

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

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Case studies have become a powerful instructive lifeline for business schools. Management education has changed because of them, which even helped globalise it. Many more changes are also sweeping in (culled from experiences):

- Internet has a gold mine of information that, if channelled properly, can grow into rich knowledge. This trend has even altered the role of a teacher – from a knowledge provider to a learning facilitator
- Students are seeking more than classroom learning. Just analysing case facts and figures is no longer making classes come alive
- Not every faculty can work out a case study as it must be. It requires strenuous hard-work and disciplined training.
- Business schools can shape the best talent but can't get them to teach. Teaching doesn't seem to fit in as a lucrative job

Closely observing these pertinent changes have got us, at Icfai Business School Case Development Centre (IBS CDC), thinking as always. Solutions were hard to come by, but we got around this dilemma too. Months of shrewd thinking and careful testing created a novel product, *Executive Brief*.

Executive Brief is by nature a video presentation. It recounts dilemmas faced by an executive, who can be an entrepreneur, manager, VP, CEO, etc. These dilemmas can either be retrospective or futuristic. Of course, business schools have to instil valued corporate virtues in their students. But that's not all.

Decision making has become too critical a task. Because, as the Danish proverb says, "He who has a choice has trouble." Picking out the best choices out of the available ones, analyse them by experience and, get cues and clues from it – to land at the best possible solution. Executives often run out of time in making the right decisions. So, decision making even calls for swift use of thumb-rules, to make the most credible decision in the shortest possible time. This is what surviving in business is all about; so decisions can either pep up or pop out a business. Napoleon got it right: "Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide." Such vital decision making is what we would like to train the students in, through Executive Briefs.

Their multimedia edge can take learning to the next level, seizing student's fleeting attention for quite some time. That's not to say that they can replace case studies. But Executive Briefs can become nice add-ons to student's learning, as case studies are. This, we strongly feel, after we tested them out and got a glowing response from students as well as the faculty. And if the executive is around when the Executive Brief is played out, nothing like that. Running through some of these Briefs, one can feel the joy in using – and learning from – this powerful pedagogical tool.

Annexure-I

A Suggested Orchestration

Executive Brief is a new pedagogical tool developed to engage and excite the students. It is a brief case in video format. Each executive brief comes with three different, but complementing products Part I (Executive Brief), Part II (Executive Response) and Part III (Executive Note (a Teaching Note)).



Executive Brief (Part I: Executive Brief)

In this video, the executive in question (an entrepreneur, a CEO, a VP, or a GM, etc.) shares certain information. This information is divided (ideally) into 4/5/6 distinct segments. In each segment, a particular idea is shared. At the end of each segment, the executive poses a dilemma to the students. It's something like, "can you solve it for me, please?" Therefore, each executive brief will have 4/5/6 decision dilemmas.

More importantly, Part I must be shown in the classroom first. Divide the class into teams handling each dilemma or throw open the dilemmas to the students; let them air their views and resolve the dilemmas.

Part II (Executive Response) should be shown next.

Executive Brief (Part II: Executive Response)

After students come up with their solutions in Part I, move over to Part II. In which the executive outlines how the dilemmas were resolved. More than how well the executive did this, the students need to focus on what variables helped resolve the dilemmas. After all, no one plans for a failure! This video helps students weigh in their solutions against the executive's, making it quite a rewarding experience.

Executive Brief (Part III: Executive Note (Teaching Note))

This note primarily recounts how this video case was handled in the author's class/es. Suggestive in nature, this note elaborates on the intended pedagogical/academic underpinnings of the video case.