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# Business Project Report

## Case Writing Workshop at AIT - Thailand

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5/7/2019

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### First Chapter

#### **A brief macro-description of the sector you work in, and it’s potential in Pakistan.**

Norwegian Church Aid is working under Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Government of Pakistan. Recently many NGOs have been asked to call off their operation from Pakistan but NCA survived through this phase and signed MoU in March 2019. The development sector in Pakistan is a volatile sector with respect to employment. The jobs are mostly project based and people come and go quite often.

In current scenario, as many NGOs have been pushed out of the country, NCA has a scope to widen operations as fewer players are there. But again on the other hand the funding for Pakistan by the bilateral donors has also been shrunked significantly.

#### **How long have you been in this sector? Who is your most inspirational colleague and why?**

I have been in NGO sector for last 7 years. Mainly I have been engaged in the role of financial monitoring for the implementing partners funded by NCA Pakistan. Other parts of my job description include budgeting and reporting for different donor funded projects.

Most Inspirational colleague is Mr. Sawai Mal who looks after Gender Based Violence program. He is inspirational as he came from a very small and backward city in Sindh and also belongs to a minority community in Pakistan. The humility he carries along with tolerance is the forte of his personality. I envy his patience and perseverance.

#### **Where do you see yourself as a professional in five years, and how does MBA help?**

I see myself placed in the same sector but with a larger set up like United Nations, Asian Development Bank or World Bank. Also, I see myself in fraud investigation and its mitigation side more as compared to typical finance or accounting role.

MBA has helped me to broaden my spectrum of thinking beyond finance. Further, I also pursue this to have a master’s degree as it opens up more opportunities.

**What is the case method and how does it add value to professional learning?**

Case method is a discussion based methodology where real life problems or issues are identified. It enables people to look into the problems in real time, just like a role play.

By solving different cases, as they portray different scenarios, you make people grow as a professional in their field through real time learning. It is not necessary, that all parts of the case reflect complete theory of a particular subject, but cases do give a better real time learning experience to the participants. Case based methodology is also proven to be better grasped by the professionals, hence is often more useful.

**What are some of the professions that use case-based learning, and why?**

The pioneers of using case based learning include Law, Accountancy and Medicine professions. As discussed during brief introductory session at NUST, these are the most highly paid professions as well. To make professionals in a particular stream, case based learning assists trainers to walk through the professionals across various real life time scenarios.

The reason of using case based learning is that it gives opportunities to students to see real life or real problems in an organizational setting. It gives self confidence and ability to think independently and also work cooperatively with fellows while discussion over the cases. Through case learning process the readers also develop skills that enable them to make decisions that with limited available information. Through different cases, people also learn how to generalize what is common in all cases for a particular topic.

Last but not least, learning with cases is fun.

**What is the difference between Case Study research and a Teaching case?**

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Case study research is an informal case research not meant for the academics. You can write these cases as an informal write up.

Teaching case tells story of what happened so are written in past tense. They should identify and establish an issue that can be used to teach a theory. Further, teaching cases are written in a chronological sequence to make them useful for the readers.

### **What skills does learning to write a case impart, and how is this useful to professionals?**

Learning to write a case imparts skills such as qualitative and quantitative skills, decision making skills, application skills, communication skills, time management skills, creative skill and written communication skills.

These are helpful for professionals as they see the issues in real time and it is easy to understand the holistic view in a particular setting. Further the professionals while going through the case can see through across various departments. It

### **What is the chronological sequence of writing a case and why is it important?**

There are 7 steps in case development as per following chronological order;

#### **1) Case Origin, lead and initial contact**

This is the starting point of writing a case. How to generate the lead and cooperation of the informants.

#### **2) Choices and disguise**

The case writer determines the largest part of the case, what to keep and what to leave.

#### **3) Case plan and provisional release**

It focuses on the purpose of the case, its focus contents and schedule of completion. It is a bridging tool between case writer and the supervisor.

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### 4) Data collection

Gathering necessary information as defined in the case plan. It entails if data requirements are well defined, data collection is just to fill in the blanks. This includes data collection from both formal and informal sources, also published and unpublished.

### 5) Writing process including rough draft, preliminary teaching notes

### 6) Release of case

The case writer must obtain formal permission from the organization before publishing the case. Release is a key distinguishing factor as well.

### 7) Completion/class testing and seeking new case

Class testing is important and informs about how the case works with the students and how it is interpreted.

It is important to follow the steps chronology as it covers the challenges of case writing that include;

Inadequately defined objectives, communication issues between the case writer and contact person in contributing organization and not worthy of teaching in the end.

Hence the cases developed following sequence are more helpful for the users to teach certain theory and also imparts better knowledge.

## **Have you witnessed a decision-making dilemma at work that holds lessons for others?**

The decision that employee takes when he leaves the organization, particularly when he/she is not in a position to bargain like having another job offer or he/she is disgruntled for some reason and wants to leave.

We have heard about exit procedures from employer's side but from employees' side it is not very clear and people usually use their own judgment.

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Some feel if they leave, their organization will collapse, others think they will have no impact so, what should exactly be the way or decorum when you are leaving your job.

### **Is there a story you feel motivated to pass on, that can be expressed as a teaching case?**

In my view one should end an employment on a good note, regardless of the fact that you are not happy with the way of work or how organization, the people therein treated you.

Organizations are run by people and they come and go often so, one should bear in mind, “All is well that ends well”.

### **Have you witnessed a decision-making dilemma at work that holds lessons for others?**

The dilemma I would like to share here is related to an HR issue. Since NCA is working in a project based environment where multiple projects are run through one office and employee retention is often an issue. Near the project end, people start entering into a competition with each other and try their best to get retained. Recently, in such scenario, two of the staff from one of our section went to the level that they start putting baseless allegations on one of their colleague and even the deputy country director. They resigned one month in advance from end of their contract period and send a long resignation e-mail copying different people even at Head Office. They went as disgruntled employees and show great discern with them.

Just after 4 months from their resignation, the other 3 personnel from their department also resigned as they found new jobs and many vacancies were generated to accommodate them. They tried their level best to come back but since they went on a bad note with most of the staff no one considered them. Feeling regret is the only option for them or for their good luck to find some other better place.

## Second Chapter

### First Para

The Margallas looked oddly distracting from Sofi Rehman’s window at the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) office in Islamabad, as she tried hard to focus on the letter of resignation she was trying to write. It wasn’t going to be a simple “good-bye and thank you” note for Sofi. Her decision was not a pleasant one, considering she had two months to go before her contract ends on 31 August 2018. She knew that NCA had project funds for an extension of her role beyond her contract. But she also felt that Akhtar John, the national team lead, was not likely to allow her an extension. Looking up she glanced at Razia Sahar, her colleague who had been at NCA much longer, and enjoyed a closer rapport with management colleagues including John. “Razia will definitely be asked to stay”, Sofi said to herself, “because she is always appreciated more even if I do most of the work”. She could go away quietly in August and turn a new leaf. But it seemed unfair. She had to make a statement by her departure. Someone in NCA had to know how employees were let down, not appreciated enough, and even discriminated against. She would make her resignation count.

### Checklist

1. Is the decision maker identified by name and position?  
Yes, Akhter John – National Team Leader is there.
2. Is the time of the case clear?  
Yes, it is 2 months before 31 August 2018.
3. Is the location of the company identified?  
Yes, Margallas are landmark for Islamabad, Pakistan
4. Is the decision/problem clear?  
In my opinion it is clear, Sofi has to take a decision for how to quit?
5. Is the decision/problem appropriate and sufficiently interesting for use in class?  
Decision problem is there and interest of user is tried to be gained through small sentences, linking to the view for grasping, Sofi’s anger etc.

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6. Is the story line cut appropriate with respect to the actual situation?  
Story line is as per actual situation. The characters are actual ones and story build up will be made on these characters. Sofi has to take a decision whether to go in a hostile way or go pleasantly. But she wants to register her grievance as well.
7. Would moving it forward or backward result in a better case?  
I believe moving it forward will go towards a better case as the opening para gives open ended options to the reader and creates curiosity.
8. Is the decision frame cut appropriate? Would moving it forward or backward result in a better case?  
  
The decision frame cut is difficult to identify in this case as this is not from the perspective of the organization but from the perspective of an employee. So this is basically related to “Analysis and Alternative Generation” and also “Decision” to be taken by Sofi.
9. What is the action trigger?  
Action trigger identifies the reader what is an urgency in the case. Sofi’s contract is going to expire on 31 August 2018 and she is confused how to put her resignation so that she can mark her exit.
10. What is the position of the case on the case difficulty cube?  
The case is simple in terms of analytics, concepts and presentation. So I will say it as 1,1,1.
11. Is the title chosen appropriate?  
The title has not yet been set but suggested title could be, “Disgruntled? Want to leave? - Take a break!”



### Third Chapter

#### **Review of industrial visits;**

During our visit to Asian Institute of Technology, following three visits were arranged for us;

- Visit to Ajinomoto Factory – Ajinomoto Salt Manufacturers and FMCG.
- Visit to AiS Head Office – Advanced Info Services – A telecom operator in Thailand.
- Visit to Ichitan Factory – an FMCG, manufacturers of famous Ice Tea in Thailand.

The first visit we done were of Ajinomoto Factory in Nong Khae, Thailand where we were able to see their Packing Unit Only for the salts/mixes section. The factory has been established in 2005. The management arranged a short documentary where they presented details of how the salt was discovered as being an amino acid. The salt is from plant source. The factory produces different sort of mixes which includes both Chicken and Pork flavorings.

Ajinomoto has diverse into different businesses one of which is their cold coffee and tea range by the name of Birdy in different flavours. We visited the whole production facility there. The plant was automated though stock handling and storing was handled by human work force.

We have seen human work force mainly engaged with quality controls and checks only.

Since many rumors are associated with their original product that is Ajinomoto Salt, so the management is very welcoming and invites different schools, colleges and universities. Pakistan has placed a complete ban on Ajinomoto Salt for last two years or so.

The second visit we did was of AiS – Advanced Information Services. They are one of the leading telecom operators in Thailand. The customer relations head gave us a presentation there. AiS mainly focus on customer centricity. They have developed different applications where customer is their main focus. They are using Artificial intelligence to detect consumer preferences and behaviors and tapping the market accordingly. They have developed their Kiosiks that are fully operational by Robots with Zero human interaction.

Another very important initiative by AiS is where they have developed a dedicated team who handles the complaints for the elderly people. The team is specially trained for staying patient and how to handle the calls with complete calm. This is a very good initiative by AiS which shows that company is catering all domains.

They presented us stats showing how increasingly Thai population is engaged with their mobile phones and how much time they are spending on internet. Stats were also shared where social media app usage was also shown.

Special numbers as suggested by different spiritual leaders are also disclosed. As a big portion of Thai population also believes in superstitious concepts like keeping specific number pattern will be lucky for them and good for their fortune, so people do try to get those number patterns.

Similarly if you have lost your phone with AiS sim card, they handle the complaint with complete end to end process with even suggesting prices for available handsets.

The last visit we did was of Ichitan Factory which is one of the most famous Ice Tea in Thailand. They have ice tea of different flavors and the factory visit was state of the art. Ichitan has made a complete facility for customers and different visitors. There is a walk through passage that passes across the whole factory with micro phones that keeps on explaining the process. They have also focused on using recycled items to construct their visiting area.

Another note worthy thing about Ichitan was that their warehousing was completely automated. All warehousing and stocks were managed by Robots. This was a new experience to see how actually the things work in complete robotics environment. Through the whole process there were hardly any human involvements except for the quality control sections. They have

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named their factory area as Tanland which gives them a specific identity.

From the different field visits in Thailand we have observed and noted following key learning points;

- The industries in different sectors are more customers centric.
- They are moving very quickly towards automation.
- Robotics is quickly getting in their industries.
- Recycling is one of the key focuses.
- The industries are also very much focused on water conservation and zero hazard waste.
- Research and Development is seen key to their success.
- Artificial Intelligence is widely used particularly in service industry.
- In service industry particularly where it comes to human interaction, humility is key.

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### Fourth Chapter

#### Final shape “first para” developed

“The Margallas looked oddly distracting from Sofi Rehman’s window at the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) office in Islamabad, as she tried hard to focus on the letter of resignation she was trying to write. It wasn’t going to be a simple “good-bye and thank you” note for Sofi. Her decision was not a pleasant one, considering she had two months to go before her contract ends on 31 August 2018. She knew that NCA had project funds for an extension of her role beyond her contract. But she also felt that Akhtar John, the national team lead, was not likely to allow her an extension. Looking up she glanced at Razia Sahar, her colleague who had been at NCA much longer, and enjoyed a closer rapport with management colleagues including John. “Razia will definitely be asked to stay”, Sofi said to herself, “because she is always appreciated more even if I do most of the work”. She could go away quietly in August and turn a new leaf. But it seemed unfair. She had to make a statement by her departure. Someone in NCA had to know how employees were let down, not appreciated enough, and even discriminated against. She would make her resignation count.”

#### Key learning takeaways

- Significance of case learning method and chronological sequence of putting things in perspective for presenting a case. Specially how to find out the leads and make it more useable.
- How to draft the opening paragraph for a case and how to create curiosity for the case reader.
- How companies can benefit from arranging field visits for students as it is not common in our country.

#### Work relevance and why? From industry visits

- Industry visit to AIS (Telecom Company) was relevant as we learnt their best practices and how customer centricity is paying them off.
- Why learning through experience is better?
- Importance of diverse portfolio of products as we saw how Ajinomoto is diversifying in beverage industry as well.

#### What you can adapt in your organization from industry visits?

- Technology innovation can be adopted from AiS Visit.
- We can also organize learning visits for universities to our companies. This will portray a good impression of a company.
- Environment friendliness is very important as industrial waste could hamper your activities.

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### Fifth Chapter

#### **Thing that went well and things that could be improved:**

It was a very well organized plan and tour in overall terms. The coordination and flexibility shown by the management at NUST and AIT was well noted. The team at AIT was fully engaged with students all the time. They guided students very well at campus and also off campus as well.

The field visits were well coordinated and logistics were perfect.

This was a very unique kind of a topic chosen, “CASE WRITING WORKSHOP” which is not offered anywhere in our country. Special thanks to Dr. Faiz Shah and Dr. Adeel for tailoring this big topic in 5 days for us. The material shared is very helpful and easy to grasp.

The IPADs were provided on day 1 to each individual was also very helpful, no notebooks were required. Materials were uploaded on time and the session was made tech savvy, which is a plus from my perspective.

Individual attention was given to each topic selected, by different participants. The sessions were very interactive and faculty at AIT kept the momentum at all times.

Logistics arrangements at the university were perfect, lunch options were several so as tea and different snacks were readily and available at subsidized prices.

Last but not least, for working students, the work load was kept very appropriate and balanced.

#### A few things that could be improved may be;

I would like to mention that we were a bit unlucky that we got stuck in the period where our airspace issue was there and we had to postpone the trip first and then move it to another time that consumed our time and a bit extra amount as well.

City campus might be a better option but it depends on how much cost effective it would be.

Industry visits could be made more relevant if selected beforehand. Different students from different sectors can chose industries of their relevance. But it is totally understandable that it depends upon number of participants and availability options at companies' side plus cost implications.

Overall it was a brilliant experience; we had a great time and learned a lot from Dr. Faiz and his team at AIT.