Teaching a case-based session

This chapter has been written with first-time case teachers in mind, but also contains multiple ideas and suggestions for educators who have some, or even extensive, experience in case teaching:

- If you are not yet experienced with case teaching: follow this chapter step by step in the correct sequence and use this book and the accompanying workbook to develop or review your learning objectives, reflect on your specific learning context, identify potential cases, and develop your teaching plan.
- If you are more experienced and are already using several cases in your classes but are still looking for ideas to further improve your teaching: use the table of content, the index, or the FAQ section of the webpage for this book to navigate directly to the relevant sections of this book.

Our case teaching beliefs and philosophy

There are several excellent (work-)books, articles, notes, and guides on case teaching. This might question the need for yet another case teaching guide. The initial idea for this book was born when we were looking for the ideal accompanying book for the case teaching and case writing workshops that we conduct either at our own institutions or for the workshops organized by the Case Centre. We quickly realized that the book that we had in mind did not exist. One of the reasons was that we developed some core beliefs around teaching in general, but even more so for case teaching. And we wanted these beliefs to be reflected in the book.

We therefore think that it is important to start the chapter on case teaching with these beliefs (or you could call it our case teaching philosophy). Everything that we write about later in this chapter, all the different elements, techniques, and tools that you can use, will play into one or even several of these core beliefs. And here they are:

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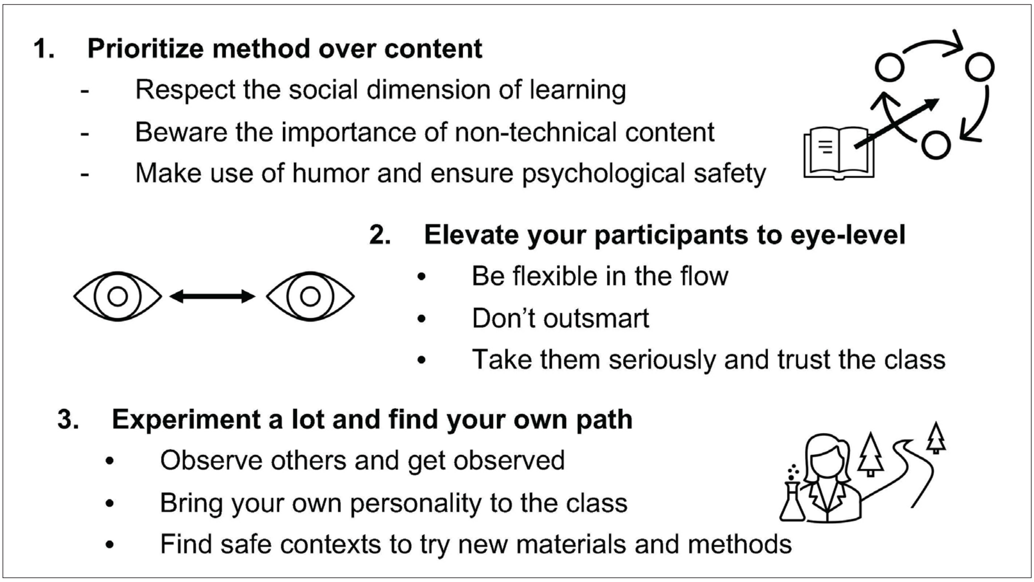

Figure 5: Our case teaching beliefs and philosophy.

Prioritize method over content

The case method is not the fastest route to convey knowledge to participants. Readings, lectures, video instructions, etc. will achieve that in a much shorter time. But the case method has the capacity to help your participants learn much and deeply. If it comes down to tradeoffs, we suggest prioritizing the method over the content. Why?

Respect the social dimension of learning

Books have been used for learning and education for centuries – but we still have schools and universities. Why? Why do people make the effort of going to school (or joining synchronous or asynchronous online classes) to learn, when they could simply read a book? Among other reasons (see below) it is because conceptual learning benefits from deliberation and discourse with others (see e.g., Asterhan 2015).

A participant's opportunity to ask questions, test assumptions, and argumentations and interact with other humans (sometimes in circles) strongly helps to deepen conceptual understanding. And we would contend that this is even true when comparing human-led or -orchestrated learning opportunities to mere interaction with artificial intelligence. Our teaching needs to take this into account and provide opportunities for interaction, exchange, and deliberation among our participants. This points to the importance of study groups before and after class sessions, group assignments, pair discussions and full-class interactions. And the case method is ideally suited to do exactly all of this.

Beware the importance of nontechnical content

Beyond the technical content and knowledge, our students have much to learn to be ready for their professional futures: creative and critical thinking, argumentation, communication (especially speaking in front of audiences), listening, dealing with diversity, digesting ambiguous material, decision-making, empathy, judgment, curiosity, etc. None of these is developed in only one case-based session, but through the use of case studies all of them can grow.

Think back to the metaphor of the patient in the room: Much can be learned about medicine from books. But when they stand around a patient with other students and are guided only through the diagnosis and recommendations by smart questions from the educator, the students can learn together – and much better and deeper. The same is true for business. Our participants will mostly end up in organizations with other people – sometimes in organizations with hundreds of thousands of others. Their ability to discuss managerial challenges with others in their jobs will be a key qualification and possibly more important than any single piece of content knowledge that you can provide them with.

So, when you run out of time or believe you need to make a content input, critically ask yourself if the content is really so important. In many cases, we would contest that you should probably prefer to stick to the case method and sacrifice a bit of content.

Make sense of humor and ensure psychological safety

Ensuring psychological safety is an important precondition for an open case discussion. If participants fear being penalized for comments or questions, they will be reluctant to contribute. The overall atmosphere in the class therefore needs to be safe, open, and transparent – the focus needs to be on deliberating jointly, not on fighting against each other. And, from our experience, humor can be an incredibly powerful way to ensure this psychological safety and to foster a class culture that really supports case teaching. We have seen many great educators in action – and, while their styles were extremely different, there was mostly an element of fun, with laughter in the class as a visible expression of this culture. And a bit of self-mockery can contribute to this a lot. We recommend giving it a try, even though Martin at least once had a (surprisingly) negative experience:

Learning lessons with Martin

I have learned that using humor and self-mockery when singling out participants in class can sometimes backfire and destroy trust. A class I was teaching in Portugal had begun very well with lively interaction among the students. About half an hour in, we ended up talking about different salary levels, and I asked why professors typically earn more than garbage collectors. A student responded: 'Because they are more important for society.' I believed this to be a good moment for a bit of humor and self-mockery. I laughed and asked: 'What will have the worse effect on society, if garbage collectors or professors go on a strike for a month?' A comment that resulted in general laughter of the class and allowed me to move on. The student didn't contribute again, but in a class of 70 this went unnoticed.

However, after class the student approached me to tell me how awful I had made her feel by joking at her expense and not giving her the chance to justify her remarks. As a result, she had decided to make no further contribution.

This incident brought home to me just how fragile trust can be. And it was also a salutary lesson to realize that very few participants would have the courage or take the time to confront a teacher in this way, so there have probably been many more situations where I had potentially destroyed trust without even realizing it.

Elevate your participants to your eye level

Our second core belief is that the biggest opportunity of using the case method is to completely change the learning atmosphere from the classical master–apprentice constellation to a collaborative relationship. In the classical master–apprentice relationship, the master imparts their knowledge either by telling or showing, for example by giving a lecture or running an exercise. The case method offers the chance to break with this power relationship and to explore and therefore learn together.

For this to happen, it is of the utmost importance that the participants feel enabled to shape and steer this discovery. They must be on eye level with the instructor. We know that the instructor is fundamentally in charge in the sense that they pick the topic of discussion and the case, that they have a clear teaching objective to achieve, and that in face-to-face settings they are often physically in front of the class ('in the pit'). But, at the same time, they should be flexible and open in how to achieve the learning objectives and, even more, must remain open to their own discoveries. Having observed many great instructors from a wide range of institutions, we concluded that three important elements are conducive to achieving this goal of elevating your participants to your eye level.

Be flexible in the flow

The most important element in elevating participants to your eye level is to be flexible in your flow. In later sections of this chapter, especially when discussing the teaching plan, we emphasize the importance of rigorous and detailed planning. But it is important to remember that the objective of detailed planning is not to then follow this plan rigorously but quite the contrary. The detailed plan will enable you to be more flexible. Having worked on a detailed plan will tell you which parts (and how much time you had planned for them) you might have to (or want to) skip because of an interesting discussion, a new and important point that was raised or a specific question that needs a longer answer or debate than expected. And this is exactly what we mean by being flexible in the flow.

This flexibility applies not only to the duration but also to the flow. Sometimes creative, smart participants make a comment that relates to a topic that was only planned to be discussed much later in the session. Rarely, it might be acceptable in such situation to park such comments (e.g., by writing the topic down on a board), but truly participant-centered teaching should be flexible enough to just change the intended flow and swap the sequence of topics.

Don't outsmart

The main idea of case-based teaching is to explore a topic together with the participants – not to demonstrate that you are more knowledgeable or smarter than them (this is presupposed when they join your class, face to face or online). When ending up in a situation in which a student disagrees with you – or in which you disagree with a student, resist the temptation to outsmart them. The purpose of the session is the learning of the class, not their perception of you. Instead of getting into a head-to-head debate, open the conversation to the entire class or outsource the conversation to after the session.

Take them seriously and trust the class

We recommend adopting the mindset that your students are smart, knowledgeable, and always have the capacity to add value to the discussion. We benefited personally from having done a lot of executive education – where you always need to assume to have a participant in the room who might have additional information about the case, the organization, the industry, or function. Even when teaching our own cases, we repeatedly had participants who knew more than us about the case. This is not a bug or danger to your academic credibility – you should rather turn this into a feature, by actively investigating your participants' areas of expertise and experience. Even your undergraduate students might have family members or have done an internship in the organization behind the case.

Taking the class seriously is not only limited to knowledge – it applies even more so to creativity and argumentation. For example, when a participant says something you disagree with, expect other participants to object for you – you usually do not have to do it yourself. The same applies to creative ideas that you are waiting for. And, if the class is a bit slow and not actively presenting the points you expect, do not tell them but rather ask questions. Trust the class – together they can come up with whatever you might need if you guide them through smart questions.

Experiment a lot and find your own path

There is no single way to success in case teaching. We both served as program directors for executive education and degree programs and had the advantage of getting to see many educators in action. And our key insight is that there are many different styles for highly successful case teaching. Over time and through experimentation you should work to find your own style of using the case method.

Observe others and get observed

If you were trained through case studies or have observed educators in other contexts, think back to your experience and learning: Which styles of case teaching did you like? Where did you learn most? You will probably realize that there was no single way to success. You will have had a few extroverted and a few introverted excellent teachers – and both worked. You will have had case teachers who gave much control to the class and others will have kept most of that for themselves – and both worked. Some of your educators might have been more structured and others will have improvised more – and again both worked. What works is the method in itself! The case method has been used for more than 100 years for very different participant groups in very different settings. The method is proven. Your challenge is to adapt it to you, to your personality, to your educational objectives, to your school, to your overall context. And for that we recommend trying to observe as many colleagues as possible – and to invite others to observe your sessions and collect their feedback afterwards.

Bring your own personality to the classroom

You are not a machine but a human being! This can legitimately become visible in the class – and it should for various reasons. It will help you to elevate your participants to eye level. But even more importantly it will help you to become a better case educator.

From theory to practice with Martin and Urs

Just as a short example: In the past, both of us were asked to take over sessions from other educators – whom we had previously observed teaching exactly this session and case. The first time delivering these sessions usually felt artificial and fake when we initially tried to mimic the instructional style and process. Only after turning these sessions into ‘our’ sessions did they become successful. And this required us to adapt the sessions to our personalities. Both of us are more on the improvisation end, so we needed to let go of the teaching plan and exact sequence before getting comfortable with the respective sessions.

Do not try to just copy the teaching approach of even the best or most impressive educator you have ever seen. We know this feeling of being not as good – but only by adapting case sessions to your personality can you get equally good. (Also: do not simply rely on the teaching plan as proposed in a teaching note of a case study – you need to adapt it to your specific setting and to your instructor personality.)

Find safe contexts to try new materials and methods

Adjusting your teaching to your personality will likely require experimentation, but in many institutions there seems to be little space for that. We would still contest that at least some level of testing is possible in all contexts. Find less important sessions and try out new learning formats (e.g., if you have never tried a role-play), new cases, other types of material, etc. Do not limit yourself to classical text-based case studies but also test the extent to which you can use the case method's Socratic approach to enable learning by asking smart questions.

The case teaching process: an overview

'The profit we possess after study is to have become better and wiser.' – Michel de Montaigne

Effective case teaching starts long before your class begins and often goes well beyond it. Your focus might be on your in-class performance, and that is our focus in this book too. However, we believe it is important to approach case teaching more broadly and to think about it in different stages. This chapter will therefore be organized along what we call 'the case teaching process':

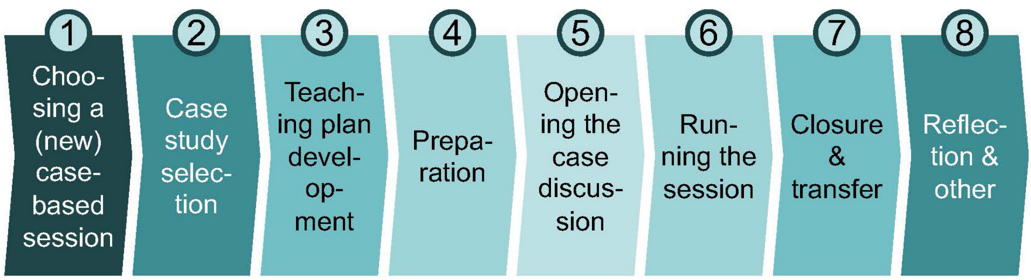

Figure 6: The case teaching process.

Choosing a (new) case-based session

Before teaching a case, you must start thinking about where and why you would like to add a case-based session to your teaching portfolio. If you do not use cases yet, you should approach this strategically by first identifying the best course for a case and then the best session within the identified course.

Identifying the right course

If you are like most of our case method workshop participants, you will teach a variety of courses for different students and will have done so for a number of years. In total you will have developed and taught many sessions and courses. Where should you start with case teaching?

We recommend choosing the right session strategically – looking mostly at factors such as where the (new) case-based session can add the highest value and where you can do so efficiently, i.e., with the least additional effort. To guide you in the identification of the session, we recommend first thinking about all the courses that you teach – and narrowing your search down to one of these courses.

Questions to identify the best course for your (new) case-based session

- Out of all the courses that you teach, which course is worst in achieving the desired learning outcomes?
- In which of your courses do you typically have participants (students) that might be open to a change to a case-based format?
- Which course needs to be changed most anyway (e.g., due to a different number of sessions, bad student evaluations, new content to be covered)?
- Which course currently has the smallest variety of different teaching/learning formats?
- In which of your courses is the overall course content best suited for exploration, discussion, and debate?
- **Your choice: the course for which you want to rework one of the sessions.**

Identifying the right session

After having identified a course with improvement potential, now reflect on the following questions to select an individual session within this specific course:

Questions to identify the best session for your (new) case-based session

- Out of all the sessions that you teach in the selected course, which session works least well?
- Which session would profit from/need most the flavor of real life (through the case study)?
- Which of the sessions deals with concepts, theories, frameworks, tools that can best be distilled out of a case discussion (i.e., they could be the outcome of a case debate [induction] rather than being lectured and then applied [deduction])?
- Which session deals with content that is the subject of public debate – and could therefore more easily be translated into a controversy in the classroom? For which of the subjects are there fewer 'right/wrong' answers?
- For which sessions does the institutional context allow you to change to a case-based session (e.g., no predetermined content/material)?
- **Your choice: the session that you want to develop as/turn into a case-based session.**

Learners and learning objectives

You are now almost ready to go on the hunt for the best possible case study for this particular session. But we would recommend you still postpone the search and first ponder the following questions that were proposed by Heath (2015):

Learners and learning objectives

- Who is to do the learning?
- What is to be learned?
  - Knowledge? (knowing)
  - Skills? (doing)
  - Values and attitudes? (being)
- How is it to be learned?
- Where, and under what conditions, is it to be learned?

We will touch on some of these questions further, but it will be helpful if you have a clear idea about the session's learning objectives right from the beginning.

In the opening chapter, 'The Case Method in the Spotlight,' we discussed why cases are a great learning vehicle. Stories are compelling and engaging at many levels. They are vivid and real to the reader or listener. They trigger multiple associations, memories, and emotions. They allow us to relate new information to existing knowledge. We also highlighted the multiple functions that case studies can have and, even more importantly, how they can broaden the horizons of not only the participants but also the facilitators.

In the context of choosing a case-based session, you should now write down the specific learning objectives of the one single session that you identified earlier. What is it that you want to discuss with the participants in this session? What is it that you want them to take home and remember? This will also require you to answer the first of Heath's questions: 'Who is doing the learning?'

A learning objective might be one or several topics, theories, concepts, tools, frameworks, etc. that you would like to introduce, discuss, or apply in class, or it could be recent developments in business. And by this we do not mean the content of the overall course, let's say competitive strategy, but the content for the one single session you have chosen. For a course on competitive strategy, one session could focus on external analysis. Taking it even one step further, within external analysis, you might want to specifically teach PEST(EL) analysis or the five forces framework. This is the kind of level that you have to think of when starting to prepare yourself for using the case method – and for searching for and selecting the right case study. Sometimes (usually more rarely) the educational objective might also result from the *context* of your teaching, for example you want to illustrate some theory or concept in the context of a case with a female protagonist, or in the context of a small company or a specific country. We believe that it is necessary to be as specific as possible when defining your educational objective as this will help you to find the right case study and help you design the teaching plan later.

Case study selection

Several of the most frequently asked questions during our case teaching workshops center on searching for and selecting the right case studies. So, let's start with some practical tips around searching for cases.

Upfront, a rather prosaic point: Traditional cast studies are mostly copyright-protected. If you want to use them in your classes, you will need to acquire a respective number of licenses and if you work for a school with no or very limited budget or have large classes, this might quickly become infeasible. We therefore include comments about free options below.

Searching

One of the most obvious places to look for case studies are case repositories like the Case Centre, Harvard Business Publishing, Ivey Publishing, and others. These distributors gather many different case collections and make them available to others. ('Collection' is the term used to denote all cases from one institution or school.) The Case Centre (www.thecasecentre.org) has the world's largest and most diverse collection of cases. It holds cases written by individual authors as well as the collections of leading business schools around the world. It is also easy to search by topic and to find, for example, best-sellers, short cases, classic older cases, and translated cases. In addition, the Case Centre's free case collection offers thousands of quality cases from respected institutions, many exploring niche topics. Given the size of its collection, the Case Centre might be the best place to start if you have no idea yet what you are looking for – except for the learning objectives.

If you already have some ideas about possible cases, you could (or even might need to) look in other places, such as case platforms from individual business schools (e.g., INSEAD Publishing) or case collections from other producers of case studies that might not be available in the catalogues of the large repositories (e.g., Delta Leadership, the copyright holder of the famous Carter Racing case study by Brittain and Sitkin 1986/2006).

Another place to find teaching cases are so-called open-source educator portals, which is particularly relevant for you if your school does not have the required budget to buy licenses for case studies. There is a very fast-changing landscape of open education portals and websites. Open education is collaboratively producing and sharing knowledge. You can often find teaching cases as open educational resources (OERs). These are learning materials that can be modified and enhanced because their creators have given others permission to do so. The individuals or organizations that create OERs – which can include materials like cases but also presentation slides, podcasts, syllabi, images, lesson plans, lecture videos, maps, worksheets, and even entire textbooks – waive some (if not all) of the copyright associated with their works, typically via legal tools like Creative Commons licenses, so others can freely access, reuse, translate, and modify them (you can check https://opensource.com/resources/what-open-education).

Some platforms/distributors (either free of charge or with the usual license payment requirements) focus on collecting and providing cases focused on specific topics. One such example is a collection of case studies from the Rotterdam School of Management (RSM) Erasmus University, which produced case studies that can be used to discuss all of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

There are a few academic journals that publish teaching cases, like *Case Folio, Global Journal of Business Pedagogy, IMA Educational Case Journal, Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Cases, Journal of Information Technology Teaching Cases, Sage Journal of Management Cases, The CASE Journal, The Case Research Journal, and International Journal of Teaching and Case Studies*. It might be worth screening their latest issues.

A few more places to search. Maybe you know from colleagues who produced but did not publish a case study. Reach out to them if their case might fit the session you selected. They might allow you to use their case free of charge. This is also true for cases that are sometimes shared at much lower or even at no license fee across partner schools from within the same network. And, finally, you could just give it a try and write your own case study – especially if you do not find a truly fitting case for the session you chose in the previous step of the case teaching process.

Where to look for traditional text-based case studies

- Case depositories (the Case Centre, Harvard Business School Publishing, Ivey Publishing);
- Individual schools or case collections (INSEAD Knowledge; Delta Leadership);
- Open-source educator portals (RSM Erasmus SDG Case collection; oikos Cases program);
- Subject specific portals and collections;
- Journals (*Case Folio*);
- Cases from colleagues;
- Cases from network schools;
- Writing own cases.

Search functions and search support at case distributors

Case distributors like the Case Centre or others have multiple possibilities to help you find the right case for your purpose. This starts with the basic search option where you can search for keywords, for example if you are looking for a case on a specific topic, company, person, region, country, etc. But very often, especially for broad search terms like 'marketing,' 'accounting,' or 'strategy,' you will have hundreds if not thousands of results. Then of course you can use the advanced search options and go into a lot more detail.

How do you narrow a search to high-quality cases?

Especially when starting to use cases in class, you want to be sure that they work in the sense that they are engaging and invite debate, that the case has all relevant information, and that there is a helpful teaching note. But how do you filter high-quality cases without having to read all of them? Here are four possible quality indicators:

- *Going by institution:* Some schools are just famous for their case production. Even though not all their cases will be equally good, chances are at least that the case will not be extremely bad. Why? Most prestigious case collections have internal review processes – that will at least result in cases with an acceptable quality.
- *Going by use:* Some case distributors (e.g., the Case Centre) show the use of the case over the last few years. You will get the information how many institutions or instructors have used the case in the past – and it is probably fair to assume that if a case was used more often it is more likely to also work in your context.
- *Going by prizes and awards:* Another indicator is award-winning or best-selling cases; most case distributors clearly mark such cases separately – you could also actively search for the category winners of some of the case competitions.
- *Going by author:* Yet one more approach is to look for top-selling case authors. For example, each year the Case Centre publishes a list of the best-selling case authors (across all their cases). You will likely find lots of great cases by starting with this list.
- *Following recommendations from others:* Another way to find good and proven cases is to look at different syllabi from good schools. You will find syllabi from all over the world online. Just search online for them and then have a careful look for the teaching material and especially the cases that they use. You might start to look for syllabi from schools that you like or that are in the same region as yours or maybe in a region where you would like to have a case study on. If you already have a preferred case writer, check for their syllabi. And finally you should of course reach out to your colleagues who have previously taught the same or a similar course or who are teaching in parallel to you.
- *Sticking to your experience:* Once you have found a case that works great for you, it might be worthwhile checking for additional cases from the same author. Most case authors have published several cases and, when you feel comfortable with one case study of a specific author, chances are high that her other cases might fit you as well.

Instead of searching by yourself you can also rely on support: Most case distributors offer a personalized assistance. You get in contact via phone or email, describe the course that you are teaching and the specific session that you need a case for, and they will help search for good cases for you.

Finally, you might want to consider subscribing to newsletters and updates from case collections or case distributors to stay informed. This way you will be informed not only about newly published case studies but about free cases, award winners, and upcoming competitions.

Searching for nontraditional case material

As already described in the 'Case Method in the Spotlight' chapter, we truly believe in instructional plurality, diversity of methods, and variety of the material. We suggested using the term 'case study' very broadly as any recounting or description of a situation (real or fictional, old or recent) that – when reflected upon by participants – will allow them to learn and/or develop. Therefore, we also want to highlight a number of maybe more unusual places to find good cases or case material. At all of the places listed below, you might find material that can be used as the basis for a case discussion, even if it is not a classical text-based case study with a teaching note.

Where to look for nontraditional text-based case studies

- Textbooks (often these include small cases at the end of chapters that might be very close to traditional case studies, but sometimes they just summarize [e.g., in text boxes] events or decisions that could be used for a case discussion).
- News (TV, newspapers, journals, online).
- Blogs, social media, newsletters for practitioners in your field, other sorts of webpages, etc.
- Videos (e.g., documentaries at video streaming services, YouTube, TED talks, etc.).
- Students, alumni, executive education participants sharing their experiences with you (informally or through assignments).
- Conferences, colleagues.
- MOOCs.
- Scientific journals.

Selecting

Searching for and identifying good cases is only the first step. With the vast amount of readily available cases – and assuming that you are not looking for a very niche case – you will probably still have the choice between multiple great case options for the session you identified earlier. So which of them should you choose (and on the basis of which criteria)? We therefore want to highlight some considerations that we use ourselves and that participants in our workshops told us that they have used successfully to narrow down the large number of potential cases to your final choice.

Screening

The search as described above will most likely have led to many results. Reading all of the candidates (cases and teaching notes) is probably unfeasible. We therefore propose to use the following process to quickly screen case studies for the development of a short-list of case candidates:

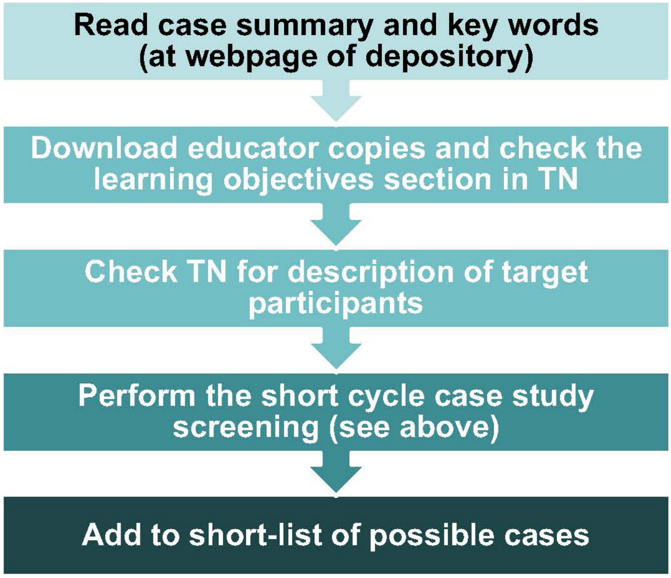

Figure 7: Screening process for short-listing of possible cases.

Be specific about your own educational objectives

Above we highlighted the fact that you should be very specific about your learning objectives. And the most obvious criterion to be used for the final selection is that the case should fit your learning objective as well as possible. Again, the more fine-grained you described your learning objective when choosing the (new) case-based session, the easier it will be now to select the matching case study. An easy way to do so is to compare your list of learning objectives with the keywords and stated learning objectives of the case, which you will usually find in the teaching note or product metadata.

The case should also fit your participant group. Undergraduates, graduates, master's students, postgraduates, and executives will react differently to cases. It is usually helpful if the participants can relate to the case protagonist (although participants might aspire to be a CEO one day, it might be difficult for them to imagine themselves being a CEO right now), the company (obviously some companies are much more known or liked than others), the industry (executives from a utility company might find it difficult to relate to the entertainment industry), or the geography (we used to teach an MBA in Portugal and we got the feedback that typical US or German cases were hard for the participants to relate to mainly due to market and company size, which were both far smaller in the Portuguese context).

But you might also want to consider elements like the length of the case (what are your participants likely to prepare? How much other work do they have to do?), the case complexity (we discussed the main dimensions of complexity – analytical, content, and presentation – in the previous chapter, 'Case Study in the Spotlight'), or how the case relates and fits with other cases/material you might use in your course.

You also might want to consider whether a teaching note for the case exists or not. A teaching note will make the preparation a lot easier, even if you ultimately decide to teach the case in a different way. The same is true for supplementary material such as videos, background notes, spreadsheets for quantitative cases, or presentation slides.

Old vs. new cases

While the age of the case could be seen as just another criterion to consider when selecting the case, we want to give a little bit of background on this question as it frequently comes up during our case workshops. We often hear (and experience ourselves) that participants complain about old cases. But there are good reasons to use old cases as some of them remain highly popular despite age (39% of the top-selling cases in 2022 were more than 10 years old, e.g., the case 'Benihana of Tokyo' by W Earl Sasser Jr and John R Klug is from 1972 and was a best-selling case at the Case Centre in every year from 2002 to 2022). Some of the reasons for their popularity are that they have meaning and relevance beyond their historical setting. They are proven to work in the classroom. But they also pose challenges for the instructor. For example, participants might google the background to the case, already existing case summaries and solutions, or just look up what happened in the meantime. As such, this is not a bad thing and could be a sign of the participants' interest. But it might also mean that participants, while looking up the solution, do not prepare properly or fall for the false assumption that what the company did is what is going to be discussed in class. There are a couple of ways to deal with these issues when choosing a rather old case. One way would be to be very proactive with the fact that the case is old. You might even want to give away what really happened in the meantime at the beginning of the session (or you could ask the participants to research the outcome and later company history). This might not only ease the discussion but prove the point that a case study is not about finding out what happened but about going on a learning journey together. You might also contrast what happened with what came up during the discussion as potential courses of action. You could also consider picking questions other than those mentioned in the teaching note to enforce thorough reading (in case you think that people have access to case summaries or solutions).

Copyright

Yet another important issue that frequently comes up in our case teaching and writing workshops is copyright. Here the main considerations are straightforward. First and foremost, you should always acquire the right licenses for cases authored by others for use in your courses. The easiest way to do this is by going through an established case distributor. Also be aware that, even if you found cases on (seemingly) public domain platforms or received cases directly from the author(s), there might still be a third party that legitimately holds the copyright (e.g., the school). Always double-check. Also make sure that the distribution of cases to participants (only paper, only via email, secure webpage, etc.) is in line with the license granted to you or your institution. Most schools have a central unit or person that deals with copyright issues and can help you to sort this out.

Sometimes it might be useful to adapt existing cases to your specific needs and context (of course not the written document, but the way you use them, for example by giving instructions to read only specific parts of the case). Sometimes it is helpful to add material to the case (e.g., technical information, updates, company information such as annual reports). Or you might want to combine two (juxtaposing) cases for one session (e.g., about same organization or with seemingly contradicting perspectives). This is not only unproblematic from a copyright perspective but we would even encourage you to think about these options, to personalize the case to your session, and to really 'own' the case.

If you actually want to abbreviate an existing case study, you need to contact the copyright holder. An alternative would be to highlight the parts of the case that participants need to read but to leave the rest of the case legible.

However, we strongly oppose case modifications like rewriting with changed timings, protagonists, perspectives, etc. There must be a considerable amount of newness to the story in order to justify this. Just changing smaller things like the timing is not enough. Obviously, we completely oppose any behavior like plagiarizing, eliminating the link to the case author, or simply not buying the adequate licenses.

Final choice

After having considered the learning objectives, the age of the case and copyright issues, it is time to bring down your short-list to one single case study. Here are the key questions that you should ask yourself if there are still a few possible cases for your chosen session:

Checklist for your final choice

- Does the case fit perfectly to your educational objective, to your participant/student group and to you?
- Is the case tested and proven to work? For example, did the case win an award or is it best-selling? Was it recommended to me by a trusted colleague? Is the case being used by others? Can I find the case in syllabi from others?
- Does the case truly fit the concepts/theories/tools/frameworks that you want to teach?
- Does the case fit well with respect to geography?
- Does the case fit well with respect to industry?
- Does the case fit well with respect to the gender, background, or seniority of the protagonist?
- Does the case fit well with respect to length? (Does the case length allow for a proper preparation? Is it in line with other readings?)
- Does the case fit well with respect to its complexity (including difficult language)?
- Does the case fit well with respect to the other cases used in the same or in other courses?
- Does the case allow you to vary the pedagogical methods?
- Do you really like the case (so that you can still teach it after a few repetitions)?
- Does the case have a (good) teaching note, a video, a spreadsheet, presentation slides, or other supplementary material?
- Can you link the case well with other readings (academic articles, textbook, technical note, etc.)?
- Is the case young? Or, if instead the case is old: Is it really so good that it should be used? Will the participants understand the context?

Teaching plan development

'By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.' – Benjamin Franklin

After identifying and selecting a case study for your session, it is now time to dive right into the teaching preparation. We recommend that a good starting point is to reflect upon the *teaching plan* that will describe what to include and how you want to run the actual session.

A *teaching plan* is a structured overview about the content and flow of a teaching session that usually includes information about the:

- opening question;
- introduction;
- different blocks of the session;
  - content/key learning points (e.g., tools, concepts, theories, or frameworks to be introduced or applied per session block) per session block;
  - learning formats per session block (e.g., full group discussion, small-group work, role-play, etc.);

   - duration per session block;
   - transitions from block to block;
- closing section of session;
- board plan;
- postsession/additional activity for participants (e.g., follow-up readings);
- overview of needed material, tools and technologies (e.g., online platforms, movies, sound, pictures, support slides) to run the session.

Context and constraints

To design a teaching plan, you need to consider the specific session context and potential constraints. Context refers to the participants (number, nationality, experience, academic background, language skills, prior performance…) and program context (where in a whole course is this specific session placed, what other topics do participants learn and discuss at the same time in other classes) but also the space that the session will take place in (classroom, online, or hybrid? Synchronous or asynchronous?). We want to focus in this part on the flow (and change) of different learning formats, the flow of session with respect to relating theory and case discussion.

Flow of the session

We believe that there are several strategic decisions to take or questions to ask when developing your teaching plan. The first is about the link between the flow of your session and your topic or underlying subject. Based on your subject, the flow of the session might be either convergent or divergent. Convergent topics or subjects start with a problem and come during the session through discussion and discovery to one specific (and correct) solution.

There are many topics where there is a correct answer, for example when working on ways to calculate rents, the optimal duration of a specific project, weighted average costs of capital, or the like. In these cases, the flow of the session will be convergent. This is important to decide upfront as this will inform your teaching plan. For convergent case topics, you will have to plan for how to react when the participants go off-trail, how to make sure that you come to the 'right' solution in time, and how to deal with potential alternative solutions. On the other hand, you might want to teach a topic that needs a divergent session flow. Then you should start with a problem and during the session the participants will develop a series of potential solutions without one being the obviously right or correct one. Often topics in strategy, leadership, entrepreneurship, or ethics follow this flow. Again, this has implications for your teaching plan as you must prepare for situations where participants might focus on only one solution or where they have problems coming up with more solutions.

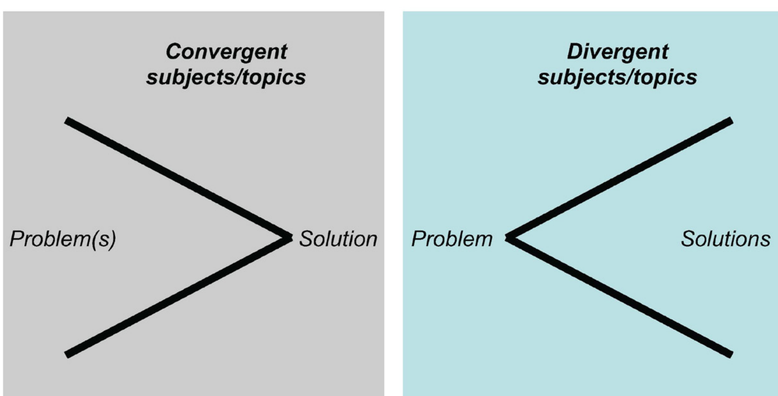

Figure 8: Convergent versus divergent subjects/topics.

Learning cycles

Besides the general flow of the session (convergent vs. divergent), it is important to think about the learning journey for the participants. In our workshops we often use the Lancaster model of learning as described by Heath (2015) or Binsted (1980) and originally developed by John Burgoyne at Lancaster University in the 1970s. The Lancaster model of learning identifies three different forms of learning and their interconnection: (1) knowledge input, (2) discovery, and (3) reflection.

The main idea of this learning model is that the facilitator should actively design a learning experience for the participants and can choose between these three different forms of learning or, even better, combine the three different forms in varying sequences. Using case studies can in our opinion support the design of complete learning cycles. Combining the three learning forms, six different cycles are possible.

1. *Input–discovery–reflection:* You would start the session with some knowledge input (for example, some frameworks, models, or theory through readings or lectures), then you let participants test those ideas through a case study discussion (discovery) and end with either an individual or group reflection on how applicable the input was for this specific case.
2. *Input–reflection–discovery:* Again, you would start the session with some knowledge input, then have participants reflect upon this input (e.g., asking them to make a conceptual/theoretical transfer of the input from one industry to another, or asking them to relate it to their own experience) and finally have a case discussion to discover the ideas or principles in action.
3. *Discovery–reflection–input:* Here you would start immediately with the case discussion through which the participants discover some ideas, frameworks, models, or theory, then jointly reflect upon the experience and end with some input on the current state of business knowledge from science about this specific phenomenon.
4. *Discovery–input–reflection:* You start the learning sequence with the discussion of a case, then provide background knowledge for example through a lecture, and end with a joint (or small-group) reflection on how this fits with previously discussed theories or past experience.
5. *Reflection–input–discovery:* In this learning cycle you could make participants reflect a specific situation that occurred to them (for example, you ask them to theorize about a question in general without a case), then present to them some background research in this field and finally end with a case discussion.
6. *Reflection–discovery–input:* Again, you start with a reflection, but then you move straight to the case discussion and only toward the end give the knowledge input on what theory has to say.

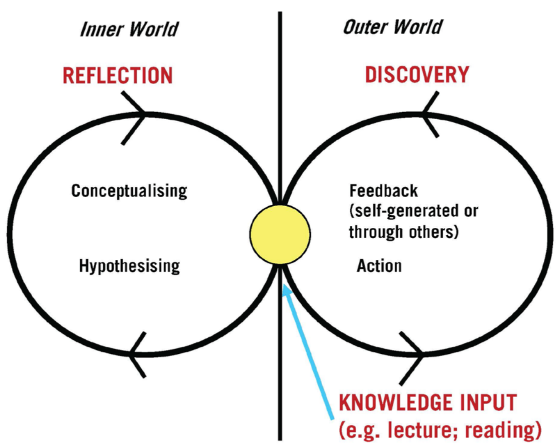

Figure 9: The Lancaster model of learning. Source: visualization adapted from Heath (2015). Source: This visualization adapted from: Heath (2015). Teaching & Writing Cases: A Practical Guide. p. 5f.; the "Lancaster model" goes back to John Burgoyne and others and can e.g. be found in Binsted D.S. (1980). "Design for learning in management training and development: a view." *Journal of European Industrial Training*, Vol. 4 Iss 8 pp. 2–32; here p.21f.

Which of these cycles is best in a given situation will depend (among other things) on the type of learning to be achieved and the participants' and facilitators' preferences. But we think that it is important to make this conscious decision, e.g., choosing which learning cycles are most appropriate to achieve your learning objective or even choosing only one or two elements of the learning cycle in a particular session. Please bear in mind that you can try to finish a cycle in one session but you can of course also use several sessions or a whole course to complete a cycle or several.

We have a separate chapter about 'Teaching a Case-Based Course,' but upfront: If you already use multiple case studies, avoid following the same pattern in all the sessions. Bring in a bit of variation to make the sessions more interesting.

Orchestrating immediate and underlying issue

In 'The Case Method in the Spotlight' we introduced the differentiation between immediate and underlying issues. This differentiation will become very important for the design of your teaching plan. The first building block(s) of your plan will usually center on the immediate issue. Should firm A acquire firm B? How should firm C react to accusations of child labor in their supply chain? Should firm D issue new equity or take a loan from a bank? These can often be the opening questions or conducted as initial votes (face to face typically as show of hands, online through polling software, etc.). During the discussion of the immediate issue, first hints about the underlying issue should either come up naturally or be solicited through respective questions. This can then be used to move to other building blocks, which will then typically focus on the underlying issues. The closing might then come back to the immediate issue or focus on reflection and transfer. You could try to visualize this for yourself by highlighting how the immediate and underlying issues are connected to one another.

Additional material

It is important to mention at this point – although maybe obvious – that the use of additional material (besides the case study) will influence the learning cycle. The link between theory and case discussion does not only relate to the actual talking in a class but also to the course context (see later) and the possible inclusion of other material. Therefore, you have to take some additional decisions in the preparation of the teaching session regarding the (1) kind of additional material (see checklist below for options), (2) whether the participants should prepare the material before or after the session, and (3) whether the material is optional or mandatory. Additional material can also support any of the three learning formats of the Lancaster model. It can be used as knowledge input (typically through readings), as reflection (e.g., through a learning journal), or as discovery (additional material on company or protagonists – possibly to be identified/researched by the participants).

Possible types of additional material for your case-based session

- textbook (entire books or only chapters/extracts),
- academic articles (e.g., *Journal of Finance*),
- managerial articles (e.g., *HBR*, *MIT Sloan Review*),
- technical or background notes (often explicitly linked with certain cases),
- webpages and online databases,
- newspapers (paper, online),
- videos,
- learning journal/personal reflection notebook.

The teaching plan

'It's not the plan that's important, it's the planning.' – Dr. Gramme Edwards

It is always good to have a plan – but the planning is even more important! And, especially when teaching a case study for the first time, we believe that it is important to have a detailed teaching plan. Rarely will you teach exactly according to your teaching plan. But, even when deviating from the original plan, this is done easier with the original plan on your mind as you will know which parts (and how much time you had planned for them) you might have to (or want to) skip because of an interesting discussion, a new and important idea that was raised, or a specific question that needs a longer answer than expected. But to be able to make these decisions you need a detailed plan in the first place.

The first thing that you should do is to break your session into different sections by topic. Specify the following aspects:

- *Overall session flow:* Almost like a good theater piece, your session will have an opening section, several middle parts, and a closing section. Start by writing down the key topics to be discussed with the case overall and bring them into a logical structure.
- *Learning objectives per building block:* Next up you need to define the matching learning objectives/takeaways per section. You need to be able to answer: Why do you add this element to your session flow? What are the participants going to take away from this building block?
- *Learning formats per building block:* When planning the different sections, immediately also think about the learning format of these sections (discussion, input, groupwork, individual reflection, buzz group, vote, role-play, etc.).
- *Timing/duration per building block:* Then allocate the approximate time for each section, considering the relevance of the respective building block but also the attention span of the participants.
- *Questions:* We believe that it is important to write down the most important questions per section (that will lead to debate). This could be opening questions, follow-up questions, questions in case specific topics do not come up, clarifying questions, transition questions, etc. We will get back to the topic of questions later, including a section on the particularly important opening question. But make sure that your teaching plan explicitly clarifies at least (1) the opening question and (2) questions that will help you to move from one building block to the next.
- *Board plan:* Specify what you want to add to the board in which building block. (More on this later.)
- *Additional material:* Are there handouts, videos, spreadsheets, physical sample products, etc. that you will need in the respective building blocks?
- *Link to slides:* If you use presentation slides, which slides should be shown in which building block?
- *Technological or room requirements:* Do the learning formats or additional material require specific setups, technology, or additional rooms/online breakout functionality? List all of them and check if they can be met. (For example, has the videoconferencing application that will be used for an online class got a breakout functionality and can the students be split according to the results of a vote? Is there decent sound equipment in the room so that you can show a video? Maybe you need more boards? Adhesive dots for voting or paper and scissors?) – This might sound unnecessary initially as you probably know the context of the first case use well, but it will help you tremendously when you teach the same session again in a completely different context.

Try to use the case study itself as an additional source of inspiration about the sequencing of the building blocks. The building blocks could, e.g., be organized along time (especially for retrospective cases), along a process (e.g., for operations classes), move from the issue mentioned first in the case to the issue mentioned last, etc.

We believe that you should aim to keep all building blocks to a maximum of 15 minutes and to mix and match different formats to keep engagement high. After 15 minutes of full group discussion, you should try to insert a block with a pair or group discussion, an assignment, a vote, or role-play, and vice versa.

We recommend describing all the points from above in one big table that you can then bring to class. Below you can see a simple Excel version of a teaching plan with the key elements as described above.

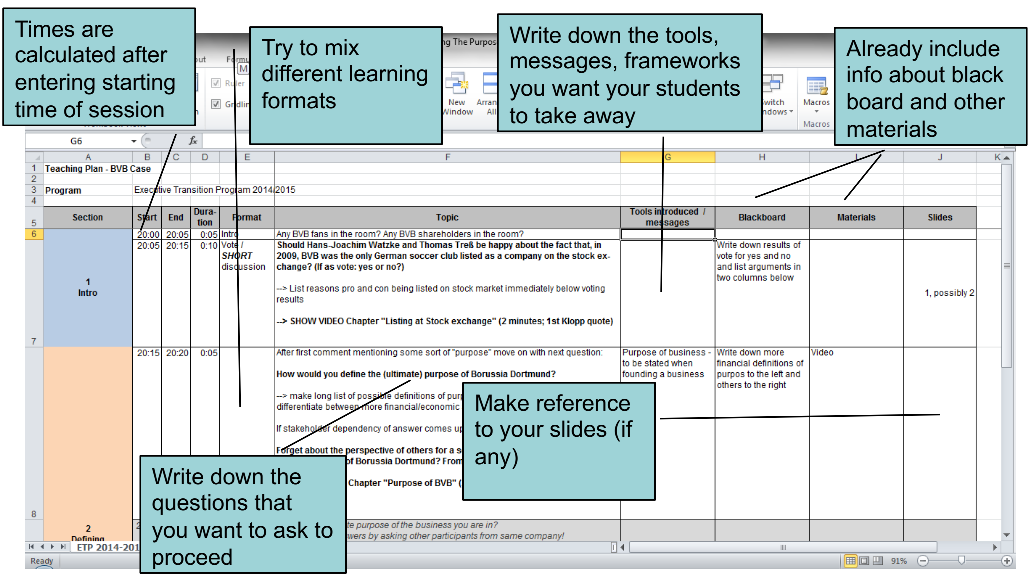

Figure 10: Example teaching plan in Microsoft Excel.

Carefully planning your session should not restrict your creativity but, on the contrary, will enable you to be more creative. For example, you may have planned five discussion sections, with each allocated a specific amount of time. This gives you a basic framework that will enable you to stay in control; you will know if one section is taking longer than planned and can then make an informed decision about whether to stay with the discussion and perhaps move one of the other planned sections to a later class. It will also allow you to realize the implications of you swapping the sequence of building blocks if a student makes a comment that 'comes too early.'

A plan enables you to think on your feet and avoids last-minute panic when you realize you have not covered everything you meant to. There is nothing worse than rushing through material toward the end of a session because you are running out of time.

But most importantly: Do not adhere to your teaching plan religiously! A truly participant-centered approach requires flexibility. As we said in the beginning, it is not the plan that is important but the planning.

Planning the use of the board

Note-taking during a case discussion is important – and we will explain and discuss this later in greater detail, focusing on how to do it during the session. Many teaching notes include suggested board plans – but not all do. And you will need to review anyway if the suggested board plan fits with your specific context and learning objectives. So, in parallel to developing your teaching plan, you should start to make a strategic plan on how to use the board for your session.

The board (could be a blackboard, a flipchart, a way to take notes in online or hybrid settings, a touchscreen in the room, etc.) will often be of critical importance to make the link between the case and the theory or concepts. If teaching in a converging/deductive approach, you could, e.g., provide a framework and ask the participants to fill out the elements. In a diverging/inductive approach, you could note the participants' comments in a way that will then allow you to add the framework later on.

From theory to practice with Urs

Below is an example of a board plan for the case 'Anna Frisch at Aesch AG: Initiating Lateral Change' – this is an inductive plan, as the participants' comments will be listed in a structure to then allow the introduction of Kurt Lewin's 'force field analysis':

	ANNA's PLAN
	New marketing approach
	Targeting hospital administrators and "C-Level"
	Solution-suites instead of individual standalone products
	Shift from product to service

JUSTIFICATION	ANNA's PLAN
Buying behavior changing (administrators instead of users)	New marketing approach
Changing buying criteria (value and solutions instead of features)	Targeting hospital administrators and "C-Level"
Growth limitations in saturated German market	Solution-suites instead of individual standalone products
Upcoming health care reform with expected negative impact on industry	Shift from product to service

(Continued)

JUSTIFICATION	ANNA's PLAN	BARRIERS
Buying behavior changing (administrators instead of users)	New marketing approach	Aesch is growing and profitable: Need for change not evident
Changing buying criteria (value and solutions instead of features)	Targeting hospital administrators and "C-Level"	Timing wrong: Cost cuts at Aesch
Growth limitations in saturated German market	Solution-suites instead of individual standalone products	Germany only 6% of Aesch activities (and rather stable compared to other markets)
Upcoming health care reform with expected negative impact on industry	Shift from product to service	Others are needed to provide e.g. budget, resources, support

Figure 11: Board plan for 'Anna Frisch at Aesch AG.'

The instructor first asks participants what Anna's plan is and notes their answers in the middle of the board. Next, the instructor asks for the reasoning or justification for each of the plans and adds these comments to the left side of the board. Finally, the discussion moves on to potential barriers, and these are added to the right side of the board. The concept of the force field is then introduced and connected to the case discussion.

Depending on the technology and equipment available, plan in advance how you will use online boards, flipcharts, metaplan boards, and white- or blackboards. Important questions to consider are:

- What do you want to cover on the boards?
- What do you not want/need to write down?
- Do you want to end up with a particular structure on the board (you will have to plan for this) or do you want to capture what participants say uncensored and unstructured?
- Will you need to refer back to something during the class? If so, you will need to note that part of the discussion in a place that will be easy to find.
- How much space do you need? For example, do you capture pros and cons on one flipchart or use one for the pros and another for the cons?

Teaching plan development

– Be very specific with the learning context and potential constraints.
– Decide upon the general flow of the session: convergent vs divergent.
– Think about the appropriate learning cycles (knowledge input, discovery, reflection), which can be used as a basis for decisions on the learning process and sequence of activities and give a continuity to the whole event.
– Integrate additional material when appropriate.
– Develop a detailed teaching plan, keeping in mind that it is not about the plan but the planning.
– Make a visual map of how you plan to take notes on any type of board.

Preparation

'It takes a lot of unspectacular preparation to get spectacular results.' – Roger Staubach

Careful preparation before a case teaching session is vital if you want participants to maximize their learning and get a real buzz from having taken part. And not only do you need to know your materials well but, equally important, you must know as much as possible about who you will be teaching. This dual approach will pay dividends as you negotiate the session, orchestrate participation, and draw out key learning points.

> From our own experience, you should pay particular attention to the preparation at exactly the point in time when you believe you do not need it anymore. After you have taught a case two or three times, you will have developed confidence and experience. You might think you remember the case and teaching plan well enough – and just enter the room. Well, for us these were frequently the worst sessions of our careers as educators. If you have had such an experience, use the negative memories to put more emphasis on preparation the next time.

Know your class

It seems an obvious question, but it is a vital one: who will you be teaching? Get to know as much as you can about each of your participants and the class before the session. For example:

- What country or region are they from or do they have experience in? (And how does this link to the case?)
- What are their cultural backgrounds? (Might they be unlikely to understand certain parts of the case because they are so alien to them?)
- What business or industry experience do they have and at what level?
- What jobs have they done in the past? What jobs are they doing now?
- What roles and jobs do they aspire to? What does the program train them for?
- Are they undergraduates? Graduates? Executives? A mix?
- Are they roughly the same age group? Or very different ages?
- Mainly female? Mainly male? A mix of both?
- How large is the group?

This background knowledge is invaluable as you prepare for your case discussion. There are several ways you can use the information you gather about participants to enhance your case session, encourage participation, and introduce fresh perspectives. In both our institutions we typically receive students' profiles with pictures ahead of the first session, which is already a good start. If this is not common practice at your school, it might be worth asking for it. If learning management software is used at your school, this is also a good place to start with an introduction.

Advance knowledge of this kind will also enable you to anticipate the potential dynamics in a case session and help you create the safe environment that is necessary for an open, dynamic, and mutually respectful discussion.

So, once you have spent valuable time acquiring background knowledge about your class, how can you use it?

Nationality and culture

Is your case about a multinational company? If so, it may be perceived differently by your participants, depending on their nationality or culture. Is the advertising and marketing different across different geographical reasons? Why is a product or marketing campaign successful in one country but not in another? Why is a company making huge profits in one geographical region but struggling in another?

These are all rich seams for discussion that participants of various nationalities and different cultures can contribute to with insight, personal experience, and 'insider knowledge.' This provides another tool to ensure you can keep the discussion lively (personal viewpoints based on experience are always more compelling than abstract facts) and will not only enrich the learning experience for everyone in the class but also instill confidence and self-worth in the participant who realizes they have something of value to contribute.

Just as an example, even though cultural topics do not usually dominate thinking in operations management, it would probably be helpful to know if there are Japanese students in your session on the 'Benihana in Tokyo' case.

Cultural background can also offer an indication of the type of participant you will be dealing with. Participants from some cultural backgrounds are far more deferential toward their teacher than those from other cultures. This may not always hold true but forewarned is forearmed; if you suspect some of your participants may be unwilling to spontaneously contribute to a discussion because they feel it would be impolite to do so, you can plan ahead and incorporate tools and techniques to encourage their participation (see some tools and techniques in the following paragraphs, especially the section on participants who are too vocal or quiet).

Business and employment experience

Do not feel threatened by participants who may have more (practical) knowledge and experience than you of the topics you plan to discuss in your case session. On the contrary, this is a great opportunity to draw on their expertise for the benefit of the class as a whole. However, remember that your 'in-class expert' may not necessarily volunteer their experiences and insights, so prepare a few questions that you can ask them directly at suitable points during the discussion. This is also a great way to show respect for your participants and to demonstrate that you appreciate the opportunity to learn from others – one of the traits you will also wish to encourage in your participants.

You may have participants who have experience of working in the same industry but at completely different levels – one in management, the other on the shop floor, for example. These are gems that will only emerge from careful presession preparation and making a point of getting to know your participants.

It is a good idea to prepare a list of participants who you may be able to call on during the discussion. Make a note of roughly when and why their contribution may help to move the debate along.

Age groups

People of different ages will be able to offer different and often surprising perspectives. With a little thought and preparation this can greatly enrich your class discussion. In our experience, we have found that it is often more useful and important to be aware of the extent and type of work experience your participants have, rather than their ages. But there is one dimension in which age usually matters: the type of references to politics or culture you can make. If you are clearly older than your students, they will be increasingly unlikely to be able to understand your links to movies, books, historical events, etc. – just be aware about this and consider using it to make fun of yourself to introduce humor to the session.

Undergraduates? Graduates? Executives? A mix?

You will need to adapt your session to suit the level of the group. This may include the complexity and difficulty of the topics to be discussed as well as taking into consideration aspects such as time – executives will often have less time to prepare for a session and shorter cases will probably suit them better.

Plan to calibrate the speed of the discussion to the expected level or expertise of the group. But there is no golden rule. You will also need to test the extent of the group's appetite for discussions and how willing they are to learn from their peers as well as the instructor.

Generally, we have found that participants with sufficient work experience (MBAs and executives) tend to enjoy discussing the practicalities of applying concepts or tools, while participants with little or no work experience enjoy more theoretical discussions on the pros and cons of various concepts and tools.

With executives, it is crucial to ensure you have an in-depth knowledge of the industry or market sector and are familiar with the participants' companies. Your presession preparation should also include a clear plan to help participants relate the case discussion to their daily work.

Gender

Be wary of gender imbalance in your classes. If, for example, your class has significantly more males than females, be aware that they may find it easy to dominate the discussion. Your female participants may not get a look in! Be ready to counteract this and plan ways to include both genders in the discussion.

Class size

Make sure to know exactly how many people you will have in class. Full-class case discussions work very well with mid-sized groups (15–40 participants), but if the group is getting very small you might need to add formats, building blocks, or material as the case discussion might slow down a bit faster when participants have made their key points. On the other hand, very large groups of over 40 participants will require the addition of pair or group discussions to allow all participants to contribute in every session.

Preparation: your participants

– Find out as much as you can about who you will be teaching.
– Note key aspects such as nationality, culture, gender, work experience, areas of expertise, age, and previous track record in class.
– Make a list of why and when you will call on individual participants to contribute.
– Prepare tools and techniques to deal with both dominant and quiet participants.
– Always draw on the expertise of your participants during the discussion.

Preparing the case and materials

(Re)familiarize yourself with the case

If you are teaching a case that you have taught before, always refamiliarize yourself with both the case and the teaching note.

Look through any notes or comments you have made when previously teaching the case. It is a good idea to make notes each time you teach a case and keep them for handy reference in an electronic file, a physical folder, or an electronic or paper notebook. If you are teaching your own case, this will also be useful material when writing or updating your teaching note.

It goes without saying that if you are teaching a case for the first time, particularly if it is not your own, you must make sure you know both the case and the teaching note inside out. It is also vital to do some additional research about the company, industry, and market sector. Then you will not be caught off guard by sharp participants who have also been researching the case and know more than you!

Things to investigate each time while (re)reading the case study and teaching note

- What happened to the organization after the date of the case? (e.g., mergers or acquisitions, bankruptcy, growth or stagnation, rebranding, changes in product portfolio or international footprint),
  - in general?
  - specifically related to the case?
- What happened to the protagonist?
- Are there bigger changes in the overall context (e.g., the political landscape, the overall industry, new technologies)?

Review your teaching (and board) plan

During the preparation you need to revisit your teaching plan and potentially adjust it according to your audience (see above) or to different learning objectives.

The first things to look at again are your opening and follow-up questions. Based on your preparation for your audience, you might want to adjust your questions. Always have your opening question ready in advance, plus one or two backups in case the first fails to ignite any debate.

Also revisit the structure and flow of your session. Review how long you wish to spend on each section. Consider the relevance of the topics to the participants and the learning objectives.

Also reconsider the board plan – taking into account the specific context (room layout, videoconferencing software, visibility of board in hybrid setting, etc.).

Preclass preparation for participants

How much work do you want your participants to do before walking into your classroom?
You will expect them to read the case, of course, but what else? Be clear about your expectations. For example, is the presession work to be presented in class? Is it just for background reading? Do you want to see the work before the class? Is it mandatory? Does it count toward grades? Or is the presession work optional?

If you wish to assign tasks to participants, either to the class as a whole or to individuals, be sure to do this well in advance. By allowing plenty of time, you can also send out a reminder closer to the date of the session or submission deadline.

Ideas for presession assignments

Here are a few ideas for possible presession assignments that will help to engage and interest your participants in advance of the class:

- Recommend additional readings (e.g., traditional textbooks, academic or managerial articles, online information, news items).
- Assign videos to be watched (e.g., company presentations, commercials, publicly available interviews with board members, MOOCs, TED Talks).
- Stimulate presession discussions, e.g., through online forums or in small groups.
- Require case writeups or specific responses to questions (e.g., through a questionnaire).
- Demand that participants perform specific analysis (e.g., ratio analysis) or calculations.
- Ask for the preparation of a role-play in class.
- Ask for reflective essays/papers that move beyond the case at hand (e.g., writeups of personal or professional experiences; participants could be asked to describe a situation where they tried to convince somebody else to do something and they refused).
- Request additional research about the case or the larger context.

What other type of presession preparation do you find works really well? Please share your experiences with us for future editions of this book.

Setting the scene: before class

Do you want your participants to be fired up and ready to go before they even reach your classroom? If so, simply telling them in advance which case they need to read is not sufficient. Some of your participants will read the case, others might scan it, and a few will not even look at it; they are intelligent individuals and will be confident they can just wing it in class. But is this what you want to be faced with at the start of your session?

It does not have to be this way.

Preclass preparation means you will have a far higher chance of running a successful session because your participants will already be inspired and ready to learn as soon as they come into the classroom.

Raise participants' expectations and excitement

Preclass communication is key. It is possible to create a buzz of anticipation before the session, as well as ensuring that participants prepare well. Think carefully about:

- the tone and style of your communication;
- the content, i.e., the instructions and information you want to give your participants; and
- the channels you will use to communicate with your participants.

Tone and style

As mentioned above: it is one of our core beliefs that you can and should bring your personality to the class; the same is true for the preclass communication. No two teaching styles are the same and what works for one person will not work for another. The same goes for the style of communication we adopt when liaising with our participants outside the classroom. You need to decide what works for you and at what point on the spectrum between formal and informal you feel most comfortable.

However, we would say that it is important to be consistent, so your participants know what to expect. This is an important aspect of building trust.

Content

The content of your preclass communications needs careful thought. Will you focus on strict instructions? Explain the grading system? List the learning objectives? Invite preclass contributions? Or simply make suggestions rather than give instructions?

From theory to practice with Martin

The answers to these questions will depend to a large extent on your audience. For example, some groups will need far more guidance than others. I always give undergraduates and first-year master's participants longer and more precise instructions than other groups. This will often include the learning objectives they should be aiming to achieve.

However, with more experienced or mature participants, for example final-year master's participants or executives, I provide less information and usually exclude the learning objectives. I like to introduce a little ambiguity and intrigue and also want to ensure that more experienced and mature participants are sufficiently challenged. So that they do not feel being treated as school kids, I will often decide against sending presession assignments or questions to executives at all – with the exception of a request to read the case.

Channels

The 'how' is very important and there are a number of options to choose between. These are some of the most frequently used communication channels:

- Learning management systems (sometimes also called e-learning platform, such as Canvas, Blackboard, and Moodle);
- Email;
- Messages in team collaboration software (such as MS Teams and Slack) or messengers (e.g., WhatsApp and WeChat);
- Shared online drives (such as Dropbox, MS SharePoint, Google Drive, and Notion);
- Providing hard-copy paperwork and/or informing via a physical (pin) notice board;
- Creating a video of yourself introducing the case and other required assignments;
- Making time to visit the group during a break to spark interest in the case;
- Short live online kick-off sessions in which you explain what is to come and what is expected from the participants.

Preparation: before class

– (Re)familiarize yourself with the case and teaching note: know your material inside out.
– Review your teaching plan and board plan but be prepared to think on your feet!
– Preclass communication is key.
– Provide clear and unambiguous instructions about presession assignments.
– Beware that your preclass communication sets the tone and style for the case discussion.

Opening the case discussion

'Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.'
– Abraham Lincoln

Setting the scene: at the start of the session

How do you feel if you walk into a silent room, sit down at an empty desk, and look at a blank screen? Enthused? Ready to learn? How about if music is playing, an intriguing product has been placed in front of you, images or a video clip are on display, and the instructor is welcoming all participants as they enter the room (or online session)? There is a huge difference between these two scenarios. It almost goes without saying that most of us would choose to walk into the second room or online session.

> Carefully setting the scene for our participants as they join our online session or come through the door will bring the classroom to life and make a dramatic difference to their mood, expectations, and level of anticipation.

Of course, we need to ensure that our scene setting is relevant to the case we are going to teach – and it will not be possible to include all these elements every time. Not all cases, for example, are about a product that is small, portable, and affordable enough for the facilitator to buy for every participant (though it may be worth asking the company concerned for free samples!).

However, with a little thought and imagination, some scene setting will always be possible. Even simple images of the protagonists on display at the front of the classroom plus some current news clippings relating to the issues discussed in the case will create interest and expectation.

> **From theory to practice with Martin**
>
> When teaching my case about Madonna, cowritten with Jamie Anderson ('Madonna: Strategy in Action'), I always start with an eight-minute video clip called 'Star.' This is part of a series of eight short films produced by BMW for the internet in 2001 and 2002. While the video is not directly related to the case, it shows Madonna in an atypical situation and is extremely funny. It's a very good icebreaker at the start of a session.

At the other end of the spectrum, why start in the classroom at all? It may be possible to meet participants at a location that is central to the case – more inspiring than the four walls of a classroom, perhaps. As Einstein said, 'logic will get you from A to B; imagination will take you everywhere.' We want our participants to use their imagination, so, when it comes to setting the scene, we should use ours too.

A last aspect of setting the scene is the creation of a positive climate in which participants can flourish, which invites participants to contribute and support them during the session.

Participation can be frightening and difficult for participants, especially at the beginning of a course/program: Comments in class are key to build reputation and network or, as David Garvin from Harvard said, '[w]hat you say is who you are' (Garvin n.d.). One of the principles of the case method is to make participants feel empathy, appreciation, and support. During class this can be achieved by following up with questions that frame their responses and ultimately make them better. It is also important to start with little or no judgment at beginning of a course/session. We know that this is hard sometimes, but we think that it is important to avoid judging answers or comments of participants by saying things like 'this is an excellent point' or 'I was looking for that' or to only note down certain answers on the board while ignoring and not writing down others.

Getting started

We have been there too: the start of a session, more than a few stage-fright nerves (ours, that is!), a roomful of (hopefully) expectant faces, silence – and the telltale signs that more than a few of the participants are already texting, googling, and surfing. Where to begin?

First impressions are so important. The way we open the case discussion is crucial for the success of the session. Always start on time and with a clear signal that the class has begun: make sure you have everyone's attention. Anything else might have undesirable long-term consequences.

From theory to practice with Urs and Martin

Urs:
I like to have music playing at the start of a session and combine this with a very loud and energetic 'Good morning/afternoon.'

It can be a good idea to turn up the music so it is too loud for participants to comfortably talk, and then turn it off as a signal that the session will begin.

In some institutions, a formal signal such as a bell will mark the start of the class.

Martin:
I aim to be in class (or online) at least 10 minutes before the start. This means I can check that all the equipment I need is working and also, importantly, I can greet everyone as they arrive. Alternatively, I will quickly go around the class and shake hands with the participants.

I remain standing and usually position myself in the center of the room or somewhere where everyone in the class can see me. I try to make eye contact with as many participants as possible but do not say anything at this stage. I then wait for everyone to settle and do not begin the session until the class is quiet.

Opening question

It is vital to get the opening question right. This is of the utmost importance as it will have a critical impact on the rest of the session. As case facilitators, we must always give this very careful thought.

From theory to practice with Martin

The first choice to make is: How difficult should the opening question be? If it's too easy, it sets the wrong tone for the session, and no one will be interested in answering it. For example, asking about the timing of the case or the identity of the protagonist (as I have seen from other educators) are both far too simplistic for an opening question.

But it's also vital to strike a balance, because if it's a closed question that is too difficult, participants will be afraid to answer in case they get it wrong. And it's important to note that this fear of responding incorrectly can be more pronounced in certain cultures and early on in a program or course.

Typically, the opening question should be posed from the perspective of the protagonist in the case. Indeed, the most traditional opening question is: 'If you were in the position of the case protagonist, what would you do?' But the question can obviously be finetuned to the specific case, e.g., 'If you were in the position of Paul Nasar, would you propose Rob Parson for promotion to managing director?'

The opening question should elicit a strong and ideally controversial response about the nature of the problem and how serious it is. Aim for a question that immediately prompts disagreement and discussion among participants. If implicitly or explicitly going for a vote, try to phrase your question so that you will get a 50/50 split. But there are exceptions to the general rule that an opening question should immediately provoke controversy:

From theory to practice with Urs

An example of an exception to this general rule is when I teach 'Anna Frisch at Aesch AG: Initiating Lateral Change,' a case I cowrote with Ulf Schäfer.

The 'official' opening question for this case is: 'Is Anna justified in proposing changes to the marketing approach at Aesch AG?'

Most participants will agree with Anna's proposals as they are so convincing. This then makes the question of why she fails much more interesting. So, in this particular context, controversy is not instigated immediately but develops later in the session when the reasons for failure are being debated.

Your opening question should usually be open, not closed. The reply to a closed question is limited to yes or no. (More on open versus closed questions later.)

Here are some typical opening questions that can be used:

- If you were in the position of the protagonist, what would you do? (Probably the most frequently used opening question, neutral and focusing on the immediate issue.)
- Out of the three options mentioned in the case, which would you choose? (Centering the question around the immediate issue but abstract from the protagonist.)
- Is this a serious issue and who should deal with it? (This might provoke debate about the roles and responsibilities of the various characters in the case and is a mechanism to move to the underlying issue.)

- How effective will the proposed action be? (A good option for cases in which the protagonist has choices but seems to be leaning toward only one option.)
- Which specific actions do you propose for the protagonist? (This moves the attention to the practicalities of process and execution.)
- Which challenge should the protagonist deal with first? (A good way to start if there are multiple immediate issues and if you are flexible in the teaching flow, because you should probably focus next on the one challenge that most participants chose in response to your question.)
- Who (or what) is responsible for this situation/complication/problem? (A good option for retrospective cases, in which the analysis of the root causes is more important than the decision and next steps.)

Avoid using the same opening question when teaching multiple cases to the same group. Participants will soon anticipate what is coming and repetition will quickly lead to boredom.

From theory to practice with Urs

My case 'Vodafone in Egypt: National Crises and Their Implications for Multinational Corporations,' cowritten with Shirish Pandit, is set in Egypt during protests against the 30-year rule of President Hosni Mubarak. It focuses on the dilemma faced by Hatem Dowidar, CEO of Vodafone Egypt, when the government ordered Vodafone and other service providers to suspend communication services in certain areas, including Tahrir Square, the center of the protests.

The case can be approached from many angles and so offers numerous examples of potential opening questions. Here are just some examples to illustrate the broad range of options you can choose between when starting a case discussion:

1.	What should Hatem Dowidar do?	Recommendation, participants have to put themselves the protagonists' shoes
2.	What would you do in Hatem's position?	Recommendation, but this time it is what participants would do in Hatem's position which might lead to different answers than the first question
3.	What do you think actually happened?	Analysis, very open question, the discussion can go in many directions
4.	If you were Vittorio Colao, CEO of the Vodafone Group, what would you expect Hatem Dowidar to do?	Recommendation, but this time with a change of perspective. It is about the boss of the protagonist
5.	Should Hatem Dowidar disconnect the services, yes or no?	Recommendation, but with a forced choice, narrowing down the options
6.	What is going on here?	Analysis, very open question, the discussion can go in many directions. Slightly different from question 3 as it points more in the direction of politics, emotions, underlying currents than pure facts (what happened)
7.	Which is more important: obeying the government or satisfying customers?	Either vote or opening for discussion, but with a very narrow focus and a forced choice

(Continued)

8.	Could Dowidar have prevented this situation?	Focus now shifts from prospective (what should he do) to retrospective (what should he have done)
9.	Why does the government give this order?	Diagnosis, shifting the focus from the protagonist to an important stakeholder, the government
10.	Is Hatem in trouble?	Assessment, very open and even ambiguous as there might be very different opinions on what trouble really is
11.	What is Hatem's challenge/problem?	Assessment, rather open. Could be narrowed down by simply rephrasing to '… most important challenge'
12.	Is Hatem pro or anti Hosni Mubarak?	Assessment, might come as a surprise at the beginning of the discussion as this seems to be a nonbusiness question
13.	Should Hatem try using his political connections to avoid the shutdown?	Recommendation, with a very narrow focus as the question already rules out many other options that Hatem could try
14.	What is the relationship between Vodafone Egypt and the group's HQ?	Assessment
15.	Can you define the problem/ challenge that Hatem is facing?	Assessment, very similar to question 11, but forcing the participants to be very precise by using the word 'define'
16.	Should Vodafone shut down its business in Egypt?	Recommendation, but impersonal, general, not focusing on the protagonist but rather the whole company

As mentioned above, these are just a few of the multiple options available. It is useful to think about each possible question from both your perspective and your participants.' Would you be excited to discuss a particular question? Would your participants? Is the question too easy? Too hard? Will it provoke controversy and disagreement? Will it naturally lead to the fundamental questions/issues of the case?

The power of three

There are three tried and tested formats to open a discussion:

(1) *Open call:* simply invite the entire class to respond to the opening question. It is very important not to panic if your class is initially silent – the silence is never as long as it seems to you. Resist the temptation to 'fill the gap.' Silence can be a wonderful learning opportunity so do not spoil the moment by ending it too soon. Give your participants plenty of time to think and respond; hold your nerve and wait for at least 30 seconds (count them down inwardly). This will also reaffirm your commitment to participant-centered discussion.

However, it is still a good idea to have an alternative approach ready in case no one speaks, even after you have waited patiently!

(2) *Cold call:* Ask an individual participant for their initial thoughts and ideas. The identification of the participant could be strategic or random. If you are met with silence, you can:

– open the discussion to the whole group;
– ask another participant to respond instead;

(Continued)

- ask another participant to support the participant you originally picked, for example by asking: Can you please help XY by just giving him one example (or a specific quote from the case or just one word etc.);
- allow the participant to pass this question on to a different participant;

(3) Warm call: Warn an individual participant in advance that they will be asked for their input. This can be done well in advance (for example, after a previous class); immediately before the class (for example, as participants enter the classroom); or in class just before showing a video clip. ('Dan, after this video I would like you to…')

Warm calling is good to encourage contributions from participants who already have expertise on the topic, or those who have not previously contributed sufficiently to the discussions.

Additional tactics to get the discussion going

Votes or questionnaires: Another very frequently used way to open a case discussion is to hold a class vote on a specific question (usually related to the immediate issue). This can be a very effective technique. Having responded to a vote, participants are often more willing to defend their position in class and contribute to the discussion. (This is amplified even more in face-to-face settings, where everybody can see how each other voted.) You can also ask participants to explain their decision – this can be particularly rewarding when only one or two participants vote against the rest of the class. For this to be effective you have to of course remember who voted for what. When writing down the number of votes on the board, you might want to write a couple of names (for example, very small and only readable for you or just their initials) under each number. After a vote, it is always legitimate to call on individual participants with opposing views to explain their perspective and defend their position. Try to call participants from both/all camps to balance the comments in the classroom. Voting also gives you a good sense of the distribution of perspectives in the class and enables you to stimulate the debate, e.g., by supporting the minority. In online or hybrid classes you can use online voting systems (e.g., Mentimeter, Kahoot) or simply ask participants to respond in the chat or to use the typically available reaction signs.

Small-group presentations: Ask small groups to prepare and present their ideas at the start of class. This has to be done as a preassignment (create groups upfront, give them a task, elaborate your expectations, ask them to be brief/concise). Use their input as the opening of the class. This can be very effective to ensure preparation of the case. But sometimes it might fire back in the sense that only the groups that are selected to prepare and present their ideas will actually prepare and the others will wait to be informed in class. One way to improve this is to make several groups prepare a case and select one to present their ideas and the others might add or comment. The upside of this kind of opening is that the start of the session is already participant-centered. Additionally, you will immediately get a sense of how participants have understood, interpreted, and liked the case and what kind of issues they focused on while preparing the case.

What other techniques to open a case-based session have you used in the past or observed in great teachers? Share your experience with us!

Heretical view

Some case facilitators open their session by summarizing the case to be discussed. We do not recommend this as it signals to participants that they can get away with less preparation next time. And, of course, it delays participant engagement (they will need to listen to the summary). The aim should be to start the discussion as soon as possible.

However, a case summary at the start of the session can sometimes be necessary, for example when participants arrive poorly prepared. This may be due to an exam, some special event, or a short-notice change to the case to be used in the session.

An introductory summary will work best if you have something a little special up your sleeve to make the session more interesting and livelier as it progresses. This might be additional material such as video clips or the presence of a case protagonist.

But starting with a case summary is definitely a technique to be avoided if possible, and only used rarely after careful consideration!

Dealing with participants who know the outcome and give it away immediately

Many of our workshop participants struggle with the problem of individual students who know the outcome of the case. This is particularly true for old cases, extremely famous cases, or cases about well-known organizations or events. Our workshop participants then frequently wonder whether the case session still makes sense if such a student simply gives away the outcome of the case early in the session (which they will then often frame as the 'solution' to the case). We strongly believe that it still makes sense to go on! And there are several techniques to deal with such situations.

We already touched on a first such technique when looking at the use of old cases: You could simply anticipate it by sharing the outcome of the case upfront at beginning of class. You could, for example, show pictures, charts, news reports, or products that illustrate the decision/action. This way you can get the 'what happened' out of the way and then fully concentrate on why and how it happened.

A second tactic is to avoid this situation from happening by using fake/sanitized cases. For example, the famous 'Carter Racing' case, by Brittain and Sitkin, deals with the issues leading up to the *Challenger* disaster from 1986 but is disguised as a NASCAR racing case. In this specific case it makes a lot of sense to disguise the fact that the data comes from the *Challenger* accident because knowing what happened to the *Challenger* will make participants look a lot more actively for problems with the data. To avoid participants googling the outcome, the case was later republished under another different name ('Speed Venture'). But, in general, there are a lot of good reasons to avoid fake/sanitized cases, so we would argue that this option should be used carefully.

Another tactic would be to use cases about less or unknown organizations and events, for which the outcome possibly cannot even be googled. But be aware that the potential advantage of participants not knowing the outcome might be counterbalanced by the fact that participants might be less willing to engage with companies or events that they do not know.

Finally, you might just as well accept that some participants know the outcome – acknowledge the fact that they did the additional research. You can see this as a good sign that people are willing to engage, to go beyond just the necessary, and to put in the extra effort to find out. We would even say that it is almost a principle of participant-centered learning that participants frequently 'know' relevant things that you might not know. Instead of fighting this, embrace the opportunity to leverage the differences in knowledge and experience to the benefit of the whole class (because in the end it is rarely every participant but just a few who care enough to find out).

Opening the case discussion

– Set the scene for when participants arrive/join: use your imagination!
– Start on time and with a clear signal.
– Get the opening question right: draft a number of options and choose wisely.
– Always have a plan B – especially if participants are unprepared, unwilling to contribute, or surprise you with unexpected comments.
– Decide how you will start the discussion: open call, cold call, warm call, group work, or a vote?
– Don't be afraid of students who know the outcome.

Running the session

'For your information, let me ask you a question.' – Marshall McLuhan

While opening the session is crucial for the atmosphere and energy, the way you will run the session will be decisive for achieving your learning objectives.

The case method ultimately requires three key skills:

1. *Asking great questions:* Make sure you have a broad spectrum of different types of questions that you use in your classes. To be able to ask great question is not only a matter of preparation, but also linked to your ability to listen.
2. *Listening carefully:* Asking great questions requires you to listen carefully so that questions build on earlier questions – generating a natural flow of the session. Make sure that you stay focused on what your participants say instead of thinking about the next mini-lecture or just waiting for the keywords you expect. And next to listening to the content of the response it is equally important to listen to the social, emotional, and relational aspects (is the participant excited, is there a fight within the class, etc.).
3. *Orchestrating a discussion:* At the same time, you will have to orchestrate the class discussion with attention. In parallel to facilitating the content dimension of the case discussion, you will simultaneously need to orchestrate the discussion on a social, emotional, and relational level. We will dive deeper into these three key skills of a great case facilitator, including a deeper look at different learning formats that you can use, how important the learning space can be (if teaching face to face), and why coteaching might be a good way to deliver an extraordinary session and improve your own teaching skills at the same time.

Your job as a case facilitator is mostly to ask great questions (even in asynchronous online sessions!), so this is where we will start.

Asking great questions

Asking great questions is probably the single most important case teaching skill. You will need to prepare carefully and be ready with a broad range of questions that will advance the case discussion and encourage participation. When planning your questions, it is vital to ensure that they will help to achieve the learning objectives.

As already mentioned in the section on the teaching plan, we suggest preparing a lot of questions and quickly thinking through the potential direction that the discussion might take based on your questions. As questions are so important, we also recommend writing them down and testing them with someone. This is especially important if you do not teach in your native language. There is nothing worse than asking a question and realizing during the discussion that the participants understood the question in a different way, and you then must course-correct.

First, it is important to understand that there are various types of question that can be asked and that each type will result in a different outcome. To inspire the development of your own questions, we will first introduce a short typology of questions for case teaching and then describe all of them with various examples.

There are many possible ways of differentiating between various types of questions that usually look at different aspects and are often neither mutually exclusive nor collectively exhaustive. Also, our proposed typology is not perfect but we believe that we cover the most relevant aspects of questions for the purpose of teaching a case-based session as follows:

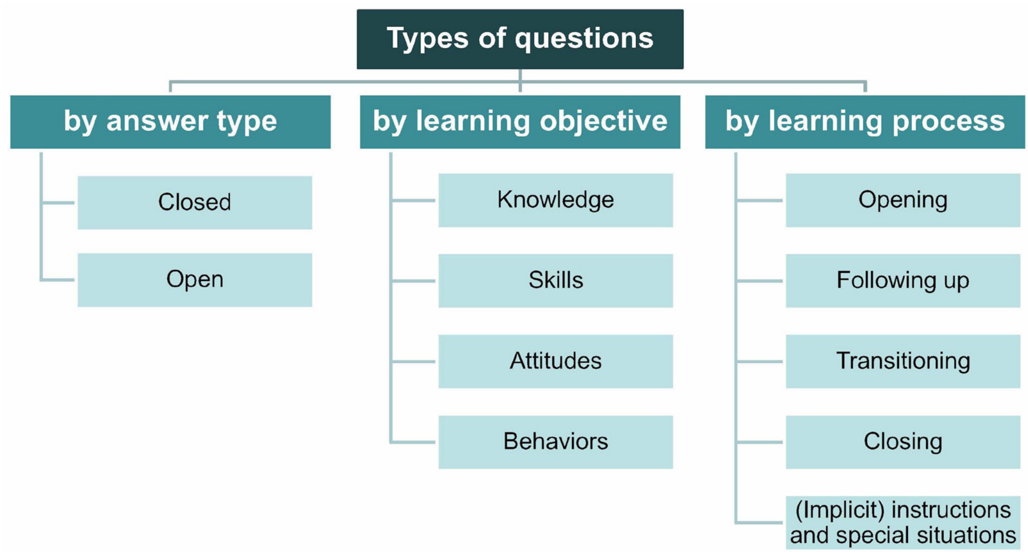

Figure 12: Typology of questions for case teaching.

The C. Roland Christensen Center for Teaching and Learning at Harvard Business School put together a long and wonderful list of 'Questions for Class Discussions' (NN 2008), which was a source of inspiration for this entire section even though they use a different typology. The list is publicly available at http://www.hbs.edu/teaching/docs/Questions_for_Class_Discussions_rev.pdf.

Question types by answer

A frequent differentiation between types of questions (that you might know from your own survey research) is closed questions versus open questions.

Closed

Closed (sometimes also called 'closed-ended') questions are questions that have a very limited set of possible answers. They usually result in very short, simple factual responses, e.g., a 'yes' or 'no.' Often, the answer will be right or wrong. The questioner remains in control.

Despite being closed, i.e., targeted toward a limited choice of responses, closed questions can still investigate a broad range of issues. Here are just a few examples:

- Can you tell me the total R&D spending of the company in the previous year? (facts)
- Would you fire person X or not? (opinions)

- In the position of the protagonist, would you be angry about the divestment decision? (emotions)
- On a scale from 1 to 5, is the market potential for product Z big (5) or small (1)? (scale assessments)
- The CEO knew about the ongoing sexual harassment, right? (statement dressed as question)

The benefit of closed questions is that they force participants to take a stand. This can be effective at the start of a discussion when participants can be asked to vote or express their opinion on a particular issue. You can then move from the vote to the discussion by following up with open questions, for example 'Why did you vote against giving the loan?' or 'What would make you change your mind about the location for the next production plant?'

With closed questions, educators can quickly evaluate preparation of the class or individual participants. Just cold-call a participant with a specific closed question and you will immediately know if they have read the case. You can also use closed questions to help bring a discussion back on track or to refocus when a participant's contribution becomes too broad and unspecific. (More on that later.)

However, as a general rule, closed questions should be used far less frequently than open questions during a case discussion, because they have several characteristics that are unsupportive for a fruitful and lively debate in class.

Disadvantages of closed questions for case teaching:

- Participants might be afraid about giving a wrong answer to a closed question.
- Closed questions usually do not allow space to provide reasoning behind the response which it might be important to give (e.g., why they believe that the marketing VP's actions were not racist – even though the majority of the class might have a different opinion).
- Participants might have a creative idea that just does not fit the acceptable set of responses to a closed question.
- Closed questions usually result in short responses and might not help to get the discussion going.
- Closed questions tend to simplify things through the limitation of options – which is usually not in line with the educational objective of preparing for a world of complexities.

Open

Open (sometimes also called 'open-ended') questions are questions for which respondents are not limited in their response. The questioner is less in control because the replies might go in all kinds of directions, and it is therefore not possible for the educator to (precisely) predict what the response will be and where this will lead the case discussion.

In case discussions, open questions are typically used to reflect on, diagnose, assess, evaluate, or analyze a particular situation (in retrospect) or to ask for recommendations, actions, and response strategies. Typical open questions might include:

- How would you describe the situation X was facing at the beginning of 2020? (diagnosis)
- What has led to this development? (analysis)
- How dire is the financial situation of company A in your opinion? (opinion)
- If you were in X's shoes, what would you do now? (recommendation)
- What should the specific next steps of the internal auditor be? (action)
- What could be counterarguments to what participant K just said? (invitation to object and contribute)

Open questions invite longer, more discursive replies that will often initiate alternative responses from other participants or that can open further questions by the educator. Therefore, open questions require good listening skills so you can respond appropriately to skillfully probe participants' understanding, knowledge, opinions, assumptions, or emotions and drive the discussion forward.

As mentioned before, open questions should usually be the more frequently used question style in case discussions. However, there are also a few disadvantages of open questions.

Disadvantages of open questions for case teaching:

- Responses can easily be too long, unstructured, and off track.
- The uncertainty about the direction of the response can be nerve-wracking for the educator.
- They might invite multiple participants to provide similar but just slightly varying responses that do not add value to the case discussion.
- Nonnative or introvert participants might be less willing to contribute.
- If questions are extremely open (for example, 'What do you think?' as an opening question), participants might be overwhelmed.
- When grading participation/contribution: the grading is usually a bit less objective compared to the simple check of whether the response to a closed question was right or wrong.

Despite these potential disadvantages, we strongly recommend making as much use of open questions as possible and to limit closed questions to very specific situations, such as an opening vote, the clarification of case facts, or as a way to refocus the class discussion. And, with a bit of practice, you will find it easy to ask for similar aspects through open questions.

To make the difference of closed and open questions very clear: below we provide a comparison table with examples of open-ended variants to the closed questions mentioned above:

Closed question	Open question
Can you tell me the total R&D spending of the company in the previous year?	What factors might have impacted the R&D activities of the company in the previous year?
Would you fire person X or not?	What might be reasons to fire person X or not?
In the position of the protagonist, would you be angry about the divestment decision?	In the position of the protagonist, what would be your feelings about the divestment decision?
On a scale from 1 to 5, is the market potential for product Z big (5) or small (1)?	How do you evaluate the market potential for product Z?
The CEO knew about the ongoing harassment, right?	Who might have known about the ongoing sexual harassment?

Table 1: Comparison of closed and open questions.

As you can see from the table above, the differences between closed and open questions can sometimes be very small in wording but they will move the discussion into very different directions and can elicit very different emotions and reactions from your participants overall.

And just ask yourself: Which of the two sets of questions would you have preferred to be asked as a student? So why should we treat our participants differently from how we would like to be treated?

Question types by learning objective

Questions can be used to implicitly or explicitly point toward the learning objectives of a session and to evaluate their achievement (often toward the end of a session). There is a large number of different taxonomy systems around the achievement of learning objectives (often following 'Bloom's Taxonomy'; see e.g., Anderson and Krathwohl 2001). But given the underlying complexity of human learning they tend to often be equally complex. For the purposes of this section, we will therefore just follow the frequently used differentiation of learning into knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors (KSAB).

Because the three proposed main dimensions of question types (by answer, learning objective, and learning process) are quite independent of each other, just remember that the following description of questions by learning objectives will overlap with earlier and later differentiations. For example, all learning objectives can be addressed through both closed and open questions. And the same will be true below for questions by learning process. But as a source of inspiration for the formulation of your own questions, we believe this to be an acceptable redundancy.

Knowledge

Testing knowledge and the availability of information through questions is typically very straightforward. This can happen by asking for a particular piece of information, perhaps an important aspect of the case. But, while knowledge questions can be focused on the case, they could equally well go far beyond. Such questions can be used to ensure reading of the case or advancing the discussion by asking for something that may have been overlooked during the discussion so far.

Questions asking for information and knowledge are often used as a follow-up when participants express opinions but fail to back them with facts from the case. For example, if a participant argues that they would choose option A because it would be more profitable, a good follow-up question would be: 'Is there any information in the case about the level of profit that might be achieved with option A?' You could also test knowledge from earlier in the course, from other courses, or gained through comments from participants during the case session.

Examples for questions investigating knowledge and information:

- According to the case study, what are the three product ideas that person A presented in the investment meeting? (testing case reading)
- Can someone remind me about the formular for WACC so that we can calculate the expected returns for company B? (making explicit links to previous course content through a closed question)
- Which key challenges for effective team collaboration did we discuss earlier in this course that might have contributed to the team's failure in this case? (making links to previous course content through an open question)
- What are the key challenges of the automotive industry that participant C just introduced to our discussion? (testing for learning from contributions during case discussion)
- Which academic theories could provide strong support for the proposal of participant D? (inviting links to previous course content)
- We have already discussed two aspects, but which other disadvantages of the proposed marketing plan are being raised by person E in the case? (advancing the discussion to a new aspect)

As educators you are probably used to being in a position of having more information/knowledge about the subject than your participants. But the case method requires you to let the discussion flow and this lower level of control over the session can make inexperienced case teachers frightened – particularly when they have participants who have highly specialized knowledge in a field related to the case but possibly outside of the scientific domain of the educator. But through the intelligent inclusion of knowledge questions to the experts in the room you can easily deal with such issues. Here are a few ideas:

Dealing with experts in the room: Make the most of your expert by asking them specific questions that will enrich and inform the learning experience for everyone. You can frame your questions in the following ways:

- Can you please share in a few words the key trends in your industry?
- How do you organize the budgeting process in your company and how does this compare to the process described for company F in the case? (For example, when teaching in a customized executive education program for participants from only one firm.)
- Based on your experience and expertise in this field …
  - … would you invest in this proposal?
  - … how would you approach this problem?
  - … is the protagonist in the case taking the right decisions?
  - … what would you do next?

Skills

You can also use questions to test participants' skills, e.g., their ability to apply concepts, frameworks, or tools to the specific case. Here are a few examples:

- Can you please calculate the average customer lifetime value for customer segment G of company H in the case?
- Which utilitarian arguments could person J present to seemingly justify a violation of company K's patents?
- Can you take me through the main steps of calculating total cost of ownership in general so that we can then do this for the case?
- How would you build an onboarding process for new hires at company L?

Attitudes

As a psychological construct and therefore as something deeply personal and internal, attitudes are more difficult to bring to the surface. But there are still ways to investigate your participants around their attitudes, relative to existing attitudes at the beginning of the learning as well as changes over time and attitudes at the end of the learning. And, even though the evaluation of the responses might be difficult, you might want to use questions around attitudes to clearly state that this dimension of learning matters to you. Typical questions could be:

- In the case person M shouts at N during the negotiation, how do you feel about people shouting in negotiations?
- What would you do when finding out that a colleague is underperforming like person O in the case?
- What do you think about promoting CFOs like person P to CEO positions?
- Do you think that firms like Q should follow a 'made in the USA' strategy?
- Did the discussion of this case change your attitudes about doing business in Mexico – and, if yes, in which way?

Behavior

Assessing the learning progress along behavioral aspects in a case discussion usually faces a similar but different challenge compared to assessing skills: When using questions relative to behavior during a full-class case discussion, participants will usually *not show their behavior* but will frequently be limited to *saying what they will or would do*. Accordingly, you could rely on other, case-based learning formats beyond questions to really observe the participants' behavior. Such learning formats could include role-plays, simulations, or group assignments (see below). However, asking questions related to behaviors is still relevant for multiple reasons: (1) The way in which a participant behaves in the class discussion can also be observed and become the target of questions. (2) As with attitudes, questions related to behaviors help to articulate the importance of this dimension for the achievement of the learning objectives. (3) Even though only indirect, you can still investigate likely behavior. (4) And, last but not least, you can always probe (i.e., follow-up) the response of participants to a behavior question, by inviting them to give it a try in a small ad hoc role-play with you (or another participant) during which you and the entire class can then observe the behavior.

So here are a few possible questions related to behaviors:

- In the position of R, what would you do now?
- When auditor S calls you at 8pm and wants you to come to the office immediately, what would you do?
- How would you prepare for this situation?
- Why do you only talk with me as the instructor and not with your classmates?
- You have now interrupted participant T for the second time. Do you think his comments are irrelevant?

Question types by learning process

Another useful way to think about the kind of questions you might use during the case discussion is to go by the phase of the learning process in which you might want to ask them. Such questions – though frequently formulated around the case study – often have a secondary meaning as they also structure the teaching process in parallel.

Reflect on the skills and knowledge that you want to foster, sharpen, or test in your participants – or more generally what you want to achieve with the respective questions. You can use questions to:

1. collect information to emphasize the importance of knowing the facts and figures in business (information questions);
2. probe for opinions and encourage arguments and counterarguments to develop presentation and persuasion skills (opinion questions);
3. put things in context by asking for relations and comparisons to other situations (relation questions);
4. stimulate and test participants' ability to generalize (generalization questions);
5. foster participants' ability to summarize (summary questions).

Opening

We elaborated extensively on the importance of opening questions with multiple examples in the 'Opening question' section above on page 55. We will therefore skip this critically important first step of the case teaching process here. If you have not already read that section, please go back.

Following up

Once the case discussion is off to a good start, you can use questions to keep the discussion going relative to a specific dimension of the case, i.e., usually within a building block of your teaching plan. (How to move to the next building block or topic will be discussed later.) Two main aspects (again not mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive) are typically important in this phase:

- broadening, i.e., collecting additional information and perspectives, and
- probing, i.e., going deeper related to a certain aspect.

Broadening: collecting more information and perspectives

Broadening questions are most useful if relevant (1) *information* or (2) *perspectives* have not yet been added to the discussion. Here are a few typical questions to be asked to broaden the discussion within a building block:

- Can someone jump in and provide additional information?
- Have we missed something so far?
- What other facts might support your point of view?
- Is there anything that you would like to add?
- You mention the high overhead costs. What other costs seem to be out of hand?
- Does anyone have a strong opinion about what participant A just said?
- What do others think?
- Is there anyone who would like to build on the argument of participant B?

Broadening (just as probing below) assumes that the case discussion will not yet progress to a new building block/topic. You can use broadening questions in combination with implicit instructions to make this point:

- Before moving on to the next topic, what other obstacles to the potential market entry in Malaysia would protagonist C need to consider?
- Let's complete the marketing analysis by looking at the 'P' that we have not yet touched on. What product related aspects might have led to the success of the product launch?
- You see some black space in my 2×2 matrix; are there other possible reactions to D's dissatisfaction with his current employer?

Probing: going deeper

We believe it is hugely important to listen carefully and follow up on what participants say so you can probe for greater detail and achieve a more in-depth analysis. This is important to avoid the frequently made objection that case discussions only aim at the simple. Typical questions you can ask in response to contributions include:

- Why? Why do you think/believe that? Can you give your reasons?
- Tell me more! (not really a question – but a good way to go deeper)
- How do you conclude that the company is in trouble? What evidence from the case do you have to back up this claim?
- What is the single best argument you can make to support this position?
- Is there a conceptual or theoretical framework that supports your position?
- Would anything change your mind? Under what circumstances would you change your mind?
- How did you calculate this result?
- What would E (a stakeholder not yet considered during the discussion) think of your recommendation?
- How can we make the calculation of the potential market size by participant F a bit more precise?
- How/to what extent is that different to what participant G said earlier?
- What facts from the case support your point of view?

- What if this alternative wasn't available?
- Is participant H right in assuming that company J's fixed costs are too high?
- Could you rephrase that in simpler language?
- You mentioned X in your comment: could you explain what X is?
- Where in the case did you find that information?

Just as with broadening questions, probing questions can also be used to retain the discussion within the respective building block of your teaching plan while at the same time ensuring the necessary depth of the discussion. For example:

- You have mentioned a number of issues; could you explain Y first?
- Let's drill down a bit more. What are the specific factors influencing the throughput time in plant K?
- Leaving the two last points that you made aside, how does the credit insurance you just mentioned help company L during this crisis?
- Let's try to get a more precise estimate before moving on. Which factor might we need to consider additionally?
- Would you mind coming back to that point after we have first discussed X?

Transitioning

The subtle use of questions to move without force from one building block of your teaching plan to the next is one of the hallmarks of a great case teacher. When done well, it is through transition questions that the educator can be flexible and adaptive to participants' contributions while at the same time staying firmly in control of the learning process and timing.

Transitioning through questions requires patience, experience, and thinking on your feet. Which contributions from students will allow you to move to the next building block? What if a participant makes a comment that would allow for a wonderful transition question but it comes too early? Many things can happen in a case discussion. But, with a bit of preparation, you can increase your chances of success – even if all your prepared transition questions are eventually useless in a specific session. Here are a few examples of transition questions for your inspiration:

- You just mentioned as a side comment that the risk officer, M, seems to be unhappy in the case study. Let's explore this issue: what might be the risks associated with this insurance product? (You need to be either lucky for such a fitting comment, or you need to elicit such observations through skillful broadening questions before.)
- We have looked extensively at fixed assets. Which other assets make up more than 10% of the balance sheet and should be looked at in this particular case? (A quite focused, almost closed question.)
- Which other important aspects have we not yet discussed? (An open transition question that might move you to a topic that you did not intend to move to.)
- In our analysis of the new employee onboarding process at company N, we moved from the preparation to the first day. What should come next? (If orchestrating your teaching plan along a process, the transitions might be a bit easier.)
- Is everyone ready to move on from our external analysis? Then I would suggest looking at the internally available resources of company N. Who would like to go first? (A quite rigid and clearly marked transition with a very open-ended question to move on.)
- Are we done with the business case? Great! Let's now calculate how the case changes at different interest rates. (A hard cut but combined with praise for the achievement of the class.)

- Before moving on, are there any open questions or comments? (Not really a transitioning question but a question that clearly marks that you are ready to move on.)
- Leaving behind our discussion around customer satisfaction, what could company O do to improve its brand awareness? (The explicit mentioning of customer satisfaction and brand awareness gives the different building blocks a name – it is a bit obvious, but it might help participants to remember the key areas discussed.)
- Most of you agreed to terminate the contract with supplier P, but how else can we ensure that our raw materials don't include toxins? (A broadening question that can at the same time help you to transition to a new building block.)

Closing

When closing a case discussion, three considerations are usually key: (1) summarizing the lessons learned, (2) relating the session and session outcome to other parts of the course/program or to other business constellations, and (3) generalizing the insights from the case.

Summarizing

Summarizing questions are usually asked at the end of a case discussion to bring the session to a close. As the flow of a case-based session can be winding according to the participants' contributions, it is important to close the session with a look back at what was learned along the way. One way to achieve this is to ask summarizing questions. Typical summary questions might include:

- How would you sum up this case?
- Can someone please remind all of us about the three mistakes that protagonist Q did while trying to sell to company R?
- Based on our discussion, what is the key thing you have learned today?
- In a few years from now, what should you remember from this case discussion?
- If you were asked to write a tweet about this session, what would it be?
- Looking back at the case discussion, what seem to be the most important steps of the account consolidation process?

Relating

It is one thing to summarize (i.e., add up, bring together) the previous discussion, but often it is important to help participants to see the connections to other domains (industries, functions, countries, theories, tools…) or to their own situations (especially in executive education). The aim of relating questions is therefore to broaden the picture and to learn by comparing and contrasting. Relating questions typically come toward the end of the session but can also be used during the discussion. Typical questions might include:

- How does our case discussion compare to the experiences you have gained before coming back to school?
- Do you think that if the company was headquartered in the US, the situation would have been the same?
- How does the R&D budget of company S compare to what you know about industry T?
- How does your answer relate to the arguments of the previous participant U?
- Are there other product types for which our lessons learned might apply? Which and why?
- This case was about a luxury hotel. Do you see similar problems in other travel segments?

- How does this case relate to the research on market entry strategies as presented in the textbook?
- In which industries might our insights not be applicable?

And here are a few examples specifically for executive education or part-time degree programs (i.e., for participants who are working professionally at the same time):

- The case describes the decision process of a CEO. How does this relate to your own situation?
- How would you deal with a question like this in your company?
- What can your teams/colleagues learn from our case discussion?

Generalizing

Another classic way to close a case session is to invite participants to generalize the lessons they have learned. This can also be achieved by asking questions. Such generalizing questions can be used to inductively formulate a hypothesis out of the lessons learned. But, in line with our suggestions on how to deal with legitimate criticism of the case method, you can also use generalizing questions to help your participants explore the limits of generalizability. Typical questions might include:

- Is there anything in this case study that you think could be generalized?
- Can you draw any generally applicable conclusions from our case discussion? When do they apply and when might they not be applicable?
- If you face a similar situation in the future, what are the three main takeaways from this case that might help you avoid potential mistakes?
- This case is a very specific situation. Where do you see some generalizable principles?
- After discussing the case, what might be the three most important drivers of corporate fraud in general?
- Under which circumstances might our main conclusion not be applicable for other firms?

(Implicit) instructions and dealing with special situations

We saw with some of the questions mentioned above that you can use questions to guide the discussion (e.g., to stay at a certain topic/building block or to move on). They can also be used to deal with various types of special situations, many of which we will discuss in greater detail in the section 'Orchestrating the discussion' from page 78 onwards. But, because we believe this to be such an important feature of questions, we will now list some such situations and corresponding questions already here. (Dealing with too vocal and too silent students – just to name a few special cases – will be discussed only below.)

- Questions to deal with offensive comments or inadequate language:
  - Could you please come up with a less offensive wording of your comment?
  - Is anyone able to make the point without using such offensive language?
  - Are all of you ok with this language?
  - Is this really something you want to say – or did you mean to express something else?
- Questions to deal with contributions that are too judgmental:
  - Are you certain that there is no other way to look at the issue?
  - Would anybody else be able to illustrate why there might be other ways to look at this?
  - Could you come up with some counterperspectives/positions to your own claim?
  - Would you please find a less confrontational argument to disagree with participant V? Disagreement is important but we should keep it civil.

- Questions to deal with factual errors:
  - Where in the case study can you find support for this claim?
  - Did you have a close look at exhibit 3 in the case study?
  - How did you come up with this sales figure of 3 billion US dollars?
  - Can someone else please correct this for us?
  - Did any of the other breakout groups come up with a different result for the calculation?
- Questions to deal with excessively long contributions:
  - Sorry for interrupting, but could you please give us the executive summary/elevator pitch for this argument?
  - Participant W already mentioned three arguments; can someone else please analyze the first argument a bit deeper, before W or anybody else adds more points?

And finally, a reminder about our core belief: During the case discussion, do not stick rigidly to the list of questions that you prepared before. Some might not really fit anymore (because you might have touched the topics without even asking a question), better ones may occur to you as you go along, and participants may also come up with some great questions (that you can use in the future!). And, if you find such new/better questions: make sure to write them down during or immediately after the session – so that you can add them to the teaching plan for the next time you use the case.

Asking great questions

- Ensure your questions support the learning objectives.
- Be familiar with different types of questions and how they may affect the discussion.
- Prepare plenty of questions in advance (writing them down helps to get them right).
- Use a mix of open and closed questions but use mostly open questions.
- Use a variety of questions to advance the discussion (Why? What? Where? How? Who? Which?).
- Target specific questions at individuals when appropriate.
- Make the most of experts in your class.
- Prepare questions that will encourage in-depth probing and analysis.
- Prepare questions that will move the discussion on from one point or topic to the next.
- Prepare questions to close the session and reaffirm the learning.
- Don't stick rigidly to your list of questions: be flexible.

Listening carefully

'Listening is a positive act: you have to put yourself out to do it.' – David Hockney

Sometimes it is hard to listen. It can be even harder to listen well. But you cannot be a very good case teacher unless you are a very good listener.

Why is it hard to listen well?

Listening well in an educational context is both extremely important and at the same time very hard. As an educator you cannot simply focus on the person who is speaking; instead, you must concentrate on three things at the same time: yourself, the speaker, and the class/process.

When teaching a case, you will always be juggling various aspects of your role. Will you get through the material on time? Are the learning objectives being delivered? Have you remembered all your materials? Will the technology work? Have you got all your points across? Did you pick the right case? These are just a few of the questions that will be racing through your brain while, at the same time, you are trying to actively listen to a participant and concentrate on what they are saying.

This will, of course, affect what you hear, how you process the information, and how you incorporate it into the flow of the session. Generally speaking: the better prepared you are for the session, the more you will be able to focus on the participants, listen well, and respond appropriately and effectively.

Being aware

Listening well means doing your best to understand the motivations and feelings of the person who is speaking. For example: Why did they decide to contribute? What is their role in the class? How often have they contributed before? Do they find it difficult to contribute? Also – are they perhaps trying to convey something that is not coming across verbally? All of these factors will influence the way you process and respond to what is being said.

And, of course, you must never forget the rest of the class, even when you are concentrating on the participant who is speaking. You will need to be fully aware throughout the session: Is everyone contributing? Are one or two people dominating? Who else might have a strong opinion and be encouraged to speak? Is there an expert in the room you can ask about a particular issue?

With all this to remember, it is no wonder that listening well and taking in what your participants are saying can take a back seat. The skilled case teacher will guard against this because listening closely to what your participants are saying should be the number one priority.

If you are not listening properly, you are not teaching properly, because you would be violating our core belief of elevating your participants to eye level.

The four levels of communication

To become a great listener, it makes sense to think about communication a bit more generally. Human communication can be verbal and nonverbal, is obviously complex, and has been studied from the perspective of various academic disciplines. There are many different communication models, none of which seems to be all-encompassing or complete. For the purposes of looking at listening during case study discussions, we suggest briefly reviewing a framework developed by Friedemann Schulz von Thun. Building on earlier work by Paul Watzlawick, Schulz von Thun (1981) postulates that when people talk to each other they exchange information on four different levels in parallel:

- Factual
- Self-revelation
- Relationship
- Appeal

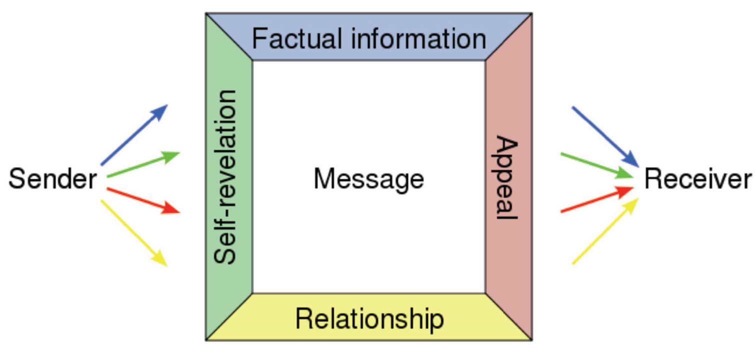

Figure 13: Schulz von Thun 'Four-Sides Model.' Source: Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Four-sides-model_en.svg; author: JazzyJulius; licensed as public domain; accessed August 1, 2022).

When listening to your participants' contributions, it is certainly helpful to develop the ability to listen to more than just the content or factual information of the contribution. Also listening to self-revelation, appeal, and relationship will be important to manage the complexities of the case discussion: even though all four dimensions will not always be present or equally relevant in every statement for your case discussion, you should develop the ability to listen multidimensionally.

To illustrate the different levels, let's take a fictional example: Your name is Alexandra Perez and you are chaired professor of marketing at a reputable school. In the middle of a case discussion during your third session of an introduction to marketing course, Olena Smieshkova, one of your participants, elaborates on her ideas for the price for a new product. As she is speaking, João Martins Leite, another participant, shouts, 'Hey, Sandy, we already discussed this!' and waves with his right hand in an outward movement – obviously assuming that Sandy is your commonly used nickname. We will explain the four sides of the model in greater detail, but these could be the messages that you could hear along the four sides when João makes this comment:

- Factual message: We already discussed what Olena just said.
- Self-revelation message: I am entitled to steer the discussion, and to cut off my classmates.
- Relationship message: I, João am on the same level as you, Alexandra.
- Appeal message: Let's move on!

One small explanation: While all four dimensions are present for most communication, they can have very different salience and the way in which we can understand them will vary vastly dependent upon the context, upon us as listeners and upon our relationship with the sender – and this is often a source of misunderstanding and conflict. 'Hearing' a different appeal or relationship can easily lead to conflict. Receivers therefore need to be self-critical with their interpretation of the messages.

Factual information

At this level, your participants try to convey some sort of (usually explicit) content or information: they respond to your question or to fellow participants, they provide other types of input (e.g., by communicating factual information from the case, their experience or other sources), and they might even talk about their emotions as content or facts. For example, when someone says 'I feel pain,' the factual information is that this person claims to feel pain.

To be a good listener, you must listen to what your participants are saying on a factual level, and respond appropriately. Like this, you will be able to effectively orchestrate the discussion, e.g., through counterquestions (probing), inviting participants to expand on their point (broadening), or asking other participants to respond to them. It is only by listening carefully that you will be able to make accurate, useful, and meaningful board notes as you teach; the notes will usually relate to the factual information dimension of a contribution.

A common error on the level of factual information is to 'hear what you want to hear' rather than what is actually being said. This can happen when you are too keen to lead the discussion in a particular direction, rather than allowing it to develop organically in the classroom. The classroom discussion should always be participant-led. You are not there to impose your own understanding and way of thinking on your participants but to encourage and facilitate theirs.

In addition, if you repeatedly ignore what is actually being said on the level of factual information and impose your own interpretation and meaning on your participants' words, they will quickly understand that their points of view are not valued and lose interest in contributing. This is even more important when capturing what is being said on the board. We discuss use of the board in more detail in below in the section 'Use of board' on page 95 of this chapter.

In our example of Alexandra, Olena, and João, the factual information João seems to try to convey is that he believes that what Olena said had already been discussed. Whether or not that is factually true (i.e., if Olena might have introduced a new facet) or not is a separate point. At the level of factual information, João tries to make a point about how the world is – and from his perspective Olena seems to be adding nothing new.

Self-revelation

A good listener can learn something about the speaker beyond what they are actually saying. Does what is being said reveal something more about the speaker? Why is the speaker's contribution important to them? Why are they so keen to participate at this point in the discussion? Are they over-excited or laid back and disinterested when speaking? How does their contribution relate to what others are saying?

Paying attention to self-revelation means being alive to the atmosphere in the classroom, the tone of the discussion, and individual emotional reactions to what is being discussed. Do not forget: Your participants have a relationship to one another beyond and in parallel to your case discussion. Especially early on in a program they also position themselves vis-à-vis one another while interacting in class.

With his comment 'Hey, Sandy, we already discussed this!' João also projects that this is how he wants to be perceived by the other members of the group. His comment could therefore be read to suggest: 'I am entitled to steer the discussion, and to cut off my classmates.' But it could also mean: 'I am super-smart,' 'I am impatient' – the exact understanding of the self-revelation dimension is usually more-dimensional and tricky to read. But it is there – and can have massive influence on the overall discussion.

From theory to practice with Urs

I was once discussing a case that I had disguised on the basis of a real case from one of the students in the group. The case dealt with the challenge of a recently promoted manager who needed to deal with a case of alleged sexual harassment against one of her subordinates. Early in the discussion a male student commented, referring to the case protagonist: 'The girl should have done XYZ.' At that point of the discussion, the student did not yet know that the protagonist was a person in the room, but on a self-revelation dimension he clearly projected that it was ok to call a manager a 'girl.' – And I could use this self-revelation easily for a follow-up.

Relationship

The third level of communication is about the relationship between the speaker and the listener. The speaker will reveal a lot about how much they value the listener and how they perceive their relationship to the listener.

This is also very important information to take into account when orchestrating a discussion, especially as a case discussion is not a 1:1 conversation but rather an n:n communication between all members of the group. A good listener will sense the relationship between contributing participants and glean important information about their role as the listener and how they are perceived by the speakers.

This third level of communication will also give you clues about whether the discussion has become too funny, hostile, volatile, or disrespectful; if people are becoming upset; if you need to address an individual's concerns; and whether or not veiled (or open) insults are being used. It can help you decide if you need to calm things down or remind participants of the basic classroom ground rules.

In our example of João, the relationship dimension relates to both Alexandra (the professor) and to Olena (the classmate). Through the use of a nickname for the professor, João seems to project: 'I, João, am on the same level as you, Alexandra.' This might be perfectly adequate – e.g., if Alexandra introduced herself as 'Sandy' – or could be extremely rude – e.g., if all other students would refer to her as Professor Perez. And, with respect to Olena and the interruption of her contribution, João's comment clearly demonstrates the assumption of an asymmetric power/relevance relationship.

Appeal

When a participant says something there is also often an implicit call to action that is frequently well hidden. This is the fourth level of communication: 'appeal.'

By saying something in class, participants can express very different appeals. Examples of what a participant might appeal to include:

- a desire to be appreciated by classmates;
- a longing to be loved;
- an interest in getting a good grade for in-class contribution;
- a concern about being considered as being smart;
- implicit instructions about the further flow of the class (e.g., a joke can signal: please make this less boring/more fun);
- a desire to win a perceived competition with other participants by outsmarting them.

You clearly do not have to give in to such appeals but they will be implicitly present and it is helpful to be able to read them. In the example of João, he seems to appeal to an accelerated speed or at least to moving to a new topic. He does not explicitly say this – but as soon as he says 'Hey, Sandy, we already discussed this!' we can probably all understand what he had in mind.

Listen to the things that are not being said

As postulated by Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967), '[o]ne cannot not communicate: Every behavior is a form of communication. Because behavior does not have a counterpart (there is no anti-behavior), it is impossible not to communicate.'

Good listeners also listen to the things that are not being said. You should try to actively 'hear' what is being left unsaid in your class. This applies again to multiple dimensions of the communication. Why do participants not touch a certain topic? Why do some not contribute at all? Why is contribution so much lower than in previous sessions? The nonspeakers might be sending 'loud' messages on all four levels of communication as described above without saying a word. A good way to test what you sense on the four dimensions will be to ask questions. And a possible question to ask to your class is always to ask on a metalevel: 'What is going on?' and thus directly speak about the educational process instead of only talking about the content of the case discussion.

Listening through speaking: echoing

It is often tricky to avoid misunderstandings in the interpretation of the messages you are receiving, especially on the levels of self-revelation, relationship, and appeal – in addition, there is the issue of the impossibility of noncommunication. A great way to avoid, or at least minimize, such misunderstandings is often called 'echoing' – and, in case teaching, echoing is particularly helpful.

Echoing is a technique through which the educator in a case discussion feeds back something that a participant said in class just like the acoustical echo in a canyon. This can be done through statements or questions, and the wording of what is being fed back can either be verbatim or be very different from what was said originally. Essentially the educator will 'listen' (or at least ensure proper understanding) through speaking. This is a very useful and powerful tool when used sparingly and well. Echoing can be in particular very useful in building likability, safety, rapport, and social cohesion between and with the class.

The basic idea of echoing (with slight variations) probably goes back to the field of psychotherapy, where it was introduced to ensure adequate understanding by the therapist, but at the same time to abstain from judgment. When people talk about 'active' or 'reflective listening,' they occasionally have something similar in mind – and when trying to make fun of the technique it is occasionally defamed as 'parroting,' because it seemingly does not require understanding but just the repetition of words, but this is far from what we are recommending to you.

Here are some benefits of echoing:

- Repeating people's words helps with your own understanding of another person's point of view but it also sends the social signal to the other person that you are making an effort to understand. It shows that you have been listening to what they were saying, and not just thinking about what you want to say next. It also shows to the other person that there is a mutual understanding between the two of you.
- You ensure that the participant really meant what you hear. This is not only limited to the level of factual information. You can also echo what you hear on the other levels. Using the example of João saying 'Hey, Sandy, we already discussed this!' here are some possible echoing techniques:
  - Factual information: 'If I understand you correctly, you believe that Olena didn't add new perspectives and considerations. Don't you think that her use of the 4Ps was a new facet?'
  - Self-revelation: 'It seems as if you are unhappy about our case discussion so far. Can you please elaborate?'
  - Relationship: 'I might have missed something, but you seem to just have called me "Sandy," right? That is not a nickname I use or want you to use.'
  - Appeal: 'João, you seem to want to move on, right?' – 'Yes' – 'Good, but before we do so, I want to give Olena an opportunity to finish her statement.'
- The language people use reflects the reality they live in. When you use echoing in a sense, that you use their wording, you – to some degree – put yourself closer to the world that participants live in. This gives you a better chance to empathize with that person and truly understand where they are coming from and why they speak and behave in the way they do. This is why it can be a good idea to adopt the same or similar wording a person uses. Echoing signals that you are on the same page as them.
- Echoing ensures that everyone in the class hears what was said; this is especially helpful in large class, with acoustical problems, with nonnative speakers, or if the meaning of the comment was unclear or expressed in a convoluted way.

Some practical tips to start using or improving your echoing:

- Really listen to the person you are talking to. Pay particular attention to words they use frequently.
- Repeat when appropriate – but do not just be a robot or parrot. Often repeating works best when you want to continue the flow of the conversation and allow the person to give you more information.

- If the contribution was clear, use the same words and phrases the other person uses, with the same intended meaning.
- If the contribution was ambiguous, vague, or using wrong terminology/language (e.g., from nonnative speakers), modify the message and use your own (more precise) wording. You do not have to use the participant's exact words when echoing, particularly when aiming to clarify the meaning of what was said.

Careful echoing will also demonstrate that you are listening carefully and respect and value each participant's contribution. It is good practice to combine your echoing with recording the participant's comment on the board (see below for more on how to use the board). This reinforces the idea that their comment is valued as part of the discussion.

However, use echoing judiciously:

- Do not overdo echoing as this will interfere with the flow of the discussion. (Echoing tends to increase your talking time, so when the contribution was clear and others are willing to immediately follow up, go with the flow.)
- Be careful when paraphrasing a participant's comments as you may change or distort the meaning of what was said. This might confuse the issue and potentially alienate your participant ('I didn't say that').
- Do not use echoing too much as this might create the impression that you have nothing more to add other than repeating what was said before.

Listening carefully

– Be a good listener.
– Try to listen on four levels (factual information, self-revelation, relationship, appeal).
– Hear what is actually said, not what you want to hear.
– 'Listen' to the things that are not being said.
– Use echoing to enhance your listening but beware of the risks.

Orchestrating the discussion

Leading the discussion

'A conductor should guide rather than command.' – Riccardo Muti

What does orchestrating the class discussion mean? In addition to listening well and asking the right questions at the right time, you will also need to deal with different types of participants and participant behavior in the classroom and manage the discussion along your teaching plan or the flow of the class. And this is mainly what we mean by 'orchestrating the class discussion.' Just like a conductor for an orchestra, the educator will need to oversee the contribution of the various members of the class and manage the rhythm at the same time.

This can be tricky for the inexperienced teacher and is a skill that will develop over time. For example, a new case teacher may be so relieved to get a response from a participant that they then allow them to dominate the rest of the session because at least someone is talking! In addition, it is easy to miss participants who never say a word, particularly if a lively discussion is underway on the other side of the classroom.

Other issues include dealing with participants who are texting or surfing the net during the session, or those who have simply not read the case and are unprepared. It sounds like a bit of a minefield, but do not panic: there are strategies and techniques that can be used to deal with all these challenges. And, of course, you will also develop your own tried and tested methods over time.

Establishing ground rules is an important part of teaching. This will usually be done at the start of a course (and referred back to if necessary during the case sessions). We cover ground rules in some detail later on (see chapter 'Teaching a Case-Based Course' from page 113 onwards).

Some basic guidelines

Before we go into more detail about specific challenges you may face in the classroom, it is useful to summarize some basic guidelines for orchestrating a case discussion:

- Manage the allocated time well. Be punctual and expect your participants to be on time too. Do not start the session early or end it late. Keep to the timetabled breaks, although break times can be flexible with mutual negotiation.
- It is your role to steer and guide the discussion but not to dominate or restrict it. You must give your participants the freedom to take ownership of their learning (think back to the students around the patient in the room: you should allow them to gain experiences and only intervene if something goes wrong).
- Ensure the transition from one topic to the next is managed smoothly.
- Develop the skills you need to deal with participants who are too vocal and those who rarely speak.
- Do not allow 'problem' participants to take too much of your attention – this would be unfair to the vast majority of your class who will usually be motivated and keen to contribute to the discussion without dominating it.
- Use various techniques to deal with unprepared participants.
- Be prepared to deal with texters and surfers.
- Be ready to refocus participants on relevant topics and issues if the discussion strays too far from the learning objectives.
- Be prepared to challenge ideas and opinions and allow participants to question their fellow participants – this is essential for a healthy and vibrant debate.
- Make accurate board notes as the session progresses and check with participants to ensure that your interpretations of their remarks are correct.
- Make use of your participants' knowledge, experiences, and expertise in class – guided by what you learned when collecting information about them before the course or session.

Managing transitions

Moving smoothly from one topic to the next is a key skill that case teachers need to develop. Be clear about the number of topics you plan to cover in the session and roughly how long you want to spend on each. Your plan must remain flexible as you can never predict exactly how a case discussion will develop.

Each discussion section will typically have its own learning objectives (concepts, frameworks, or reflection) so it is helpful to treat each section as distinct and separate.

However, you will have to strike a delicate balance because some participants can find the transition too abrupt and forced, while others might not even notice that the discussion has moved on to another topic. There are many ways to handle a transition and you can decide which option is best for you.

Here are a number of techniques that we have used, observed, or discussed in our workshops:

- Summarize the key arguments and/or learnings from a section. This could work well as a mini-lecture of up to 10 minutes.
- Invite participants to present a summary of the section.
- Signal the end of the section by holding a vote on the issues discussed.
- Use the board to signal the end of a topic (for example, by bringing up a new board, erasing a board, turning the page…).
- Physically change your position in the room.

Always check that participants do not have any final questions or queries and make sure that everybody is ready to move on. You should prepare questions that will subtly move the discussion forward from one topic or issue to the next. (On transition questions, see page 69.)

Participants who are too vocal

Do not be tempted to rely on those participants who are always ready to offer their thoughts and opinions. This will inevitably lead to one person or a small group of people dominating the session. This is very demotivating for the rest of the class, who will feel their presence is not valued and their views are not of interest: the exact opposite of what you should be aiming for!

So, what to do? Well, here are a few tactics:

- First, remind everyone of the relevant classroom ground rules (see page 79).
- Physically turn away from the participant who is talking too much or will not stop talking! This is particularly effective if you turn away immediately after responding to them and focus on other participants in another part of the classroom.
- Make a simple, nonconfrontational statement, for example: ‘Now I’d like to give some other people the opportunity to share their ideas and perspectives.’

Avoid the automatic assumption that someone who ‘talks too much’ always represents a problem. Use their verbal enthusiasm in a positive way! For example, select them for a role-play session. Not only will this use their talent for talking but it will also be a good learning experience for them as they will have to deal with feedback from fellow role-players.

It is possible to use humor to make someone understand that they are hogging the limelight too much. But be very careful with this tactic. It is easy to hurt people’s feelings and unintentionally humiliate them. When attempts at humor go wrong you risk alienating not only the person your joke was aimed at but also the class as a whole: definitely something to avoid.

Participants who are too quiet

Your target should be for everyone in the class to contribute at least once – this will usually be possible with groups of up to 50 participants.

Always be sensitive to the reasons why some participants will find it difficult to contribute. Are the women heavily outnumbered by men? Are some of your participants from cultures where participants are expected to respectfully listen to the teacher rather than contribute their own views? Are some of your participants simply a little shy and need some encouragement before speaking up? Is an individual or small group dominating the discussion to the exclusion of everyone else? It is your responsibility to deal with this – see tips above.

Again, there are a number of techniques you can use to draw out your less vocal participants:

- Cold-calling: simply direct a question at someone who has not yet spoken. This can be more effective if you ask for their response to a previous speaker's remarks rather than bringing up a completely fresh issue for the person to deal with out of the blue.
- Announce that the next contribution to the discussion must come from someone who has not yet spoken. While saying this you can indicate with an open-palm gesture two or three participants who would be welcome to give their views.
- You can allocate a number or some other identifier to each participant and pick people to speak at random.
- Organize discussions in pairs or small groups. This can be particularly useful when teaching large classes.
- Make it clear from the start that grades will be linked with the level and quality of contributions made in class.
- Use online tools like voting apps (Poll Everywhere, Mentimeter, Crowdsignal) or even X (previously known as Twitter), where participants can engage by voting, or even posting comments.

When cold-calling a previously silent participant, be patient and do not panic if they fail to reply straight away. Understand that it may be difficult for them to 'dip their toe in the water.' So just remain calm and wait a moment or two. Be sure to note their comment on the board to reinforce the idea that their contribution is valued.

Participants who do not prepare

The first thing you must do when participants arrive at your class unprepared is find out why (some reasons are more forgivable than others). You can then decide how to deal with the problem.

Possible reasons for arriving unprepared include:

- There is genuinely too much work to get through in the course program.
- Personal problems such as family, health or work issues.
- A lack of understanding about what preparation was required.
- Participants are not interested in the case or topic.
- Participants arrive in class expecting to be 'entertained' or fed information, rather than taking responsibility for their own learning.
- Overconfidence can lead participants to believe that they are smart enough to contribute without prior preparation.
- Participants are too lazy to prepare.

If you are not clear why participants did not prepare, simply ask them. You can do this face to face or use an anonymous method such as a feedback form – you may get a more honest answer this way. Once you have established the reasons why particular participants did not prepare for the session, you can decide on a course of action.

Short-term solutions

- Ask a participant to summarize the case.
- Split the class into groups and allow a few minutes for participants to look at the case and come up with a recommendation.
- Provide a summary of the case so that everyone is quickly up to speed. You can use prepared slides, images or video clips if you have them.
- Allow time for participants to read the case at the start of the class.

It is best not to use these short-term solutions on a regular basis as your participants will become complacent and view preparation as an optional extra.

Long-term solutions

- Communicate your expectations about the level of preparation you require before a class. Stress that preparation is not optional.
- Announce well in advance which cases you will be teaching to give participants plenty of time to read and prepare for the session. Send out a reminder a few days before the session.
- Ensure your colleagues send out a consistent message about preparation.

In addition, you can use 'pull' or 'push' techniques (or a combination of both) to encourage preparation.

Pull techniques

Depending on your teaching style and personality, 'pull' techniques may suit you more than 'push' techniques – or you may find a combination of both works well. Here are some typical 'pull' techniques:

- Support and mentor individual participants who consistently fail to prepare.
- Appeal to the pride and professionalism of participants.
- Choose short or abridged cases that participants will find faster and easier to read.
- Take the time to find cases that will more closely match the interests and concerns of your participant group.
- Encourage participants to meet in small groups in advance of the session to discuss the case and prepare short presentations on particular topics.
- Assign specific questions to individual participants in advance of the session so they are ready to answer in class.
- Use online tools to communicate and connect with participants before sessions, for example, ask them to post observations or questions about the case.

Push techniques

These are tougher tactics that can be used to send a clear message to your class. Only you can decide if any of these options will work for you and your participants. For example:

- To reinforce the requirement to prepare, explain in advance that you will be:
  - cold-calling participants from the start of the session
  - setting quizzes
  - allocating role-play roles
  - grading the level and quality of class participation.
- Carry out an initial short test about the case that participants have to pass before they can take part in the rest of the session.
- Request presession writeups, essays, or video clip presentations.
- If your participants have not prepared, immediately cancel the class or, less drastically, allow only those participants who have prepared to remain (as long as enough are left to run your session). You can also call everyone that has not prepared (once you noticed) to sit in a certain area of the classroom (first row or left-hand side etc.).

Dealing with surfers and texters

Every teacher is familiar with that heart-sinking moment when they realize that at least some of their participants are surfing the net or texting during a case session. This is a tricky situation to deal with but there a few things you can try to counteract this ubiquitous problem:

- Remind the class of the ground rules.
- Lead by example and make a point of switching off your own devices and putting them to one side at the start of the session.
- Simply ask participants not to text or surf during the session; point out that using personal devices in class is distracting for both you and other participants.
- Walk around the class at regular intervals (if the classroom layout allows) to see what is happening: participants may be taking notes on their laptops, which is perfectly legitimate, but checking out friends' Facebook pages should not be acceptable.
- Point out that taking handwritten notes leads to greater knowledge retention, although research is not really clear on this topic; compare Schoen (2012) and Smoker, Murphy, and Rockwell (2009).
- You can try a lighthearted or humorous remark to discourage an individual participant from surfing or texting during a session. But, as ever, be very careful with humor. It is easy to cause unwitting offense and alienate participants.
- You can also have an open discussion about the topic. You could, for example, just ask your students which other instructor handles the use of phones and laptops the best. Get the students to share some examples and ask why they think that this is an effective way to deal with this issue.

Orchestrating the class discussion

– Follow the basic guidelines including good time management.
– Prepare transitions and make sure that everybody is ready to move on.
– Use suitable tactics to deal with 'problem' participants.
– Do not focus too much on 'problem' participants to the detriment of others.
– Ensure participants are prepared for class.
– Minimize in-class surfing and texting.

Learning formats

'There's an alternative. There's always a third way, and it's not a combination of the other two ways. It's a different way.' – David Carradine

When teaching with cases it is important to use a variety of learning formats, both during a case session and over the course as whole. Evidence shows that using different learning formats has a positive impact on participants' learning. There are a number of reasons for this:

- Every participant will learn differently. By offering various formats you will be more likely to cater for different learning styles.
- Relevance is important for learning and different formats will help to highlight the relevance of a particular topic or issue.
- Different learning formats will enable your participants to take different perspectives.

- You will get the chance to use different technologies in the classroom.
- Feedback is always important and the use of different learning formats will offer participants a variety of ways to offer feedback.

A well-planned case session will include a variety of different learning formats. We hope the list below will inspire you and also encourage you to try some that you are less familiar with.

- Full-class discussion (see page 61)
- Individual presentations
- Lectures
- Guests – protagonists or other relevant individuals
- Field visits
- Video clips
- Quizzes and polls
- Simulations and demonstrations, for example, of processes
- Actors (e.g., using professional actors in class, for example for negotiation classes or storytelling having actors playing different variants)
- Group work
- Role-play

Mix it up! By changing the learning format every 15 to 20 minutes (in online formats maybe even faster) you will stand a better chance of retaining everyone's attention and interest. Using different formats will also help to actively engage as many participants as possible and will appeal to a wide range of learning styles. It is more interesting for the teacher too! However, when planning always keep your learning objectives in mind.

Let's have a closer look at a few of these options in more detail.

Full-class discussion

Full-class discussions are the backbone of the case method, and you can find more information about running a successful discussion on page 61.

Group work

Group work can be a particularly powerful learning tool. A small group can be just two people working together, a buzz group of three or four participants, or slightly larger groups. All can work well.

The location and timing of group work can be flexible too. For example, group work can take place:

- In the classroom, in breakout areas/rooms, outside (weather permitting!), or another location of the group members' choice.
- Before, during or between sessions.
- Online in advance of the session, with participants taking part in a synchronous discussion or adding their thoughts at a time that suits them (asynchronous).

You will need to decide what outcome you want to achieve from group work. Will each group present the results of their discussions? Or just selected groups? Will you ask for volunteers? Or decide based on the content of each group's discussion?

You will, of course, be limited by time, so it may only be possible for two or three groups to make a presentation at the end of their discussions. Try to select groups who will make very different presentations to avoid repetition of content. Three very similar presentations made one after the other will quickly become a turnoff for the rest of the class. This completely defeats the object of using different learning formats in your case session.

Group composition

Decide in advance how you will organize your groups. There are a number of ways to do this:

- In some programs it is common for the same groups to work together over the length of the course.
- Participants can be left to decide for themselves which groups to work in. However, be aware that this may cause uncertainty and delay that is better avoided. You may also reject this option if you do not want participants to stick together in the same 'safe' group and to ensure that quieter, or less popular participants are not excluded.
- You can simply segment the class into groups using the existing seating arrangement.
- Select group members randomly if you wish to mix up the participants and get them out of their usual seating arrangement. One way to do this is to give each participant a number (for example, from one to four if you are creating four groups) and those with the same number then work together.
- Select group members according to their expertise or background so that each group will approach the discussion from a different angle. This will also help to ensure that any subsequent presentations will offer a greater variety of content for the rest of the class.

From theory to practice with Martin

When planning a case session, I make a note of any questions and challenges that might be suitable for group work. I can then decide during the session if it will be more useful to continue with the whole class discussion or switch to a group exercise.

For me, there are some typical signs that tell me I should switch to group work. For example:

- I feel that the energy level is dropping (often after more than 20 minutes of intense discussion).
- Only a small proportion of the participants are really engaged in the class discussion. Switching to group work will enable everyone to contribute.
- I ask a question but the answers either lack depth or are off topic. Here, group work can refocus participants.

Role-play

First, we need to be clear about what role-play actually is. Role-play requires individuals to step into the shoes of a particular character and think, feel, and behave as they believe that character would in the circumstances – not as they would themselves. This can unlock previously untapped emotions, understanding, and insights that will contribute immensely to overall learning outcomes. It is a valuable tool. In addition, role-play helps to develop skills such as listening, persuasion, negotiation, responding appropriately, and dealing with feedback.

Role-playing needs careful preparation if it is to work well, but do not let that put you off. Role-play is another highly effective teaching tool with the added bonus of being a fun thing to do. Win–win!

Here are a few guidelines for role-play:

- Clearly explain what role-play involves and what is expected of your participants – in particular, be clear about the need to 'step into the character's shoes.'
- As a general rule, do not use role-play at the start of a session. Participants will be more willing to take part once they have settled into the class and gained a little confidence.
- Always keep your learning objectives in mind. Ask yourself: will this role-play contribute to the overall aim of the session?
- Decide in advance whether the role-play can be performed while participants remain in their seats or whether they need to come to the front of the class or work in small groups.
- Decide roughly how long you want the role-play to last.
- Decide if you will take part, or if the role-play will be performed solely by participants. If participants only, what will your role be?
- Consider using participants who can be too vocal in class discussions for role-play. This will both use their verbal talents and expose them to useful feedback from the rest of the class.
- Decide which characters from the case will be part of the role-play. Consider including a minor character as this may reveal previously unconsidered points.
- Decide if the role-play will take place in small groups with only a few or no observers, or in front of the whole class.
- Consider adding interest to the role-play by giving individual characters extra information that only they know.
- Consider taking a video of the role-play. This has a number of advantages: participants can evaluate and learn from their own performance; it will help to facilitate any discussion about the role-play by reminding participants what was said; and it will help to prevent disputes about what was actually said. Also, role-play performed in small groups can then be shown to the whole class.
- Plan how the debrief will take place. This will depend on if the role-play was performed in small groups or in front of the whole class, and whether or not it was videoed. Small groups can hold their own debrief session or provide feedback to the rest of the class, either verbally or by showing the video. Whatever form the debrief takes, useful questions to ask include:
  - Which behaviors were effective and which were ineffective?
  - What should be said/done differently next time?
  - What did participants think/feel when performing the role-play?
  - Did their body language contradict their words?
- Finally, always try to ensure that those taking part in the role-play find it a positive experience that offers new insights and allows them to shine. Never allow it to become embarrassing or humiliating for anyone taking part. Always be aware that a role-play session may not work out as planned and be ready with a recovery strategy.

As a final thought, be open to spontaneous role-play opportunities, for example when two participants disagree on a fundamental point during a class discussion. One interesting technique is to ask each individual to perform a role-play in which they defend their opponent's viewpoint. This can be both fun and enlightening.

Lectures

This may seem a strange suggestion as the case method is often seen as the polar opposite of lecturing. But lecturing has its place as a valuable pedagogical tool. For example, a short lecture during a case session can be an extremely effective way to explain a relevant theory or framework, or to give some key facts and figures. And it does not have to be you who gives the lecture – this is also an ideal opportunity for one of your participants to practice their public speaking and presentation skills.

Guests

Having your protagonist in class is the most exciting way to grab the attention of your participants and reinforce the idea that the topics and issues covered in the case are rooted in the real world of business. Your protagonist can be part of the class in a number of different ways. For example, they can:

- take part as a class member;
- answer questions – either during a set time as part of the session, or at random throughout the session;
- reveal the outcome of the case at the end of the session;
- give a short presentation.

It can be very effective to bring in your protagonist as a surprise guest during a key point in the discussion. And it is not only protagonists who make great guests as part of a case session. Other possibilities include industry experts, a competitor, a consultant, or a supplier or customer of the company that features in the case.

Field visits

Arranging a field visit undoubtedly involves extra time and work but is well worth it. Visits can be made to the company discussed in the case, or to one in the same industry with similar challenges and opportunities.

On executive MBA programs, it may be possible to visit one of your participants' companies.

We strongly believe that any field visit should be closely linked to the case and add genuine value by reinforcing your learning objectives. To help achieve this and make it more than a simple visit, ensure:

- there will be enough time for a meaningful exchange with management;
- you provide clear instructions about what to look out for and observe during the visit. For example:
  - 'Observe the inbound logistics in the manufacturing plant.'
  - 'Observe the working environment and note factors that might support or hinder creativity.'

Video clips

If your protagonist cannot attend your case session, they may agree to a short video interview. Alternatively, existing footage may exist on the company website or on news sites.

Other video clips may include general news coverage of the company; presentations by other key personnel, for example at AGMs; promotional corporate videos; and company advertising.

Think carefully about how to use your video clips. You may judge that it is best to show the whole clip at a suitable point during the session. Another option is 'stop and start': show a short section of the video for discussion before going on to the next section. This can be particularly effective if you ask participants to anticipate what was said or what happens next, or what they think should be said or done next.

Quizzes and polls

Quizzes and polls can be used in a variety of ways. For example:

- In advance of the session via an online poll. You can then ask individual participants to be ready to justify their choices as a good way of kicking off the class discussion.
- As an icebreaker at the start of a session: ask for a simple show of hands to demonstrate agreement or disagreement with a particular point. You can then start the class discussion by asking individual participants why they plumped for one side or the other.
- Hold a vote at the start of the session and then at intervals throughout the session to see how many participants are 'changing sides.' Individuals can be asked to explain why they have changed their mind.
- A quiz can be used to mark the end of a particular section of your case session. This will ensure everyone is up to speed and ready to move on, as well as offering a breather and helping to break up the case session overall.

Learning formats

– Include a variety of elements in your case session.
– Change the learning format every 15 to 20 minutes to keep everyone's attention.
– Always keep your learning objectives in mind – make sure the learning formats you select will support the overall aim of the case session.

7. Closure and transfer

'Endings to be useful must be inconclusive.' – Samuel R. Delany

A really good case session will fly by. Try not to let the end of your session take you by surprise. Always keep an eye on the clock and aim to make the closure of your case session polished, meaningful, and memorable. There is nothing worse than ending the session and realizing that participants have not even noticed.

Do not forget: great cases rarely have a single 'right' solution. This is one of the great strengths of the case method: it mirrors real-life business situations with all their complexities, ambiguities, and uncertainties. But be aware that some of your less experienced participants may be expecting a 'grand reveal' of the 'right' answer at the end of the session – you will need to handle their expectations in a positive way.

It is often easy for participants to google the outcome of a case – especially if it is about a well-known organization or protagonist. This can result in participants thinking they already 'know the answer' and thus limit the scope and depth of the discussion. To avoid this, it can sometimes be a good idea to share the outcome of the case at the start of the session. This may seem counterintuitive but it can clear the way for a far more nuanced discussion. For example:

- The decisions and actions taken by the company may have worked out, but were there better solutions?
- The decisions taken worked out in the short term – but was there a better long-term solution?
- If the company made the wrong decisions, what could have been done differently?
- The outcome for the company was excellent, but was there a better/cheaper/more efficient way of arriving at that outcome?
- How does hindsight color the analysis of decisions, actions, and outcomes?

- What has happened since that makes the decisions taken seem less effective than they did at the time? Was this foreseeable?

There is no single solution to ensure a positive end to a case discussion. It will always depend on how the session went, your teaching style, and the case you have been discussing. Here are a few different options that you can 'mix and match' with the aim of 'leaving the case behind' and moving on to the lessons learned:

- Thank participants for taking part and contributing to a great discussion.
- Ask questions such as:
  - Why are we looking at this? (This aims to help participants draw generalizations from some of the key points raised in the discussion.)
  - Why should we care about these issues? (This reinforces the applicability and usefulness of the discussed topics.)
  - What other aspects might we need to consider? (A good question to check if any participants feel an important point has not been covered.)
  - Has anyone here had a similar experience to the one depicted in the case? (This is another way to highlight applicability.)
  - What is the moral of this case/story? (This will reveal what is important to individual participants and will reinforce the fact that the same case might have very different lessons for different people.)
  - To which other industries/countries/companies/functions might the lessons learned from this case be relevant? (This is another way to draw out generalizations from the case.)
  - How will the lessons learned from this case affect the way you do business in the future? (This is another way to highlight applicability.)
  - How does our discussion illustrate the concepts/tools/frameworks/theories mentioned earlier? (This is a good question to close the learning cycle.)
- Ask participants to reflect on how the discussion has influenced their thinking. For example: 'I used to think X; now I think Y'; 'Before I believed A; now I realize that B is more likely to be true.'
- Ask participants to summarize what lessons they have learned from the case. This can be done in few different ways, for example, individuals or groups can present their feedback to the rest of the class; participants can work in small groups to share their feedback among themselves; or, participants can be left to work on an individual basis (this option can be particularly effective in executive education where participants may be keen to relate the lessons learned to their own workplace).
- Ask participants to write an essay summarizing the lessons learned as a postsession exercise.
- It can be effective to end with a joke or a surprise (but make sure your joke is both funny and inoffensive, and that your 'surprise' will not fall flat because participants already know what is coming).
- Conduct an exit poll to help summarize the overall conclusions made by the class. As well as helping to signal that the discussion has come to an end, the result of a poll will demonstrate that differences of opinion remain and that different choices may be equally valid. A poll may also demonstrate how many participants have changed their mind about a particular issue. This works well if you take an initial poll before the discussion begins.

A poll can be conducted via a simple 'hands-up' exercise, or you can use online tools such as Mentimeter, Poll Everywhere, or CrowdSignal (formerly Polldaddy). As well as offering more sophisticated tools for real-time voting, they also offer the advantage of enabling participants to vote anonymously.

Do you have any great ideas for the best way to end a case discussion?

Closing a case session

- Cases rarely end with a single 'right' solution: manage your participants' expectations.
- Consider revealing the outcome of the case at the start of the session to enable a more nuanced discussion.
- There is no single 'right way' to end a case discussion.
- Select appropriate tools and techniques to ensure a great end to the session.

8. Reflection and other

Typical mistakes in case teaching

'Mistakes are the portals of discovery.' – James Joyce

No case teacher is perfect. Even highly experienced case teachers who consistently do a fantastic job in the classroom are learning all the time. And it goes without saying that we all make mistakes. The secret of becoming a good case teacher is to learn from them.

We have made plenty of mistakes ourselves over the years and have observed others making quite a few too. We can only learn by doing. Having said that, the same mistakes tend to crop up again and again, particularly among inexperienced case teachers. This list is not, of course, comprehensive, but it may help you focus on common areas of potential weakness and give you a head start in the classroom.

Teach, don't preach

This may seem an obvious point, but when you are teaching on subjects that are close to your heart the temptation to steamroller your participants (a captive audience!) into listening and agreeing with you can be overwhelming. Take a step back and remember that your job is to draw your participants out, listen to them, and get them to listen to each other. You want to hear more of their voices, not your own. Facilitate the session; do not dominate it.

Don't be a copycat

Every teacher is different; every teacher has their own unique teaching style. We can absolutely guarantee that it is impossible to copy or imitate someone else's style, however much you may admire their skills and charisma in the classroom. By trying to be someone else, you will almost certainly come across as phony and your participants will see through you instantly. By all means, pick up tips and tricks of the trade from teachers you admire, but at the same time develop your own individual approach and presence in the classroom. You will soon become one of those teachers that others will want to copy!

Prepare, prepare, prepare

Another obvious point, perhaps, but a vital one. Prepare thoroughly, then prepare some more, then do some preparation. Knowing you are fully prepared and ready for anything that your brightest participants might throw at you is a great confidence booster. Being stumped halfway through a session without a plan B or plan C is a heart-sinking and confidence draining moment that you will want to avoid at all costs.

Don't be inflexible

You have your plans A, B, and C (because you prepared so well) but do not rigidly stick to them at all costs. This may seem contradictory but flexibility is vital. You must always remember that the case method is a participant-centered learning process. Without losing sight of your learning objectives, you will sometimes need to 'go with the flow,' give your participants the space to explore, and see where it takes you. You may be pleasantly surprised!

Don't be taken too far off topic

Again, given our comments above about flexibility, this may sound slightly contradictory. However, there is a balance to be struck. It will not be possible to pursue every random thought and observation that participants make during a session. To do so risks disappearing down a rabbit hole with no way back. Always draw the discussion back to the main issues.

Lower your expectations

Do not expect too much from a single case teaching session! If you go in with too high expectations, you will probably be disappointed.

Don't pack too much into a single session

The case method is not meant to be used as a speedy way to impart lots of information; there are other ways to do this. Instead, a case session enables participants to actively participate in a gradual process of discovery resulting in deep learning. It is your job as the case teacher to provide the time and space for this learning to take place. The golden rule here is 'less is more.'

Cover less material during the session, but 'unpack' it carefully and in great detail. This approach is a fundamental component of good case teaching. As part of your preparation, you will have extra material to call on should the need arise, but only do so if absolutely necessary.

Mistakes to avoid

– Teach, don't preach.
– Don't be a copycat: always be your own unique self.
– Make sure you prepare, prepare, prepare.
– Don't be inflexible: stay participant-centered.
– Don't go too far off topic: you may not find a way back!
– Don't expect too much all at once.
– Don't try to cover too much in a single session.

Cultural and language aspects of using case studies

'I make a distinction between manners and etiquette – manners as the principles, which are eternal and universal, etiquette as the particular rules which are arbitrary and different in different times, different situations, different cultures.' – Judith Martin

One of the beauties of the case method is its flexibility and adaptability. It can be used to teach practically any business or management topic to participants of all ages, experience, and abilities. And it has been proven to work around the globe in a wide variety of cultural settings.

However, do bear in mind that the case method will not automatically work well in any cultural setting. You will need to address a few important points to ensure success. This may involve adapting the content of your session as well as your approach to teaching the case.

Language

Make sure you gain an understanding of which languages your participants are familiar with. You will need to know in advance if everyone will be able to understand the language your session will be conducted in. Will they all be able to follow the discussion and contribute on an equal basis? Consider whether or not you will need an interpreter.

It can be a good idea when using, for example, the English language in a session, to choose a shorter case that uses straightforward language. This will make it easier to read and understand for participants whose first language is not English.

Another very important point to bear in mind is that certain words and expressions will have different meanings in different cultures. These confusions can be amusing, confusing, or potentially offensive, so do take the time to check out both the case itself and the words and phrases you may potentially use during the discussion.

All languages have their own idioms. Idioms are groups of words that mean a specific thing but the meaning cannot be derived from the words themselves. Typical English idioms include:

- over the moon,
- raining cats and dogs,
- see the light,
- kick the bucket,
- barking up the wrong tree,
- cut the mustard,
- piece of cake,
- wet behind the ears,
- let sleeping dogs lie.

When seen as a list like this, you can easily understand how a nonnative speaker might get confused!

Remember that the common sayings and idioms you take for granted and use without thinking may be deeply mystifying to those who do not share your first language.

Cultural issues

Unfortunately, we cannot offer any simple rules that will always apply for participants from certain cultures, countries, or geographical regions. This can be a tricky area to negotiate but you will soon gain experience and develop confidence in dealing with these issues.

It is important to understand and appreciate that your participants will very often come from a wide range of cultures and that this will inevitably influence classroom interaction during your case session.

First and foremost, make sure you use this as a positive! Leverage the cultural diversity to gain a wider variety of insights and perspective. This will greatly enhance the case discussion and deepen cross-cultural understanding – an indispensable management tool in today's global business world.

However, also be aware of the following:

- Debates may become heated as differing cultural attitudes are explored. Be prepared for this.
- You may find yourself teaching a class that comprises a single cultural group – but one that is different from your own and unfamiliar to you. Do your homework in advance and be prepared.

- Some classes will have a dominant cultural group (either in numbers or vocally). Take care to include those whose culture differs but find it difficult to have their say. It is particularly important to bear this in mind when the dominant culture in a class matches your own. Make sure no one is excluded.

You may need to adapt the content of your session and the way you teach it to suit different cultures. Here are some potential issues to be aware of:

- Participants from different cultures and countries will not be familiar with all the same companies and 'well-known' people. Do not assume that your participants will have even heard of a company or chief executive you read about every day in your newspaper.
- Some cases rely on a close familiarity with certain stories and myths that are associated with particular cultures. But these will be much less meaningful for those cultures that do not share this knowledge. For example, there is a famous case based on Robin Hood but it only works well for those who come from countries where Robin Hood stories have been familiar since childhood (Lampel J 2003).
- Every culture has its own sense of humor. You and your peers might find something hilarious – but do not expect participants from a different culture to laugh or even understand the joke. To be on the safe side, use humor sparingly and judiciously.
- Different cultures have different expectations of the instructor's role. It is very important to be aware of this. Participants from certain cultures are very deferential and respectful toward teachers and believe it is their role to listen and not interrupt or speak up. This can be particularly difficult when participants from other cultures are happy to interrupt and make their opinions known. One way to deal with this is to make your expectations explicit at the beginning of the class, for example:
  - be very clear about what you expect from participants in terms of participation; or
  - jointly define expectations with the participants.
- Be aware that people from different cultures are comfortable with differing levels of personal space. Do not invade your participants' expected level of personal space, and try to ensure that fellow participants respect others' personal space too.
- Do not expect people from different cultures to have the same regard for punctuality. You may think 10am means 10am, but someone who does not share your culture may genuinely believe that 10.15am is just as good. Again, we strongly recommend being explicit about your expectations. However, also remember that – depending on the class – these cultural differences can become an important part of the overall learning experience and may be usefully included in the case discussion.
- You may have to develop different ways of challenging participants and dealing with conflict in the classroom, depending on which culture or cultures your participants are from. Often small changes in your approach will make a big difference. For example, asking participants what they would do if they were the case protagonist is very different from asking them what they would do personally. In the first case, participants can take on a different role which may make it easier for them to contribute and test out ideas and proposals. You can then interact with the protagonist (as represented by the participant), rather than the individual. This approach can help to create trust and openness in the classroom.

Other cultural considerations

Finally, when considering cultural issues, remember that this does not only apply to the different cultures of participants from various countries around the world. A 'culture' can also refer to the characteristic attitudes and behavior of particular groups. So, for example, there will usually be a great difference between a corporate culture that will dominate in an executive education session and a participant culture that will prevail in an undergraduate session. And, of course, corporate cultures will vary from one organization to the next. It is therefore good to be prepared.

Language and cultural aspects

- Find out in advance which languages your participants are familiar with and plan your session accordingly.
- Understand and appreciate that your participants will come from a variety of cultures and make it your business to understand the issues involved.
- Leverage cultural diversity in the classroom to gain positive advantage.
- Be aware of the issues and potential problems/challenges that may arise from cultural differences.
- Plan ahead: have strategies in place to deal with issues such as cultural conflict in the classroom, different attitudes to learning, and individual cultural preferences.

Using media and technology as an instructor

'Yes, kids love technology, but they also love Legos, scented markers, handstands, books and mud puddles. It's all about balance.' – *Unknown*

One of the hot issues in our workshops is the use of technology by the instructor and ultimately by the participants. As we have already stressed in different parts of this book, teaching is about reaching learning objectives and teaching style and therefore the use of technology also has to fit the facilitator. While in the end this is a very individual decisions, we think that there are some common themes worth exploring.

As a first remark we think that it is necessary to be explicit about the facilitator's expectation regarding the use of technology, both by themself and by the participants. There are several ways to make this explicit. You might choose to have a chapter in your syllabus on the use of technology (what kind of technology will you use, what kind of technology do you expect the participants to bring to class, what do you not want to see, etc.). Additionally, or alternatively, you should make the use of technology part of your learning contract, most likely the explicit learning contract that you set up typically during the first session of your course.

When it comes to the use of technology by the facilitator, we just want to highlight that technology can play a major role in achieving your learning goals and in mixing and matching different learning formats. In your teaching you might want to include research elements (participants might have to research competitors, for example) or you might use technology for voting (e.g., Mentimeter or other applications) or even for participants to express their views (e.g., a Twitter feed or some other form of feed). There are many learning platforms available, and more and more schools are using them. These platforms often have chat functions and the like that could also be integrated into the teaching.

Technology might be important to support participants with language problems in the form of translation software or for note-taking. Most people can type faster than they can write, and this might be important especially in a fast-paced setting like face-to-face teaching.

So overall there are many good reasons to integrate technology into the teaching. But it has to fit your personality and serve your learning objectives. And, last but not least, it is about finding the right balance.

Use of board

'Visualizing information can give us a very quick solution to problems. We can get clarity or the answer to a simple problem very quickly.' – David McCandles

The use of a board (we use this here as synonym for any kind of writing support like a flipchart, metaplan, whiteboard or the like) is (or can be) an important element of a case discussion. Ultimately this is of course the choice of the facilitator if and how to use the board, but from our own experience and discussion in our workshops we think that it is important to highlight the general purpose and potential issues when using the board.

The first and foremost use of a board is to document what has been said during the discussion so that everybody understands (e.g., despite acoustic or language issues). As we discussed above in the section on preparing the teaching plan, the facilitator often already has a board layout in their head when starting to use it in class. This brings us to the first important decision. You can write down what participants said exactly how they said it, e.g., using their words, or you can decide to adjust (for example, someone says 'We have to talk to everybody that is impacted by our decision' and you note on the board 'Stakeholder analysis'). While we acknowledge the usefulness of using proper terminology, we generally advise sticking to the participants' wording. We think that it is better to make participants use the proper terminology themselves first, before noting it on the board (for example, by a follow-up question like: 'What else can you call this?' or 'What is the specific terminology for what you just described?').

The next decision you have to take is whether you want to end up with a particular structure on the board or just note whatever is being said in no particular order or format. If you use a predetermined board structure, your aim is not only to note participants' comments but the way you use the board will ultimately help participants to distill concepts, theories, frameworks, and tools by developing them out of the comments from the participants.

From theory to practice with Martin

I use my case study on Damien Hirst to discuss with students the concept of strategic innovation. In the first longer discussion section we discover the three fundamental dimensions of innovation: customers (new who), processes (new how), and products/services (new what). I start this discussion by asking participants 'What are the key elements of Damien Hirst's success? What does he do differently from other artists?' Whatever the participants come up with, I sort into three columns on the board (new who, new how, new what) without identifying the columns. When the discussion slows down and most of the elements of Hirst's success are on the board and there are a good number of elements in each of the three rows, only then do I turn to the class and ask 'All of the things you said basically fall into three categories. That's why I sorted them into three columns. What would you call each of these columns?' Participants will immediately see that the first column mainly has examples or elements concerning identifying new customer segments, the second contains elements of his products (pieces of art and services), and the last column is concerned with the way he produces, distributes, and markets his work. So, I note 'New Who,' 'New What,' and 'New How' on the top of each column. We therefore distill the framework of strategic innovation by using the board.

Yet another important consideration is how you will use the board over the course of the whole session. When planning your session, you might plan to come back to certain elements of the discussion or to earlier solutions. You might also plan to park certain discussions if they come up too early. Here the board can be used very effectively to support this. You should decide where on a board you note elements that you plan to come back to, so that when the time is right you can easily find them and do not have to flip through a stack of flipcharts or lose time searching for these elements.

Below you will find two sample board plans. You of course have to adapt according to whatever you have as boards, whiteboards, flipcharts, metaplans, etc. We have taken a typical layout of three boards horizontally with a second board that you can pull up or down. The central idea behind both plans is to think ahead how you want to structure the discussion.

In the first plan you would most likely start the case discussion either with a vote or by teasing out the options for the protagonist. After listing all options, you would then continue by listing all arguments for each option (you might also first list all potential options but then let participants vote for the best ones and only continue with discussing those). So, the first and second boards clearly belong to each other and should be right next to each other or at least close. The third board is most likely the result of the next discussion around who would be involved in the various options, e.g., the stakeholders. In the second row we have listed a couple of additional options. You might want to discuss how to get to some results or even how you have reached consensus in class as a kind of process description. You have an additional board for the central framework that you want to discuss, and you should also have planned for some space for potential quantitative analysis. Having a dedicated board for quantitative analysis allows you to come back to these calculations in case new arguments, facts, or assumptions come up during the discussion.

The second board plan starts with a description of the potential solution or target situation. What does the protagonist want to achieve? You would then have two boards to list all driving and hindering forces. In the second row you would still have some dedicated space for potential alternative solutions/approaches that come up during the discussion, the proposed implementation approach, and a parking lot for ideas that you want to follow up later on or potentially even in the next session.

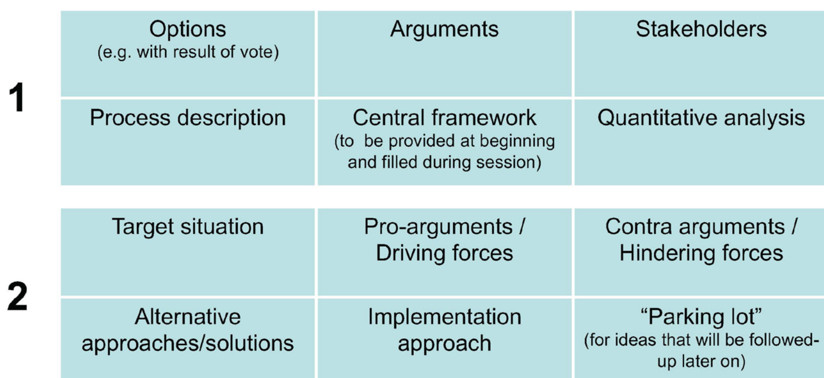

Figure 14: Sample (generic) board plans.

Use of material

Another important decision to take is how to use additional material to support the case discussion and ultimately your teaching objectives. Basically, you have to think through two decisions: when to use material and what kind of material you want to use.

Timing of material

Fundamentally the alternatives are to send material ahead of the session, typically in the form of prereadings, to hand out additional material during class, or to send out material after the session as postreadings.

Prereadings have the advantage that the discussion can start right away and that participants come prepared and with the same level of information. Typical prereadings are, for example, the case study itself, but it can also be additional material on the case like press articles, the company's website, or textbook chapters, academic journal articles, and the like. The challenge with prereadings is of course whether participants actually read them and how carefully. There are many ways of potentially enhancing the level of preparation or even assuring it, which we discuss in more depth (short-term, long-term, push, and pull techniques) in the chapter on running the session.

Additional material during class can allow you to dig deeper into certain topics and enables you to switch the teaching format. For example, you might start with the general case discussion, then switch to a mini-lecture, use a buzz-group format, and then hand out additional material like a very short press release, a short article, or a video. This allows you to highlight a certain aspect within the case discussion and add more content to then have another discussion.

From theory to practice with Martin

When discussing my case study on Damien Hirst I want students to discover the three fundamental dimensions of innovation: customers (new who), processes (new how), and products/services (new what). Often participants come up with a lot of facts and examples for the process and product dimension but somehow neglect the customer dimension. When this happens, I show a video that I found, which shows an art critic interviewing an important art collector who also collects Damien Hirst. The video is only three minutes long but gives a lot of insights on why collectors might be interested in collecting Damien Hirst. The final question in the video actually is on why he collects. While this is partially covered in the case study itself, this interview highlights the customer dimension of strategic innovation and allows for a deeper discussion on identifying, segmenting, and serving customers.

Postreadings or in general material that is made available after the session often serves for covering aspects that were less covered during class or to follow up on questions that came up during class. As already mentioned in the section where we discuss the use of boards, sometimes topics or questions get parked during the case discussion. One way to follow up on these parked issues, especially if time in class does not allow us to actually come back to the issue, is to send out additional material to cover these questions. Other typical postreadings might concern what actually happened to the protagonist or company, background readings on the discussed frameworks or concepts, or maybe some controversial/contrarian point of view.

Kind of material

Obviously, there are an infinite number of different materials that you might want to use before, during, or after class. Here we just want to highlight a few and potentially give you some additional inspiration. Most of these suggestions we have used ourselves or became aware of during our workshops.

Material to bring the case alive

One of the reasons that cases work as a learning format is that they make content relevant for participants by infusing reality into the classroom. It might be a good idea to support this by enriching this experience by bringing for example products, samples, artifacts, videos either of the site, the protagonist, or other relevant actors, or product brochures to class. This might not always be possible, but with a little bit of creativity you can come up with surprising ideas.

From theory to practice with Martin

When using my Madonna case study, I use a range of music videos and also interviews with Madonna in class. When discussing my case study on Damien Hirst I show a whole range of his artworks, and pictures that I took when visiting his exhibition at the Tate Modern during the Olympics in 2012. For my Bosch case I show pictures that I took of the newly built R&D campus in Renningen.

Material to bring support preparation, discussion, and reflection

There is a whole range of more traditional materials to support either the preparation, the discussion, or the reflection after class. The most obvious ones are the slides that you might use in class (you can decide to distribute them beforehand, during, or after class) but also your documentation during class on the board or flipcharts (you can make a photo documentation and share the photos after class). You can use optional or mandatory pre- or postreadings, like book chapters or journal articles. You might also want to think about how to involve students, for example by selecting students to capture the class discussion and then sharing their notes (either checked by you or unchecked) with the class.

Do you have any suggestions for unusual and very impactful material to support the case discussion?

Thoughts on class size and location

While often not in the hand of the facilitator, group size and location are important context factors for case discussions. Over the years we have tried and tested different group sizes, in both class and group composition for various forms of group work. Often the general framework is set by the institution a facilitator is working for, but there are nevertheless a lot of deliberate choices to make. Therefore, we would like to discuss some ideas about the general group size for a class, then some ideas about group sizes for group work and finally some additional thoughts and general remarks on the physical location (and how they are interdependent).

Class size

In the chapter 'Case Method in the Spotlight' we introduced the different functions of the case method, specifically enabling participants to apply and use concepts, theories, and frameworks to a given situation, provoking controversy and debate to increase emotional engagement, allowing participants to fail in a safe environment, receiving constructive criticism and learning from the failures of other participants, and enabling an intense social interaction with other participants leading to a significant improvement in communication and discussion skills.

For these objectives we believe that class sizes of 20 to 30 participants are ideal for the case method. Having fewer than 20 participants significantly limits the potential for controversy in the room. There will be also limited total experience in the room, and limited opportunity for networking. This will lead in our experience to a lower level of energy.

Having significantly more than 30 participants bears the risk of decreasing the learning effect due to a reduced level of interactivity. Not every student might have the time and chance to be able to contribute and say something in every session. It is also significantly easier to 'hide' in a larger group and to potentially 'switch off.' All this might lead to lower levels of energy.

In our experience, class sizes of 20 to 30 participants guarantee a broad input for mutual learning owing to a sufficient amount of real-life/business and leadership experiences in the room. We also found that classes of this size bring out a lot of alternative solutions to case studies. In general, every student has the opportunity to contribute in every single session. And a broad range of different group compositions for interactive program elements (optimal adjustment to type of exercise) can be easily organized in groups of, for example, 24 participants (you can easily split the group for debate, have four groups of six or six groups of four, or have buzz groups of two or four).

But case studies also work in (very) large groups (see e.g., Michael Sandel's famous 'Justice' course, with more than 1,000 students). Large groups frequently cause the same challenges as small groups, but the challenges get magnified, especially issues such as participation, wanted or unwanted use of technology, or dysfunctional behavior of individuals in the group. Ultimately it comes down to the fundamentals of a good case discussion, the participation of everybody. The larger the group, the more important our general suggestions are: try to change formats frequently within and between every session. In large groups we feel that it is especially important to get everybody involved, and buzz groups/pair discussions are a very good way to do that. Also role-plays and debates between selected participants representing opposing views work well in large groups.

Location

The classroom is another important context factor. As the case method is all about engagement and participation, it is important to accommodate this when setting up or choosing a room layout. Fundamentally the room layout should enable all participants to see and hear each other. While this sounds obvious, in reality most plenary layouts are designed so that everybody can see and hear the teacher or facilitator but not necessarily so that the participants see and hear each other. But, even if the room layout is not ideal, there are many small tricks a facilitator can use to improve the situation.

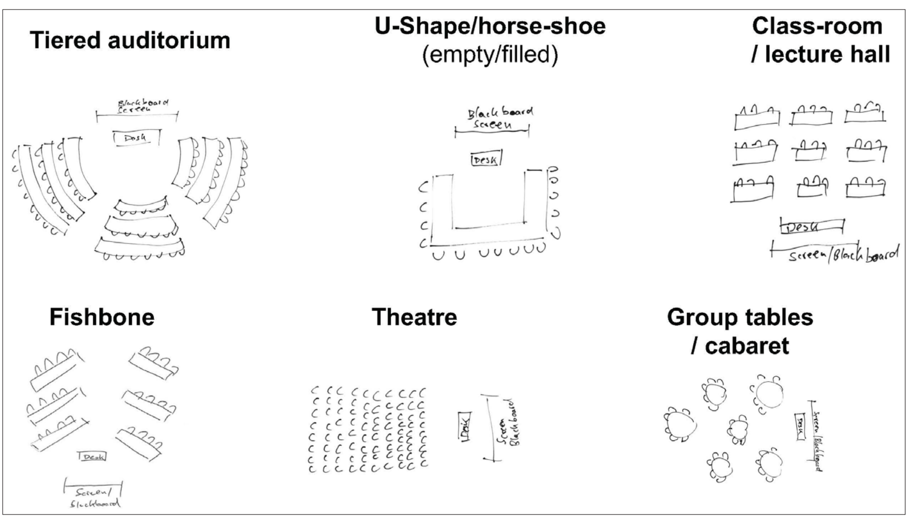

Figure 15: Sample room layouts.

The most common classroom layout for case discussions is the tiered (horseshoe) auditorium, where participants are seated in a half circle or half ellipse with the teacher's desk in the middle. Typically, the rows get higher toward the back and students sit on chairs that they can easily turn and roll around with. Participants can easily see each other and most of the time also hear each other well. If participants in the back speak too softly, resist the temptation to move closer to the participant to better understand her but instead move away as far as possible as participants then typically start to talk louder to reach you.

Variants of this classroom layout are tables set up in a U shape, often used in flat rooms or a fishbone setup. Both generally work well. In a U shape, participants on the same row might have difficulty seeing each other; in a fishbone, the first row often have a hard time looking backward when someone from the last row is speaking. Keep this in mind and, in the event that you want to use a role-play or debate between two groups, take the time to quickly get the participants of the role-play or the two groups in a good position (for example, get the opposing parties on the different sides of the U or in the fishbone set up in a middle row left and right).

For sessions with intense group work, a cabaret style with round group tables or two square tables put together might be a good solution. While the interaction between these 'islands' might be more difficult, the interaction on these group tables is very good. Just make sure that nobody sits with their back to the front of the room or wherever the facilitator is positioned.

Slightly more difficult for case discussions are traditional classroom setups with long rows of tables or theater style (long rows of chairs without tables). In both cases the interaction between participants is difficult.

Another important element of the classroom that you should take into account and get yourself familiar with is the general acoustics of the room. Sometimes high ceilings or a lot of curtains and material that dampens sound might make it very difficult to understand both the facilitator and often even more so the other participants. Noise from the air conditioning, the projector, the heating system, or any other electronic equipment might be very disturbing. Make sure to know in advance and guard against it.

Check how many whiteboards, blackboards, flipcharts, metaplans, etc. there are in the room. In general, we advise the more the better. How easily can you change the room layout (see above)? Sometimes tables or chairs are screwed to the floor. If participants do not know each other, they should be able to see the name tags (if you chose to use them). If you want them to use their laptops for group work or taking notes, check whether access to electricity is available and potentially access to Wi-Fi/internet. Also, make yourself familiar with possibilities to dim or darken the room for showing videos. We recommend that based on your teaching plan you come up with a list of items or elements that the classroom should be equipped with to be able to teach according to your teaching plan. This way you can either check yourself easily or write down what you need in the event that you are invited to teach in a new place, a different school, or a hotel.

Using cases for online teaching

'The most important principle for designing lively eLearning is to see eLearning design not as information design but as designing an experience.' – Cathy Moore

Distance and/or online learning can take very different forms. Whole programs, courses, or just single classes can be taught online. This online teaching can be synchronous or asynchronous. It can involve real-time interactivity or not. We believe that in any of these forms, case studies can have their role.

The biggest difference is that in general online learning happens asynchronously. Therefore, the very typical format, the synchronous discussion in class, cannot happen or be easily transferred to an online situation. But the discussion can of course happen asynchronously and typically over a longer period of time. And this can have a lot of advantages. Participants will have more time to reflect and can potentially be more precise in their comments, answers, or analysis. So, instead of having one discussion of 30 to 75 minutes, this discussion is typically broken down into several sections over a longer period of maybe several days or weeks. An online discussion of a case study can be started by a written question on the course platform with precise instructions on what is expected, not only in terms of content but also, for example, if you expect participants to answer in a certain order or not. You can also explicitly demand that students refer to previous comments/answers. The facilitator can highlight certain comments and take those as the starting point for the next discussion section.

Online teaching can also contain webinars or video lectures, web conferences or conference calls and chats. Again, case studies can be a part of these tools and techniques. Additional tools like voting applications can easily be integrated into the learning format.

We would like to highlight two thoughts on this topic. The first is that every facilitator has to find the right balance of different formats, tools, and techniques and online teaching can be one of those. The second thought is that we see a clear trend toward online teaching or at least online elements in teaching. We think that it is therefore important for educators to get familiar with this format and to test and try different things.

From theory to practice with Martin

In 2016 I was asked by my school to teach a course on digital transformation in our pure online master's called EMIB. This was completely new territory for me. Initially I thought that I would now have to record video lectures but I quickly found out that the EMIB is designed so that the facilitator curates content for students and tracks progress by giving assignments. The content that the facilitator curates can be of any type, like articles, book chapters, websites, videos, or self-created video lectures. But the key element of the EMIB is the assignments, which are designed to allow the participants to apply the knowledge they gained through the curated content and to allow the facilitator to track participants' progress. Of course, I immediately thought about how to integrate case studies and I tested two different ways. In the first week of the course, I used a case study (my own case study, which is not published) as an individual assignment. Participants had to read the case study and then use concepts and tools from the curated content to answer three questions. Instead of asking participants to hand in a written document with the answers, I asked for a three-minute video. This gave me the chance to get additional impressions from the participants and forced the participants to be crisp in answering the questions. In week 6 of the course, I used a case study as a group task. Participants had to work in virtual teams (sometimes distributed across continents) on a case study. They then had to hand in a power point presentation of 10 pages maximum with a clear recommendation for the case protagonist.

Getting better at case teaching

'Everyone has a chance to learn, improve, and build up their skills.' – Tom Peters

You will never stop learning how to teach. Always be open to new ideas, new approaches, and new ways of doing things. Do not assume that one day you will 'finally crack it' and become a great case teacher. It is just not like that – because being a great case teacher means constantly looking for ways to improve, to be better, to do more and achieve more for your participants.

Humility is essential: If you think you are a great case teacher, there's a good chance you might not be. At the very least, you will be missing chances to make improvements and enhance your participants' learning experience.

Being open to criticism is also essential – although, we acknowledge, often difficult. This can be particularly hard if you believe you have just taught a great case session but your participants or an observer think differently. But do not become defensive or downhearted. Always learn from feedback; accept it as a gift. Indeed, you should seek it out as it is one of the best ways to build on your case teaching skills.

Get feedback

There are a few different ways you can get feedback. As the case method is participant-centered, the most obvious opportunity to get feedback is to proactively ask your participants for feedback after the class. You can do this informally during a postclass chat, or more formally with a questionnaire distributed afterwards. Participants may be more honest if they can be anonymous! You may also be able to add your own questionnaire to any formal course evaluation used at your institution. Sample questions to ask participants include:

- Questions about the case itself (How interesting did you find the company/industry? Was it easy for you to identify with the protagonist? Was the case easy to understand? How much preparation time did you invest in the case? etc.)
- Questions about the discussion (Was the case discussion engaging? Was it easy for you to participate? What if anything hindered your participation? Did you feel left out? Did you feel that some participants dominated the discussion? etc.)
- Questions about the learning objectives (Did you get new insights from discussing the case? What specifically was new for you? What if anything is generalizable from the case discussion? etc.)

In addition to more formal and questionnaire-based feedback you might also want to consider picking individual students (and different ones over the course) to give you feedback about a specific session. In this more informal setting you might also explicitly ask for things that the participant liked about other sessions and/or other instructors. Be aware and do not get confused by individual opinions – but rather consider the big picture. Ignore very hostile comments – they are usually not driven by the educational process but by other factors. And do not forget to write down your ideas for improving your overall teaching and for this particular session – store them so that you will find them again when preparing for the next repetition of this session.

Another very valuable source for feedback is your colleagues. Ask a colleague to sit in on one of your sessions (or only part of your session) and observe you teaching. You can provide them with an observation checklist to use that will structure and ease the feedback.

From theory to practice with Martin

Whenever I can, I ask colleagues to sit in my class, even if it is just for the first 10 minutes or the last 10 minutes. Do not forget to ask your observer to take notes because you might not have time to discuss their thoughts and impressions straight away.

Also, ask them to note both specific observations (voice, gestures, body language, etc.), as well as the overall flow of the case session, including the level and quality of engagement, discussion, and participation.

(Continued)

> I still remember very clearly the first feedback I received. I discovered that I tend to focus much more on the right side of the classroom, which can be frustrating for people sitting on my left side. I also have a tendency to spend too much time with people who disagree or have minority opinions in an attempt to change their minds. This type of feedback is invaluable and continues to inform and – hopefully – improve my teaching.

A third way to get feedback is to video yourself teaching. This can be difficult to watch back but very revealing, and we strongly recommend it. Brace yourself and watch the video through carefully, making notes as you do so. You could also ask a colleague to watch it with you and offer feedback. In addition, it can be useful to watch the video in fast-forward as this will reveal aspects of your body language that have become an unconscious repetitive habit. Videotaping a whole session can be distracting and perhaps irritating for participants and will need to be addressed.

Review your own performance

Do not rely solely on feedback from others. Carry out your own thorough review too. For the best results, do this in a systematic way (see a suggested checklist below). You should note what went well and areas that need improving. If you used a teaching plan, add your immediate postsession notes to it so they will be easy to find again. It is also a good idea to take photographs of your board and flipchart notes.

Making notes in this way will not only help you when teaching the same case in the future; it will also help you improve as a teacher overall, whichever case you are teaching.

Review your own performance checklist

This checklist will help to ensure you do not miss anything important. Try to be as honest with yourself as you can. The checklist is not set in stone and you may find it useful to add your own points to the list as you gain more experience.

Reviewing your case-based session

Overall evaluation

- Did the case discussion meet your educational objectives and offer participants a meaningful and relevant 'takeaway'?
- Did the classroom discussion enable the discovery, application and critique of relevant theories, concepts, and frameworks?
- Would this case be more meaningful and relevant if taught earlier or later in the course?

The case

- Did the case itself meet your expectations?
- Did it inspire excitement and engagement and lead to key learning outcomes?
- Was any key information missing from the case?
- Were there any mistakes or inconsistencies in the case, for example facts, figures, dates?
- Did participants understand the case, or did it cause any unintended confusion?
- Do you need to find a better case? Or – an exciting thought – write your own? (See page 134.)

(Continued)

Timing
- Did your timing go to plan or did you try to cover too much or too little? (This applies to the session as a whole and individual sections of it.)
- Note which sections took longer than you thought, and which took less time so you can make adjustments next time.

Content
- Did you try to include too much? Too little? Or was it about right?
- Decide which topics to leave out next time if necessary.
- Decide which topics to add next time if necessary.
- Make a note of any unexpected topics that came up during the discussion so you can be well prepared if it happens again. Depending on its relevance, you may wish to incorporate this additional content in your next session.

Questions
- Which of your questions worked well and advanced the discussion?
- Which questions were less successful? For example, did any cause confusion? Encourage irrelevant discussion? Interfere with the flow of the discussion?
- Make a note of additional questions that would be good to ask next time; these may be questions that occurred to you afterwards or good questions that were asked by participants (never be too proud to learn from your participants!).

Sequence and flow
- Did the flow from one topic to the next seem effortless and natural in class, or did it seem like hard work?
- Should you try rearranging your teaching plan to encourage a more natural transition between topics?

Participation
- Did all of the participants take part in the discussion at some point? (This should be possible with up to 50 class members.)
- If not, how can you improve participation levels next time? (See page 59.)
- If you had a call plan, did you follow it?
- If you didn't have a call plan, should you have one in future?

Materials
- Did the materials you used in class, such as handouts, products, and videos, add value to the discussion? Were there too many? Not enough? The wrong kind?

Board notes
- Do your board notes make sense when you look back at them? (This is why it is a good idea to take a picture of the board at the end of the session – you have a permanent record for reference.)
- How can you improve your board notes in future sessions?

Your performance
- Were you fully prepared for class?
- How well did you:
  - ask questions?
  - listen?
  - manage the discussion?
- Did you speak too much and dominate the discussion as opposed to facilitating and enabling your participants to take part?

- Use 'safe' environments such as low-key events to experiment with different ways of teaching and find out what works best for you.

- Work on one aspect of your teaching at a time; do not have a list of three or four points to work on during one session. For example, plan to work on your body language or your questioning or your timing. Not all three at once!

Do not be too hard on yourself. You will not become an outstanding case teacher overnight – no one ever does. You will gradually improve over time with practice and experience. Be patient!

Getting better at case teaching

– Always be open to new ideas and fresh approaches.
– Proactively seek feedback.
– Assess your own performance against a checklist.
– Practice in 'safe' environments.
– Work on one aspect of your teaching at a time.
– Do not be hard on yourself: be patient!

Using case teaching for case writing

The following chapter is partially taken from a book chapter that we were asked to write on how case teaching and case writing influences each other (Mueller & Kupp 2017). We were asked to contribute to an edited book on case studies as a teaching tool in management education by one of our former workshop participants. At the time we felt that a lot of the general issues around case teaching and case writing were already covered in one form or the other in different books. But case teaching and case writing were always treated as two seemingly independent domains. Contrary to this, we felt not only that case teaching and case writing belong together but also that they can also support and inform each other in many ways and should be combined in new and creative ways.

Using case teaching for collecting material for case writing

An obvious – but perhaps the most impactful – way to leverage case teaching for case writing is to use case-based and participant-centered teaching methods to generate leads about interesting stories that can be used for case teaching, and subsequently for case writing. For example, this could be done by asking students to write up relevant decisions from their own (professional) experiences and then use them in class.

From theory to practice with Urs

For my classes on business ethics, I have asked hundreds of MBA students and executives to write up the most difficult ethical decisions that they have faced and to submit them before the start of the course. I read them carefully, group them into subject areas, and discuss them in class when appropriate.

The idea and story behind the case study 'Anna Frisch at Aesch AG: Initiating Lateral Change' (Müller & Schäfer 2010), which won the Case Centre's Human Resource Management/Organisational Behaviour award in 2014, was generated using an EMBA student's essay in a change management course.

Obviously, this is highly applicable to courses offered for executives, or MBA students with at least a certain level of professional experience. However, dependent upon the subject/discipline, this could even be a feasible approach for undergraduate classes. For example, teachers could ask students to present difficulties in their group work when teaching organizational behavior. Case teaching could be combined with active learning methods by first asking the students to search the news for current developments and to turn them into small cases that are then subsequently discussed in class.

Using case teaching for testing case ideas

Once you have found the inspiration for a case study – by using students/participants as described above or by just stumbling upon it in newspapers, conversations, social media, through own observations, through requests from companies, etc. – the question of whether to use this 'case lead' (we describe case leads and needs in more detail in the chapter on writing great cases) should mainly depend upon on two aspects. On the one hand, the case lead needs to fit the educational needs of the course. On the other hand, the efforts in writing this particular case study need to be balanced with the benefits. Obviously, writing a case study is resource-intensive, as one has to research the topic, conduct desk research, potentially conduct field interviews, develop an outline, write the first draft, and one day finalize the case, the teaching note, and then even get permission from the company and protagonist(s) described in the case. This is quite a bit of work, and there are many unknowns, among others:

- Is this an interesting company from a student perspective?
- Is the industry interesting?
- Will students engage, that is, is the issue controversial enough to stimulate a lively debate in class?
- Is the 'solution' sufficiently complex to justify an extended discussion of this topic?
- Are there enough questions in the case?

It would be useful to try to eliminate as many of these unknowns as possible, as fast as possible, and with as few resources as possible. This is where teaching comes into play because the classroom is, of course, the most natural and realistic place to test the idea. Below are some ideas on how to rapidly test the initial case ideas very early in the process, and for quite a low cost.

Using a newspaper article, video, blog, or other publicly available source

The first possibility for testing the case idea is to use an existing, publicly available source, such as a newspaper article, a short video or documentary, a blog entry, or the like. Depending on the initial inspiration, a quick search of archives, webpages, social media, etc. for some background information on the case should suffice. If someone mentions an interesting story, the chances are high that something can be found on the internet that relates to it. This often does not take longer than an hour or two. Sometimes an article can be found that does not require any editing.

From theory to practice with Urs

The idea for the case study '"Do You Really Think We Are So Stupid?" A Letter to the CEO of Deutsche Telekom' (Korotov, Müller, & Schäfer 2009) resulted from an article quoting the entire letter; a quick test of this article in the class environment confirmed the viability of the case lead for a great case discussion.

Alternatively, active learning activities could be used, whereby students prepare a certain case by actively searching for information themselves before coming to the next class session, or a sanitized version could be used if the information is received in confidence.

Independently of the material provided as input, the most important part is to think through the session and to come up with the right questions to open the discussion and lead through the session. This will provide early feedback about whether it is worth investing the necessary time, effort, and possibly even resources into the research for the case study.

Using a short presentation

With a little more work, a short (for example PowerPoint) presentation, that is, a few slides, could be generated. Instead of using the original sources, a very short presentation (this does not need to be longer than four or five pages) could be created that presents the key fact of the story, already structured in a way that will help in starting and moderating a discussion. This short presentation (as opposed to just an article etc.) allows the instructor to make use of visual materials (pictures, organizational charts, tables with data, process presentations, etc.) – various elements to be considered as possible exhibits for a final case study. The presentation should have a very similar structure to a typical case study, with one page dedicated to the problem, one page on the background of the company, one on the industry or wider context, and a final page to either flesh out options or to serve as a kind of wrap-up. Depending on the topic, more details on numbers and background can be offered. As with a case study, the idea is to create a level playing field for the discussion. Of course, although this will take longer than if the original source(s) were presented, in our experience the instructor will be able to create a good presentation in only a few hours – a lot faster than a case study.

The benefits of using a presentation compared to just using the original sources are that the case story can be shaped to fit the educational objectives. Existing articles frequently present the case lead in ways that are not optimal for teaching purposes:

- They are frequently written from a (seemingly) objective, independent perspective, whereas cases usually present the issue from the perspective of one clearly identified individual.
- They frequently present the results after the decision, that is, the events and consequences of the decisions that were made by the main actors.
- They frequently contain some of the reflections and considerations that educators usually want to bring up during the discussion.

Using mini-caselets

Another format to test case ideas in the classroom is the so-called mini-caselet. The main idea is to write up a very rough and brief version of the case idea. Often, mini-caselets focus on the problem description and just offer some basic background information. The level of detail is quite low, and authors do not provide a lot of data or exhibits. Again, the idea is to just deliver the basics to ensure an informed discussion, but things such as quotes, various perspectives, and detailed figures are not added.

What to test for and what insights can be gained

Testing obviously only makes sense if there is a clear objective about what to test. Although you might already feel very confident about how to use the case and how participants will react, we believe that there are at least five good reasons to go down the testing route. Testing will help you to check: (1) what additional information is needed, (2) whether the topic is controversial and engaging, (3) whether the right perspective and protagonist have been chosen, (4) whether the immediate issue works, and (5) what level of breadth and depth is needed. Last but not least, (6) testing will provide a lot of data that might be needed for writing up the teaching note.

What additional information is needed? Is it already complete?

The most obvious test is to check what additional information is needed. Especially in cases where testing involves using a journal article or a few PowerPoint slides, the instructor will quickly realize where the discussion might get stuck or where students will ask for additional information to be able to answer questions, to formulate a recommendation, or to make a decision. A situation in which students ask for additional information is actually a great opportunity. Even if the information is not readily at hand (e.g., because instructors have not yet started to do interviews and dig deeper), an instructor can use this moment in class to start building hypotheses with the students. So, if someone asks for additional information, the instructor can ask: 'What do you assume?' or 'Does anyone know the answer?' or 'Why do you think you need this information?' Case study teaching offers this opportunity to actually develop, discuss, and challenge the different assumptions in the classroom.

Is the topic controversial and engaging?

Already when handing out a newspaper article or when starting to tell a story – for example, with the help of a few (PowerPoint) slides – you will immediately get a sense of whether the topic engages the audience. Can people easily relate to the case? Do they engage? Do they understand the situation and the context? Are they excited to talk about the specific case and the topic in general? But you can go even further and test, for example, what kind of opening question triggers the most controversial debate, and whether bringing a sample of the product helps people engage with the topic. You will also experience whether there is some kind of natural way in which the discussion can unfold. If so, this will provide an idea about what kind of information needs to be added to make it easier for participants to follow this path.

Has the most promising perspective/protagonist been chosen?

Sometimes a case can be written from the perspectives of different people (e.g., headquarters versus business unit perspective; marketing versus finance perspective; company versus stakeholder perspective; more senior versus less senior protagonist). Presenting different perspectives in different courses will give a potential case writer a good feeling about which perspective is leading to the most fruitful discussions.

From theory to practice with Urs

For my case study 'Vodafone in Egypt' (Müller & Pandit 2014) we had to choose between the perspective of the local management in Egypt and the perspective of the Vodafone group headquarters. We tested both ideas/perspectives and immediately realized that each perspective would lead to a different discussion. Testing using the case as a mini-caselet in class, we realized that the local perspective was much more engaging and controversial.

Does the immediate issue work?

One of the trickiest things about writing engaging case studies is finding the appropriate immediate issue. The immediate issue is the hook into the case that is supposed to engage the reader (we discuss this in much more detail in the chapter on writing great cases). The objective of the immediate issue is to lead the reader into the case with a small and concrete issue, such as a question about whether to hire externally for the new sales executive position or to promote an internal sales manager. These kinds of questions are engaging, as they require an immediate action or decision and ultimately lead to the more fundamental issue as the discussion unfolds in class.

But, for each fundamental issue, there are, of course, many different possible immediate problems to choose from. It is therefore advisable to think of at least four or five different immediate issues, list them, and write matching opening questions for them. In one session, an instructor can try to test two or three of them by quickly discussing them at the start of the session and testing for levels of controversy, engagement, and emotions.

From theory to practice with Martin

For the case study 'Team Wikispeed: Developing Hardware the Software Way' (Kupp, Dahlander, & Morrow, 2013), which is about the fundamental issue of organizing agile product development, there were several potential immediate issues. We came up with the following opening questions:

- Should Joe Justice allow the team to set its own agenda?
- Should Joe Justice cut and weld the existing axle or press for the development of a proprietary axle?
- How could Joe Justice improve the performance of his team?

By testing these questions in class, it became clear that question one was too closely linked with the fundamental issue of agile product development, and question three was too broad and unspecific, thereby making participants uneasy and slowing the discussion. Question two worked best: it was specific enough and it was controversial, as it offered two options and split the class.

Breadth and depth

A classic beginner's mistake in case writing is to overload the teaching objectives; we have seen countless case studies written by quite inexperienced case authors in several different case writing competitions – one of the most frequent problems is that many cases try to kill too many birds with one stone. Instead of clearly centering on sales management, a case might, for example, simultaneously include strategic, cultural, change, and leadership issues. In very specific situations, this might be acceptable, for example when intentionally making a case complex. However, in most situations, case authors will quickly realize that cases that have too many learning objectives, cover too much content, and/or address too many concepts, theories, or subjects will make the case discussion in class significantly less effective. Case authors should therefore test the necessary level of concentration, for example by eliminating aspects in iterations after each test use in class. This can even be done after publishing an initial version of the case, e.g., by adding an abridged version of the case, as is frequently done by major case distributors.

Conversely, some (but usually much fewer) cases are written with a scope that is too narrow. They focus so clearly on one single, specific issue that the first use of the case in class quickly reveals that the case does not have the necessary breadth to allow it to be used for an entire class/ session. When faced with a fading discussion in the middle of the session, the case author might want to consider including (successively) more facets to the case. Alternatively, it can be most appropriate to keep the case focused – but then the author should advise other educators in the teaching note about additional exercises, discussion points, etc. that would complement the short discussion of such a highly focused case.

Collecting data for the teaching note

The last reason why it is useful to test case ideas by teaching them is that a lot of data and ideas will be generated. Such data and ideas will be very helpful when writing the teaching note. Although the main objective in writing a teaching note is to put the case into a research or teaching field context, the second objective is to help potential users (other teachers) of the case study prepare and to create an engaging atmosphere when using the case. To achieve these objectives, it is very helpful to: state the actual reactions of participants who were exposed to the case study (so that other educators can anticipate the main points of the discussion); offer guidance on board layouts; give information about what kinds of topics typically come up during the case discussion; and also offer advice on how to deal with typical questions or requests of participants. The more detailed this information is, the better.

When to test case ideas and how to choose the right environment

By now, some of the benefits of using case teaching to develop high-quality case material should be clear. But questions remain: When and how to test case ideas? For example, how can one choose the right environment? And what should be done to get the most out of these tests?

First, there is the question of timing. From experience (our own experience as well as from observing, talking to, and coaching many other educators), we fundamentally believe that the earlier the ideas can be tested, the better. Of course, the earlier the testing is started, the less the teaching process and outcome can be predicted and controlled. It is therefore important for instructors to choose the right environment and to prepare both themselves as well as the participants for the testing. The best preparation for educators is for them to be very clear about what they want to test and then choose the right audience. If, for example, the instructor wants to test for breadth and depth or relevance, a more mature audience might be the better testing ground. So, when looking for the right environment to test case ideas, you should be clear about what needs to be tested for and what audience is the right one for helping to answer this question.

The next thing to think about is how to create a safe teaching and testing environment. Whenever possible, even beforehand, you should explain to participants why certain materials are being used. Sometimes this is not possible, as it would spoil the results of the test. But it is still advisable to explain the approach at the end of the test, for example the session, and to leave enough time for everyone to discuss what they have observed.

It might also be a good idea to have a short discussion with a group of participants – for example, at the end of a course or the end of a day seminar with executives – to conduct a short feedback session, not only about the actual learning but also the process and the materials used. By explicitly exploring the learning process as well, you will gain additional insights into the teaching's effectiveness and how it relates to the materials and processes.

At many institutions, educators can also find a broad range of low(er) risk/low(er) visibility teaching opportunities that – dependent upon the testing idea mentioned above – could work well for some testing. For example, this could be, among other things: conferences, marketing events/roadshows, alumni meetings, open houses, class sessions outside of the normal curriculum (e.g., voluntary classes), electives, or internal meetings dedicated to educational purposes.

Using case teaching for case writing

- Case teaching and case writing belong together; they can also support and inform each other in many ways and should be combined in new and creative ways.
- Use your teaching to collect ideas for new case studies from participants.
- Test case ideas in early stages in class.
- Be rigorous in testing by applying a structured approach.
- Chose a safe environment for testing or create one yourself.

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