SMALLBIZ WORKSHOP:
DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED MEDIA CASE STUDY

Les Carter, St. Edward’s University
3001 South Congress Avenue
Austin, TX  79704-6489
(512) 428-1331;lesc@stedwards.edu

Hamilton Beazley, St. Edward’s University

ACADEMIC ABSTRACT

This workshop explains how to develop an integrated media case study that incorporates video segments into a compelling storyline and is built around an actual case study. The session includes selection criteria for case study candidates, conducting interviews, creating the storyline, developing the shooting script, creating the classroom exercise, and producing the self-contained CD. The sample case, MagRabbit, Inc., revolves around a series of crises confronting a start-up technology enterprise that required management to change the nature of its business, adopt a new business model, and expand the company creatively to survive and grow before taking the operation global.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This workshop describes the development of an integrated media case study that incorporates video segments into a compelling storyline. It uses MagRabbit, Inc. to illustrate the entire process from identifying potential case candidates through development of the storyline and shooting script to final editing and CD formatting. At its conclusion, participants will understand the entire developmental process for creating an integrated media case study on a self-contained CD.

The MagRabbit case is based on extensive interviews with Tommy Hodinh, co-founder and Chairman. The case format combines traditional case study teaching and learning opportunities with a problem-based learning strategy delivered in a CD format with integrated video segments and a class experiential exercise. The case includes “Questions and Answers” for each video segment, “Case Factoids,” and “Video Factoids” that enhance the learning experience and provide intriguing information. The video action in combination with the written script that appears on the computer screen is more memorable for students than traditional case studies. The visual presence of the entrepreneur has a potent effect that creates greater interest in the case and a stronger motivation to match wits with the entrepreneur in developing the most effective answers to the challenges presented.

MagRabbit is a multi-problem case that revolves around a series of crises confronting a technology start-up that requires management to change dramatically the business model, and expand the company in inventive ways to survive and then to grow in preparation for taking the operation global. Various managerial and operational issues arise in the process of creating and then re-inventing the company, including identifying the opportunity, responding to threats generated by changing technology and demand, and developing a strategy to expand globally.
MAGRABBIT, INC.

MagRabbit, Inc. is an integrated media case study, by which is meant a self-contained case study on a CD (or DVD) that integrates video of the subject of the case study into the written text that appears in the center of the computer screen in a series of sequential segments. The purpose of introducing integrated video segments into the case study format was to move case study delivery out of the 20th century space into the 21st where technology-savvy students felt more at home and could shift back and forth at will among questions, factoids, supplementary information, basic data, and video segments in which entrepreneurs spoke directly to them and, on occasion, challenged them to a battle of wits. The case appears on the main screen, which consists of three content components: the facts of the case displayed in the center of the screen, the video segments related to those facts, and related academic theory. The entire case is contained on the CD, with certain segments available only to the instructor through a password, e.g., answers to questions, case challenges, the class exercise, and the teaching notes.

During the developmental phase of the case study, it became apparent that creating an interactive CD business case was analogous to creating a mini-documentary or investigative TV series, which meant that subjects had to be chosen, storylines developed, characters interviewed, scripts written, and rough footage edited. While the time demands are high, so are the rewards—for both the student and the teacher.

Workshop Objectives

The objectives of this workshop are as follows:

- To introduce participants to a new case study format that integrates theory and case text with video segments of the entrepreneur who is the subject of the video on a self-contained CD with teaching notes and a classroom exercise.
- To explain each step in the process by which an integrated media case study is designed and produced, from the selection of the subject through final production and release of the self-contained CD.
- To discuss the key issues involved in the production process.
- To illustrate the development of an integrated media case and production of the CD through MagRabbit, Inc., a case produced by that process.

Workshop Structure

The workshop will be structured around the MagRabbit, Inc. case, which is an integrated media case developed by the presenters. The process of developing such a case will be described in conjunction with a presentation of the case, and questions will be encouraged as presenters and participants explore how the case was developed, the storyline written, the script devised, the video shot, and the class exercise created.
Workshop Outcomes

Workshop participants can expect the following outcomes:

- An understanding of the process through which an integrated media case can be developed, including creation of the central storyline.
- How to create an integrated media case in their own city using local resources.
- How to develop a classroom exercise for the case.
- The instructional advantages of an integrated media case over the traditional single-media written case.

The Developmental Process

The basic process of developing an integrated media case study consists of the following steps:

1. Develop criteria for selection of potential candidates to be the subject of the video (see next section).
2. Research various candidates through interviews and scans of newspapers and journals and arrange interviews.
3. If the candidate is accepted as a case study subject, conduct additional research on the candidate and his or her business.
4. Develop a preliminary storyline and identify tentative case segments and an extensive list of questions for the entrepreneur.
5. Conduct an extensive in-person interview with the entrepreneur.
6. Develop the final storyline, including segments, questions and answers, and case factoids.
7. Write the shooting script, which will contain the questions to ask the entrepreneur on camera.
8. Identify a top-quality video production company to shoot the video.
9. Select the shooting locations for the individual video segments (the production company can help with this).
10. Videotape the individual segments, coaching the entrepreneur as necessary.
11. Develop the production script, which will be used to interview the entrepreneur, shoot the video, and track each of the video clips. Those clips that are selected for the CD itself will be noted on the script by their time code (which numbers each frame) so that they can be identified during the edit.
12. Edit the video footage into a “rough cut” that contains the selected video clips categorized by case segment.
13. Research and write up the industry data, answers to the questions, and teaching notes.
14. Create the classroom exercise.
15. Edit the final video.
16. Work with an outsourced firm to integrate the various case elements (text, video, questions, etc.) into a self-contained CD prototype that is proofed and revised as necessary.
17. Field test the prototype CD in the classroom.
18. Revise as necessary based on undergraduate and graduate student feedback.
19. Design the CD package and produce the final CD through an outsourced supplier.
20. Outsource the fulfillment function, and create a website to facilitate sales.
Choosing the Entrepreneur

The first step in developing a small business or entrepreneurship case study is to establish a set of selection criteria for potential entrepreneurs. These criteria center to the nature of the entrepreneur’s business and his or her personal characteristics. At St. Edward’s, these criteria included, among others, being a woman or minority, strong ethical values, giving back to the community, success with the venture, an inspiring personal story, an intriguing business story, instructional challenges that were overcome, a willingness to share details of the business (including financials), and the application of significant creativity in the solution of the problems that arose.

A review of local business journals, conversations with bankers and businessmen, and inquiries made to entrepreneurs will yield a set of potential candidates for the case study. Once the selection criteria have been applied to the pool of potential candidates, a final slate is chosen for individual interviews. Each member is interviewed with the selection criteria in mind, and one candidate is picked for the video.

Identifying the Storyline

Essentially, the creation process involves identifying and capturing the central story of the entrepreneur and then transferring it to the computer screen in a way that is engaging, educational, and challenging. The CD must draw the student into the story. It must also challenge him or her to think critically, analytically, and creatively. And it must provide the necessary clues for the solution of the case to be fair, but include enough red herrings to make it difficult and nuanced as real business decisions often are. Ultimately, each case begins with the entrepreneur’s special characteristics and then moves to the heart of the business story, searching for a theme to the case and one or more central, critical decisions around which the case will revolve. It is this business decision—which the students must make while assuming the role of the entrepreneur—that turns the entrepreneur’s story into a business case. The central decision may be actual—as in the case of MagRabbit—or it may be manufactured, but legitimate when the actual outcome is not yet known.

The compelling storyline in the MagRabbit case is not just that the founder came to America as a refugee from South Vietnam speaking virtually no English and yet managed to get a college education and build a multi-million dollar business, but that the business itself was beset by a series of fundamental crises that required a bold and accurate assessment of the future along with very difficult decisions. At one point, in fact, it was clear that MagRabbit’s basic business would vanish with the coming of the internet and that the business, as constructed, was doomed. With each challenge, however, the entrepreneur came up with creative solutions that solved the problem. Those solutions, however, led to even greater challenges and, ultimately, much greater revenue. One instructional advantage of the MagRabbit case is the existence of a pair of crises and an international opportunity that require creative management responses in a hostile competitive environment.
The Case Segments

The case study consists of a series of case segments that feature a video, the main text of the case that appears in the center of the computer screen, supplementary data related to the case, questions and answers, case factoids, and, occasionally, video factoids. Each case segment can be printed individually and the entire case can be printed as a whole. Answers to the questions can only be accessed by the instructor. At least one of the segments will challenge the student to solve the central problem of the case, and the problem that must be solved by the students is described in the video by the entrepreneur as well on the screen in the main text.

Table 1, “MagRabbit Case Segments,” lists the case segments in the MagRabbit case. The introductory segments are standard for every case, varying only in content, such as case title. The hidden segments are instructor keyed and can be accessed only by the instructor using a password that is provided.
### TABLE 1
 MagRabbit Case Segments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Introductory Segments</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01. Opening Screen and Logo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02. Instructor’s Introductory Screen <strong>(Instructor Password Required)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03. Navigating the Case</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Segments**

1. Tommy Hodinh: Vietnam to America
2. Tommy Hodinh: The IBM Experience
3. Tommy Hodinh: Chairman and CEO
4. Identifying the Opportunity
5. The First Crisis
6. Your Recommendation: 1
7. Re-Inventing the Company **(Instructor Password Enabled)**
8. The Second Crisis
9. Your Recommendation: 2
10. Re-Engineering the Company **(Instructor Password Enabled)**
11. Reasons for Success
13. Minority-Owned Business
14. MagRabbit, Inc.
15. MagRabbit Joint Ventures
16. MagRabbit-Vietnam
17. Going Global: Your Recommendation: 3
18. Credits

**Hidden Segments (Instructor Keyed)**

19. Class Experiential Exercise: “Creative Solutions” provided in Script Appendix **(Instructor Password Enabled)**
20. Instructor’s Key And Teaching Notes Provided In Script Appendix **(Instructor’s Password Required)**

---

**The Shooting Script**

The shooting script is used for the actual taping of the video segments. Its distinguishing characteristic is the list of questions it contains that will be posed to the entrepreneur on camera. The script also includes the proposed text for the main screen as well as the questions and case factoids. Table 2, “One Page from the MagRabbit Shooting Script,” contains an example of one page from the shooting script used in the production of the MagRabbit case study CD.
TABLE 2
One Page from the MagRabbit Shooting Script

**Segment 1: Tommy Hodinh, Chairman and CEO**

**VIDEO CONTENTS**

**Screen Image:** Still-shots of Tommy Hodinh in Vietnam, college, or at IBM as well as the earliest days of MagRabbit. One source may be the 10th anniversary MagRabbit video.

**This Shoot:** Tommy in the warehouse or at the packing machines.

**On-Camera Video Interview Questions for Tommy:**

1. Why did you, as a South Vietnamese citizen, seek a scholarship to an American university?
2. How difficult were those first years in the U.S.? [In your *Austin Business Journal* Profile, you replied, “My poor English was the biggest problem. However, I was a very happy young man, and I was very determined that I would survive. The interesting thing I remember is that I felt so optimistic—new life, new opportunity, new country. I felt that the sky was the limit for me.”]
3. Why did you decide to become an entrepreneur?
4. How difficult was it to leave the security of IBM for the high risk of the entrepreneurial space?
5. How has the American business community, in general, treated you?
6. What is the key to your success?

**Chosen Video Segments (Time Code Numbers):**

---

**The Production Script**

Once the video segments have been taped, they have to be viewed and edited. Since the case authors are the most knowledgeable about the case, they are the ones who are most qualified to judge what portion of the video segment should be saved and what should be abandoned. The process of viewing all the video segments can be lengthy, but it’s critical. The preferred segments can be sharpened in the editing studio by the professional editor, but the first cuts have to be made by the authors themselves. Each frame in the video has a unique number which will show on the monitor. The numbers of the chosen frames (beginning and ending number) are recorded on the shooting script (see Table 2) for use in the studio when the final edits are made. An example of two pages taken from the MagRabbit production script is shown in Tables 3 and 4. The movie camera icon shown in the main screen text, when clicked, activates the video segment. Its placement in the text indicates the point at which the student should view the video.
MagRabbit began as the result of a friendship. Tommy Hodinh had a friend who as Vice President of Marketing was laid off from a company that manufactured diskette duplicating equipment. When his friend asked Tommy if he would like to partner with him in creating a new software diskette duplication business, Tommy agreed. Tommy’s management strong point was operations and the former vice president’s was marketing, so the two complemented each other well. The new company was internally funded with a few thousand dollars each from the two partners who owned the company on a 50/50 basis. Tommy’s investment came from his savings.

From the beginning, the partners determined that their competitive advantage would be the quality of their products and service. Tommy had been IBM’s quality engineering manager in Austin and had studied Total Quality Management, the work of W. Edwards Deming, and the Malcolm Baldridge National Quality Award Program, all of which had been embraced by IBM. Tommy knew that excessive discards from poor quality would hurt the company financially and that that less than stellar performance would hurt the new company’s position in the marketplace. Therefore, from the beginning, the two partners concentrated on quality.

For the first five years of MagRabbit’s existence, Tommy kept his position at IBM, and the new company’s revenue was small. In 1993, however, Novell moved out of Austin and turned its software duplication business and its fulfillment business over to MagRabbit. The small company’s sales took off, reaching $3.5 million that year. Sales rose again in 1994 and again in 1995 when Tommy joined the company full time.

MagRabbit not only duplicated diskettes, it also took orders from customers, packaged the diskettes, and mailed them to the customers of its clients. The business demanded a high degree of accuracy in execution, because MagRabbit not only had to take the order and duplicate the software, it had to ship it to the exact customer at the exact address identified by its clients, which sold their products to tens of thousands of computer users anxious to download new software.
Segment 4: Identifying the Opportunity

Case Factoids

MagRabbit was founded in 1990 to duplicate computer software diskettes. The company name was created from a combination of “magnetic,” the means of replication, and “rabbit,” indicating speed of replication. The company’s original slogan was "More than a hare better and faster than the competition.”

“The joy of entrepreneurship is the key—not the dollars,” says Tommy Hodinh. “It’s like the joy of creating music.”

Q & A:

1. What are the potential problems with 50/50 ownership by two stockholders in a company?
2. What are some ways around the problems created by 50/50 ownership?
3. What is the role of market research in entrepreneurial ventures and why is it important?
4. Choose a business and describe the kind of market research that might be possible (and necessary)
5. What is the Malcolm Baldridge National Quality Award Program

Video Editing and Final Production

Professional editing advice, whether from an outsourced firm or an in-house university video department, is very helpful in the final video production process. The objective, of course, is to create the most compelling video possible that is intellectually challenging and aesthetically pleasing. An essential part of final production is creation of the teaching notes and the classroom exercise, which can be some kind of simulation or a game. Its development takes a certain amount of creativity, but it adds to the effectiveness of the video, particularly when the case is used over an extended period of time, such as a semester. When the case is very rich with many teaching points, it can be used to exemplify course principles throughout the course period.

CD Editing, Production, and Distribution

The final phase of the production process includes creation and packaging of the CD and arranging for its sale and distribution. Integration of the various case segments and content components is the primary task, which involves both the authors and the technical experts. Multiple revisions are generally required, particularly when a field test of the CD with graduate and undergraduate students was conducted. Once the CD has been completed, appropriate packaging has to be created and a license agreement written. A website devoted to the CD is a necessity and may be linked the university website. The fulfillment function is best handled by an outsourced firm.
The Competitive Advantage

The legacy of MTV and the breaking news that scrolls across the CNN television screen is a devotion to media by the young and short attention spans that demand multiple sources of stimulation. By combining music, dialog, entrepreneurs in motion, and intriguing facts, the integrated media case study is superior to the written text in creating interest and motivation. The personal challenge of the entrepreneur to find the best answer and the question of “what really happens” propel an interest that is often missing in single media case studies.