysis of Complexities**  **25%** | Clearly identifies several complexities of the main problem(s). The analysis appropriately incorporates strategic marketing management concepts and financial analysis. | Identifies complexities of the main problem(s). Some statements are unsupported by analysis/ calculations. Assumptions are stated, but some are not justified. | The list of complexities is incomplete or unclear in some aspects, and includes items that are not reasonably linked to the problems and issues. Analysis is too narrow and does not identify a broad strategic direction. Some analysis is included, but it is not very detailed. Many statements are not supported by analysis/calculations. Most of the stated assumptions are not justified. | Either the list of complexities is missing or the list is very incomplete or there is no linkage of the alternative actions to the problems/issues. None of the alternatives identifies a broad strategic direction. Shows lack of thorough consideration. Analysis is trivial or missing, lacking any depth. |
| **3. Recommendations**  **25%** | A clear action plan is given, logically derived from complexity analysis, that provides optimal solution for identified problems/issues and that further makes sense; the recommendation is based on only one of the strategic alternative actions. Assumptions, caveats, ongoing considerations concerning recommendation are provided. The likely benefits/disadvantages of each action are clearly identified and supported by the analysis. | An action plan is given, which is mostly, but not completely, logically derived from alternative analysis. There may be a better solution to the problems/issues than the one recommended. Most, but not all, assumptions, caveats, and ongoing considerations are provided. Most, but not all, benefits/disadvantages are clearly identified and supported by the analysis. | A solution is recommended, but logical derivation from analysis is unclear, and there is clearly a better optimal solution. The recommendation is based on more than one alternative action. No identification of assumptions, caveats, or considerations that might affect the recommendation is provided. Several benefits/ disadvantages are missing and/or not clearly identified or unsupported by the analysis. | A solution is recommended, but it is not derived from the alternative analysis at all; or the recommended solution is clearly not viable; or the recommended solution does not address the problems/issues; or there is no recommended solution. No assumptions are stated (and are needed). Likely benefits/disadvantages are not provided at all or are unsupported by the analysis. |
| **4. Organization, Grammar, Spelling, and Formatting**  **25%** | Written work is well organized and easy to understand. There is a brief introduction. Sections of case analysis are marked with appropriate headings. The work has been thoroughly spell-checked and proofread. There are none to almost no grammatical or spelling errors. There are no formatting errors. | The organization is generally good. There is a brief introduction and section headings. But some sections seem out of place or mislabeled, diminishing the ease with which the case reads and is understood.  There are a few spelling and grammatical errors. There are one to three formatting errors. | The organization is unclear; headings are missing. The introduction is not succinct. There is more than one spelling, grammatical, and/or formatting errors. | The case analysis is disorganized to the extent that it prevents understanding of content. There are no headings. There is no introduction. There are frequent misspelled words, serious grammatical errors, and formatting errors, indicating that time was not taken to spell-check and proofread the report. |

*Example of an Excellent Case Write-up:*

**Anonymous Company**

**Problem Summary:**

Anonymous Company is trying to grow revenues to $20 million by the end of 2001 to obtain the highest valuation of the firm. To do so, they are deciding to either expand existing products to supermarkets or to introduce new products to natural food stores.

**Analysis of the Problem:**

There are many advantages and disadvantages to consider when deciding between the three options available to the Senior Management Team.

Option 1: Expand 6 SKUs of the 8-oz. product line into one or two selected supermarket channel regions.

* Benefits: Product has the largest dollar and unit share, other yogurt brands have successfully expanded their distribution to the supermarket channel with a scope of earning 200% in 2 years, and the 8-oz. product line has an increasing unit volume growth (20%).
* Drawbacks: Slotting expenses would be higher ($10,000 per SKU per channel). It incurs higher risk as the competition for 8-oz products is fiercer. It would require quarterly trade promotions and an increased marketing budget. In addition, there would be a need for more funds to be allocated to sales personnel and brokerage fees.

Option 2: Expand 4 SKUs of the 32-oz. size nationally.

* Benefits: Although the product is sold less, they generate a higher profit margin (43.6%). It has less competition and has a 45% market share in the natural foods channel. Promotion expenses along with the marketing expenses would be lower.
* Drawbacks: Slotting expenses would be higher ($10,000 per SKU per channel). New users would be less likely to enter the brand through a multi-use size. Also, the sales team would have to be extended and may also be unable to achieve full national distribution.

Option 3: Introduce 2 SKUs of a children’s multi-pack into the Natural Foods channel.

* Benefits: Pre-existing strong relationships with natural foods channel’s retailers. Sales team is capable and confident in extending to current channels. Sales and marketing expenses would be lower. It has the possibility of yielding the strongest profit contribution. Natural foods channel will have an annual growth of 20% compared to 3% in the supermarket channel.
* Drawbacks: R&D and Operations would have to develop the product, which might take some time. Although Natural Foods channel is increasing at 20% per year, it only holds 3% of the market share for yogurt while supermarkets hold 97%.

**Recommendations:**

Senior Management should pursue Option 3:

* Introduce 2 SKUs of children’s multi-pack to Natural Foods channels. Package type and size were the top priority to customers when purchasing yogurt. Introducing a multi-pack would attract more customers to the brand and increase sales.
* Natural Foods channels are growing at a 20% yearly rate compared to 3% for supermarkets and given that children’s multipacks dollar sales are increasing at a faster rate than the 8-oz. and 32-oz. cups in supermarkets, it is safe to assume the same for Natural Foods channels.
* Riley did not believe that Anonymous Company had the necessary resources required to sell effectively to supermarkets.
* Current anticipated incremental retail unit sales is 1.8M units for Natural Foods channels. Profit that could be made = [($3.35\*37.6%)\*1.8M units] = $2,267,280.
* In exhibit 1, it is shown that gross profits are equivalent to 37% of revenues. Thus, the yearly increase in revenues is equal to: $2,267,280 / .37 = $6,127,784.

The reasons for not choosing options 1 and 2 are as follows:

* Option 1: Introducing 6 SKU’s of 8-oz. cups in two regions incurs a huge cost during the first year due to high slotting expenses [6 (SKU’s \* 20 (stores in Northeast and West) \* 10,000(cost per SKU per store)] = $1.2 million. The first-year gain including all expenditures is as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 8-oz cups | Price | Cost to produce | Distributor  Margin | Retailer  Margin | Broker Margin | Total Margin | Profit per Product |
| Supermarkets | .74 | .31 | 15% | 27% | 4% | 46% | $.2322 |

Gain for 35M units – (Advertising, SG&A, sales staff, marketing personnel and slotting)

6 8-oz products in two regions= 0.2322\*35million - (1.2M\*2+320,000+200,000+120,000+1.2M)

=$3,887,000.

* Option 2: The market share for 32-oz. cups is the smallest and only has a 2% change in dollar sales from the previous year. There are also doubts that users will enter the brand via a multi-use size. In addition, slotting expenses would be very high as they would have to pay $10,000 per SKU for each of the 64 stores for four products, resulting in $2,560,000 in slotting costs.
* Lastly, CEO Barry Landers valued his current relationships with his distribution partners. Going with option 1 or 2 is not only less profitable and more risky, but could also potentially ruin the relationships they have built with Natural Foods channels.

Anonymous Company is nearly two years from having to achieve its $20 million revenue mark. Option 3 allows them to obtain revenues of $13M + $6,127,784 \* 2 = $25,255,568, which is beyond the revenue mark. Thus, Christine should pursue introducing 2 SKUs of a children’s multi-pack into the Natural Foods channel.

General Remarks about this Write-up:

Note that this student did a very thorough job with their analysis and recommendation. Frequently, the main problem can be separated into sub-problems. Categorizing these will help you to prioritize your recommendations. So, a different approach might be to simply label these sub-problems based upon their themes, rather than the “Option 1,” “Option 2,” etc. approach taken by this student. For example, if the sub-problem is related to branding, say so. Make sure that your analysis maps to your recommendations.

*Example of a Reasonable Case Write-up:*

**The Upstart’s Assault Case**

**Problem Summary:**

Meridicom has to decide on how to react to TelZip’s offer of free broadband service to new business customers who were willing to leave their current provider and enter into a long-term contract with TelZip. Meridicom needs to proceed very carefully because TelZip’s bold move may be a “game changer” within the telecommunications industry.

**Analysis of Problem:**

There are 5 aspects of Meridicom that need to be understood and considered carefully before making a decision regarding the strategy that needs to be implemented to counter TelZip’s offer.

* Meridicom is separated in 3 independent divisions: Landline, mobile, and broadband. Each division operates independently. Meridicom customers receive a different bill per service, which can be confusing. Also, the fact that the 3 divisions operate independently does not contribute to minimizing Meridicom’s total operational costs.
* The landlines division represents 70% of the company’s revenues, and Meridicom has an 85% market share in the landlines market. This means that it is important that this division does not lose customers.
* Meridicom has a 60% market share in the broadband market, and the broadband division represents 25% of the company’s revenues. Offering broadband service for free would negatively affect Meridicom’s revenues and would make the broadband division operate at total loss.
* Meridicom’s major business customers complain about the company’s services being expensive.
* TelZip has a much larger mobile phone market share than Meridicom’s 5% market share.

Management at Meridicom needs to understand that whatever strategy they implement will have an important impact on the telecommunications market distribution.

**Recommendations:**

I have 3 recommendations for Meridicom’s management:

* Quickly develop and implement a strategy to minimize the operational costs, and send individual bills to their business customers instead of one different bill per service. This would decrease the company’s costs and eliminate confusions that customers may have.
* Offer free broadband to their customers because TelZip’s move is a “game changer”. Customers will be expecting to get broadband service for free or change providers.
* Increase prices of the landlines service by 5%. This is the reason why: Offering free broadband would help Meridicom acquire a larger market share in the landlines market, which would increase their revenues and partially cover the losses resulting from offering broadband for free. The 5% price increase in the landlines service is relatively low, and it is very likely that it will not be noticed because it would happen at the same time as the free broadband.

My remarks to this Student on the Write-up:

Remember to use professional tone in your writing. No “I, me, and my” references. Go ahead and categorize your analysis and recommendations.

*Example of a Poor Case Write-up:*

Alegre Hotels

Problem: The problem with this case was that Alegre Hotels just opened up a brand new flagship hotel at Palma Cay and is struggling with filling the rooms at the peak of the tourist season.

Analysis: Beatriz Soto proposed that Alegre pay her $700,000 so that she can create a campaign focused towards generating more revenue and bringing more customers to the hotel. The company is struggling to accept her request because they run their hotels individually of one another. Individual hotel managers are outraged because they feel that they could use the money that Beatriz is asking for better opportunities but the company feels that they need to push their new hotel as much as possible. It seems as if Alegre Hotels is suffering from an internal calamity due to its decentralized business structure and lack of uniform brand recognition.

Recommendations: I would recommend that Alegre take the approach of Best Western when trying to create a brand throughout the company. The Best Western model sticks to one initiative that exudes quality and convenience at affordable rates. Alegre should brand itself amongst its different categories because each entity is so distinct from the other. The city hotels should be branded the same as other city hotels and the resorts should be branded just like other resorts but the key to all of them is to have one common identity which is luxury and style. As far as giving Beatriz the money for her campaign my suggestion would be to closely supervise her campaign and to force her to model it off of the entire brand as a whole. The reason that she needs to brand with a companywide focus is because the company needs to maximize revenue across the board and it can essentially fund two different initiatives for the price of one with Beatriz’s campaign. The company needs to develop a rewards program because several other competitors already do that and they have seen great success in offering them. By offering rewards to customers they can drive customers back into the hotels time and time again. Independence between individual hotels is essential in achieving success amongst the brand because individual hotels run and operate in specific ways from one another and help to create a unique brand for the company as a whole. By going back to the Best Western model Alegre needs to be known for its ideals rather than the look of all of its hotels.

My remarks to this Student on the Write-up:

A few comments about your work this week, and a general situation report:

Some of your ideas are good. However, they are overshadowed by problems, the likes of which we have been discussing since the very first submission. I am concerned, as the submissions from your contemporaries are now much improved, but much of your work is not on the same level. There are flashes of wisdom, but also, thoughts that meander.

I don’t like repeating myself, but please go back and review the formatting guidelines. You are not writing a mystery novel. Your audience should be able to quickly assess your thoughts. This becomes difficult if your thoughts are not organized. Furthermore, poor writing/grammar make things challenging for your reader. Also, try reading your submissions out loud. This is something I practice myself. While reading aloud, the places where you pause are generally where commas would go. If you need further help with writing, please see the writing resource center at our library.

As far as your class discussion, the first half of today’s class was great. Afterwards, you didn’t assert yourself into the conversation, as much. Speak up. You have great ideas. I want to hear them, and your contemporaries deserve to, as well. This discussion is critical to the success of your studies.

I hope that you understand that these comments aren’t intended to be overly critical. I simply want to see you in the best position to achieve what I know you are capable of. Find the fire. Let me know if I can help.