Product Management

Guidelines for Analyzing Case Studies

We will read and analyze approximately two case studies a week, most of them being very detailed. While there is no “formula” for analyzing case studies, the following guidelines are recommended.

1. Define the goals and objectives for your analysis. What questions are you trying to answer? What issues are you trying to resolve?
2. Rapidly skim through the case study and get a sense for how the case study has been structured.
3. Read through the case study with paper and pencil and make notes as you go along.
4. Structure the information in the case study: this is the key step.
   • Think of the information given in the case study as “raw data” that you have gathered to help you answer the questions and resolve the issues in Step 1 above.
   • You need to structure this data in order to resolve the issues. Here are some useful dimensions along which you can structure the given information chronologically:
     • Evolution of the industry in which the enterprise operates (changes in technology, customer needs, competitive landscape, etc.)
     • Evolution of strategy - business, technology, and market - of the enterprise
     • Evolution of technology (including manufacturing), product platforms, and product lines of the enterprise
     • The technology, product, and process development process within the enterprise
     • Growth (or decline) of the enterprise with respect to of market share, revenues, costs, profits, etc.
     • Organizational structure of the enterprise
     • Key decisions made at different stages in the life of enterprise, and the drivers for these decisions
     • The interconnections and relationships between all the above factors
   • Make extensive use of figures, tables, trees, etc. to shape your thinking during the structuring process.
5. Perform any necessary analysis, for example, revenues or costs associated with different design options.
6. Draw conclusions, answer questions, resolve issues, and make recommendations using the structured information in Step 4.