



POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA  
IN  
STRATEGIC BUSINESS IT



**MODULE:  
IT: THE NEXT FIVE YEARS**

**ASSIGNMENT TITLE:  
CASE STUDY**

**DECEMBER 2009**

**Important Notes:**

- ❖ Please refer to the Assignment Presentation Requirements for advice on how to set out your assignment. These can be found on the NCC Education *Campus*. Scroll down the left hand side of the screen until you reach Personal Support. Click on this, and then on Policies and Advice. You will find the Assignment Presentation Requirements under the Advice section.
- ❖ You must familiarise yourself with the NCC Education Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism Policy and ensure that you acknowledge all the sources which you use in your work. The policy is available on *Campus*. Follow the instructions above, but click on Policies rather than Advice.
- ❖ You must complete the ‘**Statement and Confirmation of Own Work**’. The form is available on the Policies section of *Campus*. Scroll down the left hand side until you reach Personal Support. Click on this and then click on Policies and Advice.
- ❖ Please make a note of the recommended word count. You could lose marks if you write 10% more or less than this.
- ❖ You must submit a paper copy and digital copy (on disk or similarly acceptable medium). Media containing viruses, or media which cannot be run directly, will result in a fail grade being awarded for this module.
- ❖ All electronic media will be checked for plagiarism.

**Marker's comments:**

**Moderator's comments:**

**Mark:**

**Moderated**

**Final**

**Mark:**

**Mark:**

## Introduction

This one assignment within the module will address all of the module's learning outcomes. You are required to produce a case study that addresses the questions in the four Tasks.

You are required to produce a mini strategy case study (between 4750-5000 words) on an organisation that you:

- a) Are studying at (e.g. college, University)
- b) Have worked for or are working at.

You are required to choose one piece of information technology that has had a major impact on the organisation. You may choose a general technology (for example, the Internet, email), or more specific systems (for example, virtual learning environment, marketing information system).

Ensure you agree the organisation of the case study with your tutor. The case study should be capable of illustrating your understanding of how the competitive environment and internal capabilities of the company have combined to influence its IS strategies and development. Your choice of organisation must also demonstrate how the use of technology has related at least in part to the development of competitive advantage. The case study should be written in the style of a mini-case similar to those presented in many of the strategy texts.

The mini-case must not be just a brief history of the business; instead it must clearly focus on specific strategic IT/IS issues e.g. competition, changes in customer preferences, increased use of technology in processes to increase competitiveness, technological innovations, threat of new entrants to market, outsourcing of activities to improve cost efficiencies ... the list could be endless. However, you need only to address the most important issues. You are required also to identify how the external IT/IS environment impacts on the internal workings of the organisation you have selected.

The following steps should help you in the process of writing the mini-case.

Select the organisation or company you wish to write the case study on. If the organisation is large in terms of customers, locations, products, then you should narrow this down to particular Strategic Business Units within the company. Your tutor must agree your choice of organisation.

Decide on the specific strategic issues relating to competitiveness which the case study is going to address. This should make some reference to external issues or factors and the internal capability of the organisation. Your case study should not require in-depth knowledge of the inner workings of the company, but should highlight particular issues of strategic significance. However, remember a mini case study is NOT simply a description of the company taken from various sources e.g. company web pages!

## Task 1 – 20 Marks

Here, define the aims and scope of your case study. Briefly critique the method of enquiry you will adopt. Identify any assumptions you will be making in conducting your research. You may provide some descriptive narrative that gives brief background information on the organisation and an account of the circumstances or situation of the organisation. The case might focus on providing a discussion of particular issues, and/or managerial actions.

**Approximately 1000 words.**

## **Task 2 – 25 Marks**

Using quality sources of reference, provide a summary of external drivers that are influencing the case under examination to make more use of IT.

You are required to undertake an external environmental analysis of the industry the organisation operates within; what competitive pressures exist within the industry? How does IT/IS impact on their positioning for competitive advantage? What changes in IT/IS are likely to affect the organisation in the future? The important point is that analytical tools (e.g. SWOT, PESTEL etc.) are properly used and included in the appendices. The use of information technology/systems in the sector should be appraised and possible future technological innovations examined. Ensure all source material is acknowledged in the case study, including citations within the main body of the text.

**Approximately 1500 words.**

## **Task 3 – 30 Marks**

Using consequence analysis tools, provide a discussion on the likely impact of IT/IS on the case under examination. This section should focus attention on the internal resources/ competencies and capabilities of the company; for example, what are they doing that is either helping or hindering them in the use of IT/IS?

This analysis should be drawn from the ‘effect/probability/action grids’ (to be included in the appendices). In this section of the case study, the focus will be on the internal process, management and strategy of the organisation.

**Approximately 1500 words.**

## **Task 4 – 25 Marks**

Drawing on the previous two sections, the fourth section of the case study should provide an overview of key issues that are directly linked to systems development. The aim in this section is to show how the external and internal environment of the case under examination influences systems development. Your discussions should focus on the initial stages of the SSM (feasibility, analysis and design aspects).

**Approximately 1000 words.**

## **Guidance**

These Tasks require you to demonstrate your analytical skills and give justifications for your answers. Note: Any models or diagrams you wish to show as supporting analysis or information should be included in the appendices and do not count in your word count. Clarity and brevity, given the word count, are important.

You must of course provide references for the sources you have used to write the mini-case and commentary, using the Harvard referencing system. (Not included in the word count).

Consult with your tutor if you are uncertain about any aspects of the assignment.

## Submission Requirements

To pass the assignment candidates must:

- Complete all the four sections of the case study.
- Submit their work in a single word-processed document of no more than 5000 words, excluding appendices.
- Produce clear and specific reasoning and argument to justify answers.
- Make appropriate reference to relevant concepts, techniques and theories
- Appropriately cite all information sources.
- Include all tools used in the appendices.
- Provide a reference page.

### **Warning: All media must be virus free!**

Media containing viruses, or media which cannot be run directly, will result in a FAIL grade being awarded for this module.

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your assignment.**