

Notes on Preparation for Case Discussion

Cases allow you to improve your decision making skills related to identifying, defining and solving complex marketing problems in their organizational settings. Learning from the case takes place in various ways. Some learning comes from initial preparation, reading and analysis. But, much of the learning comes from class discussions where you sort out the issues with your peers. The opportunity of coming across a variety of ideas expressed by your peers and of being exposed to the challenge of defending your position in the face of counter-questions sharpens your focus on the key aspects of the case.

In preparing cases for class, it is recommended that you read the case at least twice. The first reading should give you a feel for what the case is about and the type of information available. The second reading should be more in-depth. The major focus should be on understanding the issues raised in the case and the factors affecting the decisions made as well as the results obtained. Identify the major problems/issues, conceive prospective solutions and assess the advantages and disadvantages of alternative solutions. Remember that to arrive at a good solution you must consider the alternative solutions and be convinced that the alternative ones are weak. If you do not, someone else will trump you with an alternative solution.

As is often the case in actual decision making, the case may not provide all the information that you may ideally like to have. Nevertheless, it is crucial that you develop a well-reasoned plan of action based on the available data. If you think that a specific piece of information is crucial for making a decision, reason out how you might go about collecting this information and how the decision is contingent on that information.

Finally, contrary to popular opinion, there are very few right answers and many wrong answers to these cases. **Good marketing decisions are not opinion, it is based on data, information, rigorous quantitative and qualitative analysis, and reasoned judgment.** The validity of your view rests on its logic and your ability to combine diverse bits of information to develop an effective course of action. In some situations, if time permits, we can discuss what the company actually did, however, that will not be the focus of the discussion. Thus, do not waste any time trying to find out what the company did - that would be irrelevant to our case discussions. Your reasoned judgment informed by rigorous analysis would be on display, and would be the basis for the class participation points.

You are encouraged to prepare for cases in a group. Group preparation enhances learning and leads to more effective classroom discussion. However, the deliberations you will make in class must be your own individual contribution.