In the study material of strategic management the theory that you study helps you in acquiring sound educational base. At the end of each chapter a small case has also been included. In this subject the learning can be reinforced, made more meaningful and given practical dimensions with the help of practical cases. In management schools it is normal practice to teach this subject largely with the help of cases. Therein students interact amongst themselves and with subject experts to discuss cases and find solutions to the case problems and other questions. However, your course on account of being distance education course makes it difficult to follow such a methodology. You have to evolve an ideal strategy for yourselves to assimilate this subject as intended. You can have following approach.

The first and foremost important thing in a case analyses is not to look for ideal solutions. There cannot be any one best answer to questions that are in the nature of a case study. Case must be analysed and answers written on the basis of the subject matter covered, the interpretation of the facts, and the conclusions that can be drawn logically. Any answer with sound reasoning can be appropriate.

Thus, you should also try to answer them on your own. Analysing cases and writing their solutions require certain abilities that would be generated only when you actually do them. In examinations it is improbable to get the cases that are available in this study material or in other books. Thus you need to develop abilities to analyse cases and write answers to the questions posed, rather than knowing suggested solutions.

You can also form a group of likeminded friends and discuss cases extensively. We suggest that you form a small group to discuss cases and other issues in this subject. In a group you will be able to identify different issues. But at the end do write the answers with pen on paper.

**What is Case Study?**

Case study method was first developed in the 1871 by Christopher Langdell at the Harvard Law School to keep students to learn for themselves by independent thinking and by discovering in the ever tangled skein if human affairs, principles and ideas which have lasting validity and general applicability. A collateral object is to keep them to develop skills in using their knowledge.

The method is based upon the belief that managerial competence can best be attained through the study, contemplation and discussion of concrete cases. The case method is indeed learning by doing. Cases offer a viable substitute by bringing a variety of business organisational problems and permitting students to assume the managers role. Cases, therefore, provide the readers with a kind of experimental exercise through which they enhance their ability to apply textbook knowledge.
‘Case’ is a written description that presents issues and problems calling for solutions or actions on the part of students. When the case is given, students are asked to analyse, identify the problems and to recommend tentative solutions for the same. This method offers to them matter for reflection and brings home to them a sense of complexity of life as opposed to theoretical simplifications and practices in decision-making process. It diagnoses and deals with real life situations. A case study is primarily useful as a technique of developing decision-making skills as well as communication skills and for broadening the perspective of students.

In case study method students are expected to:
1. Master the facts of the case.
2. Define the objectives sought in dealing with the issues in the case.
3. Identify the problems in the case and uncover their probable causes.
4. Develop alternative courses of action.
5. Screen the alternatives using the objectives as the criteria.
6. Select the alternative that is most suitable in keeping with stated objectives.
7. Define the controls needed to make the action effective.
8. To ‘role play’ the action to test its effectiveness.

Objective of The Case Method

Case studies provide an excellent opportunity of developing confidence in problem solving amongst the students. It serves following objectives:
1. It helps the students/trainees to acquire the skills of putting textbook knowledge about strategic management in practice.
2. Getting them out of the habit of being receiver of facts and get into the habit of diagnosing problems, analysing and evaluating alternatives and formulating workable solutions.
3. It trains them to work out answers and solutions, as opposed to rely upon others.
4. Provides them with exposure to a range of practical situations thus offering them a basis for comparison when they begin their own career.

If they understand that these are the objectives of the case method of study, then they are not likely to be bothered by something that puzzles some of them - *What is the answer to this case?*. Thus the purpose of cases is not to learn specific answers but to become skilled in the process of designing a workable and hopefully effective plan of action after evaluating various alternatives and approaches.

Briefly stated the purpose of case method is to inculcate in students ways of thinking strategically and exercising responsible judgement.
Preparing A Written Case Analysis

There is no iron-clad procedure for preparing a written case analysis. With a bit of exposure students can arrive at their own preferred method of writing up a case and learn to adjust their approach to the unique aspects that each case presents. However it is typical for a comprehensive written case analysis to emphasise three points:

**Identification**: It is essential that answers reflect a sharply focused diagnoses of strategic issues and key problems and further demonstrate good business judgement in sizing up the present situation.

**Analysis and evaluation**: This is the most significant and difficult part. Analysis is hard work. In doing this students should bear in mind the following points:

1. They must offer supporting evidence for their views and judgements. They should not rely upon unsupported opinions and over generalisations.
2. They should point out key factors which are crucial.
3. Some information in the case is well established fact, some may be in the form of opinions, judgements and beliefs. Some may be inaccurate. You are expected to assess the correctness/validity of such information.
4. Students should clearly demonstrate that their interpretation of the evidence is reasonable, logical and objective.

**Recommendations**: The last part in written cases should consist of recommendations or plan of action. The recommendations should be logical and consistent with the analysis and make sure that the company is financially sound to carry out what has been recommended. Furthermore recommendations should be in detail to be meaningful. Finally, students should indicate how their plan should be implemented. Here they may give some attention to leadership styles, psychological approaches, motivation and incentive which may bring desired result.

Students should give special attention to the points given below to avoid common errors in the Case Analysis:

1. *Inadequate definition of the problem*: Students must begin with a focus on key issues and problems. Do not make the error of analysing symptoms without determining and defining the root problems.
2. *Search for the answer*: Remember there is no one ‘correct’ answer to a case. There are always several reasonable alternative solutions.
3. *Avoid generalities*: In answering specific recommendations, use of generalities should be avoided. Try to be specific.
4. *Narrow vision*: Cases are often classified as a specific type such as ‘Manpower Planning’, ‘Recruitment’, ‘Job Evaluation’, ‘Leadership Style’ etc. But it should not mean that other human variables should be ignored.
Appendix

5. **Unrealistic solution**: Solutions should not be unrealistic. Such as a wage increase is suggested which is beyond the capacity of the company.

6. **Rehashing the case material**: Students waste time and effort in rewriting unnecessary long history of the company as given in the case. This should be avoided as it is superfluous.

7. **Hasty conclusions**: Students jump to the conclusion after the first reading of the case. This is not correct.