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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CASE STUDIES

The case study method

This is not only the most relevant and practical way to learn management skills but also a fun and engaging process. The case method involves looking at situations that managers have encountered in real life.

Case study writers describe the situation in a way that introduces you to the information the managers had. When you analyze a case study, you need to put yourself in the shoes of the protagonists and see the situation through their eyes. You are often asked to come up with a solution and present it in class with the arguments to support it.

Case studies as a way to gain knowledge

Case studies cover a wide range of organizations and real-world situations, so studying them offers practical value and more perspectives than you can gain from your day-to-day work.

This technique will help you sharpen your analytical skills. You will have to present quantitative and qualitative evidence to support your conclusions.

During the discussion, each participant shares relevant personal experiences, knowledge, observations and analytical judgments. This wide variety of opinions and viewpoints forms the basis for the professional growth of all students.

The instructors will try to challenge you and your group, testing the validity of your arguments and your analysis of the situation.

Perhaps the most vital advantage of the case study method is that it teaches leaders how to identify the core of a real problem and ask the right questions to get to the right solution(s).

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Independent preparation

Read the assignment (discussion questions). These questions are designed to orient you and to draw your attention to certain aspects. Read the first few paragraphs, and then take a quick look at the case study. Ask yourself: "What is the overall problem and what information do I have to analyze it?"

Then read the case more carefully, highlighting sentences when necessary and making notes. Ask yourself: "What problems do the leaders face?" Put yourself in their shoes. Imagine that you are not analyzing their concerns but your own problems.

1

Write down the main problems and questions on a piece of paper.

2

For each critical aspect of the situation, highlight the relevant facts.

3

Conduct an appropriate qualitative and quantitative analysis.
Accept the limitations of your own knowledge.

4

Based on the results of your analysis, develop a system of recommendations, which will form the case solution.

Group discussion

After your independent preparation, you should proceed to a group discussion. This involves a small number of participants getting together to share their ideas and further analyze the case study.

Bear in mind that group discussions are not designed to create consensus. Instead, their purpose is to clarify, correct and expand each individual's position. Remember that you will get the most out of group discussions only if you prepare thoroughly.

Intense discussions, which are typical when groups get together, allow participants to deepen their understanding of the subject – something they would not have been able to achieve through independent analysis. Such interaction implies dialogue, exchange of experiences and constructive argumentation.

Advantages of group discussion

According to past participants, working in a group has a number of advantages:

- promotes a better understanding of the material;
- allows participants to share knowledge;
- provides an opportunity to rehearse your own conclusions and arguments before they are presented in class for discussion;
- allows you to establish closer connections with your study group.

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How to get the most out of the group discussion

Participants in training programs identify the following factors for effective group discussion.

- One of the participants is chosen to be the moderator. The moderator has the task of assisting and supporting the group as they discuss all of the questions formulated for each case study. The moderator is not the “group leader.”
- 100% attendance.
- All students participate in the discussion and are equally responsible for its content.
- It is not always productive or appropriate to rely entirely on the opinion of a “subject expert” in the group. Often a “lay person” can ask the substantive questions that will direct the discussion in the right direction.
- Diversity of opinion in a group is normal, desirable and unavoidable. Don't try to reach a consensus.
- Group members are disciplined and focused, and use time efficiently.
- Remember: the best discussions are two-way, i.e., a dialogue. Stick to the time limit and ensure that everyone who wants to speak gets their opportunity.
- Members of the group take responsibility for learning and teaching.
- Each of the participants has their own strengths and weaknesses. Even if you are unsure of your understanding of the material, your questions and ideas will help others learn, so feel free to join the discussion!

Tips for the discussion moderator

- In the first group meeting, it is recommended that you briefly review the best practices for group discussions described above so that all participants realize their importance.
- Do not set yourself the task of working through a case study more thoroughly than the rest of the group – your role is to coordinate the discussion.
- Guide the discussion process, ensuring that the group considers all the questions for each assignment. Keep track of time so that the group is able to cover all the questions, not just the first on the list.
- Study questions are designed to ensure that the main points are addressed, contributing to an effective discussion with the whole class. Try to keep the group from wandering off the point and getting bogged down in the unimportant details.
- Try to involve the less talkative members of the group, encouraging them to express their opinions.
- If you are having difficulty resolving a situation in your group, you can always ask the coach for help.