

BUSINESS CASE ASSIGNMENT

Comm 390

For this assignment, you will work as a member of a group to develop and write a *Business Case* report directed to the management of your own company.

A Business Case is a document that details a specific business problem, considers a broad range of options to address that problem, and then builds the case in favour of one of those options. It provides an argument that justifies the expense, the risk and the resources necessary, as well as any potential benefits for, or risk to, the reputation or brand. It usually has an emphasis on budget, but also considers other factors.

The purpose of the report is to help a specific company make the best decision about an important initiative by fully exploring the potential benefits and problems associated with the options available. Each group will select one company (a list of recommended choices is provided) and identify a specific problem facing this company. The primary task of your group is to explore options for addressing this problem. The final document is expected to provide sufficient information for the company to move forward on the initiative by making an informed and effective decision.

A Business Case requires a pragmatic rationale, explanations of solutions and benefits, as well as options rejected. It forces management to consider the solution within its context, and as an alternative to business as usual, providing a framework that helps decision makers prioritize options.

A Business Case must provide a thorough analysis of the costs and benefits. This is difficult because it requires guessing how much something will cost before it is purchased or implemented. Therefore, assumptions must be based on something that is comparable, and must be stated very clearly. Moreover, analyzing costs and benefits also requires attributing benefits to things that are difficult or impossible to measure, such as customer satisfaction or culture.

This is a collaborative project so all members of your group are expected to contribute equally to preparing, writing, and presenting the plan. While each member of the team should take on a role that makes effective use of their capabilities, **everyone should contribute substantially to the writing of the assignment submission.**

One objective of this assignment is for you to develop teamwork skills, part of this is learning how to deal with members who don't contribute equally. If this is the case, you may need to:

- Discuss it with the member
- Use persuasion to motivate the member
- Seek assistance from me
- Ask the member to leave the project

Members who are asked to leave a group because they haven't done their share of the work will have to come up with their own venture and complete the assignment themselves.

DELIVERABLES - There are Three Deliverables for this Assignment

Deliverable One – Memo & Work Plan

In the **Work Plan** identify all key deliverables with team lead and deadline for each.

Write a **1.5-2 pages Memo** to your instructor, identify:

- A specific company you will use for your case;
- Details of the issue, purpose or problem facing the company;
- Criteria you will use to assess each alternative;
- At least three of the best alternatives you will consider; and,
- Justification for your most favoured alternative.

Due: Thursday, March 17, by email (*CC all group members)

Evaluated as a Class Activity.

Deliverable Two – Business Case Report

Write a complete Business Case Report identifying a company, an issue needing resolution, a robust options evaluation, and one best solution for the issue with thorough justification. The report should be a maximum of **14 pages or 4500 words** including an executive summary. Title page, table of contents and appendices are not included in the page count. Use standard margins and 12 point font. *You will be deducted one point for every page or 100 words (or portion thereof) you are over the limit.* The report should not be less than 10 pages or 3500 words.

Due: Friday, April 10, 11:59pm via turnitin

85% of your grade for this assignment

Deliverable Three - Presentation

As part of this assignment, your group will make a 5-8 minute informal presentation to test your ideas. You will present during class to the other groups who will offer comments and suggestions for improvement. The presentation will briefly introduce the company, present the project problem, identify the 3 best alternatives and discuss the recommended option. This might be different than what you thought the best options would be when you submitted your memo.

All members of your group must take an active speaking role in the presentation and talk about specific elements of the report. No one should simply act as the announcer.

You are encouraged to use a presentation program such as PowerPoint, Keynote, or Prezi to present the highlights of your plan.

Due: Slides due the night before your present: Date TBC via turnitin. All members of the group must be present in class for the presentation.

15% of your grade for this assignment, includes the feedback you offer.

REPORT STRUCTURE

Your report should include the following sections:

1. **Executive Summary**
2. **Background Information** ownership structure, business model, brief history, revenue sources
3. **Problem Identification:** description of the problem, current state of business or goal
4. **Project Goals** including *criteria* you will use to assess each option/alternative
5. **Project Assumptions & Constraints** what will you need to assume to complete the task and what will limit the success of the business project (e.g. size, cost, strength of competitors)
6. **Methodology:** Identify what specifically the company will do to determine the most appropriate option. E.g. market research, focus group, pilot project, etc.
7. **Performance Measures:** Specify how you will determine the effectiveness of the project.
8. **Risk Analysis:** Identify and quantify the major risks inherent in the project and suggest possible mitigation strategies.
9. **Options and Alternatives Analysis:** In order to determine the best option, you must consider a wide variety of options, even those that might at first seem far fetched. You will look to competitors and similarities in other industries to determine what might work and how you might apply it to the business you choose. Be sure that each option you identify directly addresses the problem and fits within a set of criteria that is clearly articulated.
 - a. Include at least 4 options intended to solve the problem you have identified. In addition, include a "do-nothing" or status quo option. For each option provide a description and rationale for why it is worth serious consideration.
 - b. Provide a *Cost-Benefit Analysis* for each option or alternative, the more feasible options will require more detail. Consider how much each option is likely to cost (dollar values are best, but you may use high, medium or low if you're unable to determine an approximate dollar value). Also consider the benefits of each option including those benefits to which a dollar value cannot be assigned such as culture or ethics.
 - c. Identify the significant risks of each option or alternative (e.g. financial, social, environmental, reputational or operational risk).
 - d. Provide a rationale for rejected options.
10. **Recommended Option:** Choose one best option and provide a complete justification, including quantifiable and unquantifiable risks and benefits for that option.
11. **Implementation Plan & Timeline:** Provide a plan and a timeline for your recommendation, including key milestones and resources (people, money, equipment, etc.) required.
12. **Conclusion:** Two to three paragraphs summarizing the key points and reiterating your recommended best option and rationale but without explaining it all over again.
13. **Bibliography:** Use APA style. Include at least 8 sources.

Choosing a Suitable Company:

Choose an existing company that is probably public, and has enough information available for you to carefully consider the problem and the options. Companies that sell products are easier to work with than companies that provide a service. You are required to choose a small to medium size Vancouver (or BC) based company, as you will likely want to visit the company to gather research. A list of suggested companies is provided in Appendix A.

Once you have chosen a company, identify a problem or an area of improvement required for improved functioning and/or profitability. This might be a need for:

- a. Cost savings
 - i. E.g. realized through improved efficiency found in new equipment or software
- b. Improved sustainability
 - i. E.g. improved hiring practices or reduced carbon footprint
- c. Increased market share
 - i. I.e. a marketing campaign that will seek to secure a certain market segment
- d. Improved competitor position
 - i. E.g. How does Milestones compete with Cactus Club?

You will need to identify the expected annual sales for the company based on previous years revenue. Determine if the company is a start up, mid-maturity or mature. Identify an average growth rate for the last 3-5 years. Determine if the company is growing quickly, moderately or slowly. This will help you identify options that will meet the needs of the company.

You will have to make assumptions about the company and its internal workings. State those assumptions clearly. This process will push you to think through the business problem in detail and identify the necessary information. In many instances it will be necessary to identify costs as *high*, *medium* or *low* when exact values cannot be determined.

Teamwork

This is a collaborative project, so all members of your group are expected to contribute equally to preparing, writing, and presenting the plan. While all members of the team should take on a role that makes effective use of their capabilities, everyone should contribute substantially to the writing of the assignment submission.

One objective of this assignment is for you to develop teamwork skills so that you'll be better prepared to work on group projects in your profession. Part of this process is learning how to deal with members who don't contribute equally.

If a member of your group isn't contributing equally, you may need to:

- Discuss it with the member,
- Use persuasion to motivate the member,
- Seek assistance from the instructor, and/or

- Ask the member to leave the project.

Members who are asked to leave a group because they haven't done their share of the work will be required to come up with their own business case and complete the assignment individually.

Submission/Marking

Only one member of your group needs to submit the final version of the business case. It must be submitted on the due date in the manner prescribed in class.

The assignment will be graded using the standard marking rubric, including a score for the class presentation. All members of the group are expected to contribute equally and will receive the same grade for the assignment. However, if the group unanimously determines that an individual's contribution is unsatisfactory to the extent that it negatively affects team performance or results, or causes other group members to carry that individual's load, the underperforming group member will receive a lower individual grade.

Late assignments will be penalized 10% per day. The last day you can submit this assignment is Friday, April 15.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. **Analytical Skills:** consider quantitative *and* qualitative data to identify, analyze and develop business opportunities or solve business problems.
2. **Critical Thinking:** evaluate a business and make reasoned well supported decisions about how it might improve and the trade offs inherent in "improvements."
3. **Sustainability:** in addition to profitability, consider measures of success such as sustainability and ethics.
4. **Research & Reading:** interpret primary source material, such as a company website and audited financials, to determine issues and solutions that will be appropriate for the company in question.
5. **Applied Learning:** apply what you've learned at Sauder to a real world business.
6. **Group Work:** work effectively in a team to come to a common conclusion and deliver one high quality project.

APPENDIX A

Provided below is a list of local companies that you should consider for this assignment. This list is by no means exhaustive; however, working with a local company is preferable because of its proximity and accessibility. If you prefer considering a small to medium sized BC (or non local) company that is not in this list — as long as it meets the criteria for the type of company this assignment asks you to consider — please obtain the approval of your instructor.

- 6S Marketing Inc.
- Choices Grocery
- Clevest Solutions Inc.
- Daniel Hospitality Group
- Global Relay Communications
- Great Little Box Co. Ltd.
- Habanero Consulting Group Inc.
- Harbour Air
- HootSuite Media Inc.
- Burnaby Board of Trade
- Rennie & Associates
- Kardium Inc.
- Nurse Next Door Home Healthcare Services
- Odlum Brown Ltd.
- Para Space Landscaping Inc.
- Fountain Tire (150 locations)
- Strangeloop Networks Inc.
- Summerland & District Credit Union
- Tasktop Technologies Inc.
- TMG The Mortgage Group Canada
- Playland
- West Pacific Consulting Group
- Managed Services Inc.
- Whistler Brewing
- Burrowing Owl Winery
- Sequoia Group of Restaurants
- Wow-1Day! Painting Inc.
- YYoga
- Steve Nash Fitness World
- Club 16
- Blue Shore Financial
- Native Shoes
- Cloverdale Paint
- Lanefab Laneway Housing
- Blue Ocean Construction
- Ballet BC
- Vancouver Symphony Orchestra
- The Orpheum
- The Rio Theatre
- BC Ferries Food Services
- Seigel's Bagels
- Science World
- TradeEx Abbotsford
- Abbotsford International Airport
- Pacific Coach Lines
- Vancouver Whitecaps
- BC Lions Football Club
- Covenant House (NGO)
- Loving Spoonful (NGO)
- Kin's Farm Market
- United We Can (Social Enterprise)
- Milestone's Restaurants
- Other as approved by your instructor