



# United Nations Global Compact

## Business Case Studies: Brief Research Guidelines

The UN Global Compact seeks to contribute to a better understanding of good business practices related to the internalization of the ten Global Compact principles within core business processes and activities, as well as on partnerships aimed at advancing broader sustainable development objectives. One instrument that supports this learning objective is the development of business case studies. The following are broad guidelines for researchers and companies interested in developing case studies in the context of the Global Compact.

### Global Compact Business Case Studies

A Global Compact Business Case Study is an independently prepared discussion of an important experience company managers went through, substantiated with the information available to internal decision makers and intended to enable others to learn from that experience. Although data included in the document comes from multiple sources, the case author stands apart from the company and other stakeholders, bringing *a credible and balanced perspective* to the case preparation. Case authors are usually academics or graduate students, staff of civil society organizations or consultants who are not linked to the company and the experience that is the subject of the case. Credibility through independent development is an important quality indicator of Global Compact Business Case Studies.

Business Case Studies focus on either the **internalization of the Global Compact principles** or on **partnership projects**. The initiatives described in the case should be innovative, and strategically linked to the core activities of the firm (as opposed to an ancillary philanthropic activity), and interesting for other managers to learn from.

### Why should a company participate in a Case Study development?

The preparation of a Business Case Study requires a commitment. However, the range of benefits for a company that engages as a “case subject” is extensive:

- **Internal learning** to improve future decision making and external communication
- **Access to the experience and learning** of peers, academics and other experts
- **Credit from local communities**, governments, investors and the public for transparency and innovative approaches or solutions to complex problems
- **Positive public recognition** for submitting to the process and allowing a transparent appraisal of a key issue, particularly where the issue is not perceived as an unmitigated success

The Global Compact encourages companies to see case preparation as an internal learning process and a valuable opportunity to better understand how decisions are taken and how others perceive the company’s actions. Release of the case on the Global Compact website and in Global Compact publications requires the company’s prior consent.

## Who develops a case?

The Global Compact promotes a team approach for case study development. The case preparation team is usually composed of a researcher, as well as a representative of the company and concerned stakeholder organizations. Companies normally do not finance the development of the case in order to enhance their independence.

Case authors benefit from:

- **Access** to company experience and real-world examples within their fields of interest
- **Research opportunities** for their colleagues, students and/or advisees
- Potential **publication** of the case in a UN Global Compact publication

## Learning Objectives

The Global Compact Business Case study is distinguished from other documents by its *learning objectives*. A Case Study aims to:

- Present a process (including drivers, key players, obstacles) **and** an outcome;
- Include as yet unanswered questions, pointing directions for further experimentation;
- Present multiple, relevant points of view with enough detail to suggest their intrinsic merit;
- Provide a learning opportunity to all stakeholders (as well as case authors); and
- Provide a document rich and suggestive enough to serve multiple purposes such as:
  - Discussion material for internal company training programs;
  - Discussion material for internal Global Compact Local Networks;
  - Background material for discussions among companies as well as relevant NGO and community groups;
  - Background material for journalists exploring relevant issues;
  - Public record of the company's actions;
  - A resource for faculty adaptation into business school teaching case studies;
  - A trigger for in-depth academic research.

## Format

A Global Compact Business Case Study is less dense and more user-friendly than a research case study. It is also more multi-faceted than a traditional teaching case study, and includes the outcomes of the particular issue described, such that readers can assess what worked well and what they may wish to alter in future related activities. The case studies can nevertheless identify fruitful topics for further examination by teachers and researchers. Global Compact case studies are usually around 15-pages long, and follow a similar format:

- A. **Case Abstract:** One paragraph, identifying the company, the relevant Global Compact Principles and research question addressed, and a brief statement of the company actions.
- B. **Company Profile:** A brief description of the company, major products or services, age and location, sales and revenues, recent trends, brief background on key company decision makers featured in the case, and other relevant information.
- C. **Straightforward chronological account of the case “story”.** The account includes: a statement of the problem and issue addressed; identification of the “drivers”, motivation and key internal and external players; description of the process, challenges, perceptions and responses; outcomes and impacts; and unanswered questions, usually underscored by quotes from people interviewed.
- D. **An analytical framework** (see below).
- E. **Background Information:** Relevant annexes to the case; date of preparation; people interviewed and sites visited by the case development team; case authors and contacts.

## Analytical Framework

The central purpose of case studies is to provide a learning opportunity and increase the body of knowledge related to the practical implementation of the Global Compact principles. To maximize their value it is important that case studies lend themselves to aggregate and comparative analysis. Accordingly, their analytical framework must follow common themes. For the two different types of case studies, **Internalization of Principles** and **Partnerships**, authors are therefore asked to use the following analytical frameworks.

### *Case Studies on Internalization of the Global Compact Principles*

The Performance Model is a comprehensive framework that can be used to analyze and describe how the company is engaged in the subject of the case study<sup>1</sup>:

1. **Vision:** How well are the principles and values reflected in the vision of the company?
2. **Leadership:** How do leaders at all levels within the company engage in the promotion and implementation of the company vision; the Global Compact principles; and the issue of the case study? In what ways does the company play a positive leadership role within its sphere of influence? (Within the country and the local community? With its supply chain and industry sector?)
3. **Empowerment:** How well does the company empower – organizes and informs, shows and motivates, trains and rewards, listens and trusts – its employees? How do activities such as recruitment, training and the setting of individual and team performance targets reflect an attitude of empowerment in the context of implementing the Global Compact principles or the issue of the case study?
4. **Policies and strategies:** How clear does the company state the way it works and what it wants to achieve? How well are the Global Compact principles and the issue of the case study reflected in policies and strategies?
5. **Resources:** How coherent is the company's allocation of resources with what it wants to achieve? Are sufficient financial, managerial, technological and human resources dedicated to the implementation of Global Compact principles and the issue of the case study? How are they integrated into the company's accounting and management systems?
6. **Innovation and process:** How has the challenge of embracing the Global Compact been seen by the company as an opportunity to innovate? How open is the company to reviewing core perceptions, practices and processes in order to search for innovative solutions?
7. **Impact on people:** What has been the impact of the companies' engagement? Has the company been thoughtful about and responsive to this impact on workers? How is it measured and communicated?
8. **Impact on value chain:** How well does the company seek out opportunities for alliances and collaboration in implementing the Global Compact principles? What impact has its actions related to the issue of the case study on its value chain?
9. **Impact on society:** How are groups of concerned stakeholders impacted? How are those impacts measured, communicated and acted upon? Are stakeholder views effectively incorporated into the decision-making process?
10. **Reporting and communication on progress:** How well are results measured? How transparent is communication on progress?

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<sup>1</sup> More information on the performance model is available on the Global Compact webpage: <http://www.unglobalcompact.org>

### ***Case Studies on Partnership Projects***

The Global Compact encourages companies to participate in partnership projects to advance the Millennium Development Goals. Companies are particularly invited to share their experiences on such partnership projects through case studies. Again, in order to allow for aggregate and comparative analysis, case studies should address under the analytical framework each of the following elements:

1. **Millennium Development Goal(s)** addressed
2. **Partners Involved:** e.g. Governments, NGOs, UN Agencies, Labour, Private Sector, Other civil society organization. What role did the different partners play in the partnership? What was the comparative advantage of each partner? (What did each partner bring to the table?)
3. **Project Description:** What problem was addressed? Why did the company choose to address this issue? What did the company choose to engage other partners? What were the main objectives of the project? What indicators and timeline were used to measure progress?
4. **Project Implementation:** Were any instruments used to ensure that the partnership was effective and sustainable? What actions were taken by the company? What actions were taken by the company's partners? What organization took the lead in building the partnership and implementing the project? Were beneficiaries consulted in the process?
5. **Project Financing:** How was the project financed? What were the costs and who contributed? What major contributions were delivered in-kind?
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Was the project monitored and evaluated? How was the project monitored and evaluated and by whom? What feedback mechanisms were in place?
7. **Project Results:** What did the project achieve? Quantify and qualify which goals were met and which were not? What were some of the lessons learned? How were the results communicated within the company and externally?

### **The Publication Process**

Once the case study draft is complete, it is submitted to the Global Compact Office. The draft is then forwarded to an independent peer reviewer, who provides substantive and editorial feedback. The feedback is passed back to the company as well as the case author, who incorporates it into the final draft. Final publication, through the Global Compact website or in a Global Compact publication, is conditional on the company providing written consent for release.

Companies, case authors and other stakeholders are strongly encouraged to share their learning and experience through participation in Global Compact and other relevant events, workshops and forums.

For more information please see the Global Compact website: [www.unglobalcompact.org](http://www.unglobalcompact.org), or contact the Global Compact at: [globalcompact@un.org](mailto:globalcompact@un.org)