TEACHING CASES IN HR

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Why Use Cases?
Principles of Adult Learning

- Self-directed
- Problem-focused (not theory)
- Collaborative (learn from each other interactively)
- Change framing (new ways of looking at issues)
Course Design: Expectations

• [Why...?]
• How do you incorporate cases into the design of your courses?
• What expectations do you set for your students
• What kinds of assessments and grading procedures do you use?

Logic and analysis for decision making
Engage to build collaborative learning
Apply to your organizational context
Reflect and reinforce new ways of thinking
Network to sustain continuous learning
Case Studies on Strategic HR

- Plan questions
- Business first...
- Principles not practice
- System solution
SHRM Case Study Collection


TEACHING RESOURCES
SHRM is committed to empowering HR faculty with the proper tools and resources needed to create better-prepared entry level HR candidates.

These case studies and learning modules are available for faculty and educator use only.

How to Use These Resources in Your Classroom

Case studies take an in-depth look at a specific topic or challenge faced by an organization. Case studies include instructor resources as well as a corresponding student workbook.

Learning modules are provided as a resource for HR faculty to supplement a current teaching plan, to add a new HR content topic to an existing course, or to create a new course. A learning module includes PowerPoint slides, teaching notes, syllabus, recommended readings and instructor's manual. In some instances, the learning module includes accompanying case studies, exercises, progress checks and quizzes. While each learning module is designed to be complete and ready-to-use, we anticipate instructors will invest preparation time in order to customize the module to fit in their own teaching style.

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How I use cases when I teach HR & Staffing

Dr. Beth A Livingston
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My first HR class

→ Spring 2008 (4th year of grad school)

→ HR + Diversity applied to HR

→ Assignments + Cases

Grading:

1. Cases/Homework: 150 points (30%)
   a. Includes brief case analyses & assignments
   b. Between 2-4 pages each
   c. See grading rubric at end of syllabus
   d. Each is worth 15 points (10 total)

2. Participation: 100 points (20%)
   a. Contributions to discussions (quality and quantity)
   b. Attendance
   c. Pop quizzes (5 of them—lowest quiz will be dropped)
   d. Respectfulness towards classmates and instructor
   e. Participation in in-class group assignments/cases
   f. Earn around 3 points per class period (more on quiz days)
   g. This is not a “gimme”!

3. Individual Project: 150 points (30%)
   a. Individual Diversity Experience Response
      i. Instructions included at end of syllabus
      ii. Proposed experience must be submitted by Feb 21st
      iii. Final paper due by April 29th at 5pm via ELearning

4. Group Project: 100 points (20%)
   a. Group Human Resources Analysis
      i. Instructions on ELearning website
      ii. Group presentations begin April 15, 2007
      iii. Select groups by Feb 21st
      iv. PPT slides due April 14 by 11:59pm via ELearning
My first “cases”


Case 2: Texaco A and B
Case 5: Cracker Barrel
Case 6: Eye of the Perfect Storm
What did I learn?

→ Books with cases make it easy to start
→ Clear learning goals make it easy to teach
→ Comprehensive rubrics make it easy to grade
Consider flipping the classroom, even a little!
Cases should serve your learning goals.
Cases can be complex or simple.
Practice asking good questions.
Sample cases I use (MBA class)

- **A Day in the Life of Alex Sander: Driving in the Fast Lane at Landon Care Products**
  - How do you deal with a recalcitrant “star”?

- **Mabel's Labels: Leading in a Results-Only Work Environment**
  - How do you maintain a strong culture with a ROWE approach?

- **Role Play: Confronting a Necessary Evil: The Firing of Alex Robins (A)**
  - How do you fire someone?
Sample cases I use (undergrad)

“Tanglewood case” (accompanying “Staffing Organizations” book, written by John Kammeyer-Mueller)
  • From staffing strategy to data analysis to selection decision making

Treadway Tire Company: Job Dissatisfaction and High Turnover at the Lima Plant
  • Satisfaction --> Turnover
Thanks!
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Teaching Cases in HR

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My own case teaching journey

• Postgraduate teaching context
  • Degree programs vs. Executive Education
• Case method is main instructional approach
  • 60-70% of sessions are typically case based
  • Foundational lectures and exercises complement cases
• Training on case teaching and regular teaching groups
• Most courses follow a general management perspective
  • HR taught to a managerial audience, not to HR specialists
• Student expectations:
  • Case as primary reading BEFORE class
• Grading approach:
  • Class participation – case as vehicle to stimulate learning
  • Team assignments: HR analysis of a start-up/scale-up company
What makes for a rich case

1. Challenges of finding a real gem
2. Fungibility/versatility: case lends itself across audiences and courses
3. A decision problem that splits the class
4. Attractive setting
Classic HR cases that I use

Microsoft’s Vega Project: Developing People and Products

In March 1998, Jim Kaplan, product unit manager for Mi Group, was deep in thought as he left one of his regular meetings. 3-year Microsoft veteran, MacLellan had spent the past three development of an innovative interactive learning system design and retention. Kaplan felt a great deal of pride in the project experience he'd had as a manager—not only because of the product even more important, because he’d been able to coach and develop.

Now, however, his young protege had just told him that management role and wanted to concentrate on writing software Engineer (SDE), as they were more formally designated. Walkin sort through the questions and concerns racing through his mind support such a radical career shift when Matt had five years of experience but had never worked as a professional software deve manage such a move, not only to Matt’s satisfaction but also in particular concern was the performance level he could justify for his deep knowledge of the company’s products, technologies applied software development experience would make it hard to current compensation package. It was an issue Kaplan realized hard.

Bain & Company, Inc.: Mak

We’d like to think promotions are only fact-based, but both fact-based and judgmental.

Partnership promotion is a make-or-break decision for us.

—Tom Tierney,
Bain Worldwide Managing Director

Cambridge Consulting Group: Bob Anderson

As the 737 circled and climbed eastward out of Los Angeles International Airport, Bob Anderson began to unwind from the grueling 48 hours in Los Angeles. As managing partner of the Technology Group of the Cambridge Consulting Group (CCG), he had spent two long days defining a consulting project for a rapidly growing biotech company. Now, while some of the junior members of his team were doing preliminary data gathering, he was flying back to Boston to meet with another client.

Since the seat next to him was empty, Bob was left to his own thoughts as he settled into the 6-hour flight. His thoughts quickly turned to CCG and the Technology Group. He began to reflect on how he had performed during his second year as group head. Despite the great year his group had, he began to wonder how well he was doing in managing them for the future. Were they positioned to handle the intensifying competition, and was he developing younger staff for the changes the organization would require given the rapidly growing number of clients?
American Express: Deciding on a Hybrid Work Model After the COVID-19 Crisis (A)

John Almandoz
Sebastian Reich
Larsa Tietje

In the fall of 2021—after leading his team through 18 turbulent months of the pandemic—Juan Orti, CEO of American Express (Amex) in Spain, and his chief of staff (CET) had to address what the new way of working would look like for their employees. The company-wide discussion about what the "new normal" would look like faced with determining to what extent Amex Spain employees should adapt their work arrangements. Their conclusions, along with those from other Amex countries, played an important role in formulating the final company-wide policy.

Since the onset of the health crisis, Amex Spain's colleagues had been working from home—amazingly so, Juan felt. Both productivity and profitability at Amex have increased, but Amex managers were concerned that the company's culture could erode, and operations could be affected if a certain level of in-person interactions were maintained. Outside the company, the pros and cons of different work arrangements were being widely debated among academics and practitioners alike.

Towards the Top End by Being Down Under: Haier's Acquisition of Fisher & Paykel Appliances

B. Sebastian Reich
Yih-teen Lee
Carlos Sánchez-Runde

Harry Hou was sitting at one of the many round tables in the spacious Grand Harbour Restaurant in downtown Auckland, New Zealand. In his role as director and owner of the Oceania microenterprise for Haier Group, a leading multinational consumer electronics and home appliances company headquartered in Qingdao, he was contemplating the future of the group's acquisition of Fisher & Paykel Appliances (FPA). A delegation of Haier representatives, with whom he had spent the day discussing collaborations between Haier and FPA, had just left, allowing him a few moments to reflect on the past and future journey.

Myer and Flanagan (A): High-Stake Recruitment at the Top

In the late spring of 2014, the Australian department store Myer was going through a major reshuffle of its senior management team. More than 20 senior managers had left the company over the previous two years, and the exodus of some key members of the executive team was thought to have accelerated after CEO Bernie Brookes decided in his position, cancelling his previous plans to hand over the reins of Myer's senior executives with the potential to be increasingly difficult to identify promotion opportunities. At the same time, the retail sector meant that several opportunities were arising in the industry.

Several senior managers from Myer, many roles needed to be filled.
Example case on R&S

- Setting: High-stake recruitment at the top – hiring a chief strategy officer for an Australian department store
- Hiring process together with Executive Search firm and Board involvement
- Written based on publicly available information
- Useful setting to combine case teaching with lecturing: effective selection methods and their limitations, especially regarding the recruitment interview
What you need to teach cases effectively

• Find your own style!
• Preparation is key – but when is it not...?
  • The right questions to tease out the most meaningful debate
  • Breadth: what possible issues may come up in the discussion?
  • Depth: background content, side points, related concepts, etc.
• Your role as an agile facilitator
  • Be attentive and listen well!
  • You need to build the storyline!
  • You manage the engagement levels
  • Be ready to improvise 😊
• Think Case Method+: Complement with other methods (mini-lecture, buzz groups, roleplays, simulations, debates, workshops)
How to overcome typical challenges in (HR) case teaching

• The HR system I would like to develop on the board doesn’t emerge from the discussion!

• Never teach a case until you have taught it 10 times 😊

• Help, no one has read the case!

• OMG, students were given the B case!

• There are still 30 minutes remaining, and I am done already!
Thank you!

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