



How to Build a Business Case

**Presented by
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Overview

- Basic Business Concepts
- What is a Business Case?
- How to Build a Business Case
- Exercises

About the Speaker

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Ground Rules and Warnings

- Group Participation
- Speaking in Hypertext
- Chinese Artists

Basic Business Concepts

- The goal of most companies is to make money for its owner or shareholders (profit)
- To make a profit, a company must take in more money than it pays out
- That is, unless you are a .com company whose investors throw money at you like it's going out of style....

Basic Business Concepts

- It costs money to make a product
 - Direct Costs (materials, labor, etc.)
 - Indirect Costs (facilities, insurance, etc.)
- The more effectively you manage these elements, the more profit you make

Cost Center vs. Profit Center

- Management tends to look at the world in black and white:
- You are either a Profit Center...
- ...or a Cost Center

Profit Center

- Part of a company that generates more revenue than it takes to operate
- Examples:

Cost Center

- Part of a company that generates *less* revenue (if any) than it takes to operate
- Examples:

Gray Areas

- While many departments are clearly a cost center or profit center (black or white), there are some "gray" areas

Gray Areas: Tech Support

- Are customers charged for tech support?
 - Per call?
 - Included in a “maintenance fee”?
- Does the revenue cover the cost of the call?
 - More than the cost = Profit Center
 - Less than the cost = Cost Center

Gray Areas: PM & Documentation

- Are project managers and technical writers in your company considered an integral part of the development team and therefore are considered a profit center?
- Or are they considered something that “has to be there” like boxes and bubble wrap and therefore is considered a cost center...
- ...a commodity to be acquired for the lowest acceptable quality at the lowest possible price?

Speaking CxO

- Upper management looks at expenditures differently than you and I do.
- CxOs are concerned with:
 - Increasing revenues
 - Decreasing costs (both direct and indirect)
 - Which (hopefully!) results in more profit

Two Types of Spending

- Spending money to reduce costs (current or future)
 - “Cost Avoidance” (CA)
- Spending money to make money
 - “Return on Investment” (ROI)

Cost Avoidance (CA)

- Is an action taken to decrease current costs or prevent future costs
- Examples

Return on Investment (ROI)

- The amount of revenue that is anticipated to be generated as the direct result of an expenditure
- Measured in time and money
 - Must state how long it will take to recoup the money spent
 - And how much money will (hopefully) be generated

Return on Investment (ROI)

- The return can be from boosting existing revenue sources or generating new revenue sources
- Can also be applied to non-monetary returns like "good will"
- Examples

What is a Business Case?

- A business case is a verbal or written proposal that:
 - States a problem
 - Describes the solution
 - States how much it will cost to implement the solution
 - States the ROI or CA that will be realized if the solution is implemented

Warning: The result is not always logical

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- Air Cargo Story

Elements of a Business Case

- Executive Summary
- Current Situation
- Proposal
- Financial Proof (ROI or CA)
- Conclusion
- Supporting Materials

Business Case Elements:

Executive Summary

- Summarizes the problem
- Entices the reader to read the rest of the document

Business Case Elements:

Current Situation

- Describe the current situation:
What is the problem? *Why* is it a problem?
- The problem *must be presented in terms important to the audience.*
- You must state why the situation is a problem for *the company*, not just for *you*.

Business Case Elements:

Current Situation

- Exercises

Business Case Elements:

Proposal

- What is being proposed?
- How does it solve the problem?
- How much does it cost (if anything)?
- What is the ROI or CA?
- Address both risks and opportunities
- Anticipate objections and preempt them

Business Case Elements:

Financial Proof

- Demonstrates the ROI or CA:
 - How did you calculate the ROI or CA?
 - Where did you get those numbers?
- Use historical company data or industry standard numbers if possible
- Keep it simple and provide full details in the supporting materials

Business Case Elements:

Conclusion

- Summarizes the problem and the solution.
- It states by spending \$____, it will generate \$____ in cost savings/revenue.
- It ends with a call to action

Business Case Elements:

Supporting Materials

- List references and sources
- Provide raw data (if necessary)
- Provide more detailed financials

Summary

- A business case is a verbal or written proposal that:
 - States a problem *in terms the audience will understand and relate to*
 - Offers a solution and how much it will cost to implement the solution
 - Estimates the ROI or CA that will be realized if the solution is implemented

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