Teaching the International Business Case Competitions Course

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This article provides three benefits to the reader. The first is a comprehensive review of the traditional classroom business case method and the wide-spread benefits of case competition participation. The second is a thorough description and plan for the delivery of the new IB Case Competition course. The third is that we can prepare our students for the future of work by guiding their participation in worldwide IB Case Competitions only after students have taken the IB Case Competitions course.

Keywords: case method, international business, teaching methods, case competition, strategy

INTRODUCTION

The key message of this article is that business case use has four distinct evolutionary stages (Table 1). Stage 1 is the student as Case Novice. This is the normal use of business cases to support course content in the classroom setting. Business case competitions give students simulated real-world case practice in a team, allowing them to develop to Stage 2 of case proficiency, the Case Apprentice. Our argument is that students can only reach the Stage 4 Case Master level if they have completed the new International Business (IB) Case Competitions course, which will move them from Stage 2 Case Apprentice to Stage 3 Case Artisan.

This article's reader will benefit in three ways. First, the traditional classroom business case method is reviewed and benefits from case competition participation for students, faculty/staff, and others are described. Second, the IB Case Competitions course is considered and a detailed plan provided for delivering this new course type to students. Third, the pressing problem of how to prepare students for the future of work is addressed – the answer is their guided participation in IB Case Competitions after having taken the IB Case Competitions course. Students who learn to be Case Masters will become competitors ready for the future of work.

TABLE 1
FOUR EVOLUTIONARY STAGES OF STUDENT CASE PROFICIENCY

	Traditional Business Case Method	**Case Competition**	**IB Case Competitions Course**	**IB Case Competition**
Student Stage	Case Novice: Learn tools and apply to case	Case Apprentice: Simulated real-world case practice	Case Artisan: Shared development in case practice	Case Master: Command of expert skill in the future of work
Case Type	Classroom cases	Both classroom and competition cases	Both classroom and competition cases	Competition cases
Locus	Classroom	Competition site	Classroom	Competition site
Competition Format?	No	Yes	Simulated for grading	Yes
Training	In class	Clubs, boot camps, ad-hoc, staff, alumni	In class	Case competition course plus coach/advisor
Topic	Current systems	Emerging topics – e.g. e-sports, block chain, the future of their work	Best practices	The future of work
Focus	Course Content: Use tools to learn	Case Process: Use tools in trial by fire	Case Thinking: Problem solving mindset training for future	Become Competitors: Learn cooperation and competition
Role Orientation	Manager	Consultant	Manager + Consultant	Multiple Stakeholders
Time Orientation	What happened – look back	What's next – look forward	Both forward and back on the story so far and what could be	Future Focus – Forward looking on work, organizations, and society
Solution Method	Individual/group and then with professor facilitation	Group with no outside help	Team with feedback from classroom colleagues, professor, and others	Team with no outside help
Time Allowed	Mostly open outside of classroom	Limited by competition rules	Limited by classroom time available	Limited by competition rules
Resources Available	Open	Usually limited, often to three hours including reading case	Usually limited	Limited by competition rules regarding internet access
Students Present?	Individually answer and respond during classroom discussion	Yes. Each group member must present. Presentation slides are important.	Yes. Each group member must present. Presentation slides are important.	Yes. Each group member must present. Presentation slides are important.
Who Judges	Professor	Community Professionals	Professor and others: Students, alumni, professionals	Community Professionals
Question Period	Questions posed by professor to the class	Yes – not all must answer	Yes – each team member must answer at least one question	Yes – not every group member may be required to answer

CASE NOVICE: THE TRADITIONAL BUSINESS CASE METHOD

The case method is a major component of management education at both the undergraduate and MBA levels (Mesney, 2013). "A *case* is a description of an actual situation, commonly involving a decision, a challenge, an opportunity, a problem or an issue faced by a person, or persons, in an organization" (Erskine, Leenders, & Mauffette-Leenders, 2003, p. 9, emphasis in original). Cases are meant to be a thought-provoking, rich description of a real situation (Mesney, 2013) and are an effective way for direct teacher-student learning (Jugurnath, Fauzel, & Cader, 2018).

There are several varieties of cases. They include: multi-media; live cases with visits to organizational sites or by organization actors to the classroom; focused decision – the problem is explicitly stated; and implementation – the solution is given and its implementation must be planned (Calkins, 2001). Approaches to case analysis include: the checklist – a straightforward method of answering a set of questions about any case; guided response – the task is to answer the questions given in the case; situational – students are focused on the qualitative aspects of the case; and analytical – student focus is on the quantitative data (Jones-Delcorde & Wright, 1994).

Anticipated benefits of using cases in a class are described by Calkins (2001) as: "The case method helps people become more confident in handling business problems by allowing them to develop analytical skills within the context of a relatively non-threatening environment. It assists users as they try to order unstructured situations, to identify problems, to develop conclusions, to effectively manage risk, and to recommend actions in complex business situations" (p. 244). Case teaching can be both science and art (Greenhalgh, 2007). Given that they are "incomplete natural narratives" (p. 184), they are: (i) things ready for analysis and words ready for interpretation; (ii) problems needing solutions and narratives needing interpretation; (iii) objects to be analyzed critically using facts and creatively by interpreting facts; and (iv) opportunities for students to practice management and develop as leaders (Greenhalgh, 2007, p. 191).

Students working on a case need to: (i) pose a managerial question; (ii) search for the best available evidence; (iii) make a critical appraisal of that information; and (iv) apply the appropriate information to case issues in the generation of a solution and implementation plan (Rousseau & McCarthy, 2007). In discipline-focused courses such as marketing, accounting, finance, and management cases are typically used to teach theoretical content and tools. Capstone courses seek integration across disciplines with the objective to widen the student's perspective on the case situation.

The classic case method relies on individual student analysis without a strict time limitation, a classroom instructor who takes the front-and-center role in guiding case discussion, most questions posed by the instructor to the class as a whole, and the expected benefits of students learning managerial diagnostic skills, developing their persuasive skills in the large group classroom setting, and learning how to make decisions under uncertainty (Garvin, 2003). Problems with this method are the development of an action bias, which student positions taken can harden during discussion, and that cases tend to have a preferred right answer (Garvin, 2003).

CASE APPRENTICE: CASE COMPETITIONS

The next step in business case use was the case competition, begun at Miami University (Ohio, USA) in 1975 (Stone & Urban, 1981). Cases developed for classroom use were co-opted by case competitions as the content on which student teams could contest their skills in simulated real-world practice. Called the varsity sport of business schools (Stonebraker, 2017), the key feature of case competitions distinguishing them from in-class cases is that student teams work under time pressure with no outside help and often with no resources (internet use not allowed, no notes or textbooks brought into the case resolution room). Their task is to consider provided materials, both relevant and irrelevant (Garvin, 2003), discover the crucial problem, divide their labor to perform a wide analysis using business tools, and crucially, prepare an oral presentation supported by team-built visuals. That time-limited presentation, often twenty minutes in length, is then given to a judging panel made up of community business professionals. Each team member is required to speak during that presentation, which is followed by a question and answer period. Judges see only the team's live presentation, their supporting visuals, and the quality of their answers in the question period, not the team's preparatory work.

Student teams obtain simulated real-world case practice as they prepare and present to industry judges who focus on practicality, the implementation plan, and presentation skills. For example, one rubric given to judges asked them to look for the team's (i) Depth of Analysis – were the recommendations applicable, proposals logical and supported, with all issues covered; (ii) Strategy – does it fit the organization's mission, is there a recommendation, evidence, and an implementation plan; (iii) Practicality – can the plan be done in the "real" world; and (iv) Presentation – organization, enthusiasm, interest, overheads used were effective, and teamwork was demonstrated (Orlitzky & Benjamin, 2003). Another rubric for judges asked them to rate accurate problem definition, use of business information, analysis, implementation/action plan, presentation skills and clarity of visuals, the question and answer period, and how well teams had integrated earlier feedback into their final presentation (Stonebraker, 2017).

Similar to their course use, case competitions can be specifically targeted to different disciplines such as accounting (Maier-Lytle *et al.*, 2010), marketing (Damnjanović, 2012), business information acquisition and analysis (Stonebraker, 2017), diversity (Phillips & Wood, 2017), strategy (Corner *et al.*, 2006), and international business (Aggarwal & Goodell, 2014), among others. Case competitions can be broader in scope, similar to capstone courses, aiming to help students with general business skills (Borden & Utter, 2017; Burke *et al.*, 2013; Menna, 2010) and requiring them to show flexibility in thinking and stronger analytic skills. Case competitions also vary by their formality, from in-house events, to regional, national, and international venues.

What is different to case course use is that competition cases are often written specifically for a particular event, with a focus on emerging topics such as e-sports, blockchain, digital disruption, and other topics predictive of the future work done by the students once they graduate. Competition cases have also been gamified (McGonigal, 2011), offering features such as a live case presented by organization executives, in-person site visits by student team members, new information provided part way through the students' case resolution time, or a new requirement added after case analysis has begun or after a team's presentation (should they advance to the next round). Over time, case competitions have also become more complex. The John Molson MBA International Case Competition in Montréal Canada competition requires student teams to prepare and present five cases in four days, of which three are 3-hour cases, one is a short case, and one is a live case. To help prepare students for these case competition challenges, coaches and advisors have offered informal coaching, case competition "boot camps" covering the basics in a day or a weekend, and formal extra-curricular case competition training over a series of practices. Case competition clubs have been formed in business schools with case team alumni involved in training the next generation of students. The objective of all these training forms is to learn the case process in preparation for the competition trial-by-fire against other teams, all judged by community professionals.

Within a few years of their invention business school case competitions went international, the first such competition likely the 1981 Molson competition. In the almost 40 years since then, international business case competitions have proliferated, with competitions held in at least 15 countries and on every continent except Antarctica. Perhaps the largest is the Hult Prize (www.hultprize.org) in social entrepreneurship, now in 2019 in its tenth year and attracting participants from 100 countries. These international case competitions have become an emerging practice within a new institutional framework (Lawrence, 1999) for International Business (IB) education and experiential learning with three main benefits for students. First, students become more global and therefore less parochial as they travel to other countries to compete against and socialize with teams from many societies and cultural business perspectives. Second, students gain cross-cultural experience by working on cases from international companies and organizations that are local to the competition. Third, students have the opportunity to apply market entry and other IB knowledge to competition cases and to meet and be judged by local managers and entrepreneurs.

Research shows that the gamification of the business case in competitions has led to value creation for students, business school faculty and advisors, and the broader business community and university (Table 2). Students have found case competitions to be: a great experience (Damnjanović, 2012); fun (Phillips & Wood, 2017); an active learning experience that reinforced class concepts and related them to the real world (Umble, Umble, & Artz, 2008); helpful in improving communication skills (Borden & Utter, 2017; Burke, Carter, & Hughey, 2013; Maier-Lytle, McGuire, & Ehlen, 2010; Orlitzky & Benjamin, 2003); helpful in the development of soft skills such as how to work under pressure (Damnjanović, Proud, & Ruangwanit, 2018; Phillips & Wood, 2017); and helpful in developing both teamwork (Burke *et al*., 2013; Maier-Lytle *et al*., 2010; Orlitzky & Benjamin, 2003; Sachau & Nass, 2010) and personal confidence and responsibility (Maier-Lytle *et al*., 2010). These benefits in sum help prepare students for their future careers and make them especially attractive candidates for consulting companies. Business school faculty and advisors have found the case competition experience allows them to: relate to students more as a coach and facilitator (Corner, Bowden, Clark, Collins, Gibb, Kearins, & Pavlovich, 2006); help the students' personal and professional development (Dlačić, Ribarić, & Damnjanović, 2017); and both (i) gain new knowledge to improve their teaching of how students apply business school concepts to case problems and (ii) directly learn about other faculties, programs, and countries as they travel to competitions (Damnjanović, Kostic, & Neskovic, 2014; Maier-Lytle *et al*., 2010). The business community, through their funding, provision of sites and expertise in the development of original business cases, and judging student presentations, primarily get connection to students (Corner *et al*., 2006). They can also benefit in recruiting and connecting with academics and the university (Damnjanović, 2012). Further, business community members can employ students, watch students' present solutions to their organization's case problem, and develop a company-university relationship (Damnjanović *et al*., 2014). For the university the main benefit is greater student engagement (Burke *et al*., 2013) with subsidiary benefits of student learning, student skill development, and business community connection.

TABLE 2
BENEFITS FROM CASE COMPETITION PARTICIPATION

Student Benefits	Source
Analytical skills	Calkins (2001)
Problem solving and communication skills	
Team and personal skill building	
Analytical rigor – application of course material to real-life problems	Orlitzky & Benjamin (2003)
Development of communication skills, teamwork, networking skills	
Grounded learning integrates theory and practice	Corner, Bowden, Clark, Collins, Gibb, Kearins, and Pavlovich (2006)
Meeting judges allows networking and relationship practice	
An active learning experience	Umble, Umble, & Artz (2008)
Reinforced important class concepts	
Relate course concepts to the real world	
Engage in critical thinking and analysis	
Work as part of a team	
Learn to be effective teammates	Sachau & Nass (2010)
Manage heavy workloads	
Apply theory	
Solve organizational problems	
Present a persuasive argument to a client	
Manage their emotions	

Student Benefits	**Source**
Gain specialized knowledge Improve communication skills Develop teamwork Develop soft skills like confidence, motivation, responsibility Heighten their chances in the job market	Maier-Lytle, McGuire, & Ehlen (2010)
Distinguish/differentiate symptoms and causes	Menna (2010)
Global case study competitions are a great experience	Damnjanović (2012)
A safe environment to make mistakes	Mesney (2013)
Soft skills such as communication and motivation Teamwork Critical thinking	Burke, Carter, & Hughey (2013)
Solve real problems and gain practical experience Employment	Damnjanović, Kostic, & Neskovic (2014)
Have fun Develop research and presentation skills Learn to work under pressure as a team Learn about the topic from research and fellow team members	Phillips & Wood (2017)
Written and verbal communication Business research methods Analytical skills Team dynamics Leadership	Borden & Utter (2017)
Personal and professional improvement Development of presentation skills Skills in working under pressure	Damnjanović, Proud, & Ruangwanit (2018)
Faculty/Team Advisor Benefits	**Source**
More a coaching and facilitating relationship with students	Corner *et al*. (2006)
Travel	Maier-Lytle *et al*. (2010)
New knowledge to improve teaching See students' solutions Network with other faculties at competitions	Damnjanović, Kostic, & Neskovic (2014)
Help students to develop both professionally and personally	Dlačić, Ribarić, & Damnjanović (2017)
Others' Benefits	**Source**
Business community connection to students	Corner *et al*. (2006)
Companies can benefit in recruiting, connecting with academics and the university	Damnjanović (2012)
University gets greater student engagement	Burke, Carter, & Hughey (2013)
Companies employ students, see solutions, develop company-university relationship	Damnjanović, Kostic, & Neskovic (2014)

These widespread benefits suggest that business school international case competitions will continue to grow in importance and impact. As case competitions have evolved into a common and popular activity for student learning and engagement, several challenges have emerged. Time management (Dlačić *et al*., 2017; Damnjanović *et al*., 2018) heads the list as student teams are forced to complete complex work under time pressure. Other issues are knowledge of the local market and being able to filter out the most important information in the case (Damnjanović *et al*., 2018). Other difficult tasks for students have been the finance aspects of a case, projecting sales and developing possible solutions

(Damnjanović *et al.*, 2018), budgeting (Sachau & Naas, 2010), and establishing an entry strategy into a foreign market (Damnjanović, 2012).

CASE ARTISAN: THE NEW IB CASE COMPETITION COURSE

Another business school response is the IB case competitions course offered for regular credit. Our aim was to advance students' case thinking ability; problem-solving mindset that would prepare them for future work; teamwork skills; presentation skills; and ability to successfully travel and represent the business school and university at an international case competition. While the current percentage of students at international case competitions having taken a case course is currently low, only 15% in one recent study (Damnjanović *et al.*, 2018), we believe that this percentage is sure to rise. To help a prospective case competition course professor plan and prepare, we now turn to the literature and our experiences in two for-credit case competition courses.

Three examples of case competition courses for formal university credit have been identified in the literature. Corner *et al.* (2006) used an internal case competition as the last assignment in an undergraduate capstone strategy course. The requirement was for each case team to make an oral presentation and to provide a ten-page written report for a team grade worth 18% of the overall course grade. The decision was made to not have peer evaluation of within-team performance. Umble *et al.* (2008) used internal case competitions in a variety of courses, including new ventures, accounting, marketing, finance, operations management, and strategic management. Evaluation of case performance was worth from 10% to 25% of the course final grade. Borden and Utter (2017) described a 1-credit case competition course required in the junior year of undergraduate studies. Topics covered in their course were: Approach to case analysis; Tools; PowerPoint™ skills; Presenting Skills as part of a team; and Professional Business Writing. Teams were composed of four or five members, with students first sorted by major and then randomly assigned to teams. The evaluation system was predominantly Team Analysis and Presentation (65%), then an Individual Executive Summary of the team's analysis (20%), an in-class presentation (10%), and 5% for an individual resume (used to create a book for judges), participation, and attendance.

The authors' first case competition course was one evening a week over thirteen weeks. This course had a series of practice cases completed almost every week. The objective was to give individuals in teams the chance to apply the content tools and practice guidelines they had been taught to that point in small chunks and on a series of cases which gradually become more complex and complete (Gamble & Jelley, 2014). The final exam was a complex case presented by self-selected teams to the two course professors.

The second course was conducted in an intensive format, five full days of class in one week. First, students were asked to write their own case before the course began (worth 15%). Case writing suggestions about length and the process of writing the case helped students to get started. The intent was to have them think through how to write and present a case so that it would later be easier to solve cases written by others. A series of five reflection papers was written individually at the end of each day, and worth a total of 60% of the course mark, in order to give each student the opportunity to engage in class, then think and write about their learning. Teams were formed randomly for a practice case held at the course mid-point. At the end of the course a final exam case worth 25% was given. To fairly form the final case teams the class first voted anonymously for team leads and the top vote getters became the team captains. The rest of the team was then randomly assigned.

From case competition courses described in the literature and our own experiences, our conclusion is that the case competition course student needs to include four main elements: 1. The case problem-solving method including tools for analysis; 2. How to work effectively with teams; 3. Visual presentation skills, oral presentation skills, and winning the question/answer period; and 4. What to expect when attending an international case competition. A sample course structure and set of topics is shown in Table 3. The guiding principle for our plan was that all students were able to benefit from the course. All students practiced cases with an emphasis on case thinking. They learned how to apply disciplinary tools, to plan the implementation of their change plan, and presentation skills. They practiced competing in class teams with each other as they worked on more challenging cases through the course. We anticipate that these skills will be generally useful in their future work. Specifically, students planning to enter the management consulting industry can benefit from the course as it helps to prepare them for the case interviews typically used by those firms. Once in the consulting industry, case thinking will be directly applicable to their daily work with clients.

TABLE 3
CASE COMPETITION COURSE EXAMPLE CLASS SCHEDULE

Class	Topic	Notes
1	Use of Business Cases as a Learning Tool	Introductory case and the case method
2	Analytic Models	PAAD: Problem, Alternatives, Analysis, Decision. SAORTR: Situation, Analysis, Options, Recommendations, Timeline, Risks. WNPAQRIOS: Who are you/we, Narrative, Problem, Alternatives, Qualitative/Quantitative Analysis, Recommendations, Implementation, Obstacles, Story.
3	Analytic Tools	Content tools from disciplines such as Accounting, Marketing, Management Science, Finance, Organizational Behavior, and Strategy
4	Teams and Time Management	Team Building, Roles, Scheduling Useful articles on teams are: Edmondson (2016); Haas and Mortensen (2016); Mankins, Bird, and Root (2013).
5	Presentation Slides and Speaking Skills	Practice in building and giving presentations. Each student needs to develop these skills even when this will not be their main focus on a case team.
6	Storytelling, Question Period, Improvisation Training	See improvisation techniques and exercises in: Huffaker & West (2005); Koppett (2013); Leonard & Yorton (2015). Useful articles on innovation are: Amabile, Fisher, and Pillemar (2014); Parmar, Mackenzie, Cohn, and Gann (2014).
7	Implementation, Financials, and Costs	Gantt charts for implementation plan and costs. Expected benefits and Return on Investment.
8	Practice Case 1	Should be a shorter and relatively straightforward case to not overwhelm the teams. Consider giving extra preparation time to lessen stress. Have teams watch each other and bring in outside judges.
9	Group Presentations	Presentations with feedback from alumni, students, the professor, and possibly local executives. Feedback needs to be guided, sometimes delayed to allow self-reflection, sometimes given by peers, with the proviso that "feedback is not automatically beneficial, more is not always better" (Gamble & Jelley, 2014, p. 442).
10	Practice Case 2	Should be medium length and difficulty.
11	Group Presentations	Feedback from judges recruited from outside the course
12	Data Visualization	How to build visual charts and diagrams. See Financial Times (2019) for examples.
13	Final Case	Should be a longer and more complex case with both Qualitative and Quantitative data available for analysis.

Students should progress from skill assessment (their starting point), to skill learning of what works, then practicing skills in more realistic situations, and finally to making the application of the skills into a routine (Whetten, 2007). A useful tool for skill assessment is to provide students in the case course a set of terms/models/approaches and ask them to self-assess on a five point scale of: 0=I have never heard of it; 1 = I have heard of the term; 2 = I could define it; 3 = I could explain it to someone else; and 4 = I can use it to solve problems (Ambrose *et al.*, 2010, 29). A grading rubric (see Ambrose *et al.*, 2010, Appendix C for a useful example) needs to be devised to give directed developmental feedback. Assignments graded may be reflections or journals, class discussion, team projects, small group work, presentations, and/or peer feedback. Evaluation methods should tie directly to course goals and comprise a mix of individual and group work.

During the course, skill assessment is recommended to help the professor chart the self-declared skills of the students and therefore, make decisions about the time spent on various tools and techniques. The approach is to describe each tool, give an example of how it is used in a particular instance, and then gradually require the learner to use the tool with less guidance (Goodman & O'Brien, 2012). We now turn to the first course topic, the case problem-solving method to be used in the course.

Teaching the Case Problem-Solving Method

The simplest analytic method is PAAD: Problem, Analysis, Alternatives, and Decision. This could be a useful starting point in the course for an uncomplicated case. Then, to allow students to gradually build their skills, a more complicated scheme is SAORTR: Situation, Analysis, Options, Recommendations, Timeline, and Risks. This could be used for a second more elaborate practice case. A more complex analytic framework we have developed that uses the rhetorical tetrad of fact, logic, metaphor, and story (McCloskey, 1990) is WNPAQQRIOS: Who are You/We, Narrative, Problem, Alternatives, Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis, Recommendations, Implementation, Obstacles, and Story. Each of these elements will be described.

Who Are You?/Who Are We?

First off, the team has to decide what role they are to take and who they are presenting to. The straightforward choice is for the team to be consultants and the judges to be the board of directors. There may be an advantage for other more creative choices, such as being an internal working group presenting to a management team.

Narrative

The team's job at the narrative stage of the analysis is to figure out what is happening, to make sense of the story of the case. The test here is for each member to be able to tell the story of how the organization got to where it is in the case.

Problem Statement

This has to be short, accurately capture the essence of the case, and not offer a solution. It is worth spending time making sure you have a very good problem statement. Efraty and Stratton (1995) describe the "New Truck" exercise where the supervisor of five drivers has been allocated a new truck for the use of his team. The question is how to frame the problem statement. This short case can be given to students as an in-class exercise, done individually, to write a problem statement. These can then be anonymously written on the whiteboard. Look for problem statements that contain an answer, such as "Give the new truck to Worker 1 due to seniority." Better problem statements capture the essence of the problem and suggest neither the criteria to be used for the solution nor the actual solution to be reached. A better new truck problem statement would be: "How should the new truck and four of the five existing trucks be allocated among the five drivers?" The problem statement is a key part of the Executive Summary.

Alternatives – The 6-MECE System

In this system, the alternatives come before the analysis. MECE stands for Mutually Exclusive and Collectively Exhaustive (Minto, 2009). A good analysis needs alternatives that are separate from each other (Mutually Exclusive) and that altogether cover the ground of what is possible (Collectively Exhaustive). In our system alternative 1 is always to do what has just been done before and alternative 6 is always to exit. The other four alternatives need to be reasonable and distinct from one another. As an example, the problem is which world city should host the summer Olympics in 2032. Alternative 1 is the same city that hosts in 2028, which is Los Angeles. Alternative 6 is to cancel the games and make a case for that. Alternatives 2 through 5 need to be four world cities large enough to host, which could be: 2. Tokyo. 3. Moscow. 4. Karachi. 5. Jakarta. Case teams need to develop and weight decision criteria. In this example those might be hotel rooms, stadiums, venues, and transportation infrastructure. The next step is to use quantitative and qualitative tools to analyze each of the alternatives against the criteria. It is important that the analysis drives the choice and the team does not pick a favoured alternative and then work to find evidence in support. In the presentation, each team member could make a case for one alternative and its pros and cons, just as a city team would represent its alternative to the Olympic site selection committee. To develop innovative alternatives, the Doblin 10 Types of Innovation methods may be used to find creative variations of an organization's economic model, network, structure, process, program performance, program system, service, channel, brand, and customer engagement (Keeley, Pikkel, Quinn, & Walters, 2013). The Doblin Innovation Tactics Cards (see http://www.doblin.com/ten-types#cards) are a tool designed to help this innovation practice.

Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis gives hard results, numbers, tables, and graphs. Any quantitative data provided in a case must be analyzed and important results reported. When required, reasonable assumptions may be used and reported in the analysis. Qualitative analysis cannot be ignored. When the case provides descriptions of the people involved, their names and backgrounds, and possibly something about their personalities and relationships, a qualitative analysis will determine the importance of that data. Business analytic tools are taught in every course. In the case competitions course, these must be reviewed and their application to cases taught. Useful tools for IB case competitions described in Carpenter and Dunung (2015) are: Culture (p. 97); the why, where, and how of International Expansion (p. 362); PESTEL (p. 371); CAGE (p. 391); SWOT (p. 460); and the Strategy Diamond (p. 480). Other important tools are the 5P's of Marketing, the Customer Empathy Map (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010, p. 130), Porter's Five Forces (2008), and Financials. For a Balance Sheet analysis, teach students to look for trends and what is getting larger or smaller by a significant amount. They should also look at total assets over time and see if they are going up or down. For the Income statement, students need to learn to look for expenses growing faster or slower than revenues, the net income and profit or loss. A profit, along with the amounts in the balance sheet, tells the team what kind of resources the organization has for the changes they might recommend. For example, a balance sheet showing total assets of 10 million and net income in the last year of 1 million, implies that spending about 10% of net income is reasonable. A change plan in this example that spends only 2% of net income might not be enough to make an impact. Similarly, for the company that makes a million a year in net profit, a team that decides to spend all of that million in one year may be spending too much. The financial analysis tells the team what kind of budget they have to work with. Cash flow might also be important. Teach the team to divide monthly expenses into liquid assets to determine the burn rate and how many months of liquidity are left. Once the team has chosen a plan and budget, costs must be estimated. The result will be a Gantt chart of spending by project over time. The budget can be built from the bottom-up. For example, a person is going on vacation and has 5000 monetary units to spend and a maximum of three weeks. Four alternatives are: Hot air ballooning in France for 10 days; Cruising Greek and Turkish islands and coasts for two weeks; Touring England by bicycle for three weeks; and Journeying by bus across 12 European countries in 20 days. Each spending item needs to be estimated: Airfare, hotel or Airbnb for how many nights what cost per night; attraction fees; meals, and so on. Teams can be taught to imagine the person going on vacation, day by day, and estimating the cost of everything they will do. It is all put into a spreadsheet, with totals for each category of expense and then a grand total of how much to spend.

Recommendations

Using this analytic framework the team has the ability to present one or more recommendations. These can be shown as alternatives supported by a choice matrix. Occasionally a case will require that something be done immediately, which is Recommendation 1, then the medium term Recommendation 2, and the longer-term plan of Recommendation 3.

Implementation

The implementation phase is likely the most important piece of a case competition presentation and therefore requires significant instructional time. Each recommendation needs strategies, tactics, and implementation phases. It is important to be totally clear on the recommended spending on each item. Teams can add Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to the implementation plan. Students in the case team course can be taught to create a chart of each tactical element in their plan and then how to measure it. This shows that the plan has been thought through and its implementation can be tracked. The KPI data shows weaknesses in the implementation so that remedial action can be taken.

Obstacles

What stands in the way of this plan working? How can these problems be avoided or circumvented? The concept of a "premortem" can be taught, that you assume two years have passed and the plan failed. Why did it fail? The premortem technique is to imagine all the reasons that might have caused it to fail. With those reasons, how can those problems be solved or avoided in advance? The Institute of Risk Management (2002, p. 4) categorizes risks as: Financial (e.g. interest rates), Strategic (e.g. what competitors will do in response to the plan), Operational (e.g. a risk to the implementation of the plan), and Hazard (e.g. environmental catastrophe), with each type being both Internally and Externally Driven. For example, Internally Driven Financial Risks are Liquidity and Cash Flow, Externally Driven Financial Risks are Interest Rates, Foreign Exchange, and Credit. Students can also learn how to create a risk matrix of probability of occurrence and impact on the organization. This will show which risks are most important. A more sophisticated version of the 2x2 probability and impact matrix is the Risk Heat Map (Kaplan & Mikes, 2012). It shows what the risk is and how the mitigation lessens that risk.

Story

The last element of the analytic framework is story. Every story has a hero or heroine. Someone we care about. There is a problem that must be confronted and resolved. But it's not easy. There is conflict, drama, and tension. Then a potential resolution. Student teams need to learn to present the "this is where we are now" narrative very clearly. It is the job of the team's opening speaker to make sure the presentation is done in this story format. The Pixar Pitch is a useful framework: 1. Once upon a time there was …; 2. Every day …; 3. One day …: 4. Because of that …; 5. Because of that …; 6. Until finally … (Pink, 2013). Make sure that teams have a "hook" at the start of their story, a way to get the audience immediately involved. Two generic hooks are a question asked or a pain point. A case team's presentation can also be framed as an innovation or strategy story. The opening would then be a well-known story such as the invention of Velcro or Steve Jobs' return to Apple, and how the story is similar to that faced in the case. The innovation story about the invention of Velcro is that the inventor went on a walk through the woods and came home with some burrs on his socks. He looked closely at the burrs and saw many small hooks. Then on the socks were cotton loops. The moral of that story is that to be innovative you have to keep your eyes open and then investigate when something looks interesting. The strategy story about Steve Jobs coming back to Apple (Isaacson, 2011) is that he discovered that there were a huge variety of products and peripherals being made and marketed. Jobs recognized that the company was unfocused and doing too many things. He walked to a whiteboard during a meeting and drew a 2x2 chart with one axis labeled home/office and the other regular user/power user. He then said we are going to make one product in each of the four cells and that's all. Everything else was cut. This strategic focus allowed Apple to recover.

How to Work Effectively With Teams

A case competitions course needs a class meeting on how to work together effectively and how to manage the team's time. First, explore in class why a team and its coach/advisor wish to be part of a case competition and/or their current course. Three reasons might be: (i) To learn and grow; (ii) To positively represent the school; (iii) To have fun. (i) To learn and grow: Case competitions are microcosms of the total business school experience. They are a chance to use all acquired knowledge, to acquire more, and to apply that knowledge to case situations. (ii) To positively represent your school means that team members are available for team meetings, will attend the social events put on by the host school, and that the team travels together to and from the competition. (iii) To have fun is important for engagement and enjoyment of the process of both a class and of a case competition.

The stages of team development model (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) should be followed in building the team. First is forming, in which team members get to know each other and honestly tell each other why they wanted to be on the team. Each person, one at a time, needs to state their competitive advantages to the others so that the team knows its resources. The next stage, storming, requires an open discussion among team members with positive conflict in order to develop team norms.

Norming is the process of deciding how the team will work. One key norm to discuss and agree upon is team roles. Four standard roles that need to be filled on a team are: Team Lead, Presentation Slides, Speaker, and Numbers. Each team member will take on one or more of these roles, often moving back and forth between them within a case analysis or across cases.

One job of the Team Lead is liaison with the team coach/advisor. A second is decision making, especially breaking ties when discussion is not coming to a natural conclusion. A third is moving the team along during the resolution phase when the team is preparing their case answer or when presenting. Finally, the Team Lead role player needs to keep thinking of the big picture: Does the answer make sense? Is the presentation coherent and in the right order? And the Team Lead needs to assign presentation roles: who will talk when, what they will cover, and how long will they take.

The Presentation Slides role is mainly the creation of the slides for the team's presentation. If the competition allows Internet research, this person needs to develop the slide template and practice with it. This may include purchasing the rights for a template when allowed by a competition (for example from digitalriver.com), contracting with a developer to make one for the team (upwork.com or fiverr.com), making one from scratch, or adapting with permission an existing presentation. High definition pictures can be sourced from pixabay.com, and Bing.com search images can be creative commons licensed and therefore used without royalty payment. If the competition is Internet closed, the Presentation Slides person needs to develop their own template that they are able to quickly build for each competition case. This person needs to practice making the template slides quickly and using tools for auto updating tables, conditional formatting for exhibits, how to convert .pdf tables into Excel spreadsheets (see http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/tips/pdf2excel), and turning data into maps (Chen, 2019). The person in the Presentation Slides role also needs some design training (see Few, 2009, 2012; Reynolds, 2012), to know something about data visualization (Tufte, 2006), and how to storyboard the presentation (Finch, 1973), which is to put the slides into the best order to tell the case story.

The student taking on the Speaker role is often the team member best and most confident at opening and closing the presentation and relating with the judging panel. The Speaker role can be the person who fields questions from the panel and hands them out to team members for answers. The Speaker is watching the judges on the panel during the presentation itself and then during the question and answer period to pick up on their body language and non-verbal communication, and then using that information to adjust answers as required to benefit the team.

The Numbers role team member needs to be able to take exhibits from the case, turn them into charts or graphs with a clear take-away message, and should be familiar with MS Excel Power Query for data analysis. The Numbers role person will detail the implementation plan cost breakdown, the time line, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of what to measure and how, and expected returns.

Next comes the performing stage of the presentation. After the presentation the team needs to do an after-action review by writing down each of the judge's questions and the team's answer. Their objective is to find the intent behind the questions and then revise their proposed answer. Last is the adjourning phase. Teams need to be given time to meet to debrief and help everyone learn how to do better next time. Team members might also ask the coach/advisor for an individual meeting for developmental feedback.

Presentation Skills

Presentation skills, tips and tricks, and practice will be a key element of the case competitions course. Teams often present one person after the other in a one-two-three-four fashion and then often the opening speaker wraps up the presentation. Another possibility is to have two team members at the front of the stage for the first half of the presentation then switch with the back pair for the second half. Team members need to be taught to think of the time they have with the judging panel as less a presentation and more a meeting of equals working on a problem. Presentation timing should have a plan. One example is a three minute opening with a hook that is relevant, true, and ties to the proposal, an executive summary of what is going to be covered including the answer suggested, and possibly a catch phrase to sum up the team's solution. This is followed by four alternatives of a minute each and then ten minutes on the team's choice, implementation, costs/budget, returns/KPIs/measures, risks and mitigations. The last three minutes is returning to the opening story and a review of the executive summary how the problems have been answered. One approach to the question period is to listen to questions from the judging panel and give the best answers possible. This approach is one of clarification, often going back to the slide where the topic was covered by the team. A second approach is to consider judge questions as stimuli to the team's thinking. Here the team needs to look beyond the question asked and seek the deeper issue that has not been asked. A third approach is to see the question period as a chance to thrive and be creative, using ideas and exercises from Improvisational Theatre and Comedy (Leonard & Yorton, 2015; Koppett, 2013). Using the first rule of improvisation, teams can be taught that whatever the member of the judging panel says, the answer given is "Yes, and …". A class session can be devoted to improvisation and listening skills. A fun exercise to work on listening and creativity is the "One word story" started with one group member with one word and then added to one word at a time as the story is built by group members sitting in a circle.

Consider video recording in-class presentations for later analysis and debriefing either collectively or for each individual group. Another activity for a class is to watch a more senior team present the same case, or watch recorded case team presentations from competitions (search for "case competition" on YouTube).

Attending an International Case Competition

A session can be held on travel, what to expect from the competition and other teams, competition structure, judging, and social events.

Travel

Adapting to time changes can be difficult. When a case competition is held in a time zone that is +7 to +18 hours to your local time the body's clock will have more adjustment to make. Competitions normally begin with a social welcome event the first night, often on a Sunday, with the first case given out the next morning. A team that travels and arrives just in time for the social event will often be struggling with the time change the first few days. If teams can afford the extra hotel cost it can be helpful to arrive a few days early to give everyone a chance to acclimate. Country differences must also be anticipated. The team will have to make sure they have the proper cell phone plans, electric adapters and power bars, health and travel insurance, required visa and current passport. Team advisors who have previously travelled to a competition can develop a list of tips and tricks for each destination to share with the next year's team.

What to Expect From the Competition and Other Teams

For many students an international case competition will be a once in a lifetime opportunity to realize all the benefits from the experience. They should expect to meet like-minded business students from around the world in an environment that is both social and competitive. Some teams are definitely focused on winning. One reason for this is that winning an international case competition can be used for their school's promotional purposes and then for the coach/advisor to ask for increased funding of future competitions. Student grades in a case competition course may be tied to their performance in the competition. Other teams might therefore stick to themselves, be careful in sharing information with other teams, or might be experienced in several international competitions. Schools sometimes select teams by conducting tryouts (for a full team and/or individuals), recruiting students from a business strategy class, case club or case competitions course, or choosing an internal competition winner. Teams from a country or region sometimes set up an internal training schedule against each other before they venture out to match against a broader set of international teams.

Competition Structure

Typically the teams at a competition are divided into pools and each pool competes among themselves for the chance to make the finals. There is often a random draw held at the welcome event to determine which team goes into each of the pools. Pools are sometimes "seeded" with, for example, one team from Asia, one team from North America, one team from Europe, and one team from Australia/New Zealand in order to maximize the cultural variation among teams and to ensure that multiple teams all from one world region do not find themselves competing only with each other. The time that students have to work a case varies from three hours to 40 hours. In a case competitions course it is advised to use three hour cases to fit the normal length of a class session. At some competitions, research is expected of teams in order to support their answer. Information available on the internet or via databases from their home institution can usually be used whereas any research reports that would need to be paid for within the competition are not allowed.

Judging

Judges are volunteers asked to use their business acumen to determine the best presentation. Their perspective changes depending on the business culture in the competition location. Often the key consideration from a judging point of view is the practicality and cost/benefit of the team solution presented. The language of international case competitions is often English. Teams presenting to judges who are not native English speakers should make sure that their points are straightforward and clear. This ensures that the team's message crosses any language barrier that may be present. Teams should expect that while some judges will have read the case in detail, others may have had a short briefing on the case, and others may be late additions to the judging panel who have not had the chance to read any case material. Teams need to anticipate these variations in judge preparation.

Social Events

Since teams travel from long distances to participate, social events are created for teams to network and to experience the destination. Students need to be advised beforehand about the need to manage their energy and how to be social while still being ready to compete the next day.

CASE MASTER: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

The IB Case Competition course allows the student to become a Case Artisan, however the final step of Case Master requires that person get live experience in other countries and cultures through exposure to and participation in International Business Case competitions. The primary focus at this stage is no longer case thinking but how to become competitors. The future of work will be both cooperative and competitive, at the same time. It will be global and interdisciplinary. The case team member now needs to expand his/her worldview to encompass work, organizations, and society. Other teams are competitors however they are also peers who need to be engaged with to share knowledge and experience. Work in the future will be global and competitive and organizations, such as international consulting firms, need staff who can work easily and well with team members from many different cultures and for clients whose organizations span many countries.

Preference in the future will be for lived experience over abstract concepts (Whittington, 2016). It is the student prepared in case thinking by the case competitions course who will be able, with coaching and support and IB case competition experiences will be able to make sense of those lived experiences and assimilate the learning into the technology-based Internet society of the future as the management consulting profession is dismantled (Susskind and Susskind, 2015) and reformulated into the new world of work.

DISCUSSION

This work is important because it provides a set of ideas, resources and templates for the professor about to offer in International Business case competitions course. It adds significantly to the published literature on such courses, their plans and practices.

Research is needed on international case competitions, describing their methods, benefits, and how they are evolving over time. A crucial question to be addressed is what separates winning from non-winning teams. Is their competitive advantage in their knowledge and preparation, problem definition, analysis of that problem, implementation plan and costing, the presentation itself, or other factors? We also need more information on other case competition courses being taught worldwide, their designs and methods, and what best practices have been identified to maximize student learning and growth. Also required is evidence of what works when students who have taken the case competition course attend an event. What tools and techniques helped them the most and should therefore be emphasized the next time the course is delivered, and which can be de-emphasized?

Teaching the International Business case competitions course can be a great learning experience for students, the professor, and any alumni or business community judges who participate. Then, if travelling to a competition with class members is possible, it will be a tremendous opportunity to close the loop on their learning by coaching and advising the team as they compete, and watching their performance. The results in terms of placing in the competition will be less important than the potential learning. The next offering of the course will undoubtedly benefit enormously from such intense hands-on learning and feedback. We strongly encourage professors to teach the case competitions course and to travel with teams. It can be a professionally fulfilling and rewarding experience taking your students through the four evolutionary stages of business case proficiency and helping them become case masters.

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