



Business Case Studies: Guidelines

The UN Global Compact seeks to foster 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 tool that supports this learning objective is the development of business case studies. The following are broad guidelines for authors 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 events that company managers experienced relating to the company's implementation of one or more of the Global Compact principles, 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. Every effort should be undertaken to incorporate feedback on the matters described in the case study from the perspective of the company's stakeholders, including employees, employee representatives (such as trade unions), local communities, and civil society organizations, as appropriate. 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 the development of a Case Study?

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 understand better 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 encourages 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 the direction for further work and/or dialogue;
- 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 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, community or other stakeholder 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 intended to be more multi-faceted than an academic/teaching case study. It includes the outcomes of the particular issue described, so that readers can assess what worked well or not as 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 account of the case “story” and analysis.** 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. The analytical framework for each type of case study – internalization versus case studies about partnership projects – is different (see below). There should be special emphasis on “how” the company did what it did, what did not work as well as what did work and what the company would have done differently if it had the opportunity to go back in time. In other words, the lessons learned are particularly important and valuable.
- D. **Conclusion.** The conclusion of the case study should sum up the main lessons from the experience described in the case study and include, where appropriate, implications for others contemplating undertaking similar actions.
- E. **Discussion questions.** To encourage greater use of the case studies by a variety of audiences, case authors are also asked to provide a list of five discussion questions to accompany the case study and facilitate discussion relating to the case.

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 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.¹ Note, for case studies on human rights, the framework has been further developed and elaborated in the document “A Human Rights Management Framework,” which is available at:

http://www.unglobalcompact.org/Issues/human_rights/Tools_and_Guidance_Materials.html

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 – organize and inform, show and motivate, train and reward, listen and trust – 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?

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

4. **Policies and strategies:** How clearly 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?

Case Studies on Partnership Projects

The Global Compact encourages companies to participate in partnership projects to advance UN goals, including 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 comparative analysis, case studies should discuss each of the following elements:

1. **Global Compact principles and/or 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 International Business Leaders Forum has developed a high quality tool on how to prepare case studies about partnerships. Called “The Case Study Toolkit, Partnership Case Studies as Tools for Change,” it is likely to be a very useful resource for case authors working on case studies about partnerships. It can be downloaded from:

<http://www.thepartneringinitiative.org/mainpages/case/tool/>

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 (or, more preferably, a peer review panel), who provides substantive as well as 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, or contact the Global Compact at: globalcompact@un.org

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