

Letter from the Editor

“Raw” vs “cooked” cases: *TCJ* prefers cases “well done”

Rebecca J. Morris

In 2024, the centennial anniversary of the case method at the Harvard Business School (HBS) will be celebrated (History, nd). The format of the HBS case has long been described as the “classic” model for teaching cases (Vega, 2013). The classic case ranges from 10 to 20 pages in length and is used in the classroom to encourage students to think critically about real business issues. Most case writers experienced this approach in their own educational journey and have written this type of case for publication in journals such as *TCJ*.

The “raw” case approach

Yale University’s School of Management advocates a “raw” case approach. After experimenting with multimedia cases, the Yale faculty developed a unique approach that they believed improved upon the classic case method – the raw case. The differences between the raw case and the classic methodology can best be appreciated in the following quote from the Yale website:

Raw cases replicate the way that individuals access and use information in the real world: management dilemmas do not manifest themselves in neat 10-15 page narratives, but rely on an individual’s ability to synthesize information from a variety of channels. The web-based platform also allows students to view, search, absorb, and analyze the material in a non-linear manner. Determining what information is relevant and how it relates to the questions at hand is part of the learning experience (Raw Cases, nd).

Raw cases provide extensive data, news reports and video interviews about a real situation. By design, the raw case approach promotes case analysis in small teams as the cases contain more information than a single student may be able to digest.

“Cooked” cases

For Yale, “cooked” cases differ from “raw” cases in the way the material is presented and the narrative framework of the case (“Raw and Cooked”, nd). “Cooked” cases are paper based, written from the point of view of a protagonist or decision maker and are more linear in narrative. Yale’s “cooked” cases are comparable to the classic cases described above.

As shown in Table I, there are two primary differences between cooked and raw cases – the amount of filtering of information done by the case writer and information sufficiency (open to outside sources or self-contained). This naturally leads to the next question – which approach is better?

Which is better – raw or cooked?

There is no right or wrong answer to the raw vs cooked cases debate. The real answer to this question depends on the learning objectives for the case. If the pedagogical focus is for students to learn to gather data for solving problems in complex situations, the raw case may provide an effective learning opportunity. Although advocates of the raw case approach suggest that raw cases are superior in terms of simulating the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity” (Shi and Dow, 2017) of the real-world business settings, well-written cooked cases can also effectively address the complexities of real business challenges. Whether cases are consumed raw or cooked, both approaches give students the opportunity to make sense of the situation, develop options and make decisions just like real managers.

Does *TCJ* publish raw cases?

For more than a decade, *TCJ* has emphasized cases of the cooked variety – publishing full-length and compact cases that are primarily text based. The journal has included photographs and other graphical elements in cases, but has not yet published cases with hyperlinks or video links.



Table 1 Comparing “raw” vs “cooked”

	<i>Raw cases</i>	<i>Cooked or classic cases</i>
Transmittal medium	Online, multimedia	Paper based but may be online
Format	Video, infographics and text	Primarily text based, some photos and graphics
Information sources	Reports, articles, interviews, videos, photographs, original documents, links to other websites	Reports, articles, interviews, videos, photographs, original documents, links to other websites
Role of case writer	Information is unfiltered by case writer. Case is open to additional research by students	Information is filtered by case writer. Case is meant to be self-contained – all information necessary for analysis is included in the case
Case focus	Multidimensional in terms of stakeholders and dilemmas	Typically one primary focus in terms of a single decision maker and dilemma
Narrative sequence	Non-linear – students prioritize the information they read	Linear – cases are intended to be read from the opening hook to the closing scenario
Pedagogical strategy	Team analysis Can be assigned as an integrative component across multiple courses	Analysis by individual students or teams Typically focused on a single course
Target audience	Graduate or executive level	Undergraduate, graduate or executive level
Student preparation time	More information may mean longer preparation times for students	Tighter focus permits less preparation time for students
Instructor preparation time	Extensive due to the multidimensionality of the case	Less extensive
Teaching ease	More difficult as not all students will have read/viewed the same materials	Less difficult as all students will have accessed the same information
Resources for creation	Extensive in terms of people, money and time Most raw cases are global and required site visits to film video segments Sample case involved 8 different people with titles such as video producer/director, multimedia specialist, and website design	Significantly less extensive in terms of people, money and time Primary/field researched cases require site visits Cases can be written by single individuals

Theoretically, *TCJ*'s status as an online journal would permit publication of internet-based content, but so far no one has submitted anything like a raw case for consideration for publication. However, the *TCJ* publisher and editor have expressed interest in cases utilizing innovative technology or twists on traditional formats. Thus the door is open to publication of raw cases. *TCJ*'s primary interest is in the cases that engage students in valuable learning opportunities in whatever form required for effective pedagogy.

In the end, it is not about whether the case is “cooked” or “raw.” For *TCJ*, it is about whether the case is “well done” or of high quality. For *TCJ*, a case should present the factual story of a real business dilemma in a form that enables the students to achieve relevant and important learning objectives. Whether the case is written in a traditional format or is curated as for a raw case, the quality of the work very much depends upon the relationship between inputs and outcomes. If the case is to be considered effective, both students and instructors must perceive their efforts in preparing and analyzing the case to be less than or equal to the learning and teaching outcomes achieved. The “well-done” case thus provides learning value commensurate with the instructor and students’ investment in preparing the case. These are the cases *TCJ* seeks to publish – those that are “well-done,” regardless of their form.

Case writers as chefs

Continuing the culinary metaphors, case writers can learn a few things from great chefs. Top chefs distinguish themselves through their creativity, passion, business sense, attention to detail, effective team skills, commitment to practice, ability to multitask, commitment to quality and the ability to handle criticism (Top 10 Qualities of a Great Culinary Chef, nd). Aspiring case writers would do well to cultivate these same qualities.

Just as great chefs deliver kitchen alchemy – “the moment when ingredients combine to form something more delectable than the sum of their parts” (Morgenstern, nd), superior case writers develop a special alchemy. Under their talents, basic ingredients (primary and secondary data) are transformed into composed cases where every component is absolutely

essential and when combined together, give the reader something “delicious,” satisfying and memorable. Whether served “cooked” or “raw,” the best cases nurture the students’ minds and leave them wanting for more.

In this issue

The authors in this issue have skillfully combined carefully chosen ingredients to create cases to delight the pedagogical palate. These cases are “well done:”

- **Managing change at Urban Affordable Housing (UAH)** (Matthew Mazzei and Charles Carson). UAH, Inc. was a real estate asset management syndication firm that sponsored affordable housing to low-income families and seniors across the USA. The case examines the firm’s management of an internal information technology (IT) change initiative. The case follows the firm’s recently hired IT Manager, Anthony Bryant, as he works to change a culture while acquiring resources and acceptance for the project he was hired to oversee. Bryant deals with numerous changing priorities, inadequate sponsorship, resistance from various levels and a dearth of resources as he struggles to get the organization on board with a long overdue database conversion.
- **Buenas Diaz: Status quo or pivot!** (Monika Hudson and Frank O’Hara). The family matriarch dies without a written succession plan, leaving her children to determine how to cope with the continuity of the family’s expanding food empire. This becomes increasingly difficult when one of the siblings wants to incur expensive, yet required, renovations to the family’s original restaurant. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the two older siblings are focused on corporate expansion efforts, while the youngest is trying to demonstrate her competence in running the family’s historical restaurant. A central focus of the case is to understand and identify effective strategies that should guide the firm-related choices each sibling makes.
- **Jessica’s dilemma: Competing loyalties** (Tuvana Rua, Leanna Lawter, Jeanine Andreassi and Christopher York). This case is the true story of a Staff Accountant, Jessica, who discovered embezzlement by the Controller, Michael. Jessica worked at a US subsidiary of a multinational organization. Jessica found suspicious manual journal entries in the general ledger. When she questioned her boss, Michael, about her findings, he first denied the situation, then blamed another employee, and ultimately tried to intimidate Jessica so that she would not press the issue. Jessica’s investigation led to the discovery that Michael had been embezzling money from the company. To complicate matters, Jessica and her husband had a close relationship with Michael and his wife outside the office. Jessica had to make a choice between being loyal to a family friend and being honest and loyal toward her employer.
- **Social entrepreneurship with vedic wisdom** (Pankaj Madan). The case illustrates the social entrepreneurial journey of Ramdev who developed Patanjali Yogpeth as a successful enterprise that provided low-cost physical and mental treatment through the ancient science of yoga. The case provides an inside perspective to the success of Patanjali as a social brand and the controversies associated with it. The study describes the philosophy, infrastructure, innovations, marketing and promotional practices of the organization. It also sought answers to the challenges faced by the organization to sail smoothly in the turbulence caused by the changing course of actions by its leader.

Compact case

- **Teradyne: hitting the Great Wall** (Laurie L. Levesque, K. Hung and Hasan Arslan). This case presents a problem with competing in the Chinese market faced by Jeff Hotchkiss in the early 2000s, then President of the Assembly Test Division (ATD) at Teradyne. Teradyne is the world’s largest producer of automatic test equipment for electronic assembly on production lines. Hotchkiss needed to find a solution to prevent ATD from continued loss of market share in equipment sales and loss of service revenue in China. Various factors to be considered include customer differentiation and service supply chain configuration.

References

History (nd), *History – About Us*, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, MA, web, May 31, 2017.

Morgenstern, E. (nd), “Chef Quotes”, Brainy Quote, web, June 9, 2017.

Raw Cases (nd), *The ‘Raw’ Case Approach*, Yale School of Management, New Haven, CT, web, May 31, 2017.

Raw and Cooked (nd), *Case Study Research and Development*, Yale School of Management, web, May 31, 2017.

Shi, Y. and Dow, S. (2017), “A new approach to case studies: raw data, real projects, and on-demand lectures”, working paper, February 16, ResearchGate, Middlebury Institute of International Studies, Monterey, CA, web, May 31, 2017.

Top 10 Qualities of a Great Culinary Chef. (nd), “Culinary Arts”, web, June 2, 2017.

Vega, G. (2013), *The Case Writing Workbook: A Self-Guided Workshop*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, NY, p. 5.