case centre

The case teaching note

Speak to any group of business school instructors who teach extensively by the case method, and you will almost certainly encounter strongly-held opinions on the value and importance of teaching notes. However, even those who shun their use will grudgingly acknowledge that a teaching note, well-written, can be a valuable tool in the process of selecting and adopting a case from The Case Centre's large collection. This is clearly demonstrated by the extent to which cases that are accompanied by good teaching notes find their way into The Case Centre's best-selling lists. 40% of the cases in the catalogue have a teaching note but, 95% of the 50 most popular cases have one.

It has always been a requirement that cases accepted for publication by The Case Centre have been tried and tested in a learning environment, and have been proved to be pedagogically effective. In the interests of meeting the expectations of potential case users, some basic standards for teaching notes are also required. These standards apply to the scope of the teaching note and do not attempt to dictate the style, structure, or detailed content. However, they will ensure that a reader can expect a document described as a 'Teaching note' to contain certain fundamental elements.

What is a teaching note?

A teaching note, usually, but not necessarily, produced by the author of the case it accompanies, is a document designed to give other potential instructors valuable insights into the case and the learning which can be derived from it. It will also provide suggestions on how to maximise the learning potential of the case. Teaching notes may vary from the detailed and discursive, to the short and informal. However, irrespective of length, there are certain elements that should not be ignored or overlooked when preparing a teaching note. These elements are listed below and, for a teaching note to be accepted for publication by The Case Centre, it will be necessary for authors to ensure that all six elements are adequately addressed.

1 **Summary of the case**
The teaching note should include a brief description of the case and its context.

2 **Teaching objectives and target audience**
It should describe, with examples, the key issues and intended learning objectives, indicating the target group or class level for which the case was written.

3 **Teaching approach and strategy**
It should suggest how the case may be used in class and ways in which the class may be conducted. It may offer 'trigger' questions for opening and advancing the case discussion, suggestions for group work or student assignments, how to consolidate the learning, etc. Useful additional information could include suggestions for a teaching plan. It should also give some indication of the case's demands on course time-tabling.

4 **Analysis**
The analysis should offer comprehensive answers to the list of questions and should, at least, be as thorough as one would expect from the best student. If the case includes quantitative data, it might suggest ways of utilising the data, and should ideally include the details of any spreadsheet analysis. At the very least it should indicate the techniques to be used for analysing the data.

5 **Additional readings or references**

Suggested additional readings should be listed if it is necessary (or helpful) for students to read text or other material in conjunction with the case. Specific readings can be assigned from these lists.

6 **Feedback**

It should provide an indication of how the case worked with different student groups; where possible indicating the case's suitability for written assessment or examination, role-playing, or other forms of use. Where known, it might also include the actual outcome of the case situation, and some follow-up facts.

References

Heath, J (2006), *Teaching and Writing Case Studies: A Practical Guide* (The Case Centre) ISBN 978-0-9078-1503-7

Leenders, M R and Erskine, J A (1989), *Case Research: The Case Writing Process* (The University of Western Ontario) ISBN 0-7714-1045-X

Reynolds, J I, *Case Method in Management Development* (International Labour Office)