

EVALUATING CASES

This course will employ an adapted Six Sigma DMAIC process to analyze case studies (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control). Consistent with my commitment to provide students with “real-life, Monday-morning” applied learning, I’ve selected this process to provide you with a formal business tool rather than a purely “homemade” and/or academic process.

I’ve also selected this process because it forces us to consider the implementation and control phases of the business life-cycle. Oftentimes, leadership is great at the upfront analysis and planning and then struggles with the implementation. Even more often, business and project controls are not identified and/or applied. According to a CIO published study, “32 percent of IT projects were considered successful, having been completed on time, on budget and with the required features and functions. Nearly one-in-four (24 percent) IT projects were considered failures.” We will learn how to more fully develop our ideas to avoid such a fate.

Following are the required steps and associated grading.

1. **Assume a Role – 5 points** (These are basically free points so please remember to do this)
Assume and state your role as a business owner or line executive (decision maker) in the case being evaluated (ex: President of the firm, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Information Officer, Product Manager, etc.). Please avoid a consulting role and/or the role you currently occupy.

I will be reading your case evaluations as if I received it from your selected role. If you select the CFO, I will read the report with an expectation that key financial data and analysis will be included. If you select the CEO, I will expect the report to represent the overarching, strategic perspective of someone occupying this position. Etc.

2. **Review Key Case Data – 10 points**
The ability to synthesize complex materials into a crisp, well-constructed story is critical to an executive’s career. My expectation for this section is for you to, without repeating the entire document, **summarize the key business elements** involved in the case (ex: Business goals, key decision points, political climate, etc.) It is important that you review this section and eliminate off-topic and extraneous narrative. At the same time, it is equally important that you address the most salient points. If you’re thinking, “great, that’s clear as mud,” you are correct; this is not an easy task.

3. **(D) DEFINE – 10 points**
Write an elegant, one sentence statement that “defines” the case’s key management issue (also known as the critical issue). The issue should be a natural conclusion drawn from the above case data review and should clearly identify and highlight the barrier that is impeding the business in the case study from achieving their stated goals. The critical issue should be concise; avoid slipping into lengthy analysis and justification (ex: “The critical issue is the leadership team is attempting to expand into new technology markets that are currently beyond their core competencies”). Be sure to not list the critical issue in terms of a solution. For example, avoid statements like, “the critical issue is the organization needs to/should. . .”

I will be paying particular attention to how well the defined issue relates to the case summary provided in the previous section (step2). Done correctly, the “Review Key Case Data” section should setup the defined issue in the same way that a joke (case data) leads the recipient to a punch line (defined issue).

4. **(M) MEASURE – 10 points**
This is one of the most challenging sections. Here, you will establish metrics to measure how alternative solutions will be evaluated. For example, in the above illustration, if the critical issue is defined as “the leadership team is attempting to expand into new technology markets that are currently beyond their core competencies,” how will the organization measure the “successful” remediation of this issue? What metrics will be defined? Perhaps, one metric would be “skill alignment.” In other words, how well does our IT staff skills

align with the requirements of the new technology? Ah, but it's not that easy. At this point, the metric is purely subjective. To complete this section, we need to generate objective measures that will allow us to empirically evaluate these metrics. The question becomes, how will we measure "skill alignment?" We may elect a binary scale such as, "XYZ" certification. If we have someone with "XYZ" certification, we will say we have skill alignment. Or, we may look at it another way and say skill alignment will have three categories: 1) internal staff (to our team), 2) corporate staff (perhaps a corporate shared resource or 3) external staff. Furthermore, we may assign a preferential weighting whereby internal staff will receive the highest score (3), corporate staff a 2, and external staff a 1. Now, when we compare alternatives, we have an objective way to score the various alternatives.

Beware of a couple common challenges: 1) be sure to make your metrics objective (as illustrated) and 2) be sure to select metrics that are important and relative to your defined issue.

5. (A) ANALYZE – 10 points

During this step, we review our metrics, identify and score possible solutions, and ultimately recommend our direction. If the above sections have been well developed, this step should be both fun and relatively easy. What is most important is that each alternate solution is clearly articulated and objectively evaluated. The reader should easily follow the logic from the Measure phase, through your analysis, and converge at your recommended solution.

6. (I) IMPROVE – 10 points

Develop a high-level implementation plan for your selected solution. The plan should address basic implementation requirements: Who will lead and perform the work (minimize the use of consultants), how much will the project cost, who will pay for the project, when and how long the project will be, what risks are involved, how will risk be mitigated, etc.

Executives love pretty pictures and I fully expect some, even if it's simple, graphic. This could be a Gantt chart, a PERT chart, an Excel spreadsheet, etc. I'm not particular about the format. However, it should clearly communicate the general flow of the project, including phases, timing, etc.

7. (C) CONTROL – 10 points

Develop a plan that defines how the company will manage and sustain the implemented improvements. For example, the company may require updated processes, governance, technology solutions, organizational enhancements, etc. The question you are answering here is "how will the company prevent the recurrence of the previously defined critical issue?"

Consider controls from both the project implementation as well as the business perspectives.

8. Rate Your Team (5 points)

When working within a team, please complete the attached Team Evaluation Form.

9. Provide a Bibliography (5 points)

Please reference all materials used to complete the case study. The APA bibliographical format is preferred.

10. Evaluate your Case Report (5 points)

Read through and objectively evaluate your case report and identify its strengths and weaknesses.

TEAM EVALUATIONS

As a team, please complete the below form:

TEAM EVALUATION: Evaluate your team's performance on the following dimensions.

[1: Highly effective - 5: Ineffective]

Decision Making	Collaborative	Unilateral			
	1	2	3	4	5
Cooperation	Members help others out	Members do only own work			
	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to handle Conflict/Differences	Explore and solve conflicts	Avoid or ignore			
	1	2	3	4	5
Balance of Participation	Balanced workload	A few do most of the work			
	1	2	3	4	5
Focus/On Schedule	Focused/on schedule	Digresses/off schedule			
	1	2	3	4	5
Communication	Full, open and spontaneous	Don't keep other members informed			
	1	2	3	4	5
Support	Members give others support	People do own thing, show no appreciation			
	1	2	3	4	5
Team Spirit	Members identify with their team	No team spirit			
	1	2	3	4	5

The most valuable contribution of our team was . . .	
We are most proud of this element of the case report. . .	
One area we need to improve is. . .	

CASE EVALUATION

CASE REPORT: _____

Honestly evaluate your team's performance using a scale of 0-10.

(0 = poor; 10 = outstanding) in the following areas:

Criteria	Score	Comments
Maintaining the Case Role (staying in character)		
Review of Case Data		
(D) DEFINE		
(M) MEASURE		
(A) ANALYZE		
(I) IMPLEMENT		
(C) CONTROL		
Overall Case Report and Deliverable		
Lessons Learned from the Case Study and Report		

TOTAL SCORE:

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS: