

PROBLEM SOLVING CASE FORMAT FOR THE RESEARCH ESSAY

1. Title Page

2. Table of Contents

3. Executive Summary

This section should comprise a brief overview of the case, giving a brief background and noting any important assumptions made. (You will not have all the information you would like - so you may need to make some assumptions). As well as this, you should give a synopsis of your case report, noting very briefly the major problems identified and the recommended solutions. One page is enough.

4. Problem Identification and Analysis

In this section you should identify all the major problems in the case in behavioural terms, ie. in Management/OB related terms (it is not a marketing or an accounting case). Try to get to underlying causes of problems, not just symptoms. Seek advice from your tutor on the layout of this information.

- You should link each problem identified to relevant theory and also to actual evidence from the case. Remember you MUST integrate theory and reference all non-original work.

5. Statement of Major Problems

In most case studies you will identify a number of problems - too many to actually 'solve' in the number of words allowed. Hence it is crucial to make it very clear which are the major two or three problems or key issues, that must be solved first. Therefore this section is just a short concise statement of what problems you are going to solve in the remainder of the case. Half a page is adequate.

- Having once identified the key problems, you can continually check back to ensure that you are actually attempting to solve them and not some other minor problems you identified. This section is crucial to a good case report.

6. Generation and Evaluation of Alternative Solutions

While most problems will have a very large number of possible solutions it is your task to identify and evaluate a number of the more appropriate (at least 2-3 for each major problem identified).

- Each alternative solution should be briefly outlined and then evaluated in terms of its advantages and disadvantages (strong and weak points). Note: You must evaluate alternatives. It is not necessary to make a statement in this section as to which alternative is considered best - this is the next section. Do not integrate theory in this section and do not recommend theory. Practical solutions to the problems are required.

7. Recommendation

This section should state which of the alternative solutions (either singly or in combination) identified in section six is recommended for implementation. You should briefly justify your choice, explaining how it will solve the major problems identified in section six. Integration of relevant theory is appropriate here.

8. Implementation

In this section you should specifically explain how you will implement the recommended solutions. Theory cannot be implemented; you must translate it into actions.

- What should be done, by whom, when, in what sequence, what will it cost (rough estimates only) and other such issues.
- Remember if a recommended solution cannot be realistically implemented then it is no solution at all.

9. Appendices (if any)

10. Bibliography/References

This will contain an alphabetical list of all the references you have cited in the body of the report. Do not include details of any sources you have not cited. Ensure the style used is correct and consistent.

The main section is the Problem Identification section where we look for the ability to succinctly identify problems, a relevant theory which explains the problem, and case evidence which illustrates the problems.

We also look for a range of possible solutions for each problem, which should be thoroughly evaluated, with at least **two to three advantages and disadvantages** being given for each one. Finally, we want a clear recommendation (or two or three) which is justified using the theory, and an Implementation section presented in **concise, practical steps**.

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