

Managing Technological Innovation

MGT 693

Spring Term, Y2K+1
1800 hrs, Thursday
Asheville Campus

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Project note: Writing cases in innovation

A. Choosing a topic

Some of the best cases are written by researchers who:

- i. Have a passion for the firm or subject matter. Find the subject fun to research!
- ii. Have some work experience on the subject matter, are familiar with some of the tacit knowledge on the topic, or have good access to data
- iii. Want to go and work in that industry when they graduate
- iv. Already have lots of data on the subject.

B. Case contents

1. An introductory paragraph which answers the following questions: what is the focal problem? When does the case take place? Where is the organization located? who is the decision maker? The problem should be related to one of the questions on page 2 of your textbook or any of concepts of the course.

2. The body of the case should contain a description of :

The firm

The firm's existing technology, capabilities, performance, etc. if relevant to the problem being explored

The innovation

Competitors (existing and potential) and relevant information on them

3. Exhibits. You can have any number of exhibits you want. They do not all have to be relevant to the question you are exploring. Remember that cases are supposed to be an attempt to simulate the socially complex context in which managers must take decisions.

4. At the core of the case should be the fact that some new knowledge has been used (or is being used) to offer new product or service that customers want.

C. Style

The cases should be HBS-type but please write the type of case that you would love to read. Forget about the professor. Please yourself! Thus you may want to follow the style of the case you liked the most in one of your earlier courses. The length should be twelve to twenty pages, double-spaced, font 12, excluding the exhibits.

D. Teaching note

Use your teaching note to reveal the solution to the "problem" of the case. It is in this note that you show how the theory and concepts of the text are related to the "problem" and solution of the case. (continued on the next page)

Now that you are completing your "reflective pauses" it might be well to provide some additional suggestions about your case project in the context of the "pauses" you have written so far and examples of cases with teaching notes I have provided you.

You have of course been seeing cases the entire course and what guided you in their analysis was the fact that you had material from a chapter in the Afuah text and the "heads up" I provided that set the boundaries in which you did your analysis. Note, that your "pauses" were done in a format similar to your analyses. So in many respects what you have been composing is an extended teaching note or rather material from which a selection can be made to compose the teaching note for your case. Keep in mind also, that your "pauses" were not done in a case format. They were done in the analysis format. The case itself should follow more the format of the cases you have already read and particularly the example cases I have given you. Much of what goes into those cases can, however, be extracted from the "pauses" you have composed.

The "pauses" you have written are by their very nature rich with information. They cover a wealth of unique phenomena and you attempted to relate those phenomena to a plethora of concepts and tools that make up the analytic framework we have been constructing though out this course. Consequently, one could go in many directions doing an analysis that, I am inclined to think, would not be very productive because it would be difficult to maintain analytical coherence to what would be being done. My suggestion is to focus on some particular topic that we have studied during the course that you believe that your "pauses" best reflect or typify and build your case around that topic. This means that certain information and analyses in your pauses will be extracted for use in this endeavor and some information and analyses will be discarded.

With the above in mind, consider the following.

- 1) Select the topic upon which you wish to focus based upon which your "pauses" will permit you doing the best and most interesting effort.
- 2) Work out the organization of your "teaching note" first in terms of organization and content. Doing this will help you determine what of substance do you have to actually work with. Being tempted to write the case first, you may find that you have moved into unexplored territory that you are unprepared to address.
- 3) As you write your teaching note be committed and explicit about those aspects of the conceptual framework we have been constructing in this course that you are illustrating with the material you draw on from your pauses.
- 4) Keep in mind that your teaching note does not have to strictly be in the case analysis format. You should feel free to add to that format suggestions as to how

you would run a class examining this case. Nevertheless, the case analysis format is probably a good format to use at least as a point of departure.

- 5) In writing your case, remember that the value of a case is in its demand for the analyst to put his/her imagination to work while drawing on various conceptual resources as his/her disposal to assist the analysis. Therefore, the gist of what is at issue in the case should not be clear and plainly evident to see. Nevertheless, it is probably incumbent on you as the author to provide the prospective analyst some sort of “heads up” to help him/her with focus. This can be in the form of general questions or a statement that whereby the analyst will have an idea of what you the author want him/her to see.

This is hardly a complete and adequate document I am sure. However, I think that it will help get you started. Additional discourse on this can certainly follow as needed.