

The Case Analysis

An Overview of the Case Analysis

The purpose of writing a case analysis is to demonstrate critical thinking skills by applying concepts learned through class discussions, class readings, and outside research, in the analysis of an assigned case study.

A strong case analysis does the following:

- Identifies the strengths and weaknesses of an organization.
- Discusses possible reasons why an organization faces particular weaknesses and why those weaknesses are significant/detrimental.
- Offers suggestions for how strengths can be maintained and weaknesses improved.
- Answers any specific case analysis questions posed by the professor.

Audience

Your primary audience is your professor; however, a successful case analysis keeps the needs of real-life managers and decision makers in mind. Your professor likely has the knowledge and background to understand the problem you present, and likely knows which solution would be most effective. However, your professor is interested in how well you can explain and justify your decisions, much as you will need to do in a real-world Public/Nonprofit Administration setting. Therefore, you should include enough detail throughout the essay so that a general academic audience can follow your thinking process and enact the solution you propose.

It is helpful to think of yourself as an outside evaluator: your job is to analyze the organization and the case in question; to present this analysis in a way that is concise and informative; and to present a proposed solution. In this situation, as in your case analysis essay, your tone should be professional, but your writing should not be overly formal; instead, you should communicate with the reader in a respectful and efficient manner.

Case Analysis Organization

Introduction

Your introduction should include a brief summary of the case article you read, detailing the main point(s) of the article and the main issue(s) the organization is facing. Following this summary, the purpose of your paper should be clearly stated. Using statements such as “the purpose of this paper is” or “in the following paper I plan to discuss” is often acceptable. For exact guidelines see your professor.

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Your tone should be professional, but your writing should not be overly formal; instead, you should communicate with the reader in a respectful and efficient manner.

To bolster your analysis/opinion, support your argument with evidence from class readings, previous cases, and outside research. This information should be presented in a logical order, with a flow that is easy to follow and understand.

Body

Think of the body of your paper as a place to showcase your perspective and the specific connections you find between the material you've read in class, the issues you've discussed, and the case assigned. To bolster your analysis/opinion, support your argument with evidence from class readings, previous cases, and outside research. This information should be presented in a logical order, with a flow that is easy to follow and understand. Topic sentences should begin paragraphs, and transitions should be used between paragraphs to help guide readers through the paper.

Conclusion

The conclusion is an area to showcase your unique perspective and to justify/explain the interesting connections you've made between class and case. It is helpful to think of the conclusion as a meeting place for case issues and your ideas: a place to reiterate the importance of the issues you found most pressing. In your conclusion, you should also provide suggestions for improvements and/or ways to avoid similar situations in the future. The solution/recommendation you propose should do the following:

- Directly relate to the issues you've discussed throughout your paper.
- Draw on course topics.
- Be supported by course literature.

Critical Thinking Tips

Critical thinking shows that you've thought deeply about a topic. The level of your critical thinking will be assessed according to the quality of the evidence you use, how well you support your argument, and how effectively you consider/recognize alternatives and counter arguments. When discussing why an issue is important and needs to be addressed, or why the solution you propose to a problem is plausible, consider the following:

1. Consider discussions you've had in, and readings you've done for, class. Can any of these concepts be used to describe the problems faced by the organization? Can these concepts be used to help resolve the organization's dilemma(s)?
2. Consider any ethical dilemmas you may encounter. How will you deal with those dilemmas?
3. Utilize appropriate theoretical frameworks and tools when analyzing a case for a particular organization.
4. Use SWOT Analysis! SWOT analysis is a way to consider all facets of an organization or a particular dilemma facing an organization. Use SWOT analysis to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats facing the organization in your particular case article. SWOT should be considered when developing suggestions for improvement and when articulating why an issue is relevant to an organization at the current moment.

A Process for Evaluating Your Draft

Do I incorporate research and outside sources effectively?

Incorporating research in your argument is an important part of the case analysis, however, avoid inserting information without providing explication. If you use another person's words, explain why that particular statement is

For more help writing introductions and conclusions, see the handout on our website, <http://www.gvsu.edu/wc>.

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Use SWOT analysis to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats facing the organization in your particular case article.

If you use another person's words, explain why that particular statement is significant to your discussion. If you paraphrase a particular argument or theory, explain how that information relates to the issue at hand.

significant to your discussion. If you paraphrase a particular argument or theory, explain how that information relates to the issue at hand. Though your argument/position may seem obvious to you, it may be unfamiliar to your reader. Therefore, be explicit in explaining the connections you find; don't assume that your reasoning is obvious to the reader or that the reader will make the same connections/conclusions.

See our website for a link to a website that can help you with paraphrasing and summarizing: <http://www.gvsu.edu/wc>.

Do I avoid plagiarism by citing properly?

When using another person's words or ideas, quote or paraphrase the information, as needed. Whether through direct quotation or summary, be sure to give that person credit by including proper citation. Use the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA) for formatting and citing. Your professor's assignment sheet should indicate any additional formatting and citation preferences. For example, some professor's may prefer you use another citation style, such as the ARPA (American Review of Public Administration).

While it is important to satisfy the assignment criteria, it is equally important that your ideas appear cohesive.

Do I answer the professor's questions, and do I do so in an effective essay format?

To ensure that you answer all the case questions posed by your professor and address all the requirements specified in the assignment sheet, you may find yourself writing your essay in checklist format. While it is important to satisfy the assignment criteria, it is equally important that your ideas appear cohesive. This cohesion can be created by using transition sentences between paragraphs to show connections between thoughts, and by using topic sentences within paragraphs to stay on topic. Using headings is often acceptable, but your paper should still flow smoothly, and logically, from one heading to the next.

Do I balance being thorough, but also concise?

Though the majority of your paper should be devoted to analysis, summary/paraphrasing should be used to provide necessary background information. When switching between these two methods, keep the needs of the reader in mind. Provide enough information for the readers understanding, but don't clutter your paper with information not pertinent to your topic. Remember, if this were a real world presentation, you would likely have a maximum of fifteen minutes to make your argument/express your ideas, so being brief and to the point is essential.

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Do I consistently use active voice?

Avoid passive voice as much as possible. Phrases like "it was done" don't explain who did what, and why. For more help identifying passive voice – and advice in recasting it to be active – see our handout at <http://www.gvsu.edu/wc>.

Do I consistently use present tense?

Remember that research, whether it is ten months old or ten years old, is always referred to in the present tense because it is being used in the present and being applied to a current topic. For example, if you quote John Smith, who wrote an article in 1968, you will use phrases such as "Smith comments" or "Smith notes," as opposed to "Smith commented" or "Smith noted."

Prompts for Writing Consultations

- Begin by learning about the case on which the writer's analysis is based. What are the salient points that need to be addressed in the case analysis, and why?
- Is the problem or decision faced by the company clearly described, and does the description of the case remain brief? (Writers should

assume that readers know the facts of the case.)

- Throughout the analysis, are highlights of the case analyzed with enough depth? Did the writer avoid recounting every element of the case, and instead, focus on analyzing the elements pertinent to his or her discussion?
- Can you locate the areas where the writer indicated the theories/ perspectives used to analyze the case?
- Does the writer's response remain professional in tone? Are the writer's assertions/recommendations supported with research and/or fact-based evidence?
- Are the potential solutions to the problem outlined with enough detail, indicating that the writer clearly understands why that solution might be viable or what the limitations might be?
- Does the essay answer all questions posed by the instructor?
- Are sources clearly documented in APA format ? Are sources integrated smoothly into the discussion? Is paraphrasing used commonly and direct quotation used sparingly? Is proper credit given to the ideas of authors of secondary sources?
- Is the writing well-edited? Does the writer maintain active voice? Do the ideas and arguments smoothly transition from one to another throughout the paper? If not, how could those arguments be tied together more clearly and link back to the overall argument?