Harvard Business Case Individual Briefs

All class members (except those who are responsible for presenting the case for that class session) are expected to prepare a typed single-spaced (12 point Times New Roman font with 1 inch margins) 1-2 page summary **(TWO PAGES ABSOLUTE MAXIMUM-may be bullet pointed)** for seven of the nine cases that we discuss in class, addressing the following questions:

1) What are the most important general environment factors to be considered for the industry and the company and what is their effect (positive-negative-neutral)? What is your evidence for the importance of these factors?

2) What are the most important of the five industry forces affecting the industry and the company and what is their effect (high-moderate-low)? What is your evidence for the importance of these forces? Is the industry attractive for new entrants AND incumbents? Why?

3) List two major competitor(s) and briefly predict the significant future action(s) of each competitor. What is your evidence for their importance?

4) What are the most important of the eight value chain areas for the company? What is your evidence for their importance? Are they superior, inferior or neutral vs. each of the two major competitors and why (be specific but concise)?

5) Discuss the most significant financial factor(s) (be specific, calculating and presenting the most important ratios in the profitability, leverage and/or activity areas compared to competitors) and non-financial (leadership, culture, ethics/social responsibility) factor(s) for the company? What is your evidence for their importance?

6) **INTEGRATE** the SWOT analysis to discuss how major strengths pursue opportunities and limit threats and how major weaknesses limit opportunities and enhance threats.

7) Using your analysis above, briefly state what you believe to be the company’s major core competencies (if any) and assess their ability to create a sustainable competitive advantage by explaining each of the VRIN criteria for each competency. Be sure to state the results of the VRIN analysis (i.e. competitive disadvantage, competitive parity, temporary competitive advantage or sustainable competitive advantage).

8) In light of your analysis above, what are the company’s current strategy types (i.e. type of business level, corporate level, cooperative and international strategy the company is pursuing)? Do they fit with your analysis above? Why or why not?

9) Briefly, based on your above analysis, what are the firm’s main problems and what is your suggested solution(s)? Which 7S implementation factors are most important? Why?

10) Finally, based on your analysis, create two questions for the presenter.

While it is fine to discuss these briefs with group and/or class members, the final work should be your own (i.e. no ‘group’ briefs!). Further guidance on preparing this brief (i.e. grading sheet) is included on Desire2Learn.

Harvard Business Case Individual Written Analysis and Presentation

Each class member will select one of the nine Harvard Business cases that we will discuss in class and prepare a concise, chart-driven written analysis of the case. These analyses are due on the syllabus date that we cover the case in class. Your analysis should cover the following aspects of the case (using appropriate subheadings for each area):

1) include an executive summary that concisely and specifically covers the paper’s major issues,
analyses and recommendations in 1 page or less.

2) discuss the company’s mission, vision, values statements (if any-derive if necessary) and provide a brief history specifically related to your analysis (5 pts. including executive summary above),

3) assess and discuss individually the major external (i.e. general environment, five forces, competitor) and internal (i.e. value chain, financial ratios, non-financial factors, VRIN analysis of core competencies) factors that you consider most important for strategy formulation (20 pts.),

4) determine and discuss how the four major strategies (business-level, corporate-level, international cooperative) currently used by the company fit or do not fit with your external and internal analysis (5 pts.),

5) based on an integrated SWOT analysis (i.e. strengths pursue opportunities and limit threats, weaknesses limit opportunities and enhance threats) that you derive from 3) above, identify what you believe to be one or two of the company's most critical strategic issues (20 pts.),

6) create one or two strategy recommendations and explain how they solve the critical issues and align with your integrated SWOT analysis (recommendations enhance opportunities, limit threats, fix weaknesses) discussed in 4) above. Assess the feasibility of your recommendations by explaining the major strategy changes (if any) and the 7S changes that are required. Create a reasonable time line and a list of action items to enact your recommendation(s) (20pts.).

7) Predict major competitor responses to your recommendation(s) based on your competitor analysis in 3) above. Describe how you will you counter these responses (10 pts.).

This analysis should be 5-7 pages long excluding references appendices, charts and graphs. Be sure to provide reasons and evidence for all of your assessments above. Be sure to appropriately cite (in the body of the paper) and reference (at the end of the paper) all non-original quotes and ideas. Use the same citing and referencing style that is used in the Harvard Business Cases (i.e. endnotes placed at the back of the report, graphics and schedules included in appendices immediately after the text of the report).

**Group Case Analysis and Presentation**

This project culminates what you have learned in the class. Divide into groups, select a company not yet studied in this class and create an original strategic analysis. This analysis should be similar to the Individual Written Case Analysis with the following exceptions:

1) Assess and discuss the important aspects for each external (general environment, five forces, competitor environment) and internal (value chain, financial ratios, non-financial, core competency/VRIN/SCA) environment analysis separately in the paper. This is a more in-depth analysis than what is required in item 3) above as you will not have a Harvard business case at your disposal.

2) Formulate three separate strategy recommendations and assess how each recommendation solves the company’s critical issues, aligns with your integrated SWOT analysis (enhances opportunities, limits threats, fixes weaknesses), changes major strategies, and requires 7S actions.

3) Create a set of major action items and a reasonable time line for implementing each recommendation, as well as major competitor responses to each recommendation and counter-response in each case.

4) Based on the external, internal, formulation and implementation analyses above, select the best recommendation to solve the critical issue(s).

Use the same citing and referencing style that is used in the Harvard Business Cases. The total length of the paper should be 20-30 double-spaced pages (excluding references, appendices, charts and graphs). Use appropriate subheadings to structure your paper. Note that you will complete a peer evaluation form covering the case study paper.