The best case studies to teach management and face the challenges of modern business

From the newest installment of the bestselling Spotify series, to concerns surrounding AI, to cloud computing in Ukraine, learning by case study mimics hands-on learning and broadens perspectives.

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If people learn best by hands-on experience, the case study method is the *next* best thing. It

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introduces students to a professional facing a concrete problem — often based on or inspired by a real business. It provides relevant background information and asks students what they would do in that professional's shoes.

IESE has long championed the use of case studies, which expose learners to a wide variety of both common and industry-specific business scenarios. Professor Jordi Canals once described them as "a stimulus to creativity, intellectual rigor and balanced reflection on management issues." José Ramon Pin in his book on what makes a case study a success or a failure, adds that this teaching method drives us to know ourselves: By reflecting on why we made one decision and not another, we learn to analyze our own priorities and thought processes.

We've gathered a selection of new and inspiring case studies. Together, they highlight some of the greatest challenges of the present moment, from the ethical implications of ChatGPT, to evergreen challenges on sustainability and strategic partnerships, to what our globalized world can learn from local traditions.

Dealing with AI: Loneliness, manipulations and suicides

Antonino Vaccaro, Gilda Antonelli and Rosa Fioravante

This timely case study examines the ethical risks of anthropomorphic AI chatbots, focusing on 14-year-old Sewell Setzer's suicide after extensive chats with a Character.ai bot. Designed to mimic emotions, chatbots can reinforce distress and manipulate vulnerable users, raising urgent questions about regulation, safety and ethical design.

Spotify: Face the music (2025 update)

Govert Vroom and Isaac Sastre Boquet

This perennially popular case has been updated multiple times. The 2025 version sees Spotify, undisputed king of music streaming, turning its first annual profit. The gains came from layoffs, price increases and strategic diversification — but the company still faces backlash over royalties, high podcast costs and the uncertainty surrounding AI. Does the new profitability mark a lasting shift or a one-year anomaly?

Barcelona Supercomputing Center: A strategic partner

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for industrial innovation

Julia Prats and Guillermo Yañez

At the forefront of Europe's high-performance computing, the Barcelona Supercomputing Center (BSC) is driving industrial innovation through cutting-edge partnerships. Here, a CIO must evaluate the potential of a collaboration with BSC to keep her company's competitive edge.

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

Diego Arias Padilla and Joan Fontrodona

This case study shows how innovative fundraising and cross-sector teamwork managed to vaccinate 10 million children and strengthen global health. A must-read for everyone who wants to integrate social responsibility into a strong business model.

A path through the cloud: Saving PrivatBank's IT operations during the war in Ukraine

Josep Valor Sabatier, Javier Zamora, Alejandro Lago and Isaac Sastre Boquet

Imagine having to migrate an entire banking system to Amazon Web Services in just six weeks, as bombs fall on your country. Ukraine's PrivatBank did just that, but the story doesn't end there. This case also details some of the tough choices that come with a $4 million monthly cloud bill: optimize, sustain or return on-site?

Semirara: Is coal still the goal?

Ricardo G. Barcelona, Alexander Gotianun, Beatriz Maria Matti and Fabrizio Ferraro

Profitable, responsible… coal? This case study from the Philippines traces the decisions of a coal mine at a crossroads, deciding whether to lead in renewables or ride out the carbon wave while diversifying.

Ganni's new skin: Towards responsible fashion

Fabrizio Ferraro and Isaac Sastre Boquet

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Too often in fashion, sustainability is just lip service. But Danish fashion brand Ganni doesn't shy away from making tough calls, as it did here when CSR head Lauren Bartley proposed phasing out virgin leather in favor of recycled, bio-based alternatives to cut emissions by 10-20%. An ideal case study for learning how to balance sustainability goals with aggressive growth targets.

Managing serious interpersonal conflicts at ZaiT

Antonino Vaccaro and Rosa Fioravante

Accusations of harassment, racism and unprofessional behavior exploded at the consulting firm ZaiT, requiring agile thinking to balance ethics, conflict management and organizational survival.

ISS: Managing a strike

Mireia Las Heras and José Pérez del Valle

Interactive case studies make learning more dynamic, with embedded videos and dynamic graphs. In one of our newest interactive cases (only available in Spanish), a company must handle a labor crisis in real time, as a conflict quickly escalates and exposes the firm to legal, ethical, operational and human challenges.

Take a sneak peek at what an interactive case study looks like here.

Castellers: The challenge of touching the sky

Mireia Las Heras, José Pérez del Valle and Isaac Sastre Boquet

Catalonia's human castles are the definition of teamwork. A UNESCO-recognized practice dating back to 1791, they bring communities and generations together — and this interactive case study has many inspirational lessons for organizational structure, modern business and management.

ALSO OF INTEREST: 11 of the best case studies from IESE, plus a simulation

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