



Create a case study

A case study is a story about someone that includes a description of a situation and decisions and results of those decisions. You will be interviewing someone and writing a case study about a farmer and determine what decisions s/he has made on his/her farm that have resulted in her/his success (or failure). The case study should include some history about the grower (his/her experience with farming) and the decisions that have impacted the land on which they grow food. You will use this case study to get ideas on ways to test the effectiveness of the decisions made by growers.

This handout helps to describe some steps to help your prepare...

1) How do I get information about a topic I am not very familiar with?

a) Get prepared...try to investigate the topic before you start questioning...most people don't know where to begin to tell you about something they are very knowledgeable about...

Read the Handout: **Sample Case Study**

Visit:

Illinois Soybean Farm-America's Heartland

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RYY8TbbkYI>

Also, view and discuss Powerpoint: **Soybeans Presentation Case Study**

2) Why would soybeans or farming in general be of interest to me?

a) Watch: USA: World Without Farmers (BASF)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joUggaD6Mr0>

Vocabulary: agronomist, conservationist, meteorologist, economist, optimist

-What are some food items or products that come from soybeans, corn and wheat?

-What are some products you use or consume that include or come from soybeans, corn or wheat?

b) Visit these other resources:

Corn products:

<http://www.ncga.com/upload/files/documents/pdf/WOC%202013.pdf>

Soybean product list:

http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/soybean/uses_soyproducts.html

Wheat:

<http://oklahoma4h.okstate.edu/aitc/lessons/extras/facts/wheat.html#uses>

<http://www.wheatworld.org/wheat-info/fast-facts/>

3) How do I become a better interviewer?

a) Develop empathy

Think of something about which you are an expert or you are passionate about (a hobby or interest). For example, it could be the strategy and tactics for your favorite video game, how to get from your house to your grandmother's, how to get your parents to say yes to what you ask, a play from your team's playbook, etc.



Got it? Now, if you were going to tell someone about it, these things might be issues:
-There may be jargon or abbreviations that you use that others will not understand.

-There may be complicated situations that take a lot of effort to explain.

-You may get frustrated when people ask you about your passion/expertise, but then lose interest or don't seem to want to hear the details.

-Be aware that the person you are interviewing may have these same issues.

b) Create a list of questions to ask...what do you want to know? What is your purpose in asking? What extensions to the questions might you need to include?

-Be sure to include "who," "what," "when," "where" or "how and how much" questions. Here are some examples:

a) Tell me about a time on the farm when something you tried didn't work? What happened? What did you do to fix it? How much did it cost in money or time?

b) How do you know when something you have tried works? What "works" on your farm or in your operation?

Here are some additional questions from several categories. You do **NOT** have to ask all of these questions to get an idea about how farming works and you may have many of your own questions. These are just categories to get you started.

The farm: How many total acres? What kinds of crops (how many acres of each-how do you rotate them through fields?), and/or livestock? How long have you farmed? Is your family involved in farming (how many generations)? How does it operate as a business?

Crop management strategies: Do you use of genetically modified seed or seed with stacked traits or seed treatments? What kinds? What about fertilizer and pesticide applications? Do you use no-till, light till, conventional tillage? What affects your decisions about the strategies you use?

Capital investment: How much money is spent on seed, fertilizer, pesticides? How many tractors, harvesters, etc, do you have? How much of your profit is re-invested in equipment, seed for the following year, fertilizer, or other inputs?

Inputs: How much fertilizer, seed, pesticides used?

Outputs: How many bushels/acre for each crop?, Is there fertilizer run-off? How are the fields drain, or hold water after it rains?

c) Practice introducing yourself and asking questions.

-Smile and introduce yourself--make eye contact with the person you are meeting. Shake hands with a firm grip--not limp!

-Ask questions of each other. Practice speaking clearly and using proper grammar. Practice **active listening**. Active listening is a technique where you repeat the other



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person's answer in your own words. It allows you to check your understanding of their answer and shows them that you are paying attention.

-Try to imagine what it would feel like to live on a farm or have this as your job. What are the things you would like the least, the most and what would be the hardest part for you? Ask these questions of the person you interview. This **empathy** for the other person can help you understand more about what they do and how they react to the questions you ask.

d) Invite growers to your classroom or go visit one at their farm. Ask them your questions. Be curious! You will use this case study to get ideas on ways to test the effectiveness of the decisions made by growers.

e) Take notes or video/record the interview. Write up or create a video of your case study from the notes and recordings.