

Introduction to Part 1: Develop, Adapt, and Use Case Studies

To develop, adapt, and use case studies, chapter 1 of this book answers several questions about what a case study is, the benefits and cautions of using cases, and introduces five types of case studies. Each of the five types of case studies has a different purpose.

Chapter 2 suggests where case study development fits into the instructional design process, how to use an eight-step process to write an original case study, or how to adapt an existing case. Solutions to writing case studies are offered along with a series of templates to make writing and adapting case studies easy. Typical discussion questions are offered for learners and facilitators.

Chapter 3 offers suggestions to facilitate case study discussions using a five-step adult learning process to ensure the transfer of learning to the workplace.

WHAT'S IN THIS CHAPTER?

After reading this chapter, you will know:

What is a case study?

Why use five types of case studies?

What are the benefits of using case studies in training?

What are cautions when developing case studies?

How to recognize examples of the five types of case studies:
identification, problem solving, practice, application, and serial.

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Case Study Uses and Benefits

What Is a Case Study?

A case study is a description of an actual or made-up situation, which the learner examines to increase his or her knowledge and skills or to influence his or her attitudes. A case study is chosen by the trainer to present issues similar to the issues the learners are likely to encounter when trying to apply new knowledge and skills following a training program. A case study may be a paragraph, a page, or several pages. The amount of detail provided depends on the purpose of the case. A case study brings an element of realism to help the learner identify how to use and apply knowledge and skills. Case studies provide practice in diagnosing and solving problems and give ways to apply newly learned knowledge and practice skills.

Why Use Case Studies?

Typically, case studies are written for one of five purposes. These types of case studies are

1. **Identification:** This type of case study is appropriate to help learners identify both positive and negative characteristics of a situation.

As part of the learning process, the learner is asked to find points similar to those which may be present in his or her own work life. These provide a safer way to identify the characteristics or points from the case that they find in themselves.

2. **Problem Solving:** This type of case study helps the learner use systematic and creative problem solving techniques. Problem-solving case studies can be used to have learners solve an entire problem using a specific problem-solving model or to have learners focus on any part of the problem-solving process, such as finding a solution, or clearly identifying the problem.
3. **Practice:** This type of case study helps learners think about and use a new idea or try out a skill in a safe setting before using it in the real world. These case studies can also be used to help learners explore and clarify their attitudes about specific issues.
4. **Application:** This type of case study is often used at the end of a training program to summarize and review a set of complex ideas and skills presented during the course. Different elements of the case can address how the complex ideas that were learned are interrelated as well as show how to overcome obstacles to using new ideas and skills back on the job.
5. **Serial:** This type of case study uses an initial situation or set of characters and progressively adds new elements for the learner's consideration. Some of the elements from the above four types of cases may be used at different times during the workshop. This type of case study can save time since learners already understand the background of the case and can focus on the new element, idea, or skill being introduced. Another type of serial case study uses the same situation and asks the learners to use different tools and skills to apply to the same case study.

What Are the Benefits of Using Case Studies?

Case studies are often used in a training setting to add a note of realism and practicality as well as to increase learner participation, enjoyment, and retention. A case study allows the learner to practice or rehearse how to handle a new situation in a low-risk setting. Case studies are beneficial and successful when they

- allow learners to **discover new concepts**,
- are **non-threatening**, and
- build on past **experiences**.

Frequently, adult learners enjoy discovering new concepts by **arriving at their own conclusions**, rather than being told what to think or do and how to do a task. Learners are more likely to use and apply new concepts when they have studied and considered a situation and independently arrived at a conclusion. Often by discussing a case study, adult learners will change their minds and allow themselves to be influenced by peers. Ownership of an idea is more likely to occur when it is discovered, rather than heard from a trainer.

Case study situations can be a low-risk or **non-threatening** method for adults to learn from past experience, apply new knowledge or skills, and even rehearse or practice how to effectively change their behavior. With a case study, adults are not put in an awkward position of defending poor past practices. There is little risk in discussing a new idea or new method of doing a task.

Adult learners use their **experience** as a filter through which they learn new knowledge and skills and consider altering their attitudes. Mature or experienced learners who have been doing a specific task in a particular way (even incorrectly) prefer to learn through experience rather than being told directly that they are doing something wrong. A case study allows them to reach their own conclusions and to apply past learning.

Cautions

An effective case study must be realistic and authentic. The situation must be believable and parallel to the learner's situation. A case study needs to be authentic, but not so close to reality that the learner can identify specific co-workers or organizational folklore in negative situations. However, if a case is not at all authentic or realistic, participants may argue with the details of the case and miss the major learning points.

Examples of the Five Types of Case Studies

The next few pages show examples of the five types of case studies described above. For each case study the purpose is given, followed by directions to the learners and questions to consider, explore, and discuss following independent reading of the case.

At the end of each case are questions for the facilitator to ask as he or she leads a discussion of that particular case. These facilitator questions are designed to complete the learning process by helping the learners identify the concepts and apply what is learned.

Identification

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

The purpose of this diagnostic case study is for the learner to identify what this new supervisor is doing that is appropriate or inappropriate. After identifying these behaviors, the learner (a new supervisor) can identify what similar behaviors he or she is doing or not doing and how to be more successful.

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CASE STUDY 1: SUE WELDON, NEW SUPERVISOR



Directions: As you read the case Study,

- *Underline the things you think Sue is doing correctly.*
- *Bracket [] the things you think Sue is doing incorrectly.*
- *Decide if you would like Sue to work for you or if you would like to work for Sue.*

Sue Weldon is a highly regarded charge nurse and a bit of a perfectionist. She was promoted into a supervisory position six months ago because she is one of the best surgical staff nurses at the Medical Center.

Sue is a methodical planner and closely supervises the unit that helps patients recover from surgery. Sue says, "It's my job to get employees to provide the best patient care possible and do that in the most cost-effective manner possible. If anyone is doing something wrong, I tell him or her exactly what to do. I have learned to size up a problem quickly. I'm concerned about quality care for our patients. I have learned to get to the heart of the matter. My biggest problem is getting the rest of the staff to focus on care delivery. There's so much emphasis on cost containment. They must remember we're here to help patients recover from surgery and be well enough by the time they are discharged."

Upper management respects Sue for her good judgment. Sue tends to think through an issue and then make all of the decisions herself. Sue believes she is pretty good at selling her decisions to her staff. A major concern is losing authority over her staff, so she is loathe to admit making a mistake. When an employee does an excellent job, Sue is quick to compliment them. She is often concerned about solving problems, and when she finds the guilty party, her facts are listed in rapid fire order and her criticism can be sharp, often in front of others.

Employees complain Sue seldom asks their opinions on anything. They feel neglected and ignored.

The Unit rarely fails to meet its targets and always gets high marks on patient satisfaction surveys. To make sure productivity and satisfaction levels remain high, Sue frequently stays beyond the end of her shift to finish a job and complete planning tasks. Medical Center administration is pleased with Sue's Unit, but the Vice President of Nursing is concerned that Sue is working excessive overtime and it could affect her health.

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Facilitator Processing Questions

What are the behaviors of an effective supervisor?

What circumstances make it easy or difficult for a new supervisor to be effective with subordinates?

How can a new supervisor overcome some of the barriers to supervising others?

What characteristics are important for you to develop?

How will you do that?

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Problem Solving

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

The purpose of this case study is to solve a problem by identifying the problem, creating a plan, and taking action. This case helps the learner sort out rumors from fact as part of the information-gathering step in problem solving.

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**CASE STUDY 2:
RUMORS ABOUND!**

Directions: Identify your plan of action to address the problem presented in the following case.

You have been hearing rumors that there are major complaints with the filing of correspondence in your department. Files everyone uses are missing, people waste hours of precious time trying to locate files, and the sign-out system is ignored by just about everyone. Because you work for the department manager, this issue has landed on your desk and your boss has told you to "fix it." When you begin to talk to others with access about the files, it is difficult to find anyone who has heard a complaint or is aware of the situation.

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Facilitator Processing Questions

What is the problem?

What are the elements of the problem you want to uncover by your investigation?

What actions will you take to resolve the problem in looking for missing files?

Is your plan of action realistic?

What problems might occur if you implemented this plan?

What else could you do to solve this problem?

Are those involved in the problem likely to accept your plan of action?

What did you learn about planning to solve problems from this situation?

What are you likely to do when faced with similar problems?

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Practice

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

The skill being practiced is directing the work of others with the appropriate amount of direction. Giving orders can be done by offering information, making suggestions, making requests, or making commands. The case helps the learner read a problem all the way through to realize the possible consequences of some actions. The case also helps the learner recognize that effective direction is done with the **least** amount of control.

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CASE STUDY 3: GIVING ORDERS



Directions: Read the following situation. Answer the five questions to prepare for a discussion with others.

Your manager has asked you to arrange the conference room for an orientation to your company of a group of very important visitors. There will be about twenty people attending the meeting and you want to make a good impression. Because several offices have been moved recently, the conference room has been used to store boxes. Making such arrangements is not part of your duties, but no one else is available at the moment.

You have asked two people to help you set up the room. One of them, Mary, is with you. She is your new support person. Jim, a custodian, has not shown up yet. The meeting will take place in two hours. In addition to some heavy cartons, the room is overcrowded with chairs and is dusty. You envision seating the visitors around the conference table. A slide presentation will be shown on the front wall; no screen is available.

1. You have an idea of how you want to arrange the room. Write down exactly what you would say to Mary in one sentence.
2. You decide to first clear the area for the projector. You want Mary to help you move some heavy cartons. What do you say to Mary?
3. After you have been dusting chairs for 20 minutes, Jim shows up. Working has been difficult because the room is overcrowded with cartons. What do you say to Jim?
4. Jim is trying to lift a heavy carton by himself, instead of asking for help or using a hand truck (which is downstairs). You are concerned Jim will hurt his back. What do you say?
5. Finally the room looks as it should. You sit down in one of the chairs to rest a bit, and notice that the wall directly opposite the projector has an electrical box in the center of it. It will be impossible to show the presentation on that wall. The table will have to be moved down and the projector moved to the other end of the room. What do you say to Jim and Mary?

Facilitator Processing Questions

What made it easy or difficult to find the right words to give orders to a new support person?

How is giving directions different when the person receiving your direction doesn't report to you?

What did you learn about giving directions from this exercise?

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Application

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

Prior to reading this case study, the learner has studied skills for managing a training function in a two-day workshop. The case helps the training manager apply a variety of skills through this summary activity including: identifying training needs, prioritizing projects, allocating resources, budgeting for training, and building alliances in the operation.

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CASE STUDY 4: PRIORITIZE TRAINING PROJECTS



Directions: Review the set of circumstances and conditions described in the following case, then answer these questions:

- *What are your objectives for training?*
- *What is your recommendation to the Vice President of Operations (your boss)? Include recommendations for:*
 - *The type of training*
 - *Target population*
 - *Delivery system (centralized vs. road trip for general office trainer; self-paced video; outside seminars; train store managers as trainers; etc.)*
 - *The number of people you need to add to your staff of three (a course designer, an instructor, a support person).*

You are the training manager of “Catch Us Now,” a small fast food chain that specializes in seafood. You have twenty-five outlets in major southern California cities, Nevada, and Arizona. The General Office is located in southern California. The company has committed to opening one new store per month for twenty-four months—the size will double in two years.

Cashier/counter server turnover is 60%. Currently, store managers barely have the time to interview cashiers, let alone train them. They are begging for help in recruitment and training of cashiers/servers. Of the 40% cashiers/counter servers who remain, some feel promotions go to those with connections in high places. They feel they are the “work horses” who hold the company together.

New store managers are promoted from within. The average age of store managers is 27. The Regional Manager does training for new store managers on an as-needed basis. Two years ago a manual was developed on how to run and manage a store. It needs updating.

Each store has about twenty cashier/counter servers and cooks. Brief job descriptions exist for each position, but procedure manuals are very brief. No effective orientation program exists.

About eight months ago the store managers completed a mandatory interviewing seminar. The chain is still experiencing several problems from "bad" hires. Grievances are still at too high a rate. Little improvement has come about in this area.

You are suspicious that the interviewing class may not have been as effective as you would have liked. The managers were enthusiastic, but the interviewing class was mostly lecture. It began with scare tactics about previous lawsuits and losses the company has suffered because of bad hires. The managers received handout materials that gave "chapter and verse" about legal questions to ask. This material was reviewed quickly and was basically included as "reference."

Answer the questions in the directions at the beginning of the case study.

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Facilitator Processing Questions

What information led you to decide how to prioritize these training issues?

How do the proposed recommendations support the objectives you developed for this situation?

What additional information needs developing to allow you to finish the plan?

What did you learn about prioritizing training issues from this case?

How will you use these skills in the future?

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Serial

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

The purpose of this type of case study is to develop a series of skills by adding information to an on-going situation. In the first part of the case study, the Training Manager plans to build a partnership with the managers of the learners who will attend training. The Training Manager identifies what needs to be done before, during, and after the training to build the partnership. After additional skills are learned, the case situation is revisited two more times to apply skills being taught in the Training Manager workshop. Serial case studies have the advantage of building on previous information and added information helps bring sophistication and nuances to learning.

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CASE STUDY 5, PART 1: MANAGER'S ROLE



Directions: Read the information about the business need, training plan, and target population and identify appropriate tasks and roles for the Store Manager before, during, and after Product Knowledge training.

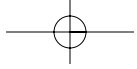
Situation: Fine Jewelry Retail Chain Requests Training for Retail Associates

The business need for a fine jewelry store chain is to increase retail sales, particularly on higher-priced products.

The training plan calls for interactive *Product Knowledge* training for Retail Associates. The training was designed at the corporate office in half-day modules to be conducted at the Regional Training Centers by Corporate Trainers assigned to each region. Role-play practice to sell higher-priced products is included in each module. A prerequisite for the *Product Knowledge* training is completion of *Selling Skills* training that is conducted monthly at the Regional Training Centers. Not all Retail Associates have attended *Selling Skills* training. Some Managers say their stores are short staffed and don't have the coverage to release new Associates to attend training outside the store.

The target population is two groups of Retail Associates: (1) sophisticated and experienced at selling fine jewelry (average age 38), or (2) young and inexperienced (average age 24). This younger group finds selling expensive jewelry difficult because they cannot afford such products for themselves.

If the chain is to meet the business need, identify the appropriate roles and tasks for the Store Managers before, during, and after *Product Knowledge* training.



Facilitator Processing Questions

What roles and tasks did you identify for the Store Managers before, during, and after *Product Knowledge* training?

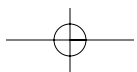
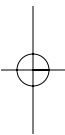
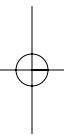
What helped or hindered you in identifying these roles?

What additional information do you need to better identify these roles?

In general, what does a Store Manager need to do to support a training effort to get the desired results from training?

In your organization, what can be done to encourage managers to support a training effort to produce the desired results?

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CASE STUDY 5, PART 2: MANAGERS SUPPORT THEIR OWN CHANGE



*Directions: Using the "Fine Jewelry Product Knowledge Training for Retail Associates" case study, part 1, identify the changes in knowledge, attitude, and individual behavior that need to take place **for the Store Managers** in order for their Associates' learning to transfer to the workplace.*

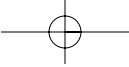
Knowledge changes:

Attitude changes:

Behavior changes:

Identify the following about the Store Managers:

1. Identify their probable level of commitment to these changes:
 - Commitment (eager dedication, initiative, and willing participation)
 - Genuine compliance (willingness and agreement with goals at the direction of others)
 - Formal compliance (will complete as part of one's job)
 - Grudging compliance (will complete only to keep a job)
 - Non-compliance (not willing)
2. What amount of resistance is likely to occur that could be a barrier to transfer?
3. Which strategies will be critical to overcome that resistance?
4. What other strategies do you suggest that have not been discussed previously?



Facilitator Processing Questions

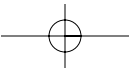
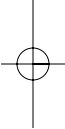
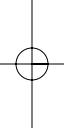
Given the changes in knowledge, attitude, and behavior that have just been discussed, what might it take to increase the Store Managers' commitment and reduce resistance to changes?

How realistic are the strategies to overcome resistance by Store Managers?

What are the characteristics of helpful strategies to overcome resistance to change by managers?

What can be done in your organization to overcome resistance to change by managers in your organization?

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CASE STUDY 5, PART 3: MANAGERS SUPPORT ASSOCIATES' CHANGE



*Directions: Using the "Fine Jewelry Product Knowledge Training for Retail Associates" case study, parts 1 and 2, identify the changes in knowledge, attitude, and individual behavior that need to take place **for the Retail Associates** in order for their learning to transfer to the workplace.*

Knowledge changes:

Attitude changes:

Behavior changes:

Identify the following about the learners (Retail Associates):

1. Identify their probable level of commitment to these changes:
 - Commitment
 - Genuine compliance
 - Formal compliance
 - Grudging compliance
 - Non-compliance
2. What kind of resistance is likely to occur that could be a barrier to transfer?
3. Which manager strategies will be critical to overcome that resistance?
4. What other strategies do you suggest that have not been discussed previously?

Facilitator Processing Questions

Given the changes that the Retail Associates need to make and their level of commitment, how realistic are the strategies to overcome resistance to these changes?

What differences are there between strategies to overcome resistance of managers and their subordinates?

What have you learned about overcoming resistance and effective strategies through the three progressive case studies?

How can these strategies be applied in your organization?

SUMMARY

This chapter helped you:

Define case study, as a description of a situation the learner examines to increase knowledge and skills or influence attitudes.

Describe the Purpose of the Five Types of Case Studies:

1. Identification
2. Problem Solving
3. Practice
4. Application
5. Serial

Identify the Benefits of Using Case Studies:

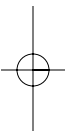
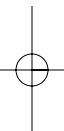
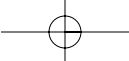
- Add a note of realism and practicality as well as to increase learner participation, enjoyment, and retention.
- Allow the learner to practice or rehearse how to handle a new situation in a low-risk setting.

Identify Cautions When Developing Case Studies:

- Make case studies realistic when the situation is believable and parallels the learner's situation.
- Make case studies authentic, but not so close to reality that the learners can identify specific co-workers in negative situations. If the case is not authentic, participants may argue with the details of the case and miss the major learning points.

Finally, examples of the five types of case studies were presented. The next chapter will help develop an understanding of the process of writing or customizing a case study.

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