Pinterest Meets StoryCorps:
Re-Imagining the Case Study as a Scrapbooked, DIY Initiative

Abstract

The use of case studies in business classrooms is a commonly used pedagogical tool. However, there are known problems with long, commercially available cases (e.g. cost, length, density, businesses that sell answers to published cases, lack of theoretical applications, lack of connections to course learning outcomes, etc.). One possible solution to these problems is for instructors to create their own cases. In this professional development workshop (PDW), we will teach participants how to create short cases for classroom use that are embedded with archival images and videos, and delivered in an arguably more engaging format than typical, academic cases. Cases can be created by either the instructor or by students as a graded assignment. Participants will be given time to create their own simple cases using their phones or a laptop. Sample cases will be shared with participants.

Keywords: Case Study; Case Creation; PDW

Pinterest Meets StoryCorps:
Re-Imagining the Case Study as a Scrapbooked, DIY Initiative

Harvard Senior Associate Dean Jan Rivkin noted that "There is something magical about the buzz in the classroom [during case study discussions]. It's tremendously rewarding" (Jack, 2018, para. 10). Thanks in large part to Harvard's lead in the 1920s, the practice of using cases in business schools is now commonplace, with an estimated 15-20 million cases read by students each year (Nohria & Rivkin, 2018). Indeed, this very MOBTS conference has an entire track devoted to the case study. A quick search yields cases that span nearly every discipline covered within business schools, if not all.

Although many instructors use conventional, document-style cases, critics of them contend there are problems: women in business and international organizations are not sufficiently represented, and themes representing groups counter to business (e.g., labor unions or social movement organizations) are downplayed (Jack, 2018). Also, little attention has been given to the length and density of many business cases, or the cost to students. A quick scan reveals that many range from 20-40 pages in length, single-spaced with small font sizes; anecdotally, students say that the cases often are so filled with data, it can be difficult for them to quickly grasp and apply course concepts, particularly at the undergraduate level. Cases tend to range from $4 to $10 each, which can certainly add a heavy burden to students who are watching their pennies. To the critics, Dean Rivkin responded: "It's incumbent on critics of the case method to suggest a better alternative" (Jack, 2018, para. 22).

Another, larger, issue at play is that the enormous success of Harvard Business School cases has generated a parasitic industry that creates an unlevel playing field for students. These businesses sell students "answers" to the case studies for about $10-$15 per case. Caudill (2022) argues that parasitic businesses should be disrupted or undermined. Because their "solutions" replace the need for students to fully engage with the case material, these companies' products would seem to effectively interfere with students' learnings, drive, and perhaps self-efficacy. The availability of "correct answers" reinforces an underlying message that students cannot succeed in dissecting the cases without the help of purchased answers, and promotes non-linear thinking born of convergence rather than divergence.

In teaching, case studies are a staple that bring the "real world" into the classroom by introducing story-telling or historic data on organizations that students then use to apply the theory from the lectures and text, presumably setting the stage for future applications once they leave the academic setting. Case studies are based on Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning, which links individual learning, personal development, and education through the creation of a transformational experience in learning. This transformational experience comes from vicariously experiencing a situation, often through the eyes of a manager in the case who faces a decision or challenge. Alternatively, in a corporate strategy course, a longitudinal case of about a century of a company's history can give students an understanding of the waxing and waning corporate and business strategies that lead to competitive advantage or sustained competitive advantage over time. Longitudinal cases can demonstrate constructs from the literature, such as the ways that core competencies can become core rigidities. Kolb's (1984) model represents a theory that helps explain why students can solve organizational challenges by

integrating the knowledge from their coursework (Shea et al., 2013), but subsequent studies suggest that longitudinal case studies can promote valuable networked thinking. Networked thinking forces students to consider interactions and the repercussions of those interactions, a critical element of effective decision-making (Pilz & Zenner, 2018).

A study published last year noted that while students developed various competencies through experiential learning from using case studies, simulations and competitions, there was little to no evidence of reflection among the students about the cases (Obi et al., 2022). This suggests that it is incumbent on instructors to produce an alternative that captures the "magical" buzz of engaged students that Rifkin seeks (Jack, 2018), together with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning, Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, and the reflection lacking from Obi and colleagues' 2022 study to enrich discussions among student groups, and disentangle the parasitic businesses from profiting off "answers" or inserting themselves between the student's learning and their grade for the work.

The purpose of the PDW is to demonstrate simple ways for instructors to create their own cases, using a kind of digital scrapbook approach to tell a company's story using articles, images, and video clips from the Internet. The title of the PDW is "Pinterest meets StoryCorps," because Pinterest is an online scrapbooking website that allows users to curate their own digital content, and StoryCorps is an online means for people from all over the world to record their own personal stories for general consumption. Using digital media in higher education falls under the fair use doctrine 17 U.S.C. § 110(1) such that classroom use is not considered a copyright infringement. While no one could "sell" these types of cases to a case provider, this PDW will ask participants if they would find an open source repository for these types of cases to be useful for their courses, and will seek input on this idea. In this PDW, examples of cases the author has developed and examples her students have co-created will be viewed.

Learning Objectives, Engagement, & Takeaway

These longitudinal, scrapbooked cases have several benefits. First, they offer comprehensive views of an organization rather than a short period of time encompassing a random management decision. Secondly, the storytelling and archival images and videos help students engage and digest the material quickly, rather than reading tediously long and dry cases. These are structured without "right" answers or solutions to facilitate open discussion that brings multiple diverse perspectives together as students discuss the cases. Students obviously cannot purchase "answers" from parasitic websites. And last, they are free!

The learning objectives include helping instructors to:

1. Develop a new vision of what a case study can look like, reimagined with archival images, videos, and screenshots.
2. Learn how to create quality content for a scrapbooked case.
3. Explore creating a scrapbooked case for use in their own courses.
4. Begin their DIY case journey by supplementing their existing lectures with mini-cases.

At the end of the PDW, instructors will have the wherewithal to re-evaluate their existing course materials and bring new life to their classes through the development of simple, DIY cases. Participants will leave with the knowledge to create their own cases and links to cases showcased in the session.

PDW Overview

The session will be a demonstration of how to develop and integrate DIY cases into any course, starting with the easiest example and working into more complex examples (see Appendix for sample cases). The first cases will be a simple demonstration of screenshotting articles, images, and bringing in videos to slide formats, and adding questions that extend the article by testing comprehension and checking learning outcomes. Working either individually or in groups (depending on the number of attendees), participants will be given time to create a simple case using their phones or computers.

We request 75 minutes for this session with the timing as follows:

Introduction	5 minutes
Overview of the Case Method of Teaching	15 minutes
Creating Mini-Cases	20 minutes
Participants Create Own Cases	20 minutes
Debriefing & Wrap-up	15 minutes
Total time	75 minutes

References

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Caudill, A. (2022). Parasitic and symbiotic business models. *Retrieved from adamcaudill.com on February 19, 2022.*

Jack, A. (2018, Oct. 29). Why Harvard's case studies are under fire: Students love the classroom buzz and collaborative approach, but critics are circling. *Financial Times, Work & Careers.* https://www.ft.com/content/0b1aeb22-d765-11e8-a854-33d6f82e62f8

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Nohria, N. & Rivkin, J. W. (2018, Sept/Oct.). The case for cases: Case studies might present challenges, but their benefits are too powerful to ignore. *BizEd,* 52-53.

Obi, B. I. N., Eze, T. I., & Chibuzo, N. F. (2022). Experiential learning activities in business education for developing 21s century competencies. *Journal of Education for Business, 97*(1), 36-42.

Pilz, M. & Zenner, L. (2018). Using case studies in business education to promote networked thinking: findings of an intervention study. *Teaching in Higher Education, 23*(3), 325-342.

Shea, E. R. O., Planas, J., Quan, M., & Kazer, M. W. (2013). Service learning initiatives in nursing education. *Journal of Catholic Higher Education*, 32, 265–281.

Appendix
Sample Mini-Cases

Mini-Cases Based on Articles:

Caleb Cain and YouTube: Here is a simple case study using a *New York Times* article that showcases the kinds of YouTube algorithms that can lead to extremist online discussions and values. It is simply a copy/paste of the article combined with questions at the end.

When the cork industry got corked: This case similarly incorporates an article, but also adds a video component. Students explore Porter's five forces and the way the Cork Council reclaimed the standing of natural cork.

Meet Thi Lam and Brent Lagerman, The Creative Entrepreneurs behind Keepers Soda: This case study also is based around a story about a young entrepreneur, but also integrates a key principle from entrepreneurship, "affordable loss." The case includes a short video from the researcher who studies the principle, Sara Sarasvathy.

Belts to Blackface: The Rise, the Fall, and the Rebirth of a Fashion Icon … And how the world wrestles with impossibly impolitic, possibly racist, high couture: This case integrates screenshots from a variety of articles on Gucci with a storytelling voice that brings them together, and videos from unusual ads that showcase pop icons Harry Styles and Billie Eilish. The case shows the progression of this company from an entrepreneurial start-up to a family-owned business to a multinational corporation owned by outside interests. It ends with a short exploration of provocative images from the fashion industry.

Xerox: How a legendary company copied itself out of its competitive advantage: This is a longitudinal story of a company that had the potential to become Xerox, HP, Google, and Microsoft … combined. It is a case that incorporates archival video and advertising images, and enables students to talk about the harmful effects of prejudice without considering race.

Boomers to Zoomers: Mowgli Zuckerberg's Jungle Book Adventure OR, What happens when a company thrives through a series of unethical decisions? : This case adds a layer of complexity by taking a sarcastic, tongue-in-cheek tone and using a beloved children's book to explore an ethics case against Facebook - now Meta's notorious CEO, Mark Zuckerberg.

Mini-Cases Integrated into Lectures

Ethics, Governance, and Fairness: This incorporates three mini-cases on Elizabeth Holmes and Theranos; Hewlett Packard and board issues; and a TED Talk by an Italian CEO Maros Alvera on the importance of fairness.

Biomimicry: This includes mini-cases (1-slide cases presented via lecture) on biomimicry, including the development of the printing press, solar panels, colors from analyzing the way the light hits birds' feathers, robots based on the cheetah, unusual building strength from sea sponges, and much more.

Student Created Mini-Cases:

Student team introduces Ray Kroc and His Golden Arches: This case introduced the McDonald's founder in conjunction with strategic leadership. The students created this as an extra credit project and agreed to let me use it in subsequent classes.

Student team introduces financial analysis using Budweiser: Another student team developed a case using Budweiser to showcase how to analyze financial ratios.