

CASE STUDY

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Case studies are widely used in the business and social science faculties. The case study is used to help students understand a particular country, company or individual(s). A second purpose of cases studies is to provide an example of a general principle or theory.

I. RECOGNIZING THE PARTS

Most case studies have four parts:

Situation	Describes the circumstances of the case
Problem	States the problem which needs to be solved
Solution	Describes the solution and the implementation of the solution
Evaluation	Evaluates the solution and the implementation of the solution

These four parts appear in the text below.

Text 1 **Malaysia's Manpower Shortage**

Since the recession in 1997, Malaysia's economy has been expanding rapidly
[Situation

mainly due to a surge in exports of electrical goods to America. One problem
.>] [Problem

associated with this boom is a critical shortage of manpower in key areas such
.

as engineering, management and information technology. One of the
.>] [Solution

measures the government has adopted is to increase enrolment in higher
.

education. The government expects that in three to four years the country
.>] [Evaluation

.]

II. READING AND ANALYZING THE PARTS

Exercise 1: Analyzing Texts:

Read the texts below and to the right of the texts, identify the parts of the case study

Text 2

Norway's Wolves

In the 1960s it was thought that wolves in Norway had become extinct. During the 1970s the discovery of wolf tracks in the snow caused great excitement among conservationists, and by the mid-1980s at least one wolf pack had been discovered. The wolves' recovery continued in the following 15 years and by the new millennium there were 12 packs in the border area of Sweden and Norway with each wolf pack roaming over an area of a couple of hundred kilometres. In this same area however, Norway's farmers allow their sheep to wander freely.

Over the last two years, the farmers have been appalled by the number of sheep which have been killed by the packs of wolves. A year ago the government's solution was to relocate the sheep to safer areas and to pay compensation to the farmers for each dead sheep. In total the government spent nearly US\$1.5 million on the scheme. This year they have decided to cut costs by culling nine of the predators at a cost of US\$225,000. This policy is popular with the sheep farmers but has enraged environmental groups.

Text 3

Changing Markets

Most companies are aware of the need to change their products in line with changing markets, but sometimes a whole country has to be aware of market trends and react quickly. This was the case in Zimbabwe. For many years the agricultural sector relied on the export of tobacco to America and Western Europe. This brought in on average US\$400 million in much needed foreign currency. For the past five years however, their main markets have shrunk due to fierce anti-smoking campaigns and legislation. The need for diversification in the agricultural sector became urgent.

Initial surveys revealed that the soil and sub-tropical climatic conditions in certain areas were perfect for growing a variety of flowers including high value roses. Soon greenhouses were appearing all over the northern part of the country. Flowers from Zimbabwe were soon appearing at many of the famous flower auction markets in Amsterdam and London.

A few years after the introduction of horticulture, exports of cut flowers were responsible for \$80 million in hard currency, small in comparison to tobacco. The need for further diversification is still there, but the success in cut flowers has given farmers the confidence to try other products.

(Based on information from "A leaf one day a petal the next", *The Economist*, March 11th, 1995.)

Text 4 Twinkle

Sometimes success can be a real problem if it happens too quickly and without warning. This was the situation that Toys4U found itself in when October sales of its new doll Twinkle indicated it would become this year's hot-selling Christmas doll. In order to meet the expected demand, the company estimated it would have to increase production threefold.

The company was in a dilemma. If it expanded too quickly it might find itself financially stretched, especially if, as expected, sales slumped after the Christmas period. However, if they didn't increase production they risked losing the market to a rival and would risk the wrath of disappointed parents who would be unable to give their children the present they most wanted.

The temptation to build a gleaming new addition to their factory was great, but the bank manager warned against the dangers of over-capitalisation. He offered two alternatives: the first was to consider running the factory on a sixteen-hour basis rather than for the present 8 hours, the second suggestion was to outsource the making of Twinkle overseas.

Toys4U decided to consider the two options carefully. Running the factory for sixteen hours a day wouldn't meet the expected demand. If the factory was run for twenty-four hours a day, then demand could be met, but two main problems remained. The first was the most important: quality control. Hiring temporary staff would be easy enough, but the time available for training would be short and this could well compromise the quality of the products. The second problem was the machinery in the factory. Running the cutting machines twenty-four hours a day meant there would be no time for proper maintenance. If just one machine broke down, then all the extra workers would have nothing to do.

The second option seemed the best. Toys4U contacted a children's toy maker in Taiwan, and, to their surprise, they found that the dolls could be made and shipped at virtually the same cost as making them in New Zealand. In addition, the Taiwanese were willing to take on a short term contract with quality control guarantees. Toys4U took this option.

Demand for Twinkle during the pre-Christmas period did indeed treble, but there were no disappointed children. The shipments from Taiwan arrived on time and the dolls that were made overseas matched the quality of the locally made ones. The drastic slump in sales after Christmas proved that the decision to outsource was the correct one.

Exercise 2: Determining the Order of the Parts

Fill in the table below, showing the order of the parts in all four of the above texts.

PARTS	TEXT 1	TEXT 2	TEXT 3	TEXT 4
Situation	1			
Problem	2			
Solution(s)	3			
Evaluation	4			

What do you notice about the order of the parts?

Exercise 3: Finding and Analyzing a Text

Find and analyze a case study. Write the order of parts below. Did you find any new parts?

order

new parts

III. LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF THE PARTS

In this section we will study the language which is used in each of the parts.

Exercise 4: The verbs of Describing the Situation

Underline all the verbs in the situation part in Texts 1 to 4, and complete the table below.

Text	What you notice about the verbs
1	present perfect tense – used to state a fact
2	
3	
4	

Exercise 5: The language of the problem

Complete the table of words and phrases which are associated with the Problem.

Text	Words/phrases which introduce or describe the Problem
1	
2	however, are appalled, sheep killed
3	
4	

Exercise 6: The language of the Solution

Complete the table of words and phrases which are associated with the Solution.

Text	Words/phrases which introduce or describe the Solution
1	present perfect tense – used to state a fact
2	
3	perfect conditions, high value
4	

Exercise 7: The language of the Evaluation

Complete the table of words and phrases which are associated with the Evaluation..

Text	Words/phrases which introduce or describe the Evaluation
1	present perfect tense – used to state a fact
2	
3	
4	no disappointed children, arrived on time, matched the quality, decision was correct

IV. WRITING A CASE STUDY

Exercise 8: Completing a Case Study

The short case studies below have two parts missing. Can you complete them by adding your own Solution.

Text 5 The Danger of Cell Phones

Cellular phones have become very popular in the rich countries of the world. It has been estimated that almost 110 million Americans now carry a cell phone. Companies involved in making the devices expect sales to increase by 20 to 25% over the next 12 months. Another interesting fact is that 70% of all cell phone calls are made by drivers. However, cell phones are now thought to be responsible for many of the accidents that occur on the roads. A recent example occurred in Washington when a driver on the phone to his girlfriend lost control of his car and killed his passenger.

Text 6 Depending on Internet Advertising

For many people the Internet offers great potential for increasing business opportunities. Most people seem to think that once they have their own website, customers will come flocking and lots of money will be made. Bob Halfpenny had similar thoughts. He had been an editor with Reed's Publishing for 20 years. At the age of 46 he decided it was time to start his own business. He had excellent editing skills and he had noticed that lots of companies were now outsourcing editing and technical writing to freelancers. Bob resigned, registered his company name and paid 1000 dollars to a local web designer. His website was launched on 22 October. Bob sat back waiting for the work to flow in. Three months later he was still waiting. Something had to be done.

Exercise 9: Writing a Case Study

Find an individual, a company, or a country which has solved a problem in an unusual or creative way. Write the parts following these steps:

1. Situation: decide what background information the reader needs to know to understand the problem.
2. Describe the problem.
3. Describe the solution(s) and how they were implemented.
4. Evaluate the solution(s).
5. If possible draw some conclusions from the case study.

APPENDIX B: ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Answer to Question 1:

The parts are indicated in the table below:

	Situation	Problem	Solution	Evaluation
Text 2	In the 1960s...	Over the last...	A year ago...	This policy...
Text 3	Most companies...	For the past...	Initial surveys...	The need...
Text 4	Sometimes...	The company...	The second...	Demand for...

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Answer to Question 2:

The order is the same in all the texts.

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Answer to Question 3:

Different answers are possible, but most texts will have the pattern shown in Exercises 1 and 2.

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Answer to Question 4:

Answers are given in the table below:

Text 2	Past, past perfect – used to state facts
Text 3	Present, past – used to state facts
Text 4	Present, past – used to state facts

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Answer to Question 5:

Answers are given in the table below:

Text 1	Problem, critical shortage
Text 3	Have shrunk, fierce campaigns and legislation, need became urgent
Text 4	Dilemma, financially stretched, risked losing, risk wrath

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Answer to Question 6:

Answers are given in the table below:

Text 2	Past tense – used to state a fact
Text 4	Past tense – used to state a fact

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Answer to Question 7:

Answers are given in the table below:

Text 2	Present, present perfect – used to state a fact: is popular / has enraged
Text 3	Present, present perfect – used to state a fact: success / confidence

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Answer to Question 8:

Text 5

Possible solutions include:

1. Governments could ban driving while using cell phones.
2. Cell phone companies could manufacture hands free cell phones for use in cars.

Text 6

Possible solutions include:

1. Registering his site with all the major search engines.
2. Advertising his site in selected newspapers and magazines.
3. Joining an association of professional writers and editors.
4. Attending conferences on technical writing and editing.
5. Contacting by phone or email companies that might be interested in using his services.

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Answer to Question 9:

Different answers are possible. Please refer to the Language Pattern Dictionary.

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