Written Case Analysis Guidelines

Overview

The case analysis method is frequently used in various business schools. It offers various benefits to students by providing real life scenarios and illustrating the complications of marketing strategy decisions. It gives students an opportunity to apply the conceptual knowledge learned throughout the course and understand that the marketing decisions are not made in a vacuum but in an environment where several factors are not necessarily under the control of the decision maker.

Harvard Business School Cases

The Harvard Business School cases are well known and frequently used by scholars across the world. Four specific cases are selected for this advertising and promotion course. You need to read each of these cases thoroughly and perhaps more than once in order to understand the issues faced and solutions need to be offered. Each case is unique and there is no single or best method to tackle the issues presented in these cases. Multiple solutions could be supported but what is important is how you analyze the case and offer solutions that are backed by the conceptual knowledge learned in this course.

Guidelines

Although there is no single best solution, we suggest that you analyze the case using the following guidelines to provide an in-depth analysis of your evaluation of the case. A rubric will be used to assess the quality of your analysis in each area.

Cover Page

Make sure to include a cover page that contains the title of the case, your name and the date it was written.

(Brief) Introduction

Your case analysis should have a brief introduction section, no more than a paragraph or two. After thoroughly reading the case, briefly summarize pertinent information provided in the case (a synopsis of the relevant information). Do not just repeat the information but rather summarize it.

Situational Assessment (SWOT ANALYSIS)

After thoroughly reading the case, several times if needed, try to get a good feel for what is going on in the case. Who are the major players? What types of information are given to you? Go back and read the case carefully again and pay particular attention to the available facts, figures, and diagrams. Do not confuse the symptoms with the underlying problems. Case writers will often flag important issues by emphasizing them (i.e., italics, headings, or questions at the end of the case).

In this section, you need to develop a synopsis and evaluation of the current situation. When conducting a [SWOT analysis HYPERLINK "https://www.smartdraw.com/swot-analysis/" (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.](https://www.smartdraw.com/swot-analysis/), try to emphasize your analysis, diagnosis, synthesis, and interpretation of the situation but do not simply restate information given in the case. Assess relevant environmental information, market, and competitors. What are the firm's objectives? Are they financially sound? Provide quantitative assessments, if applicable. What are firm's strengths and weaknesses? What are the opportunities and threats? Do they have any core competencies? Are the assumptions and opinions held by management realistic?

Identify Issues/Problems

When identifying the issues/problems specific to the case, do not mix-up the symptoms with underlying problems. Put yourself in the shoes of the decision makers in the case. What are the critical issues? Does one problem stand out as primary, with other problems secondary or contingent upon it? Establish a time dimension to the problems; which problems require immediate action and which are long term or strategic in nature? What critical assumptions are being made by the decision makers in the case, and how do these assumptions influence their selected strategies? Try to state the problems to identify:

* who must take action,
* why action must be taken, and
* when action should be taken.

Remember, problems are the causes and symptoms are effects. For instance, sales decline may be the result of low sales force morale and high turnover but these might be due to the other organizational factors. You need to focus on the cause rather than the symptoms.

Identify/Evaluate Alternative Courses of Actions

Prepare three feasible strategic alternatives that are available for the decision makers. Do not simply use “straw-man” alternatives (which are patently unfeasible or undesirable). In your analysis, develop well-reasoned responses, which could solve the problems and critically evaluate them. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative you have listed and then refine your list. Are they feasible given the various constraints? How does the alternative address the issues you have identified in the previous step? Make sure to support each alternative by evaluating its pros and cons.

Recommended Course of Action or Strategy

Present your recommend course of action or strategy in detail to solve the issues faced by the company. State the main reasons for your choice and back up your arguments with the conceptual knowledge learned in the course. Incorporate your business knowledge on the situation and use financial analysis, accounting techniques, marketing methods, economics, and human behavior in your analysis. Put theory to work in your paper by using concepts from the readings and lectures to support your recommendation. Be specific in your recommendation and address the issue of who should do what, with which resources, and when. You must validate your reasoning for your selected course of action. Also, outline the major components of the chosen course of action and elaborate on why it is appropriate to the problem. Consider both short and long-term goals when suggesting strategies. How will your recommendation be implemented? Circle back through the case to identify possible points of inconsistency between your recommendation and case facts. What potential problems might crop up? How will internal constituencies (e.g., management, employees) and external constituencies (e.g., competitors, stockholders) react, and how will you handle their responses? What assumptions have you made in developing your recommendation?