

ROBERT H. LEE
GRADUATE SCHOOL



THE CASE METHODOLOGY

Orientation

The Major Purposes of Cases

Cases are a story that provide a *context* in which:

- Professors can introduce ***tools and concepts***
- Students can practice applying tools and concepts, and engage in critical thinking
- Students can become more comfortable with ambiguity

Traditional Cases & Live Cases/Decision Briefs

Traditional cases

- Restricted to info supplied; fixed point in time

Live Cases/Decision briefs

- Limited information; live; need to explore and find more information

For both approaches

- Identify and prioritize issues
- Analyze data
- Make recommendations

Practice at management decision making

- Systematic
- Logical
- Evidence based

How and Why we Choose Cases

Choose a variety of:

- Industries
- Geographical settings
- Times
- Integration themes

What sort of things could you learn in case analysis that might be transferable across industries, geographies, and time periods?

Macro Elements of the Case Method

1. **Issues:** identify, organize, prioritize
2. **Analysis:** underlying causes; insights; alternative actions considered
3. **Recommendations:** supported by your analysis; action plan; caveats

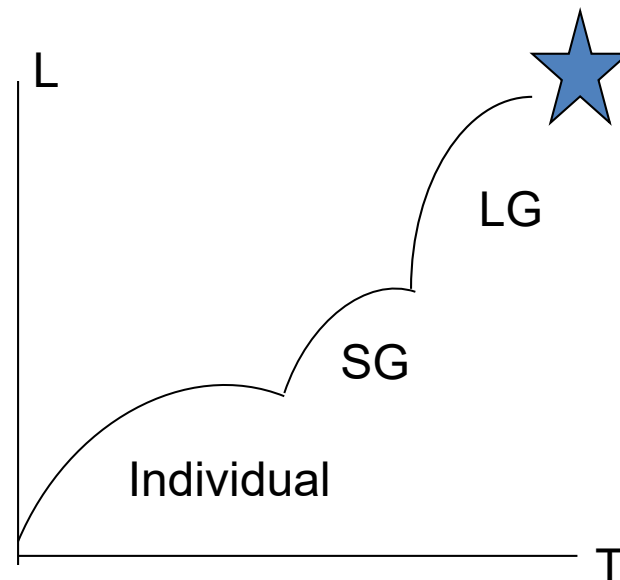
The Case Preparation Stages

- A) Identify Issues
- B) Analysis
- C) Alternative Generation
- D) Decision Criteria
- E) Alternative Assessment
- F) Recommendation
- G) Action and Implementation
- H) Missing information and assumptions

Use in preparing a memo, or for class discussion, or for a competition

Stages of Learning in Cases

- Individual Preparation
- Small group discussion
- Large group (class) discussion
- After case personal reflection



Approaching a Case

- **Skim** the case quickly to “get a feel”
- Look to see if a specific **decision** point is identified (typically in the first or last paragraph)
- Then, read the case carefully
 - Can you identify the **issues**?
 - How are they **linked**?
- For cases expect to tackle **interaction** of disciplines, i.e.
 - How does marketing impact the supply chain?
 - How does culture impact accounting practices?
 - Other interactions you might find?

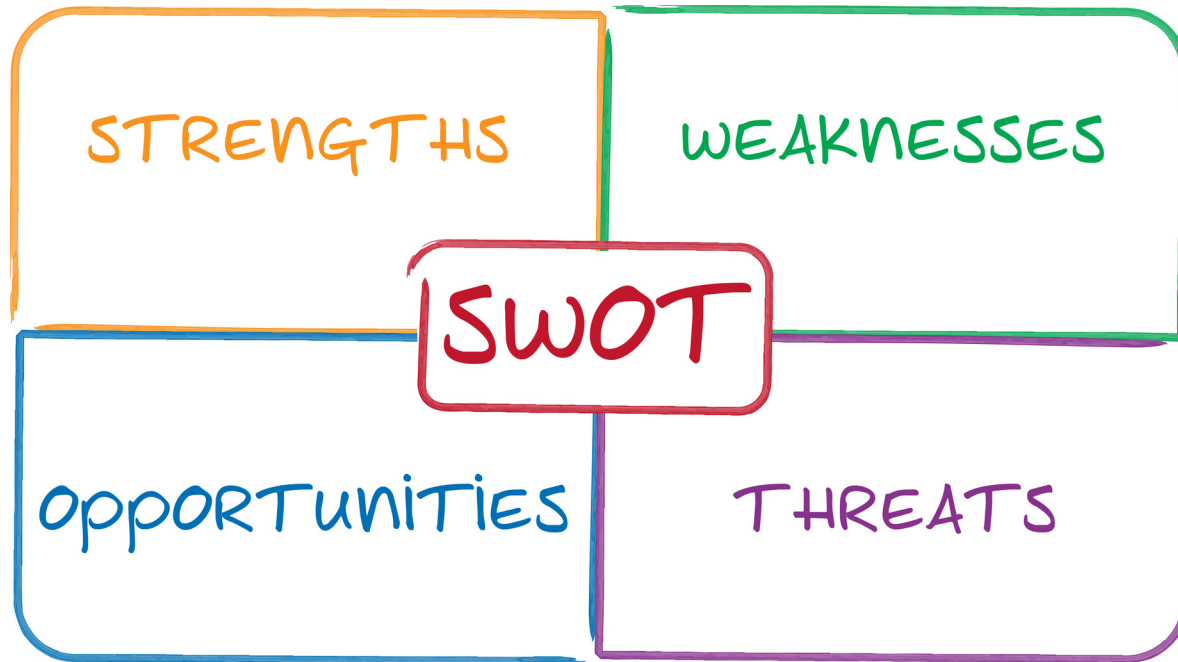
“What, Why, & How”

- “What” course of action should be taken
- “Why” reflects your evidence, directly from the case and distilled from your analysis
- “How” is the implementation plan

Dimensions & Difficulty Levels

- **Analytical:** what is the task?
 - Simpler case has task or issue identified
 - More challenging cases leave identification open for student to identify
- **Conceptual:** what concepts should be used?
 - Simpler cases may have a single, specified concept
 - More challenging cases may require multiple (possibly unspecified) concepts to be tackled
- **Presentation:** the structure of the information
 - Clear and complete or ambiguous and incomplete

Tools for Analysis - Qualitative



Questions to Ask - Quantitative

- How would you analyze the numbers in this case? What numerical framework can you build to inform your thinking?
- What answers (and possible further questions) arise from your analysis?
- Assumptions and identification
- Sensitivity analysis

E.g., Break Even Point Calculations

- BEP (volume)

$$\frac{\text{Fixed Costs}}{\text{Selling Price} - \text{Variable Costs}}$$

- BEP (\$ value)

$$\frac{\text{Fixed Costs}}{\text{CM \%}}$$

– Contribution margin %

$$\text{Selling Price} - \text{Variable Costs}$$

Decision Criteria

- What decision criteria could you use to screen alternative options?
- Hint: List under qualitative and quantitative

Alternative Assessment

- Several options available
- Focus here on “Alternative Analysis Matrix”
- Can do as unweighted or better still, weighted
- Engage team in discussing assumptions behind weightings and ratings

	Cost	Time	Risk	Ease	Add other criteria
Alt 1					
Alt 2					
Alt 3					

Missing Information & Assumptions

- This is important to document for your own notes and sometimes there will be space to include as a caveat(s)
- However, do NOT avoid making a recommended decision saying that there is “not enough information”
- The case default is: you are THE decision-maker, at the time of the case with only the information in the case....what would you do and why?

Student Myths

MYTH: There is one right answer

We are more interested in your demonstrated analysis than the specific recommendation that you come up with

MYTH: I should repeat case info in my paper to show that I have read it

This is a waste of space – don't do it

MYTH: The firm actually chose the right option

In fact, firms often do not make a “good” decision, given the information in the case

Feedback on Cases

- Grades and written feedback
- Exemplars from cohort
- Overall feedback to the class (from professor)
- Feedback through in-class case discussion
- Feedback from peers throughout the process

Professionalism & Integrity

- Professionalism in case-work? What does that mean?
- The value of case learning
- The internet and other temptations

How are Live Cases/Decision Briefs Different from/Similar to Traditional Cases?

- Current time
- Seeking more information is encouraged
- Otherwise – very similar
 - A management decision
 - Messy information that is never complete
- Similar problem
 - Organization and analysis steps will aid you
 - Be systematic

Conclusion

- This has been an INTRODUCTION to CASE METHODOLOGY
- Cases provide frameworks for learning about management issues, analysis and decision making
- There is no single right answer to a case
- With practice you can become good at tackling
 - New industries
 - Complex data
 - Ambiguity
 - Building your “toolkit” and making good tool selections
 - And respond effectively to problems and opportunities