

ENHANCEMENTS IN THE STUDENT-AUTHORED CASE METHOD

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ABSTRACT

The marketing literature has emphasized and documented the effectiveness of using the case method at both undergraduate and graduate levels. This paper describes an innovative and enhanced method in implementing student-authored cases. Our approach was motivated by an increased move in business education toward active (Granitz, 2001) and experiential learning (Frontczak, 1998) as methods to develop managerially relevant skills and increase student engagement. Numerous benefits of the experiential learning approach have already been documented in the marketing literature (improved student learning motivation, communication, and critical thinking (Bridges, 1999).

The various approaches to the case method are characterized by different degrees of experiential learning from relatively passive to more active involvement. At one end of the continuum, there is the traditional case method (TCM) of instruction which is the dominant method used in business education. This method has three major limitations: confines students to examining the situation through the eyes of the case author; is seen as outdated by most students because of the long time lag between the case research and its publication; and restricts students to the role of passive observers and analysts of a given situation (Forman, 2006). Projects in which students work with real clients, web-based cases and hybrid methods such as student-authored cases have been proposed as alternatives (Forman, 2006; Henson et al., 2003; Lincoln, 2006). Unlike TCM, these alternative methods give students the freedom to examine different aspects of a problem, obtain information from real time sources and deal with ambiguities in information. They challenge students to be more creative and use a cross-functional approach.

Our approach to student-authored cases is innovative because students are asked to write complete cases including discussion questions and teaching notes, which are then tested by class peers who are required to analyze and provide solutions to the case questions. Case authors receive feedback from both the course instructor and classmates who tested the cases which ensures greater student involvement levels with the case preparation, analysis and presentation, as well as higher case quality and relevance. Cases have long-term value because the case information can be updated based on new information from external sources and cases can be used by peers in the same or other courses.

The proposed method makes several contributions. First, students take on many roles in their own learning: team members, collaborative authors and editors, question and solution developers, case instructors, discussion leaders, peer reviewers. Second, students gain experience searching for and using secondary research as well as judging source relevancy. Third, external research materials increase the rigor of the cases. Fourth, the body of the case does not have to rehash published information because most of these sources are available and automatically updated. Fifth, students are more involved with the case preparation and presentation. Finally, as an experiential technique, this project combines action and reflection to provide students with a more valuable learning experience (Frontczak, 1998). Our approach is designed to complement current instructional methods, add variety in teaching, and increase effectiveness of learning.

References Available on Request