Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VII

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Compare and contrast different strategic models.
   1.1 Assess the case study method as a bridge between theory and practice.

4. Analyze the processes for formulating corporate strategy.
   4.1 Identify strategies used by competitive businesses.
   4.2 Evaluate case study material for possible solutions.

Reading Assignment

In order to access the following resource(s), click the link(s) below:


Click here to access a transcript of the video.


Unit Lesson

This unit of the course is a company analysis case study. The case study process has been a popular method of teaching for many years (Wheelen, Hunger, Hoffman, & Bamford, 2015). It is still a key learning tool (Sparks & Langford, 2012). This process allows you to drill into details and specifics of the assignment.

The case study method has proved to be an excellent way for students to improve their critical thinking skills by requiring them to make assumptions, be open-minded, assess the accuracy of data, have an opinion, and to objectively analyze the risks. Students are, therefore, intellectually challenged by being asked to analyze, interpret, evaluate, infer, reflect, and make decisions. In this way, learning becomes experiential, deepening the students’ understanding of the technical content, its use, and its value (Bannon, 2014). Imagine reading material from various sources on a given topic and then having to apply this content to various companies, situations, and other areas of analysis. This case study assignment gives you the opportunity to not only learn and apply analysis, but to explore research and data for your paper.

The pedagogical approach taken during a case study is important in that it “involves studying actual business situations, written as an in-depth presentation of a company, its market, and its strategic decisions, in order to prove a manager’s or the student’s problem-solving ability” (Case Studies, p. 71). This helps students prepare to deal with real-world problems.

In their article, “A Review of Case-Based Learning Practices in an Online MBA Program: A Program-Level Case Study”, Lee, Lee, Liu, Bonk, and Magjuka summarize the case-based benefits in that it allows learners to:

1. Apply theoretical knowledge to real school contexts
2. Reason critically about complex situations and recommend courses of actions
3. Develop self-knowledge and recognize our own assumptions
4. Clarify personal beliefs about teaching
5. Compare and evaluate their own and others' perspectives
6. Develop the practice of reflection (Lee et al., 2009, pp. 179-180)

Case studies allow students to develop their critical and analytical reasoning skills and problem-solving processes. A case study provides students authentic experiences of business situations. Any time one is given the chance to research, it supports three critical skills: researching, writing, and analyzing. These skills could be compared to learning how to ride a bicycle, and once learned by the student, carried on in other areas.

A student must make an initial decision on their topic, which may appear easy at first, but it is the most important decision made. The selection sets the tone for future studies and development of the topic. One can pick a larger company, thus making more information available for analysis and review. However, the study may be common enough and not seem as very specific to student's desire to develop their own analysis and review of a company. A smaller company, or one the student works for in life, may provide more for the specific wants and needs of the student, but there might not be as much information or sources to rely on for a paper. These pros and cons are important to note, so take care in making this decision.
Regardless of the level or type of case study, students get to expand their knowledge of a given area of research. The main goals are to develop stronger skills in writing, researching, and analyzing. Bringing in some life experiences often is beneficial, but one risks the issue of writing in conversational tone and lowering the academic quality. It is critically important for students to reach out to their course instructor for more guidance and support when choosing a topic and deciding how to properly develop the analysis.

There are multiple aids and supports for this assignment. Please take time to read the expectations from the instructor and to access the CSU Student Support Center and the CSU Online Library. Remember that your professor is here to help you through this process, so reach out for help before you get too far behind in the writing process. Writing takes practice, and most papers go through several edits to ensure quality. The key to successful writing is to get going early and to reach out for support when necessary!

References


