11 of the best case studies from IESE, plus a simulation

From finance and strategy to business ethics, the case study method allows students to learn by taking on new perspectives.



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If people learn best by doing, the case study method is the *next* best thing. It introduces students to a professional facing a concrete problem, provides relevant background

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information and asks what they would do in that professional's shoes. The business problem might be updating logistics networks to new digital realities, implementing AI throughout a company or changing the way the world consumes energy to go green.

IESE is not only a long-time promoter of case studies — Professor Jordi Canals has described their use as "a stimulus to creativity, intellectual rigor and balanced reflection on management issues" — but also a long-time producer. Below is a selection of the most popular and most interesting of recent years, plus a bonus simulation.

Spotify: Face the music

Govert Vroom, Isaac Sastre Boquet, Abhishek Deshmane

This perennially popular case has been updated multiple times. The 2021 version sees Spotify, undisputed king of music streaming, still posting a loss. Will CEO Daniel Ek's "audio strategy" be enough to hold back new competitors?

Nordic Technologies AB

Rob Johnson

A long-time bestseller, this case builds understanding of second-round financing of an early-stage silicon-chip technology company in Sweden, including valuation and legal issues.

Deepwater Horizon: Spilling oil, money and trust

Antonino Vaccaro, Ana Machado

Another global bestseller deals with the fallout from the infamous 2010 oil spill that leaked 4.9 million barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico and the ethical issues parent company BP faced in its wake. How could safety standards be defined — and enforced — in the context of international and local regulation?

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Brazil's macroeconomic rollercoaster: From Lula's boom to Rousseff's bust

Eduard Talamàs, Henrique Drebes Santos, Alexandre Fraletti

Brazil, an emerging economy heavily based on commodities, experienced an economic boom under President Lula and then a dramatic recession from 2014-16 under his successor. What policies were behind this, and what would be needed to calm the storm?

FreshDirect: Forget delivery, our business is all about food

Sandra Sieber, Catalin Codrean

An IT focus on the decisions that FreshDirect's CEO faced in 2016. Amid exploding competition from business-model-redefining delivery companies, the online supermarket must decide whether to stick to next-day delivery or prioritize a one-hour model.

Amazon.com, Inc: The AI transformation

Sampsa Samila, Isaac Sastre Boquet

We all need to be ready for the application of AI throughout all levels of business, and there's much to be learned from Amazon's development of copious AI solutions — and their implications for the future of the company.

Holaluz: Connecting people to green energy

Edi Soler

The choices faced by a Spanish energy startup looking to finance a dramatic expansion plan — and bring the green revolution closer to home.

Chick-fil-A: Sandwiches and culture wars

Yago de la Cierva, Eduardo Notario

This ethics-focused case looks at when CEO activism is appropriate, when it's required and when it's counterproductive. (For more on Chick-fil-A's controversial U.K. expansion plan,

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check out the IESE Business School Insight article "Culture wars: Take a stand or sit them out?")

Nike supply chain in the new digital age

Joan Jané, Pedro Ferrinha

Digital retail growth calls for a redesign of companies' logistics chains. Here, Nike faces the issues of omnichannel fulfillment, inventory management, returns, service levels, operational costs and sustainability impact, while keeping an eye on marketplace competitors like Amazon.

Driving digital transformation at the DBS Bank

Evgeny Kaganer, Robert Wayne Gregory, Catalin Codrean

DBS, the largest bank in Southeast Asia, is undergoing digital transformation and trying to balance customer satisfaction, employee buy-in and technological innovation in a highly regulated industry.

A new era for the case study

Digitalization isn't just for banks and supply chains – case studies are changing too. And IESE is taking early steps to develop new formats, which can enliven the reading experience and help students visualize complex ideas more simply.

Flying across the sea

Rafael de Santiago

This interactive case study on the America's Cup features embedded videos and dynamic graphs. Students must model the 37th America's Cup (set for 2024 in Barcelona) and choose the yacht with the highest probability of winning.

And for something a little different…

Beyond the world of case studies, IESE also produces simulations, such as the Relic Island Negotiation Simulation and the classic Beer Game. Meant to force business learnings into

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practice under time pressure, simulations can make for a lively and interactive classroom experience. See the list of IESE's simulations here.

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