Writing a case study

Quick study guide

There are two approaches to case studies. Always check with your lecturer to confirm which type is required!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The analytical approach</th>
<th>The problem-oriented method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The case study is examined in order to try and understand what has happened and why. It is not necessary to identify problems or suggest solutions.</td>
<td>The case study is analysed to identify the major problems that exist and to suggest solutions to these problems. We will focus on this approach.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The problem-oriented method

A successful case study analyses a real-life situation where existing problems need to be solved. There are six steps in the problem-oriented method.

- The Case is the “real life” situation.
- The Case Study is the analysis of this situation.

- Relate the theory to a practical situation. For example, apply the ideas and knowledge discussed in the coursework to the practical situation at hand in the case study.
- Identify the problems.
- Select the major problems in the case.
- Suggest solutions to these major problems.
- Recommend the best solution to be implemented.
- Detail how this solution should be implemented.
Writing the case study

Generally, there are eight sections in a case study. Use this as a guideline to write your case study.

1. Synopsis/Executive Summary
   - Outline the purpose of the case study.
   - Describe the field of research – this is usually an overview of the company.
   - Outline the issues and findings of the case study without the specific details.
   - Identify the theory that will be used to analyse the case study.
   - The reader should be able to get a clear picture of the essential contents of the study.
   - Note any assumptions made. You may not have all the information you would like, so some assumptions may be necessary.
     e.g. “It has been assumed that…”, “Assuming that it takes half an hour to read one document…”.

2. Findings
   - Identify the problems found in the case.
     - Each analysis of a problem should be supported by facts given in the case together with the relevant theory and course concepts.
     - It is important to search for any underlying problems, for example, cross-cultural conflict may be only a symptom of the underlying problem of inadequate policies and practices within the company.
   - This section is often divided into sub-sections, one for each problem.

3. Discussion
   - Summarise the major problem/s.
   - Identify alternative solutions to this/these major problem/s (there is likely to be more than one solution per problem).
   - Briefly outline each alternative solution and then evaluate it in terms of its advantages and disadvantages.
   - There is no need to refer to theory or coursework here.

4. Conclusion
   Sum up the main points from the findings and discussion.

5. Recommendations
   - Choose which of the alternative solutions should be adopted.
   - Briefly justify your choice and explain how it will solve the major problem/s.
   - This should be written in a forceful style as this section is intended to be persuasive.
   - Integration of theory and coursework is appropriate here.

6. Implementation
   - Explain what should be done, by whom and by when.
   - If appropriate, include a rough estimate of costs (both financial and time).

7. References
   Make sure all references are cited correctly.

8. Appendices (if any)
   Attach any original data that relates to the study, which would have interrupted the flow of the discussion in the main body.