

Common Mistakes to Avoid in Case Analyses

This list presents some of the most common mistakes made when analyzing cases. Use this list to spot potential shortcomings.

1. **Inadequate definition of the problem.** A common error in case analysis is attempting to recommend a course of action based on symptoms without adequately understanding the problem. Always focus on finding the root problems represented in the case situation.
2. **The search for “the answer.”** In case analysis there are no clear-cut solutions, or “official” answers, keep in mind that the objective of case studies is learning through exploration and the search for intelligent questions. There are usually several reasonable alternative solutions.
3. **Not enough information.** Analysts often complain that there is not enough information in some cases to make a good decision. As in real life, a strategist seldom has all the information necessary to make an optimal decision. Thus, reasonable assumptions must be made, and the challenge is to find intelligent solutions in spite of the limited information.
4. **Use of generalities.** In analyzing cases, specific recommendations are necessarily not generalities. For example, a suggestion to increase the price is a generality that lacks a sense of scale to the reader; a suggestion to increase the price by \$1.07 is a specific.
5. **A different situation.** Do not spend time arguing “If the situation were different, I’d know what course of action to take.” Even though analysis of past events may be necessary in diagnosing the problem, in the end, alternatives must address the present situation as is.
6. **Narrow vision of analysis.** Although cases are often labeled as a specific type of case, such as “Pricing,” “Product,” “Personnel,” etc., this does not mean that other variables should be ignored. Be careful, and look out for the consequences a change in one management element (e.g., investment) will have on the others (e.g., financing).
7. **Realism.** Don’t become so focused on solving a problem that your solutions become unrealistic. For example, suggesting a \$1 million advertising program for a firm with a capital structure of \$50,000 is an unrealistic solution.
8. **The do more business research solution.** A quite common but unsatisfactory solution to case is the “The firm should do this or that type of business research to find a solution to their problem.” Although helpful, business research does not solve problems or make decisions. You do.
9. **Rehashing the case material.** Including a two- or three-page recap of case details is unnecessary, since the instructor is already familiar with this information.
10. **Premature conclusions.** Too many analysts jump to conclusions upon first reading the case and then proceed to interpret everything in the case as justifying their conclusions. Completely read case and write down the problems as they come up.

Adopted from:

Rasche, C., & Seisreiner, A. (2018). *Guidelines for business case analysis*. Retrieved from https://www.uni-potsdam.de/fileadmin01/projects/professional-services/downloads/skripte-ss/Anleitung_Case_Studies.pdf