

The Hot Mommas[®] Project

Case Writing Tutorial

Your case should have 6 major sections. The Appendix (a 7th section) is optional.

- I Title & Tagline – your name (option: company name) and a tagline for your case.
- II. Introduction – introduction of protagonist as well as personal/professional challenges.
- III Background with focus on “aha” moment – leadership moment/moment of confidence.
- IV Professional challenge – a major professional challenge to discuss in the case.
- V Personal – a major professional challenge to discuss in the case.
- VI Discussion questions
 - Answers
- VII Appendix (Optional)

Rules:

- Word limit: 600 min 1800 max (not including discussion questions/answers/and title)
- Age Limit: 18 or above
- Language/PC: The case should be written in an objective sense rather than a subjective sense. Please read the complete tutorial below to find various tips and hints for writing.
- Submit by Jan 31
- Follow outline (checklist)

Process

- Vetting – call and determine this is the actual person
- Must work in LBM or balance in some way

I. Title and Tagline:

A. Title: Your title should be your name or some combination of your first name and last initial.

Examples:

Vanessa K Brown

Vanessa Brown

Vanessa K

Vanessa B

Vanessa KB

B. Company name: If you own your company, you can also include that in your title. Examples:

Vanessa K Brown and Tech Transfer, Inc.

Vanessa Brown and Tech Transfer, Inc.

Vanessa K and Tech Transfer, Inc.

Vanessa B and Tech Transfer, Inc.

Vanessa KB and Tech Transfer, Inc.

C. Tagline: Your tagline should help frame the tone of your story in the readers' mind. There is a 10 word limit.

Examples:

“Reaching for the Stars Without Losing Consciousness”

“Raising Venture Capital During a Down Market”

“Balancing Work and Life With a Twist”

“Hires, Fires, Divorce, and Drama”

II. Intro

The introduction should set the stage for the rest of the case by letting us get to know the case protagonist as well as the major personal and professional challenge set forth in the case.

Here is how a typical intro might go:

A. Introduction to protagonist through a specific event (e.g., Vanessa walked in to find her office a wreck.”

B. “Get to know” both personally and professionally (e.g., Vanessa was an avid “neat freak” and did not take to the state of her office too kindly. How would she ever get through the extensive contracts she needed to review today?)

C. Hint at personal and professional challenges (e.g., Contract negotiation was not something Vanessa enjoyed, nor was it a major strength. She wrestled with the appropriate way to handle this task which could change the face of her company. The pick-up time for her daughter – 6:00 pm – loomed. Clearly, a quick prioritization session was needed.”)

III. Background with focus on “aha” moment

In this section, we get to know a piece of background information about the protagonist (both personal and professional). The most important part to get across is your “aha moment” which is defined as an experience or moment in which the protagonist demonstrated a particular skill or ability which gave them confidence.

Personal

Example:

Vanessa grew up in Chicago. She was raised by her father after her parents divorced. “While I missed the female bond I guessed I would have felt with my mother, being raised by my father helped prepare me for the male-dominated technology world.” Vanessa knew she could adapt to almost any situation when she ran for school treasurer in high school. “I developed campaign posters, plastered them around the school, and got really into it. I was devastated when I lost. But everyone kept commenting on my posters and how much they liked them. I had designed them myself using a software program. I realized that my real skill and interest was in technology.”

Aha moment

It was no surprise to her family or friends when she went on to study engineering. After college she worked at _____ where she learned more than she ever thought possible about _____, _____, and _____.

Professional

Tip: It can be very tempting to put a protagonist’s entire background, not just a highlight. Focus on a few areas that define the protagonist as a person and build around it.

IV. Professional challenge – a major professional challenge to discuss in the case.

The professional challenge is the major professional issue with which the protagonist is grappling. In the context of communicating this professional challenge, we learn about the protagonist's place of work. Remember NOT to put the answer to the problem in the case. While there may be several issues about which you could speak, think about the MAIN challenge or teaching point you want to come through to the reader. Professional challenges might include how to most cost effectively market a product or service (category: Marketing), how to handle a situation with an employee at work (category: Management), or how to approach planning in a way that the team will buy-in (category: Planning, sub categories: leadership, team building).

Example:

While technology had surfaced early-on as Vanessa's area of expertise, marketing was another situation entirely. She hated sales, and found herself wishing the networking event, sales meeting, or other "getting the word out" activity counting the minutes until it ended. This is not how her business was going to grow.

Tip: If you find yourself putting the answer to the challenge in the case, save it for later. There is a discussion questions and "answers" section. (The answers will be in a "teaching notes" document for instructors).

Tip: Thinking about the discussion questions for the case will help focus the professional challenge (e.g., What strategy do you suggest Vanessa employ now, and in the future, with her contract negotiations? To do for case writer: Fully outline the challenges associated with Vanessa's contracts strategy.)

V. Personal - a major personal challenge to discuss in the case.

The personal challenge is the major personal/family/outside-of-work issue with which the protagonist is grappling. In the context of communicating this personal challenge, we learn more about the protagonist's life. Remember NOT to put the answer to the problem in the case. While there may be several issues about which you could speak, think about the MAIN challenge or teaching point you want to come through to the reader. Personal/family/outside-of-work challenges might include following your passion (category: Passion), taking care of an adult family member (category: Adult care-giving), or risk of burnout (category: burnout).

VI. Discussion questions & Answers

A. Discussion questions make or break a case. You must write between 3 and 5 discussion questions for your case, plus brief answers. The goal is to have a minimum of one discussion question about each major issue set forth in the case (personal and professional) as well as another one which hits on an issue or learning objective you feel is important. Good questions will:

1. Create a meaningful discussion in a learning environment.
2. Drive the reader toward a potential solution or realization in their answer

Optional:

Discussion questions can lead the reader to search outside sources to support or help develop their answer.

Tip: Do not include links in your case, or discussion questions, which might not be valid in a few years. Strong links around primary documents or articles from established websites are your best bet.

Tip: Lead the reader toward learning, but not toward your opinion. Let them discover their own opinion.

Example:

Level 1 discussion question (less detail)

How do you suggest Vanessa approach her marketing dilemma?

Level 2 discussion question

If you were Vanessa, list the top three actions you would take to begin to solve the marketing dilemma.

Level 3 discussion question (more detail)

If you were Vanessa, list the top three actions you would take to begin to solve the marketing dilemma. (Category: marketing) Place the three actions in a timeline and explain. (Sub category: planning).

If you were Vanessa, list the top three actions you would take to begin to solve the marketing dilemma. Why? (Category: marketing) Look up three other businesses like Vanessa's online and provide a summary of their marketing strategy.

VI B. Answers

Answers to your discussion questions will be stored in a separate document as “teaching notes” for educators. You do not necessarily need to know the answer to the discussion question, but, rather share

1. Your intent in asking the question.
2. Your “insider’s perspective” on the topic.

Example:

1. Intent of the question: In asking this question, I could imagine students going back and forth on the whether Vanessa should strengthen her sales skills, or look elsewhere for sales help. I could also imagine a discussion taking place from a personal perspective (e.g., Vanessa doesn’t like sales, why should she have to do it?) and a company perspective (e.g., She should do what it takes for the good of the company).

2. Insider’s Perspective: I continue to struggle with the question of marketing, however, have made two major steps. The first is I hired a sales director. I concluded that it would be impossible for me to become as good at sales as someone who enjoyed it. I continue to wrestle with this decision as so many people say a CEO should be the company’s primary salesperson. Second, I did strengths analysis. It made me realize that – in fact – the company could benefit a great deal more from my utilizing my strengths within the business versus trying to build up a major weakness. I turned my energy toward trying to build the right team to balance out my weaknesses.

VII. Appendix (Optional)

An optional appendix should include the following standard elements, plus whatever additional links and information the case writer would like to include:

A. Company notes

- This can be a “back of envelope” approach of rough notes and bullets for readers to interpret. For example, “Sales notes: Good meeting at Discovery Communications Monday. Thought it would help me feel better about sales. Nope.”
- Links to sales training sites

B. Schedule

A typical daily schedule from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed. This helps readers, in no uncertain terms; understand exactly what it takes to balance. Even if you do not consider yourself a strong balancer, it provides interesting additional points of discussion for readers.