

Gina Vega

Letter from the Editor: compact cases have arrived

We have been hearing for the past few years about how students do not prepare their cases the way we would think would provide the very best learning experience. As you all know, case preparation requires work, sometimes quite a lot of work. But students often think that because cases read like stories, they can read the cases as if they were stories rather than trying to see behind the curtain and perform ongoing analysis and deep thinking about the content, context, and process on which the case is focused.

When students come to class either not having read the case or have read it cursorily, case discussion grinds to a halt and a learning opportunity is lost. This is frustrating for the instructor and also for those students in the class who did spend the time to prepare thoroughly for a case discussion. Rather than bemoaning this fact of life, the CASE Association has decided to do something about it. The day of the compact case has arrived.

A compact case is a factual narrative, written in the past tense that provides students with the opportunity to perform an analysis or to make a recommendation to the protagonist. Sounds like a case, right? That's because it IS a case. The goal of these cases is to motivate student learning, illustrate concepts, and provide discussion opportunities.

Compact case length is limited to 500-1,000 words. This is just about two pages, single-spaced. It is not easy to provide sufficient information for solid analysis, interesting and engaged discussion, and decision-making in this small amount of space, yet we are doing it. I have provided a sample compact case and teaching note in this issue of the journal that so you can get a good idea of what we are looking for (www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/full/10.1108/TCJ-10-2015-0059). This is in addition to the new section of the journal devoted specifically to compact cases.

The goal is not to “dumb down” cases; instead, the goal is to make cases accessible and readable by the student in class to encourage better learning and stronger learning outcomes. The following case components must appear:

- a protagonist;
- information about the business/industry;
- an actual situation/problem/issue/challenge; and
- focus: either a decision focus, an analytical focus, or the application of a tool.

The case must be previously unpublished and written in accessible language appropriate for targeted audience. Disguised cases are acceptable, but not composite cases or invented characters/situations. Secondary-research is acceptable, but if the case is field-researched, a release from the protagonist is necessary.

Instead of a full Instructor' Manual, Compact Cases have a briefer Teaching Note that includes an abbreviated abstract, a set of keywords, description of the usage of the case (level and course), one or two learning objectives, two or three discussion/thought questions and their answers, any teaching tips that you can offer to assist the instructor, activities that might enhance learning from the case, and an epilogue.

I hope that you will make good use of the excellent cases that appear in Vol. 11, Issue 3 of *The CASE Journal*:

1. Reshaping at Eileen Fisher: organizational change at its best? (Susan D. Sampson, Bonita L. Betters-Reed, and Tessa G. Misiaszek). When you ask your employees how to change the organization while maintaining the existing culture, the “new normal” can present significant challenges. *Graduate or advanced undergraduate organizational management, strategic change.*



2. All World Media: a new business model (A and B) (Katri Kerem and Dietmar Sternad). An attempt in Estonia to revolutionize an industry with a new business model and seeking to change a failed business model of an online media planning and buying tool for advertisers. *Graduate or executive entrepreneurship or marketing courses.*
3. Financial distress at Comercial Mexicana, 2008-2011 (Carlos Omar Trejo-Pech, Susan White, and Magdy Noguera). A Mexican retailer's bankruptcy challenges the firm to repay the high level of debt resulting from its bankruptcy reorganization and locate additional funds needed for growth. *Advanced undergraduate or MBA electives in finance.*
4. Kumnandzi Macadamia importers: cracking the nut of self-identity (John E. Timmerman, R. Franklin Morris, and Al S. Lovvorn). This case presents the challenge of articulating a vision and crafting a mission and value proposition for a macadamia nut import business designed to sustain a college in Swaziland. *Undergraduate and graduate strategic management, entrepreneurship, and marketing courses.*
5. Eastern Truss Company: the technology adoption decision (William J. Ritchie, Dusty Williamson, John Ni, and George Young). Students will analyze the critical factors involved in adopting a new production technology. *Undergraduate operations management.*
6. Compact case section:
 - Sorry, no carnitas: balancing food with integrity and growth at Chipotle (Rebecca J. Morris). Can Chipotle maintain its commitment to "Food with Integrity" when the supply of sustainable foods fails to meet demand? What other choices have they? *Upper level undergraduate and MBA courses in strategy.*
 - The case of the unhappy teachers (Andrea L. Santiago and Fernando Y. Roxas). This compact case deals with the process of making data-driven decisions in human resource management. It takes place in the Philippines. *Graduate level courses in educational leadership.*

Happy reading!