

## **Learning From Our Students and Their Experiences:**

### **Why Student-Written Cases are Powerful and How to Use Them Effectively**

#### **Abstract**

This PDW is intended to help participants learn about why and how learning can be transformed by teaching using cases written by students, based on their experiences. The primary audience for this workshop is MOBTS attendees who (a) have not used student-written cases in their teaching, and (b) have used student-written cases and want to reflect on or examine their approach with peers. In our experience, student-written cases are an effective way for students to bridge their experiences into our classrooms. This may be of particular interest to doctoral students who are considering different methods for highly engaging their students.

#### **Keywords**

student-written cases, experiential learning, problem-based learning

## Proposal information

### Resource needs

Projector for showing video from our laptop(s).

Wired (ethernet) internet connection (if possible)

### Conference track

Yes, please consider this PDW for the conference track

In our experience, teaching with student-written cases provides a highly effective bridge by which bring students can bring their relevant experiences to the classroom. Student-written cases can be used in many business subjects (Leadership, Ethics, OB, HR, marketing, competitive analysis, data analytics) – in almost any course where faculty might otherwise consider assigning students to work in groups with an outside “client.” Student-written cases make a direct connection between their own (past or present) experience and course content, obviating the need for the lead time needed for working with live “clients.” Finally, student-written cases are free of cost to students, an increasingly important consideration in higher education.

**Unique Contribution.** Indicate whether: You have presented the work in this proposal before, at MOBTS or elsewhere? If yes, explain how this proposal is different.

Yes, we have made presentations/conducted workshops on student-written cases at MOBTS (2022), international MOBTS (2022, Mannheim), Academy of Management (2017, 2022). This workshop differs from those presentations in that we center this workshop first on our students’ verbatim accounts of their experiences. Not only are we asking our students to do some of the talking, we are proposing far less “telling” in this workshop, the majority of the

workshop time (40 of 75 minutes) is invested in participants working with their own courses and ideas for adapting student-written cases for their own purposes.

Is the proposal is currently under review elsewhere?

No.

Indicate whether this is your first time submitting to an MOBTS conference (formerly OBTC) and any comments you may have for the program chair.

Author 1 presented at 2003, 2019, 2022 (2), and 2022 International (Mannheim)

Author 2 was a co-author of all three presentations in 2022.

## Introduction

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In the introduction of the workshop, we will provide a brief explanation of what we mean by student-written cases and the courses and settings in which we have used them. Next, the main portion of this workshop consists of three parts:

1. Via pre-recorded video and transcribed interviews/surveys, we will share students' observations and reflections about learning from cases written by their classmates. Students will describe both "why" and "how" the use of student-written cases is effective from their own perspective.
2. We will explain to participants how we manage the process of teaching with student-written cases.
3. Participants will have working time with colleagues (pairs or small groups) to discuss their own classes and identify (a) potential uses of student-written cases in their classes, and (b) questions or concerns that arise from their discussion. We will reconvene participants to debrief their smaller group discussions regarding key takeaways and questions/answers that arise from to be shared with participants.

**Learning Objectives, Engagement, & Takeaway.** Establish the what the learning objectives are from you, the presenter. How will you engage with your target audience to develop them toward these objectives? What is the desired takeaway by the audience at its conclusion?

### **Learning Objectives**

At the end of this session, participants will:

- understand what students experience when learning from student-written cases;
- understand a process for managing student-written cases and adapting student-written cases to their classes;
- identify issues they need to consider if they use student-written cases in their class(es); and
- acquire resources to support their own use of student-written cases.

### **Engagement**

We plan to engage participants by:

- providing testimony from students from a range of courses, levels, institutional settings, and instructors;
- providing an accessible and useful process for managing student-written cases; and
- providing time with a peer partner to explore and refine their own ideas about teaching;
- coaching participants and encouraging their exploration of student-written cases as pedagogy.

## Takeaway

In short, we aim to provide inspiration, information, and resources to help participants enrich their classes through the use of student-written cases.

## PDW Overview

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We will reconvene with participants to debrief their pair/small group discussions regarding key takeaways and questions/answers that arise to be shared with participants.

A timeline for the workshop is provided below.

**Workshop timeline**

## Proposed Workshop Timeline

Section of PDW	Minutes	
	Segment	Cumulative
Introduction	5	5
1. Students' testimony	10	15
2. Facilitators' overview of student-written cases	20	35
3. Participants' working time in pairs/small groups		
A. Pairs/small groups	25	60
B. Participant/group debriefing, PDW Q&A	15	75

We believe that bringing students' voices into the workshop virtually or via pre-recorded video is unique and can provide first-hand testimony as to the efficacy of student-written cases and will increase participants' interest in using these methods. and will lead to our explanation of how to use student-written cases and working and discussion time for participants. We will provide a pre-press version of our forthcoming refereed journal article that describes our process for student-written cases to all PDW participants. The complete list of references from the above-described forthcoming article can be found at the end of this proposal.

### **Authors' Backgrounds**

For several decades, we have used student-written cases as a core pedagogy in almost all of our courses, at all levels and modalities. We developed a free facilitator's guide to this process (Authors, 2021), which was the #1 resource on IgnitED.global for 2022. We have been recognized with awards by the Mid-Atlantic Association of Collegiate Business Administration (2017, Innovation in Graduate Education) and the Academy of Management's Management Education and Development Division (2022, Best Professional Development Workshop). A growing community of business educators is experiencing the benefits of teaching with student-written cases, and we hope to cultivate and expand that learning community at MOBTS 2023. Our interest is in helping fellow faculty deepen their students' learning in their course. While we take pride in faculty at other institutions adopting student-written cases for their own use, we have no business or financial interest in our process for using student-written cases.

### **Theoretical Background**

Our experience is that student-written cases can deepen learning because the process taps students' experiences and draws students and their experiences into the classroom. Student-written cases affirm students' ownership of their own learning and their agency in their learning



process. Students report enjoying helping their peers successfully address issues – often in real-time – and find the process motivating. Our use of student-written cases lies at the intersection of

- problem-based learning – working to solve unstructured problems, but without the logistical and time challenges of recruiting available “clients” outside of the class;
- student-centered learning – working within students’ reality and helping them apply what they are learning in class to the real world;
- experiential learning – students learn by doing, and learn more effectively the more engaging the experience; and
- learning in groups – students learn most effectively when they are working on a meaningful and significant challenge in joint work with others.

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