

Case Study Aid: Problem Diagnosis Scenarios

I. Analyzing a Problem Diagnosis Case

This study aid is divided into two parts. The first part organizes your notes and thinking about the case. The second organizes the points you want to make for an essay on the case. (For a detailed explanation of how to analyze a problem diagnosis scenario, see Chapter 6.)

To begin your work, think about and capture the following: What problem does the case describe? Problems are the effects of causes such as actions, processes, activities, or forces. Problem scenarios often concern business pathology, e.g., managers or companies that perform poorly. To help define the problem ask yourself, What does the main character need to do? What is the major uncertainty of the case?

Exploring the Problem

What questions will help you explore the problem and its causes? Can you identify concepts or frameworks you have learned that might be useful for identifying and proving causes?

Questions for finding the causes of the problem. Example: Has poor leadership been one reason for the company's poor performance?

Potential concepts and frameworks to help identify causes. Example: The Leadership Styles theory can help determine whether leadership is a contributor to the problem.

Use the grid below to organize your thinking about the problem. Use your questions to study the evidence and identify causes of the problem. Write the causes down, the case evidence relevant to them, and how the evidence connects the cause to the problem. Your goal is to determine the causes most strongly supported by the evidence. You can defer thinking about action steps if you'd rather focus on the decision.

Example: Diagnosis of a company's poor performance

Possible Cause #1: Poor leadership			
Facts/Evidence	How cause contributes to the problem	Short Term Steps	Long Term Steps
The head of the division is an autocratic leader who makes major decisions without consulting anyone.	The division head's autocratic leadership style led to several bad decisions because he failed to tap into the knowledge and experience of subordinates.	The CEO needs to mandate collaborative decision making.	The head of the division should receive leadership coaching.

Possible Cause #1: _____			
Facts/Evidence	How cause connects to problem	Short Term Steps	Long Term Steps

Possible Cause #2: _____			
Facts/Evidence	How cause connects to problem	Short Term Steps	Long Term Steps

Copy and paste as many rows of causes as you need. However, make sure you include only major causes.

Ready to Take a Position?

State what you think is the main problem in the case and its major causes. Example: The company lost its competitive advantage after years of market leadership. Major causes: a change in the company's primary market, a leadership crisis, and two poor strategic decisions.

The evidence you compiled above is critical to prove the causes.

What is the problem?

What are the major causes?

II. Writing a Problem Diagnosis Essay

This section helps you organize the content of an essay about the case you've analyzed. Arrange the causes in order of importance, from most important to least. The evidence should show how each cause contributes to the problem. (For a detailed explanation of how to write a problem diagnosis essay, see Chapter 11.)

Definition of Problem	
Summary of Major Causes	
Evidence Proving Diagnosis	
Criterion 1	
a.	
b.	
c.	
Criterion 2	
a.	
b.	
c.	
Criterion 3	
a.	
b.	
c.	

Copy and paste as many rows of causes as you need. However, make sure you include only major causes.

Identify the high-level goals for your action plan. In other words, how do you want the action plan to change the situation in the case?

State your action plan goals. (For a detailed explanation of how to write an action plan, see Chapter 8.)

Organize your action plan steps.

Short Term

Long Term

Identify the most important one or two risks that come with your action plan and how you would propose mitigating them.

Major Risks

Mitigation of Risks
