Case-Studies have become very popular over the last few decades amongst companies, schools, colleges and communities. Many authors and intellectuals have suggested different ways of writing a case study over the years. A Case-Study and a caselet in an academic or corporate context are two different forms of a short and specific study. A caselet is a mini case-study which does not go beyond 500 words and poses a quick dilemma, learning or problem to its reader – which has become very popular in interviews, tests and even exams. A case-Study on the other hand is a detailed academic study on a phenomena, success or failure in the corporate context where a case can sometimes stretch up to 3500 or 4000 words. It must be remembered that a case study is NOT a story of a corporate or an individual's journey but rather it should narrow down to an aspect of that journey. Adding images is optional and whilst it adds visual ease it can also be distracting and increase the overall length of the case. Data especially numeric based on fact must be backed up with sources via footnotes or references as a failure to do so would question the reliability of the case-study itself. Actionesque Consulting has given the format for a typical Case-Study in the academic context.

ABSTRACT

A short section before the case-study which gives a brief description in less than 80 words about the subject areas covered in the case study. Many writers also prefer to add the top 10 keywords associated with their case in this section.

TITLE

This makes or breaks the case study as most people judge a case study by its abstract or title. Many times, students or academicians prefer a dramatic title which is more suited for a newspaper. Although it may sound interesting or look catchy, it should be avoided as it can depict a very misleading topic. The case study should also avoid having a question as its topic – it should rather be a statement hinting towards a question or capture the curiosity of the reader. A fine balance between description and jargon needs to be achieved here. A good title is usually less than 10 words although there are titles which go up to 15 depending on the nature of the case. The title must address certain key elements of the study such as:

- Success story /Failure story / Phenomena in the making
- Identify a specific Geographic location or demographic segment
- Name the company, brand, product/service or customer/employee profile
- Use variables from a subject context terminology which can describe a cause and effect

AIM/OBJECTIVE(s)

This is an optional topic but highly recommended as it helps the writer to narrow-down to the main aspects for the existence of the case study. The objective should be concise and if required can be divided into 2 or 3 points. Always remember, an objective in a statement form begins with the word 'To'. For example - To study, to find out, to explore, etc.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Every reader must be given the opportunity to understand the context in which the case study has been developed or written. For example, A commerce graduate would need to understand basics of engineering if the case study were focused on a new engineering technique in a factory that led to business profits. Or a law student would need to understand the basics of agriculture before reading about a new fertilizer patent, etc. The contextual background serves as the backbone of a good management-based case study. An ideal contextual background must include the following:

- Industry Scenario (begin from a global scale to a national scale)
- Market Scenario (briefly explain the market coverage and scale of operations)
- Company Description and Background
- Product / Service Description (list out the ranges or extensions if applicable)
- Competitor(s) Profile (briefly highlight the most significant competitors and their activities)
- Customer/Employee Profile and Description (write a little about the typical customer or client profile and in a HR setting it could describe an employee profile. Certain writers tend to use characters as well which is acceptable if the premise/story is explained well)

ANALYSIS

This is the part where established facts are tested or studied under scrutiny. It gives validity to the case-study and proves the aim or objective(s) stated earlier. This can be done in 3 ways:

- Purely theoretical (in the form of a critique based on existing literature)
- A quantitative study using mathematical formulae, calculations, trend studies, etc.
- Using popular business tools or strategic management models (such as Porter's 5 forces, FCB grid, BEMS, Ansoff, etc.)

LEARNING - PROCESS / TRANSFORMATION/ SOLUTION

A typical case-study must pose a thought or reflection to the reader where they have either discovered something successful which can be contributed to a learning or an understanding of a failure which can also serve as a learning as well. It is encouraged that the case study poses a dilemma of sorts for the reader if the objective is based in a pure academic context. If the case study is describing a process (order) of the way things were done, then it would be more of a process-based learning which has to be highlighted to the reader. Whereas if there was a complete change in the way things have been done by certain characters in the case-study, then it could attribute to a transformation of the company or individual and serves as a transformational learning. This topic serves as an intellectual reflection for the reader to study further or ponder upon the case. It is at this stage that the writer can propose a solution or also optionally pose questions to the reader for solving them further.

CONCLUSION

It is the final and formal way of signing-off where the reader is given a choice to look up things further, solve further problems or gain a s sense of learning. This section is expected to be not more than a paragraph of around 150 -200 words. A few limitations which the writer faced can be mentioned here and there should be a mention of further scope for studying the same case in the future.