Abstract

The time and process used to write a case study depends on several factors. There are different things to consider to save time and to make the process easier. First of all the author might need a certain skillset and experience. Second is to understand the importance of being prepared. It takes much time to write a case study and if the preparations are not taken in seriously consideration it may jeopardize the whole study. A deadline and timeline for the process is necessary to control the outcome. Normally the process involves a case study release form and a success letter where the last approval is made before the publication of the case study is done.

Introduction

It requires plenty of time and commitment to write a case study. The process is usually long before the end goal is reached. Different reasons encumber the time frame and the process that is used to write a case study. To find out what is affecting the time frame this study will elucidate these parts. Among other things, these things will be clarified:

- What is important to keep in mind to save time when writing a case study?
- What to watch out for when writing a case study so it does not affect the time frame negative?
- What attributes should a case study researcher possess to make the work as efficient and good as possible?

Regarding the process, the focus is on how the process works during the creation of a case study. The following will be discussed:

- What is important to keep in mind regarding the process of a case study?
- Are there any guidelines or differences in case studies regarding types or process of a case study?
All these question formulations are important to answer because they are central to the creation of a case study. Hopefully the following reading will give the reader more knowledge about the time and process used in writing a case study.

This study will only include the time used to write a case study in general and not for each case study type separately but it will touch that subject certain extent.

The definition of a case study is according to Nationalencyklopedin (2016) “a data collection method in social and behavioral science but also in medical research. A case study is a detailed study of a particular phenomenon – for example an individual or a group – in a bigger research context and is used to nuance, immerse and develop concepts and theories, and sometimes even to illustrate or confirm hypotheses.”.

Method

This study is mainly based on qualitative information gathered through case studies and scientific literature. Some information that needed to be added is gathered from blogs and websites. It contains only secondary sources and these are well chosen out to reflect the reality objectively. The information was gathered to cover everything that is necessary to create credible conclusions. This was made by comparing all the empirical evidence and to see through all this to find some patterns. Secondary sources was used because it shows what others already have found out about the time and process used to write a case study and when all this information is gathered it is possible to make comparison. This opens opportunities to finding patterns and draw conclusions.

Empirical evidence

It takes a lot of time for preparations and planning to write a case study. Many case studies last around 3-6 months but may also continue for years (WikiHow, 2016). Normally, the author is not given much time for each case study. It occurs a lot of time consuming moments during the whole process from start to finish. Usually it is easier to do case studies with bigger companies, because they are more accommodating. The openness and willingness to share information is usually higher in those than the smaller companies. Bigger companies have more resources and more time to spare for this type of engagements. A bigger company does not always bring positive effects, too they often bring very deep information to process and it can be very time consuming. It can also be more difficult to get the proper overview of the company. The big amount of information might lead to confusion and thereby slow down the data analysis and writing process of the case study (Søilen & Huber, 2006).

A case study contains a lot of different parts which requires different time frame. Usually, it begins with an introduction where the key issues are presented and some questions. Relevant background information and facts are shown, followed with a proposed solution and might
end with recommendations of further research (Ashford University, 2013). A case study is not supposed to tell the readers what to think. The readers may interpret to the information presented and come to their own conclusion (Concordia University, 2012).

Much of the time spent for the clarification of a case study is in the preparation work. This is emphasized by Merriam (1994) where the importance of being prepared is clarified. He shows the importance of the compilation and data analysis process as an important time saver for the writing process. A structured database is very helpful for most researchers.

Yin (2007) also shows how important it is to be prepared before the data is gathered and he points out that this can be both difficult and complicated. He means that if this is not done properly it jeopardizes the whole study. An important part of the preparations is to make shore that the person who will perform the case study also possesses the necessary abilities to deliver a proper case study. Yin (2007) mentions five important abilities which a good case study researcher should have:

- The ability to ask the right questions and interpret them correctly.
- Be a good listener and be objective in every situation.
- Adaptable to new situations.
- Be able to have a clear idea of the issues which are studied.
- Not be influenced by warped or distorted perceptions.

Sometimes, depending on the topic of the case study, the author also may need some special knowledge in the topic that is researched. Otherwise it may be difficult to complete the study (Sketchdeck, 2014). When a case study is written by more than one author it is a time saver and quality raiser to divide the work after skillset and experience (Hoffman Marketing Communication, 2002).

It is important to establish a timeline for all steps used in the creation of a case study. This will create better discipline and respect for the time frame. If there is a deadline to complete the study you can plan how much time each sub-process will have. This will reduce the risk of delays (Universal Class, 2013). This is also something UNSW Australia (2013) writes about on their website:

“You will need to timetable sufficient time to complete each stage, but also be aware that some stages are revisited while you are analysing the case and writing the report. Thinking and writing becomes a cyclical process.”

To avoid any delays, it is also important to determine the expectations right away. Not having a time frame set or all the approval fixed is the most common reason of delays (Stec, 2015).

Reaching out to the right case study participants can be a time saver. It is a good idea to introduce the participants of the process with information of all the expectations that is
committed in participation. Most common is a case study release form. This may vary depending on several of factors such as the size of your business. Stec (2015) shows the main content of a case study release form in her blog and it is cited in the following way:

- A clear explanation of why you are creating this case study and how it will be used.
- A statement defining the information you expect to include about the company -- names, logos, job titles, pictures, etc.
- An explanation of your expectations in terms of their participation beyond the completion of the case study. (Are they willing to act as a reference or share feedback? Do you have permission to pass their contact information along for these purposes?)
- A note about compensation.

Next step is very important and is the main core of the case study, the success story letter. An example of the steps in a success story letter:

- **The Acceptance:** The decision about approval or not is determined. If it is approved the release form must be signed. Timetable that suits both teams is also determined at this stage (Stec, 2015). Notably is according to marketing consultant John Spindler it is better to scrap the case study if the approval is rejected (Schreiber, 2014).
- **The Questionnaire:** Receive ensuring that a good interview will be conducted. Prepare a questionnaire prior together with the participant. This will probably provide your team with valuable information and save time.
- **The Interview:** Actual implementation.
- **The Draft Review:** Once the case study is all set, send a draft to the participants. Give them time and opportunity to provide feedback and edits.
- **The Final Approval:** Once any necessary edits are completed, you should send a revised copy of the case study to the participants for final approval.

Once the final approval is done it is time to release the case study. A nice gesture might be to inform all the involved where they can find the case study (Stec, 2015). During the process it is necessary to stick to the budget and realize the limitations that follow. This is best done by sticking to the process plan (Academic Help, 2012).

There are no specific guidelines in how case studies are created, but Yin (1993) suggest as follows:

- An overview of the content.
• Working process.
• Specific questions that might occur during the data collection.
• An outline of the case study.

According to Søilen and Huber (2006) there are six different types of case studies but they alert that the source of this knowledge is Wikipedia. Because of the source of this information it should be processed with caution. These six types are illustrative, exploratory, critical instance, cumulative and two different program implementation case studies. These types are built differently and applied to various purposes. Allocation of time and focus are also different between respective case study types.

A description of each type:

• **Illustrative case studies.** These are time consuming and require a lot of information. The goal is to make general conclusions of a specific problem. Two examples of Illustrative case studies are TOMVA and Mickes Maleri I Adalen both written by Søilen and Huber.

  In TOMVA there is a specific problem. While the company grows, the founder and CEO of the company get overloaded by work and become overwrought. It is first when he hits the wall he realizes that it is time to share some responsibility with the employees. Entrepreneurs tend to fail to limit themselves and this is common among entrepreneurs which makes this case study cover a larger audience (Søilen & Huber, 2004g).

  In Mickes Maleri i Adalen we follow Micael Gabrielssons persistent try to save his business by entering branches he knows little about. The general conclusion is that this is a common phenomenon which happens to many professionals that faces financial problems. They want a quick profit but often it becomes a painful experience instead (Søilen & Huber, 2004d).

• **Exploratory (or pilot) case studies.** Also their goal is to make general conclusions but from a more extensive problem. Two examples of Exploratory case studies are Berglunds Mekaniska AB and Fotfavoriten both written by Søilen and Huber.

  Berglunds Mekaniska AB is a smaller company with structural problems. This is common among smaller companies which often become dependent on outside help to survive. This case study covers a wide problem and general conclusions are made that affects many small companies and not only Berglunds Mekaniska AB (Søilen & Huber, 2004h).

  Fotfabriken AB shows how a former social worker can be retrained and become an entrepreneur. The case study illustrates how local government can fire staff only to reengage them as entrepreneurs in similar services. This is common in the social sector and the outcome is often positive. The sooner they get the assistance the better outcome (Søilen & Huber, 2004j).

In both examples there are general conclusions of an extensive problem.
• **Cumulative case studies.** These studies are mostly used for studies with information for longer periods of time. The information concerns a problem over time. Two examples of Cumulative case studies are Glimakra Akvamatik and Lars Höglund both written by Søilen and Huber.

Glimaka Akvamatik has during a long time continually invested in new technology with hope to win market shares in the future. The recent years have been difficult for the company but hopefully all the investments pay off sooner or later (Søilen & Huber, 2004f).

Lars Hoglund AB is a growing company. To keep the company growing, the board decided to begin a project in which the purpose is to raise the competence of their employees. This method has successfully been used by Japanese companies and other industries. The investment has been a success for Lars Hoglund AB and will hopefully continue in the future (Søilen & Huber, 2004l).

• **Critical instance case studies.** These are using one or more problems to make general conclusions. This type is already tinged to support a determined theory. Two examples of Critical instance case studies are Bracke Trahuskomponenter and Nipsoft both written by Soilen and Huber.

Bracke Trahuskomponenter is having problems with their profitability and needs help from the county administration. The company has many problems and the CEO decided to invest in his staff. This became successful but the company is still dependent on outside help. Often small companies underestimate market forces (Søilen & Huber, 2004k).

Nipsoft AB shows that most engineers are content to be employees and not entrepreneurs. This is because they are not educated in how to run a business. In this case study, a technician tells his story of his transformation to start his own business. He had a short economic education which he believes pushed him to try. For engineers to start their own business they need exactly this, someone to teach them how (Søilen & Huber, 2004b).

• **Program implementation case studies.** These studies evaluate the strategy that has been set up and if it was the right one. The execution of the strategy is also evaluated. Two examples of Program implementation case studies are Mercatus engineering and Nymek both written by Soilen and Huber.

In Mercatus engineering we follow a company which has invested in their staff and reorganization. The purpose is to develop the company. According to the company the investment is the reason of the increased earnings and efficiency but may it actually be because of external factors (Søilen & Huber, 2004i).

In the case study about Nymek, the company has done expensive investments to develop their staff. Has the investment made the impact that was planned and was it the right kind of investment are questions that are processed (Søilen & Huber, 2004a).

• **Program implementation case studies II.** These studies are very similar with the one before. The differences are in this type focus is in finding the consequences of the chosen strategy and evaluate the result of this strategy. Two case study examples of this type are ADC of Sweden and MSG both written by Soilen and Huber.
ADC of Sweden shows three different companies that had to merge during the beginning of millennium if they want to survive the stagnation of the telecom industry. The merge creates new problems and consequences which the company had to work with (Søilen & Huber, 2004e).

In MSG, three Swedish companies had to merge to defend against Chinese companies’ progress. They see themselves as more competitive together than separately. These companies have their differences, which is evident in the merger. This case study shows which consequences a merger may have (Søilen & Huber, 2004c).

Which type of case study that is used depends on many things but Yin (2014) defines it like this “There’s no formula, but your choice depends in large part on your research question(s).”. Hines (2011) describes it in her blog as the type of case study is chosen by which type is the most suitable in the specific study and it is possible to try them out and choose the most appropriate one.

Analysis

To write a case study requires a lot of time and often several different time consuming steps are involved (Soilen & Huber, 2006). Many case studies last around 3-6 months but can also continue for years (WikiHow, 2016). To be prepared is very important. Merriam (1994) show that a well prepared compilation and data analysis process is a time saver for the writing process. Yin (2007) also expresses how important it is to be prepared before the data is gathered. If not, this will be complicated and difficult to complete. He says it may jeopardize the whole study. One important step of preparation is to make sure the person who will create the case study also possesses the necessary abilities. Yin (2007) shows five important abilities:

- The ability to ask the right questions and interpret them correctly.
- Be a good listener and be objective in every situation.
- Adaptable to new situations.
- Be able to have a clear idea of the issues which are studied.
- Not be influenced by warped or distorted perceptions.

Sketchdeck (2014) is also adding an ability that may fit in the first one but clearly expresses it as the author may, depending on the topic, also need some special knowledge in the topic that is researched. Otherwise it may be some misinterpretations.

Establish a timeline for all steps used to write a case study reduces the risk of delays. The discipline and respect for the time frame raises by this. With a deadline to complete the study it helps control the time spend for each sub-process (Universal Class, 2013). This is also something UNSW Australia (2013) agrees with.
Reaching out to the right case study participants can be a time saver. To avoid delays it is essential to determine all expectations for all parts, especially the process. Usually a case study form is used and this may vary depending on several factors, such as the business size (Stec, 2015).

Often it is easier to write a case study with bigger companies. They are more accommodating. Bigger companies have more resources and they tend to be more open and willing to share information. The big amount of information may also bring difficulties. It may bring confusion and complications to get the proper overview of the company (Søilen & Huber, 2006).

After the case study form is set it is very important for the case study to create a good success story letter. This involves several things such as acceptance, questionnaire, interview, draft review and the final approval. During the process it is important to have a good dialogue (Stec, 2015). It is also essential to stick to the budget and know it’s limits (Academic Help, 2012). If there are more than one author it is often a time saver and quality raiser to split the work after skillset and experience (Hoffman Marketing Communication, 2002).

There are no specific guidelines in how case studies are created, but Yin (1993) suggest it involves an overview of the content, working process, specific questions that might occur during data collection and finally an outline of the case study. There are six different types of case studies. According to Søilen & Huber (2006) the different types are Illustrative, exploratory, critical instance, cumulative and two different program implementation case studies. There are different focus and allocation of time between respective case study types. Yin (2014) describes which type that is best suitable to use like this “There’s no formula, but your choice depends in large part on your research question(s).” Hines (2011) has a similar answer she says that the case study type which suits best in the specific study is also the most appropriate one to use.

**Conclusion**

In general, it takes a lot of time to write a case study. To be prepared for the task is very important and the central things are connected to the preparation. The work will be much more time consuming and difficult if this is not taken seriously in consideration. The author often needs to have certain skillset and experience to write a case study properly. Otherwise it will take a lot of time and the result might lack credibility. A deadline to complete the case study and a timeline for the process will help to control the situation and the end result. There is a lot of time to save by using the right participants. By setting up all the expectations directly the risk of delays reduces. Usually this is done by a case study release form. Next step is to create a good success story letter. This includes acceptance, questionnaire, interview,
draft review and the final approval. During the process it is important to have a good dialogue. The process is also limited by the size of the budget and this must be in consideration when the process is planned. If a case study is written by more than one author it is better to split the work by skillset and experience to save time and raise the quality of the study. There are no specific guidelines in how case studies are created but there are examples in how they can be structured. The decision of which type of case study to use is made for each specific study and depends on how suitable it is for the specific case study.

Further studies

There are different types of case studies and it could be interesting to do further research on how much time that is used for each type and if there is, why is there a difference?

References


Newfangled. (2013). Rethinking the case study November 30 from https://www.newfangled.com/rethinking-the-case-study/


