Making the Most of Case-Method Learning: The Benefits of Case-Method Learning

Case-method learning brings numerous benefits to the participants in the case learning session. This style of learning

- ...is focused on doing (what the protagonist should do in the situation he or she faces), not merely on knowing, though knowing something new (a theory, a tool or framework and how to use it) is also a key result.
- ...sharpens analytical and problem-solving skills as evidence provided in the case, typically both qualitative and quantitative evidence, is weighed and evaluated, and the “wheat and chaff” are identified and separated.
- ...develops persuasive and argumentative skills, as theory and evidence are marshalled to support one’s point of view.
- ...allows for valuable insights to come from anyone in the room. The learning isn’t just one-way, from instructor to participant. It is peer-to-peer, or even participant to instructor. Some in the room may have dealt with similar decisions and learned from having done so, and their insights add value for everyone else.
- ...In this way, case-method learning is also confidence-building, as participants learn the value that lies in their own experiences and points of view.
- ...when accumulated across multiple sessions, can provide participants with exposure to a wide variety of businesses, markets, industries, and geographical settings, any of which may prove useful in a particular participant’s business setting.
- ...Case-method learners, collectively, are responsible for their own learning. If they prepare well and are fully engaged, learning will occur.
- ...develops participants’ ability to “think on their feet”.
- ...is often inspiring, once “the rest of the story” is revealed by the instructor following the discussion.
- ...is “sticky.” Colorful characters, dramatic case settings, and tension-filled debates about what the protagonist should do are likely to be memorable, sometimes for decades.
- ...helps participants recognize, grapple with and understand the complexity of the intellectual, political, and social challenges involved in being a business leader. Sometimes identifying the real problem is the most difficult part of a leader’s job in “cracking the case.

For instructors, there are also benefits, especially when teaching material to an audience that has some experience in or expertise with the subject matter:

- Teaching experienced participants is like doing research – you learn how they do whatever it is that is being discussed.
- Every case session goes differently, even with the best-laid teaching plan. No two sessions are ever alike. This keeps your teaching fresh. The surprises offer learning to the instructor, too.
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- Skilled case-method teaching – that is, skilled facilitation combined with the selection of excellent case and other materials – makes for happy participants! Why? Because they become actively engaged in the learning, can relate to what’s being learned, and can see its applicability in their businesses tomorrow.