

Geographic Information Technology Training Alliance (GITTA) presents:

General Introduction to the GITTA case studies

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1. General Introduction to the GITTA case studies

Introduction

"Success in business comes from experience and knowledge, from the ability to analyse and reflect, from observing and interacting with others, and learning from these encounters." (Harvard Business School 2003). Based on these principles, the Harvard Business School developed the so-called "Case Study Method" in 1908. The aim of this method is to create a realistic learning environment and confront students with real, complex economic and business challenges of an enterprise. You, as a learner, take on the role of a decision maker who has to base decisions on information that may be incomplete, limited or incorrect. Thus, through hands-on, interactive experiences, you learn the skills and proficiency that you need to successfully realize an entrepreneurial task (Harvard Business School 2003).

The aim of the GITTA case studies is to use realistic problem settings to prepare you to deal with current professional requirements in the best possible way. You are given the opportunity to think and work in a holistic, practice- and goal oriented way and to work self sufficiently on complex topics.

GITTA offers case studies of varying levels of difficulty which fit the learning contents of the "Basic" and "Intermediate" modules.

Overview

In this introductory lesson you will be given all necessary information and basics on how to work on a GITTA case study. In this lesson, you will learn:

- how a case study is defined
- how a GITTA case study is structured in a sequence of phases and how these phases work (didactic model)
- why you are required to keep a learning diary

Learning Objectives

- you have a basic understanding of GITTA case studies
- you know the didactic model of the GITTA case studies
- you know about the learning diary and how to use it

1.1. Definition und explanations

1.1.1. What is a case study?

Kaiser (1983) has defined a case study as a teaching method or learning strategy in which the students are confronted with “practical cases” from different aspects of life. The methodology aims at practical solution strategies rather than at a transfer of theoretical knowledge.

A case study is based on real conditions. You will be provided with the necessary case study material. It contains all important information in the form of original texts, which means that this material has not been edited like a textbook but may be incomplete or incorrect (Müller et al. 1991).

The characteristics of a case study can be summarized as:

- work on a real problem
- open solution; there is not one correct path to a solution approach
- case study material is provided though it is not edited
- theoretical knowledge is not sufficient for understanding

What does it mean for you?

For you, this means that in the beginning, you will receive all the case study material (such as GIS data and additional information material) necessary in order to be able to analyse and solve the stated problem. However, you will get original data that may be incomplete or even incorrect so you might not be able to adopt it straight away. First, you have to think about how to process this material. You might, for example, have to make sure that units are consistent, incorrect data filtered out or adjustments made before you can process the material further.

The solution of a case study is open and not forced upon you. For you, this means that you will not be guided step by step but have to think solution-oriented and look for one or several solution strategies before analysing and applying them. Of course, there will be a supervisor in case you have problems or questions.

1.2. Didactic Model of a GITTA case study

1.2.1. Didactic Model

Case studies vary in difficulty and duration and are adjusted to the "Basic" and "Intermediate" contents of teaching. To guarantee a consistent structure of the individual case studies, a didactic model was developed based on the structure of a case study designed by Kaiser (1983). It can be divided into six phases:

- Phase 1: Definition of the task
- Phase 2: Problem analysis
- Phase 3: Planning
- Phase 4: Realization
- Phase 5: Exchange of information
- Phase 6: Evaluation

The relationships between the individual phases and the documentation that you are required to provide are illustrated in the following animation.

Only pictures can be viewed in this version! For Flash, animations, movies etc. see online version. Only screenshots of animations will be displayed. [\[link\]](#)

1.2.2. Download

Click here for a pdf-document on the didactic model and explanations on the individual phases. [Didactic Model \(Download\)](#)

1.3. Learning diary

1.3.1. General information on the learning diary

With internet based learning lacking active exchange between students and supervisors, it is important for you to reflect upon your own learning process. One tool for this is the learning diary, which can assist you in various ways:

- you systematically reflect upon the learning process through targeted questions and recordkeeping
- dealing more intensively with a topic leads to a deepening of your learning experience
- your supervisor has the possibility to trace your learning process and progress. Moreover, the supervisor gains an insight into special interests and difficulties of each student.

The structure of a learning diary is arranged according to phases 2, 3 and 4 of the didactic model of a GITTA case study (problem analysis, planning and realization). Questions were prepared for each of these phases to assist you in reflecting about your learning process.

Procedure

Read through all the questions in the learning diary before beginning to work on the case study. You should update your learning diary during or right after each work session. You are expected to keep it regularly updated so that your supervisor, who is going to check the learning diary, can clarify possible technical misunderstandings in time.

1.3.2. Download

[Click here](#) for a learning diary template.

1.4. Summary

This introductory lesson has given you all the information and basics that you need to work on a GITTA case study.

You have learned how a GITTA case study is defined and what this means for working on it. Moreover, you have read about the didactic model on which GITTA case studies are based. The last section explains how a learning diary is structured and why you are required to keep one.

1.5. Glossary

Case study:

A realistic teaching method in which the students are confronted with up-to-date, complex, real, economic and business challenges of an organization or enterprise.

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