

How to write a professional business case and market it to management

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of Canada

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du Canada



My Background

- Economic evaluation and the business case have been part of my portfolio of work for decades
- My research includes both workplace and systems level studies of economic burden, economic impact and economic evaluation
- Teach business case analysis at McMaster University, University of Toronto, and Pacific Coast University
- Publish in the fields of occupational health and safety, disability management, work disability policy and labour-market policy
- Served on several technical committees that have developed best practice guidance for workplaces/management systems standards

Learning Objective

After successfully completing this session, you should be able to:

1. Recognize what makes a good business case
2. Prepare and market a business case to senior management
3. Develop an implementation plan for a business case

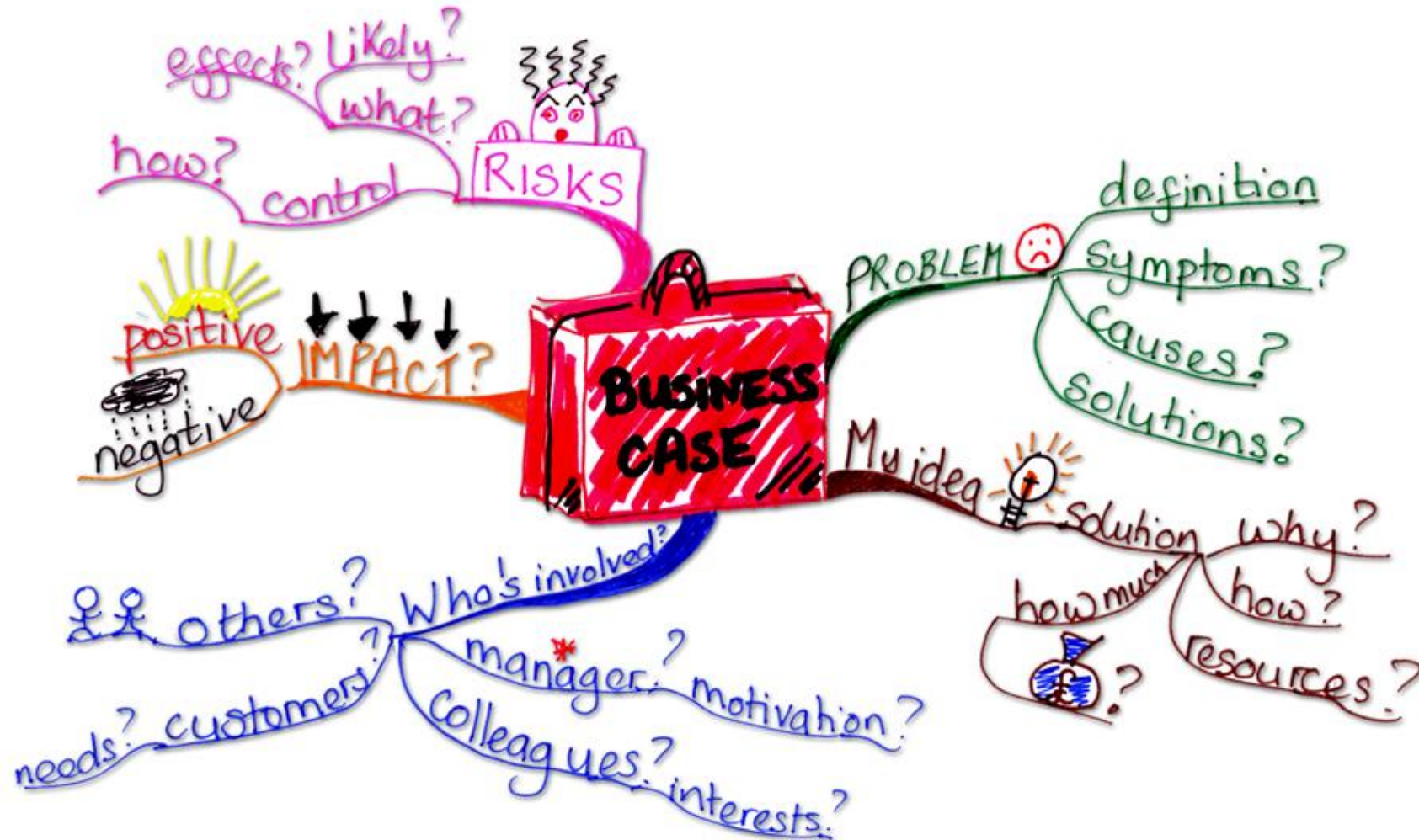
Agenda

1. What is a business case
2. What does a business case include
3. Where to get evidence to support the case
4. How to package the case to get buy-in
5. How to support implementation success
6. Discussion

Link to some resources

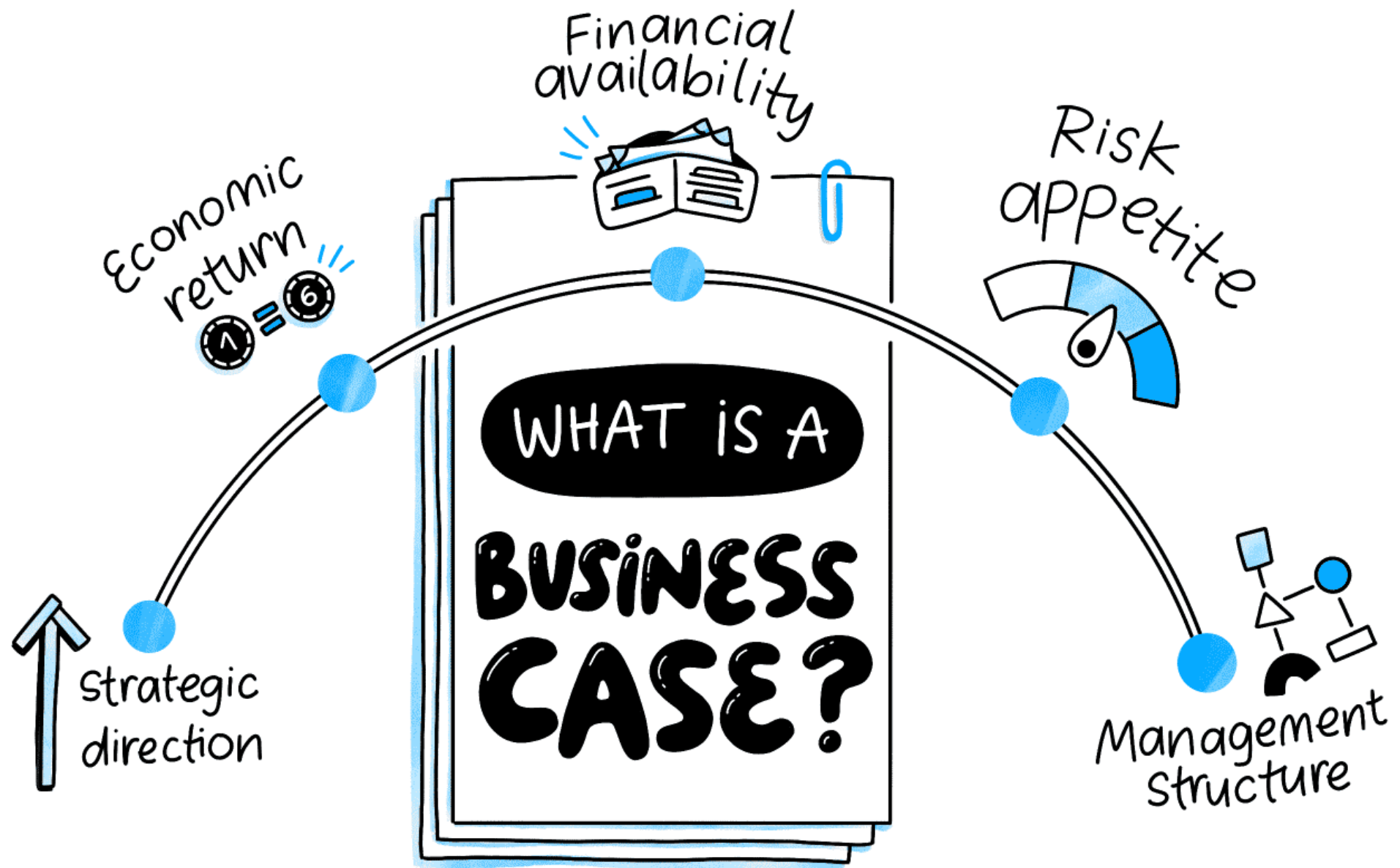
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Group Activity: What comes to mind when you hear the term “business case”?



Many people think it is about this







What is a business case?

- A business case is a management tool to support planning and decision-making for an investment
- Key characteristics:
 - Intended to **inform investment decision-making** when resources for a project must be justified (e.g., new, expansion)
 - Supports organizational decision-makers by **contextualizing the decision, reinforced with evidence**
 - As such, it is a **customized product** written for a specific organization

What are key components of a business case?

1. An executive summary
2. Overview including the problem/issue to be addressed
3. **Alignment with organization drivers, goals and business plan**
4. Description of the alternatives with an environmental analysis of each—primary impacts, other relevant outcomes, stakeholders affected, risks, costs/benefits
5. Recommendations for a course of action with an explanation
6. **Implementation plan and performance indicators**



Suggested Template*

Cover with title that draws attention

- Executive summary (1-2 pages)

Table of contents

- Problem definition (1/2 page)
- Organizational context and current situation (1/2 page)
- Intervention options (1-2 pages)
- Objective and target outcomes (1/2 page)
- Strategic alignment with organizational priorities (1/2 page)
- Evaluation of the alternatives (3-4 pages)
- Recommendations (1/2 page)
- Implementation plan (1 page)
- References
- Appendices



*Detailed outline provided at the resource link on page 4

The need for credible evidence

- Evidence-supported/informed decision-making is the foundation of a business case
- Where can one get credible evidence?
 - Peer-reviewed studies—systematic reviews are particularly useful
 - Grey literature studies, reports, guidance—preferably from reputable organizations
 - Direct outreach to organizations and people working in the field who can help identify evidence (e.g., academics, policy-makers, field experts)
 - Interviews with key informants who are respected in the field for their extensive knowledge on the topic



Group Activity: What might make the CFO stop and listen/consider your idea?



Factors decision-makers consider in determining whether to support an initiative

- Links to organizational drivers, goals and business plans
- Interdependence with other activities
- Needs analysis
- Resource implications
- Funding availability
- Timing and time-lines
- Other strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Drivers of Influence in Workplaces

Drivers: factors motivating how and why changes are made

1. Financial (cost, profit, productivity)
2. Moral (care and concern, corporate citizenship)
3. Political (personal power, workforce/management relations)
4. Legal compliance (individual liability, regulatory enforcement)
5. Corporate image
6. Quality orientation
7. Industry pressure (customer/supplier relationships, industry networks, social pressure)

Evaluation of Alternatives

- SWOT analysis of each option/alternative*
 - Strength and weaknesses—internal factors
 - Opportunities and threats—external factors
- Economic evaluation of each option/alternative—what are the costs and benefits—quantitative
- What are the anticipated qualitative impacts

*There are many SWOT analysis alternatives. For example, see

<https://xtensio.com/swot-analysis-doesnt-speak-to-your-business-philosophy-try-these-alternatives/>

How to contextualize evidence for a specific organization

Estimating Benefit

- What is the full cost of a case/incident for the organization – consider direct, indirect and intangible costs for the organization and the worker?
- How many cases could be averted by the organization in a year and over the lifetime of the intervention?
- Are there spillover effects beyond the incident (e.g., worker morale, reduced turnover, productivity enhancements, customer good will)

Estimating Costs

- Consider up-front costs, maintenance costs, amortization costs
- Include people time taken away from other activities
- Include in-house resources redirected to the intervention

**Do your
homework**

**Be realistic but
comprehensive**

**Include
intangibles**

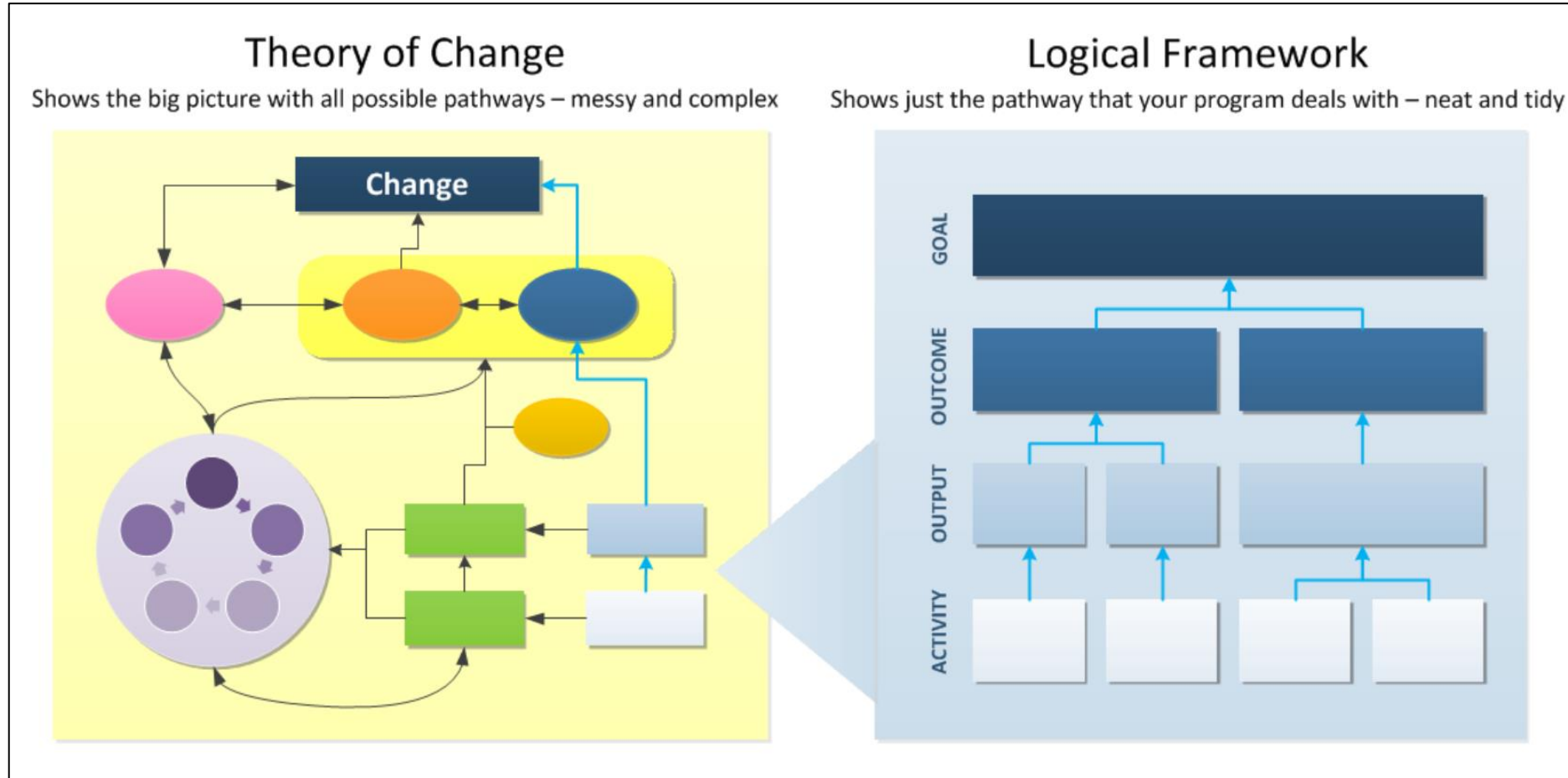
Program Logic Model

- Describes the essential logic of how an intervention or program is meant to work
- Provides invaluable insights into identifying what data is needed to evaluate it
- Often presented as a diagram showing the relationship between 1) inputs/resources, 2) activities, 3) outputs, and 4) outcomes (short-term, intermediate, and long-term)
- Inputs/resources are the investments in a program (e.g., staff time and equipment)
- Inputs are synonymous with costs in a cost-benefit/cost-effectiveness analysis
- Activities are the intervention elements themselves—what is actually being done within the intervention (e.g., training on safe lifting practices in a safe patient handling program).
- Outputs can be seen or counted and are the result of an activity that is related to the ultimate achievement/goal of the intervention
- Outcomes are changes, benefits, learnings or other valued effects of the program that are the substantive achievements to be realized

Theory of Change

- Vocabulary of theory of change sometimes used to describe logic flow
- Although there is a lot of overlap between logic models and theories of change, they are not quite the same
- A program logic model presents the essential logic of how a program is meant to work
- A theory of change describes how the world actually works and why
- A theory of change can be messy and interconnected
- It provide insights into what influences behaviours and what outcomes one might be expected from the introduction of changes to policies, programs and practices

Theory of Change versus Program Logic Model



Source: <http://www.tools4dev.org/resources/theory-of-change-vs-logical-framework-whats-the-difference-in-practice/>

How to support implementation

- Implementation team that includes key stakeholders
- Detailed resource requirements
- Implementation and communications plans with timelines
- Measurement and evaluation are critical—provide key performance indicators, including process, and intermediate outcomes
- Plan for continual improvement



Student Case Study Example

Mental Health of Interns at a Law Firm

This case study is about a significant issue impacting the ability of a law firm to provide exceptional client service through lawyer productivity, engagement and retention.

It addresses the recent and increasing departures of junior and senior associates who have vocalized concerns that the culture and environment overemphasizes a lack of lifestyle balance and mental well-being and have signaled that this is their key reason for leaving.

Mental well-being for the purposes of this case study encompasses different forms of mental illness, including depression, chronic stress, burn out, mental fatigue, anxiety and substance abuse.

While this firm is not the only law firm in Canada struggling to identify and address this issue, the firm takes pride in being considered the preferred choice for articling students in Canada. It's eroding reputation is in part due to the turnover. The situation is resulting in crucial missed opportunities.

The case is made for a shift in how work is conducted to address and prevent mental health issues by providing greater latitude of control to associates, decreasing workloads and embracing a flexible work culture that focuses on a contextual approach to facilitating high quality work.

Shifting the way that work is conducted involves creating opportunities for individuals to work less hours including part-time, take leaves of absences as necessary, and job share with their co-workers.

Student Case Study Example

Addiction in the Oil Fields in Alberta

The energy sector and more specifically the oil and gas industry is the backbone of the Albertan economy. It is the main driver for economic growth and as well its despair (price fluctuations, environmental challenges).

It lures workers with promises of grandiose compensation packages, living life on the fast lane and a culture of working hard/playing hard. The playing hard component has taken a dark turn towards rising drug addictions, violence and increased crime.

At this organization, we have seen increasing incidences of substance abuse on site, workplace injuries as a result of intoxication, as well as individuals carrying illicit substances on their person while on shift. More alarmingly, the data shows the community residing in the area has 25% higher substance addiction rates than the national average, as well as a higher alcohol consumption and crime rates. The following key points summarize the context:

- Rising incidence of drug use and intoxication in the workforce
- Increasing costs of loss time during extremely difficult times in the industry
- Corporate Image is being harmed due to media exposure
- Current status quo is simply not sufficient to tackle the issue

This business case provides suggestions on how to better leverage existing resources such as the employee assistance program, updating the current resiliency modules, and introducing after-work programs to address the issue. The most integral component of this solution is reliance on employee engagement. For this to work, we need a strong commitment across the organization beginning with the team reading this report. A detailed project implementation plan is included in the report.

Summary

- Customize the business case for a specific context
- Use a layout/template where all key components are easy to find
- Include an Executive Summary
- Align the case with key organizational drivers
- Support the case with credible evidence
- Include a SWOT analysis of alternatives
- Consider including a theory of change and program logic
- Include implementation and communications plans with measurement and evaluation details

Link to some resources

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/65ypdw6phtjy68jbf2wai/AAKC2tYyQAejB3ntvmiqTmo?rlkey=lv3jli9o85excwt40lhfcgc9j&dl=0>



Discussion, Questions, Comments



What are your experiences with developing a business case?
What are some of the challenges experienced?
What has worked well?