WESTERN CASEWRITERS ASSOCIATION BEST CASE AWARDS 2010-2021

ABOUT THE WESTERN CASEWRITERS ASSOCIATION

The Western Casewriters Association (WCA) Conference is held yearly in conjunction with the Western Academy of Management (WAM). Participants can attend both conferences. The WCA Conference is a unique opportunity to engage with other case writers in a small group format to exchange feedback and polish a case, learn about using cases in the classroom, get a peer-reviewed conference and proceedings on a vita, and enjoy presentations from leading case researchers and case educators.

The WCA Conference is an excellent professional opportunity because it is a "developmental" meeting designed to provide feedback from experienced case researchers. Submissions are double-blind peer reviewed. Participants at the conference will have their cases reviewed by other authors. The objective is to help participants move their cases towards journal publication.

WCA AWARDS

Two awards are given at the WCA Conference each year. During the revision process, reviewers nominate especially strong cases which are then further reviewed by the conference chair and WCA officers. This is generally a difficult process, because of the many superlative cases WCA receives each year.

The first award presented at the Conference is the “Best Case Award”, for which all submissions are considered. The second award presented at the Conference is the “Best Mentored Case”, which recognizes the best case written by a student author(s) with the guidance of a faculty mentor.

Occasionally, additional awards recognize special categories or achievements. These are also included below.

2021 Award Winners:

Best Case Award: *Twiga – A B2B Agritech Startup's Innovative Solution to Improve Food Security in Kenya*
Dr. K B S Kumar, ICFAI Business School

Twiga, a mobile-based B2B tech platform supplied fresh fruits and vegetables sourced from farmers in rural Kenya directly to small and medium sized vendors and kiosks known as Mama Mobgas, in Nairobi. It was founded by Grant Brooke, a US-based researcher and Peter Njojo (Njojo), General Manager at Coca-Cola, Easat Africa, with the aim to address the issues that were plaguing fresh produce supply chain in Kenya.

Twiga linked the unorganized vendors to the farmers through its proprietary cashless mobile technology platform. The platform had offered three primary functions: it matched supply and demand between small scale farmers and vendors, procured fresh produce from the farmers, and organized efficient supply chains with the help logistics and warehouse platforms, towards successful delivery of orders to the vendors. In the process Twiga eliminated the middlemen, minimized post-harvest losses, and lowered the price of the fresh produce. As a result, farmers got assured offtake and a better deal for their crop and vendors got good quality produce delivered at their doorstep.

This highly scalable and replicable model of Twiga created a manifold impact. It was expected to help in fixing the economy of Kenya by controlling the food prices, and by reducing the share of disposable income people spent on food (which was 45%). Twiga's model was found to be highly suitable to address the challenges of food insecurity, food safety and food inflation. Experts said that such systems were needed, not only in Kenya and Africa, but also in other developing and populous countries, which were likely to face food shortage in the future.
As Twiga spread its wings, attracting venture capital and investments, it went on to add a number of products, including FMCG products, to its supply chain. The CEO, Njonjo had ambitious goals to expand Twiga to more countries in Africa. In the process is the company moving away from its basic purpose – that of serving the farmer?

Best Mentored Case: *Sterlite Copper: Who Is At Fault?*
Roopal Gupta, Management Development Institute (Student Author)
Tanuja Sharma, Management Development Institute (Faulty Supervisor)

Sterlite Copper was a subsidiary of Vedanta Resources, the UK-based mining and metals conglomerate. Since its inception in 1994, the organization had been through a myriad of controversies, ranging from manipulative compliance practices, legal hassles arising out of land acquisition and depleting environment around its plant in Thootukudi (Tuticorin), Tamil Nadu, India. While on one hand the organization had an aspirational plan to expand and double its copper production, on the other hand various sectors of project affected people were raising voice in agitation due to the alleged misconduct by Sterlite and its impact on the lives of villagers surrounding the plant.

These agitations took a violent turn in May 2018 and unfortunately led to 13 agitators losing their lives. A detailed probe ensued where first the government cut-off electricity and closed the plant, then NGT ordered it to open, then Supreme Court again passed the order for its closure and suggested Sterlite approached Madras High Court if they wished to challenge their decision. Sterlite's appeal to the Madras High Court was rejected, resulting in permanent closure of the plant on August 20, 2020.

The case portrays how a core industry plays an important role in the development of a developing economy, the issues it faces to operate and the effects it has on the people surrounding it. This conundrum, of which Sterlite Copper is an extreme case, explores the complex situation which questions the sustainability of business, its compliance to the law of the land, its manoeuvring through the political set-up for its own advantage and managing stakeholders for its existence with an eventuality of loss of life. The other side of the coin can also not be missed. The case also explores the simmering discontent among the villagers and stakeholders, the organization's perception- despite its best efforts- playing to its ruins.

2020 Award Winners:

Best Case Award: *NRI Distribution: Scaling a Values-Based Culture*
Melanie Reed, Thompson Rivers University

Developing a values-based culture in a single location organization is challenging enough for leaders. It takes clarity of those values, clear definitions of expected behaviors, alignment to policies, programs and practices and a great deal of perseverance and communication. However, in a fast-growing and rapidly expanding organization that crosses borders and time zones, this can be monumental. Nevertheless, NRI Distribution, a 22-year old company in the 3PL industry based in Kamloops, B.C., Canada, was cutting their teeth on the challenge of scaling a unique and powerful values-based culture as they rapidly expanded into new markets in Southern California and Montreal.

This case provides an overview of how the company developed and sustained its values-based culture through its People Experience function and the actions of the Senior Leadership team and outlines the challenges the company faced when they entered a new and unfamiliar market in Southern California. The case begins with a brief history of the organization and the leaders who were instrumental in developing the culture, including Dean Stainton, People Experience Director and Carly Gordon, People Experience Manager, who have both been with the company for over a decade. The case then provides students with the steps the leadership team took to develop and implement a culture shift using values. It then describes the challenges the organization and team faced when the culture did not quickly scale in the new location and the lessons they learned along the way. The case challenges students to identify the strategies used to implement and embed a values-based culture as well as explore possible strategies that would help the organization continue to scale at a rapid pace and maintain the values-based culture the company was founded upon.

Best Mentored Case: *Talk to Amber About Growth*
Claudia Barrulas Yefremian, California State University Los Angeles (Student Author)
Josue Arvayza, California State University Los Angeles (Student Author)
Nina O'Brien, California State University Los Angeles (Faculty Supervisor)

> Amber L. Wright was an African-American entrepreneur and the founder of Talk to Amber, a communications consulting and coaching practice focused on inspiring people to communicate with confidence and quality. Amber believed that life was a conversation, and she wanted to guide people to build better lives through better communication. However, doing it alone as an entrepreneur proved to be a steep road with many risks and uncertainties.
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> In 2018, after two years of full-time commitment, Talk to Amber almost came to a stop. All of a sudden, she lost her income stream, and there were no immediate business prospects. Amber knew that if she was determined to continue her practice, it was imperative to create new revenue streams to ensure financial sustainability and stability over the long term. However, how could Amber go about it? What could she do?

2019 Award Winners:

Best Case Award: *Mostly Mental Shuttles: Now is the Time to Grow*
Wayne Singular, Thompson Rivers University

> Mostly Mental Shuttles was a Kamloops, British Columbia based transportation company owned and operated by Dylan Methot that since 2010 had specialized in mountain bike shuttling. The core portion of his business was shuttling mountain bikers at a city-owned facility called the Kamloops Bike Ranch.
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> In August 2018, the company entered into a sponsorship agreement with the Sun Peaks Resort to provide a daily shuttle service from Kamloops on a seven day per week basis during the winter skiing and snowboard and the summer mountain bike seasons. As a year-round business, Methot must now expand from one to two shuttle vans as well as hire employee drivers to maintain the current level of service to their existing Kamloops Bike Ranch and Sun Peaks customers.
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> This intermediate level case is based on a real-world capital acquisition decision; it requires students to utilize capital budget analysis and operating income forecasting as well as take into consideration nonfinancial factors to make most appropriate recommendation for the new equipment acquisition.

Best Mentored Case: *Los Angeles Apparel: Growing Pains*
Ezra Pugh, California State University Los Angeles (Student Author)
Ellen Drost, California State University Los Angeles (Faculty Supervisor)

In 2014 the founder and CEO of American Apparel, Dov Charney, was fired. The clothing company, which focused on T-shirts and other fashion basics, had been founded in 1989 with a loan of $10,000. It had grown tremendously, reaching a peak in 2013 of over $600 million in sales and 200 stores across 20 countries. But it was as controversial as it was successful – both in terms of the marketing style of the company and the public persona of the founder himself.

After his ouster, Charney went about recreating what he saw as the best elements of American Apparel in a new company – Los Angeles Apparel. Founded in 2016, over 300 former American Apparel employees had joined him at the new venture. At both companies, Charney's goal had been to create a vertically integrated business model for producing fashion basics that did not require outsourcing or abusive labor practices. Both companies manufactured their products in Los Angeles, utilizing supply chains they billed as 'sweatshop free'. This strategy, in 1989 and in 2016, went against the grain of the conventional wisdom of how to attain success in the garment manufacturing industry.The new company, Los Angeles Apparel, was focused on wholesale but had recently begun selling directly to customers via their website. However, Charney mentioned he also wanted to open brick and mortar stores in the near future, following the same path American Apparel had . But will Charney be able to recreate his earlier success using his model of local and ethical clothing manufacturing in the current global economy? And, would brick and mortar stores be an option for Los Angeles Apparel in a highly competitive e-commerce business environment?

2018 Award Winners:

Best Case Award: *Ashokan Center: Fostering Deep Connections*
Michael Merenda, University of New Hampshire

The case chronicles the transition of the Center from a public, nonprofit, entity under the supervision of the State University of New York at New Paltz to a private, nonprofit, social enterprise, dependent on program revenues, grants and donations. The case focuses on husband and wife, social entrepreneurs Jay Ungar and Molly Mason, co-founders of the Ashokan Foundation Inc. and Ashokan Center, Inc. (ACI). Early in 2017, Ungar and Mason and the Center's Board faced several challenges. Ungar and Mason, were two well-known musicians who had recently taken on the interim management of the Center in response to the sudden departure of its Executive Director. The Center offered educational and community programming in: Natural Science including watershed studies and ecology; living history; culture; music and dance; and team building. Ashokan's 320-acre campus was in Olivebridge, New York in the Catskill Mountains. Over 5,000 school children, mostly from New York, annually enrolled in the Center's programs. ACI 2016, revenues and net revenues were just over $1.7 million and $26,220, respectively. The Center envisioned a living and working teaching campus with a focus on sustainability and protection of the physical environment and open space.

Although the Board was firmly committed to the Center's vision they were concerned about having adequate funds and community backing to sustain its programs and campus. The current financial situation was concerning since the Center was barely operating a breakeven. ACI's Board estimated that it needed over $4,000,000 in additional funds by 2023 to maintain its building, natural resources and for strategic initiatives. The case ends with Ungar wondering whether the Board's actions were radical enough to sustain the Center's financial health and achieve its mission: "to teach, inspire and bring people together through shared experiences in nature, history and the arts.

Best Mentored Case: *Brewerkz: Brewing What Works Best* **Shreshthi Mehta,** Northeastern University (Student Author) **Julia Ivy,** Northeastern University (Faculty Mentor)

The major decision in the case concerns Devin’s, the owner of a successfully operating microbrewery in Singapore, dilemma of how to navigate a local saturated market and expand business operations to promising markets of China or India. The owner considered a host of options from Hong Kong, Kaula Lampur to Mumbai, and he was aware that microbrewery set up required a large area, which limited his options. To answer the question of, “What should Devin do to assure a market-based solution for his company?”, students first evaluate external and internal forces that the company faced by evaluating each of the markets and then formulate a market-based strategy for market entry.

The case demonstrates that being low and mid-income countries, China and India offered different opportunities and threats for the craft beer market. Students would learn macro and microeconomic differences and develop different market-based decisions for shaping Brewerkz’s competitive and global strategies, as well as its choice of market entry mode.

2017 Award Winners:

Best Case Award: *Russian River Brewing Company In 2016: Crafting Strategies*
Armand Gilinsky, Sonoma State University
Sergio Canavati, Sonoma State University
Jeffrey Young, Sonoma State University

Vinnie and Natalie Cilurzo became owners of the Russian River Brewing Company (RRBC) in 2003 after its parent company decided to shut it down. From 2004 to 2014 RRBC became one of the most successful breweries in

Sonoma County, increased its production fourfold, and won multiple awards, honors, and recognitions for the quality of its beers. By 2015, after paying off all outstanding debt and buying out investors, the Cilurzos enjoyed the freedom to lenders and investors. The newfound freedom presented the Cilurzos with the opportunity to craft the strategy of their choice according to their long-term vision for RRBC. The opportunity to freely craft and implement strategy for RRBC was accompanied by the challenge of meeting fast-growing consumer demand while maintaining the focus on quality and consistency that made their brewery an international sensation.

The case lays out the difficult strategic choice faced by the Cilurzos. In 2016, they identified a property that seemed ideal for building a new brewing plant and brew pub. It became increasingly evident to the Cilurzos that RRBC's existing production and consumer retail infrastructure could not meet market demand for

RRBC's products. However, Natalie Cilurzo wondered if RRBC had the proper technological and human resource infrastructure in place that would be needed for the administrative challenge brought on by expansion. What would be the impact of large-scale growth on consumer perceptions of the quality and value of RRBC's beers? How would the proposed growth in the size of RRBC affect the ability to sustain the firm's recent outstanding financial performance? Are there any operational or human resource challenges that should be addressed before even considering growth and expansion?

Best Mentored Case: *Homeboy Industries: Redefining Social Responsibility*
Yang Zhang, California State University Los Angeles (Student Author),
R. Duncan M. Pelly, California State University Los Angeles (Faculty Supervisor)
Steven McGuire, California State University Los Angeles (Faculty Supervisor)

Founded by Father Boyle in 1988, Homeboy Industries, a non-profit organization, aimed to offer alternatives to gang activity and help former gang members or prisoners reenter the community. For the first few years, Father Gregory Boyle, the Jesuit priest who founded Homeboy Industries, focused on job placement for the ex-gang members (or "homies"). However, the number of the homies far outpaced the available jobs. In 1992, Homeboy started its first social enterprise, Homeboy Bakery.

At the end of 2015, Homeboy businesses included: Homeboy Bakery, Homegirl Café, Catering, Food Truck, Diner at L.A. City Hall, Airport Bakery, Farmers' Markets, Salsa and Chips, Homeboyfoods.com, Homeboy Silkscreen & Embroidery and Online Store: Homeboy Apparel & Homeboy Merchandise. Homeboy programs included: Education, Employment, Case Management, Legal Services, Mental Health, Substance Abuse Support, Tattoo Removal, Domestic Violence Intervention Program and Solar Panel Training Program. In spite of all its entrepreneurial success, Homeboy continued to face financial difficulties.

2016 Award Winners:

Best Case Award: *AKB Safe, Inc.: Death, Embezzlement and Lost Sales*
Charla Mathwick, Portland State University

Co-founders Emma McIlroy and Julia Parsley were two and a half years into the creation of their tomboy retail brand—Wildfang—launched online in 2013 using public relations and social media content to attract over 120,000 Wildfang community members. Wildfang's online retail presence which is described as 'the home of tomboy style and culture,' is complemented by a destination brick and mortar location on Portland's East Side –dubbed the Wildfang Fort—which also serves as corporate headquarters. The team readied for proof of concept of their second physical location in Portland – the Wildfang Outpost. The strategy was to form partnerships with complementary consumer brands that align with Wildfang's brand values and would appeal to the Wildfang girl. They are considering a combination of national and local brands to deliver an authentic tomboy experience in-store. The team aimed to create a localized tomboy experience that would anchor the national expansion of their brick and mortar presence, as well as drive traffic online. The handshake between Wildfang's offline and online retail operations were closely tracked to understand the impact channel expansion had on cost of customer acquisition, revenues, and profitability.

Meanwhile, McIlroy considered changes to her retail business model to accelerate equity creation, leverage Wildfang's core competencies, and push the organization toward profitability.

Best Mentored Case: *Opec Plastics: Growing with Vietnam*
Tram T.H. Nguyen, University of Hawaii (Student Author)
Jack P. Suyderhoud University of Hawaii (Faculty Supervisor)

At the end of 2013, the leadership of Opec Plastics was pleased with what they had been able to achieve in their four years of existence. They had grown the company to nearly $200 million in revenues in just four years, and they had goals to double that in two more years. However, they were uncertain on how to accomplish this. They had technical expertise in manufacturing plastic bags and related products and trading the raw materials (resins) from which the products were made. Even so, they regarded their core competencies in a more general way: strong relations with people who mattered, in the supply chain, in the regulatory environment, and in financing. The growth options included:

- Expansion within existing business lines through scale increases.
- Scope expansion to products and services near to their existing activities.
- More distant scope expansion to products and services that were not near to their existing activities but still presented opportunities.

Layered on these issues was the external environment. The prospects for Southeast Asian trade agreements and the Trans Pacific Partnership created new opportunities along the value chain. In addition, the vagaries of oil markets threatened additional uncertainties.

2015 Award Winners:

Best Case Award: *The New and Old Starter Clothing Company: A Strategic Case Study Of Nostalgia*

Brian Soebbing, Louisiana State University
Chad Seifried, Louisiana State University
Khirey Walker, Louisiana State University
Adam Pfeegor, Mississippi State University

The sport apparel market has experienced significant growth over the past 30 years allowing numerous companies the opportunity to establish brand awareness, recognition, and loyalty regarding their products and services (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2014). The present case is a profile case regarding the history of the Starter Corporation, whose iconic jackets were one of the most recognizable pieces of merchandise in the 1980s and 1990s. After filing for bankruptcy just prior to 2000, Starter executives expressed a desire to stay relevant in the sports apparel industry. One way is to reintroduce the Starter Jackets, a product that generated close to $400 million in revenues per year as late as 1997 (Lioz, 1997). From an observational perspective, the primary advantage the Starter brand appears to enjoy today surfaces with the feeling of nostalgia experienced by consumers wearing, or viewing, Starter brand clothing. The focus of this case is on recognizing the opportunity to consider the impact of nostalgia on brand awareness and the influence of identification with a fan nation toward product consumption.

Best Case Award: *Los Angeles Fire Department: Diversity Still Ingites Discrimination*

Jewhan Yoon, California State University Los Angeles
Steve McGuire, California State University Los Angeles

Located in a “melting pot” of ethnic communities, the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) was the second largest municipal firefighting force in the United States protecting over four million people. Founded in 1886, the

Department's Engine Company No. 1 was established in 1887.

In 1972, the federal government filed a lawsuit against Los Angeles claiming that the city discriminated against Blacks, Latinos, and Asians. As a result, in 1974, the Department adopted an Affirmative Action Program and created a Minority Recruitment Unit to improve the recruitment of members of underrepresented demographic groups.

Although the LAFD in recent years had members representing many ethnic groups in the city, the LAFD faced many ongoing issues regarding recruitment of women, harassment, race discrimination, and changing its male-dominated culture to embrace diversity. A series of events, including numerous lawsuits that took a toll on the City's taxpayers, hindered the growth of minorities in the LAFD program. Should the LAFD have continued to invest time, energy and millions of dollars on recruitment efforts? If so, how could it have modified its "culture" to embrace diversity?

Best Mentored Case: *Huy Fong Foods' Sriracha: Irwindale Turns Up The Heat*

Neda Abousaidi, California State University Los Angeles (Student Author)
Natsuki Tamekuni, California State University Los Angeles (Student Author)
Catherine Gandara, California State University Los Angeles (Student Author)
Stephen McGuire, California State University Los Angeles (Faculty Supervisor)
Kern Kwong, California State University Los Angeles (Faculty Supervisor)

In 2014, the City Council of Irwindale, California considered a resolution to call Huy Fong Foods, Inc. a "publicnuisance," and filed a lawsuit againstthe company for failing to address environmental concerns. Huy Fong Foods was the manufacturer of Sriracha, a very popular hot sauce made from jalapeno peppers. Residents of Irwindale had complained to the City that the strong odors of the peppersemanatingfrom the factoryconstituted pollution, and endangeredtheirhealthandthe quality of their lives. David Tran, the company founder and CEO, had to consider (a) installing expensive filters thatmight or might not reduce the pepper odor, (b) moving thefactory to another location, or (c) finding another solution to the dilemma. The State of Texas was aggressively pursuing California businesses and offering tax incentives to those who relocated to that state. The case provides a description of the company and its industry, as well as direct quotes from multiple interviews with Irwindale residents and City officials.

Special Awards: Best Published Case Award: *Mouat's Trading Company*

Anthony Bell, Thompson Rivers University
Andrew Fergus, Thompson Rivers University

Kevin Bell had been the General Manager of his family's business, Mouat's

Trading Company, for over 14 years and was ready to retire. Mouat's Trading Company owned and operated three retail stores, and leased space to 33 other retailers in Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada. The company had been a family-run business for over a century. Over the past three years, Bell had been informally searching for a successor to manage the company. Bell needed to consider several factors in deciding on a suitable replacement: Should his successor be a family member? Should his successor be from, or have lived on Salt Spring Island? Should his successor be required to invest in the company? Bell also foresaw major changes coming at the board level. In 2013, the board was a tight knit group (the majority of whom were Bell's brothers), but the board was aging, and it wouldn't be long before control was transferred to the next generation of the family. Bell wondered if there was anything he ought to be doing now to make this transition a smooth one.

2014 Award Winners:

Best Case Award: The Love Smitten Director
June M.L. Poon, Universiti Kebangsaan, Malaysia

In August 2012, William Wong, the CEO of Zejaya Corporation faced a dilemma. He had just been told some disturbing news about Larry Pang, his executive director, which may or may not have legal implications for the company in relation to sexual harassment. Two of his managers had confided in him that Linda Tan, one of his managers who had recently resigned, had asked them to tell him about Pang's repeated attempts to court her in the past several months. Several questions crossed Wong's mind. Should he talk to Tan to verify the story that he had heard secondhand or confront Pang directly? Should employees be reprimanded or disciplined for attempting to pursue a romantic relationship at work? Should he do nothing given that Tan was no longer an employee of the company? But, if he did nothing, how would the employees who have already heard of the story react? Would they spread more gossip? If word got out to more employees, what would be the consequences? Would it affect Pang's working relationship with the employees? How would Tan react if he ignored the issue? Would she decide to file sexual harassment charges against the company out of resentment?

Best Mentored Case: *Ed Block Courage Award Foundation: How Do You Define Courage?*
Dave Copenhaver, University of Hawaii, West Oahu (Student Author)
Keith H. Sakuda, University of Hawaii, West Oahu (Faculty Supervisor)

The Ed Block Courage Award Foundation was created with the mission of improving the lives of neglected and abused children. Each year the Foundation bestows its Courage Awards to National Football League Players who best demonstrate the traits of courage, compassion, commitment, community, and character to become ambassadors of the organization. Trouble emerged for the Foundation when the Philadelphia Eagles select Michael Vick, a convicted felon, as their 2009 recipient of the Courage Award. Vick's troubles with the law and reported history of animal cruel and abuse appeared to clash with the Foundation's mission of protecting victims of abuse, violence, and neglect. As a non-profit organization dependent on donations and sponsorships, the Foundation could not afford to alienate its financial supporters, but it also needed to maintain a strong relationship with the National Football League and its players.

William David, General Manager of the Foundation, must make a decision in terms of protecting the reputation of the Foundation while considering the impacts on stakeholders. Should he honor the selection of Vick? If so, how does he explain his decision to the donors and sponsors who fund the Foundation? Should he reject the selection of Vick? If so, how does he explain his decision to the players who unanimously voted Vick as their recipient of the award?

Special Awards: Best Case in Sports Management: *Skatistan*

Gerard Rossy, California State University Northridge
Doreen Shanahan, Pepperdine University
Margaret Phillips, Pepperdine University
Andrea Scott, Pepperdine University
Nancy Dodd, Pepperdine University

When Oliver "Ollie" Percovich arrived in Kabul Afghanistan in 2007 to join his girlfriend, he had no idea that the three skateboards he brought with him would change his life. More importantly, it would change the lives and expectations of numerous boys and, most significantly, girls in the Afghan capital and beyond. By late 2013, Skateistan had become an international NGO with a mission to "use skateboarding as a tool for empowering youth, to create new opportunities and the potential for change. " Skateistan has expanded beyond its primitive origin in Kabul and currently operates in Cambodia and Mazar-e-Sharif, as well as conducts cultural exchanges with the U. S. , Italy, and Columbia. As Founder and Executive Director of Skateistan, Oliver Percovich evolved from skateboarding for pleasure on the streets of Kabul to skateboarding for purpose as he sought to further deliver on the company's vision to "grow a sustainable organization that is recognized locally and globally for changing the lives of hundreds of thousands of youth through skateboarding and quality programmes—creating leaders that change the world. " His broad goals were to 1) discern the universal lessons from his Skateistan experiences in Afghanistan that could be applied elsewhere; 2) identify the opportunities and challenges that were unique to the Afghan culture; and 3) leverage that knowledge to cultivate a Skateistan social brand that would symbolize the organization's core values of "quality, ownership, creativity, trust, respect, and equality."

Special Awards: Best Mentored Case in Sports Management: *Experience, LLC: Filling The Best Seats In The House*
Noah Jackson, University of San Francisco (Student Author)
Ricky Malott, University of San Francisco (Student Author)
William Strome, University of San Francisco (Student Author)
Joe Bisson, University of San Francisco (Student Author)

Experience, LLC is a start-up company that sells in-game seat upgrades during live sporting events using text messaging and cell phone apps. From a user's standpoint, the service offers improved views, closer seats, and a better overall fan experience for a small upgrade fee. From a venue or team standpoint, Experience offers the ability to fill un-used inventory, in some cases by re-selling the seats of no-shows. The outcome is more revenue for teams and better experiences for fans who are then more likely to become return customers.

Experience is looking to expand its services beyond single-game upgrades to a full-season ticket that is based on filling open, but previously sold, inventory. This case illustrates the forces at play in the ticketing industry, describes features of each product, and allows students an opportunity to decide on the product expansion strategy for a fast-growing start-up company.

2013 Award Winners:

Best Case Award: *The Shape Of Things To Come: A Small Town Gym's Challenge*
Deborah Walker, Fort Lewis College
Elaine Labach, Fort Lewis College

This case is designed to encourage students to think critically through a series of issues dealing with the operations of a fitness center in a small town. Although the business was successful, the owners were still facing some typical problems that a gym in a small community faces. Membership had steadily increased, but was tapering off. The gym was located in a small market. Their main problem dealt with the fact that the gym's market niche was the personal service the owners gave to its members. But as the gym continued to grow, giving the depth of personal service their current members were used to receiving was becoming more and more time-consuming and difficult to accomplish. Therefore, how could they continue to motivate existing members and, at the same time, continue to bring in new members while dealing with this service issue? Would the business be as profitable if the owners offered less service and simply sold access and programs the way most gyms do? And, without hiring costly employees, would their current model of contracting with personal trainers and fitness class instructors allow them to grow and give the same personal service they were known for?

Best Case Award: *Café Britt: A Costa Rice Pride*
Issam A. Ghazzawi, University of LaVerne

Café Britt, the Costa Rica's leading provider of gourmet coffee, chocolates, and gifts has been on the verge of the second round of growth. Britt's foreign operations sparked by the success of its foreign international airports' operations, truly transformed the company, and made it a true international company. The initial airport operation began in Lima, Peru in 2005 and continued with the opening of Britt shops in the international airport of the Americas in the capital city of Santo Domingo. Later, in August 2011, services began in the airports of Samaná and Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic. In January 2012, Britt's CEO Pablo Vargas and the executive management team met to reflect and revisit the growth strategy. Pablo wanted a comprehensive plan that would sustain Britt's explosive growth for the future. The questions before them were straightforward: How could the international expansion opportunities best be managed? What design choice(s) were available to create an effective organizational structure that could serve as a source of the company's competitive advantage?

Best Mentored Case: *Keva Fitness Workout*
Lauren Solie, California State University Los Angeles (Student Author)
Stephen McGuire, California State University Los Angeles (Faculty Supervisor)

What happens when logic and imagination are combined? For entrepreneur Lauren Solie, it could mean a very lucrative business opportunity. Ms. Solie was the owner and creator of Keva Fitness, a new fitness workout that planned to expand through DVD's, certifications, classes, sportswear and much, much more. Given the challenges of creating, funding and starting a new business, is the risk of producing these DVDs too great? What strengths and weaknesses will Ms. Solie have to be aware of in order to enter and succeed in such a large market? How would she get the $25,000 in funding needed to produce the fitness DVDs, and should people even invest? Does she possess the necessary skills of an entrepreneur?

2012 Award Winners:

Best Case Award: *The Upper Big Branch Mine Disaster*
Anne T. Lawrence, San Jose State University

On April 5, 2010, a massive explosion at the Upper Big Branch coalmine in West Virginia killed 29 miners and seriously injured two others. It was the worst mining disaster in the United States in almost forty years. The mine's owner, Massey Energy, had a history of safety violations and a contentious relationship with both government regulatory agencies and the United Mine Workers union. It had succeeded in breaking the union and had actively resisted attempts by regulators to cite and fine its operations for safety violations. In the wake of the disaster, four separate investigations—by the federal and state governments, the United Mine Workers union, and the company itself—examined what had gone wrong.

This case tells the story of the disaster, and challenges students to consider both the ethics of Massey's actions and the causes of the disaster. Were Massey's actions ethical? Who should bear the responsibility for the deaths of 29 men: Massey Energy, its board of directors, and its CEO Don Blankenship; federal and state regulators; policymakers; or the workers themselves? What could be done in the future to assure miners' health and safety and to lessen the chances of a similar tragedy?

Best Mentored Case: *ASAP-Translation.com*

L'udmila Mitková, Comenius University (Student Author)
Paulina Stachová, Comenius University (Student Author)
Joan Winn, University of Denver (Faculty Supervisor)

This case study is about a translation agency operating in the Slovak Republic. Founded in 2005 by Katka and her husband Jakub Absolon, ASAP---translation.com offers translations from different languages (over 68 language combinations), and also a wide range of additional services (e.g. language consulting, graphic services, courses in translation software). The company has customers not only in Slovakia but also in the Czech Republic and other neighboring countries. Since the Slovak Republic's economic and political transition (from the Velvet Revolution in 1989 to its independence from the Czech Republic in 1993) from a planned economy to a market economy, small businesses have contributed to significant economic and social changes in the country. Further changes also came with the entry of Slovakia into the European Union in May 2004. Because the country is small, bordering Austria, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, and Czech Republic, language translation is a recognized necessity for conducting business, especially for businesses that engage in international trade. Katka started offering translation services as a freelance translator, and as demand grew, she and her husband decided to make the business a full---time endeavor, with an office and regular staff. Despite the presence of large firms—primarily subsidiaries of large, well---known companies—and increasing competition from abroad, ASAP has succeeded in maintaining quality services, emphasizing values and harmony. As the technology changes and competition increases, Katka and Jakub must reevaluate their business strategy, and reaffirm their goals and values.

2011 Award Winners:

Best Case Award: *Balancing Economic and Environmental Sustainability In Public Policy: Gold Mining Reform*

Linda K. Gibson, Pacific Lutheran University
Bruce W. Finnie, Pacific Lutheran University
David E. McNabb, Pacific Lutheran University

A member of the U.S. Congress and her legislative staff undertook the daunting task of reforming federal mining policy. They encountered the political pressures involved in balancing economic and environmental sustainability when formulating policy or drafting legislation to reform environmental policy. Mining reform was one of the perennial issues before Congress since, according to the EPA Toxic Release Inventory; mining produced more hazardous waste than any other industry. Further, after a mine's resources were depleted, mining firms often declared bankruptcy when faced with the significant expense of environmental remediation, leaving the cost to the federal government. Many mines became unfunded Superfund sites.
The General Mining Law of 1872 laid the groundwork for these problems; but reform of this law would not resolve the federal risk exposure resulting from environmental mishaps on private land. Options were needed to help protect the federal government from this often-overlooked risk.

The case describes the challenges faced by a western Congresswoman who wanted to reform federal gold mining policy. To help her decide what legislation she should propose, she charged her staff with locating and organizing reform options and a strategy to use to win support for reform. Her staff gathered options and background information, engaged in stakeholder analysis, and debated which decision--- making process and reform strategy to recommend to their boss. They examined public choice theory and agency theory issues as possible contributors to the political inertia on mining policy reform.

Best Mentored Case: *U.S. Treasury: Recruiting Great Talent for Senior Positions In A High--Pressure Organization*

Peter Khanahmadi, American University (Student Author)
Booz Allen Hamilton, American University (Student author)
Mark A. Clark, American University (Faculty Supervisor)

Newly appointed US Treasury Chief of Staff Mark Patterson was in the unenviable position of recruiting to fill management roles in the worst economic crisis in recent years. It was March 2009, and Patterson was under great pressure to fill senior positions at Treasury to tackle pressing economic problems. His many challenges included appealing to private sector business leaders who earned substantially more than the government could offer, and ensuring they could pass the more rigorous vetting process implemented by the new Obama administration. Treasury Secretary Geithner wanted to have a

Deputy and several Undersecretaries hired immediately, and Patterson was tasked with delivering a recruitment plan by noon on the next Tuesday, March 10, 2009.

Every four years, a newly elected administration was tasked with finding effective leaders to fill important seats in Government agencies. Finding the right leaders was no easy task. The administration needed to identify, vet, and attempt to attract the best talent to help run the nation. But what if there were little incentive to join the government other than patriotism? What if the government salary offered was only a small fraction of what potential leaders could earn in the private sector? Lastly, what if one were asked to help save the nation from the next great depression? Prior to the economic collapse of 2008 and 2009, this great depression scenario seemed farfetched. However, as the US and world witnessed --- it occurred. With renewed hope, the newly elected Obama administration set out to find the right leaders to help save the nation from economic despair, particularly in one of the most important government entities: the United States Department of the Treasury. What the Obama administration discovered was that it was much harder than anyone had ever imagined.

2010 Award Winners:

Best Case Award: *iPhone Apps: Business Or Time Consuming Hobby?*
Leslie Ann Goldgehn, University of San Francisco
Suzanne Yonkers, University of San Francisco

David and Ian were two young entrepreneurs from Marin County, California. David and Ian started Pandav with the desire to become known for creating socially conscious well---designed iPhone software featuring a great user experience. In the spring of 2008, Apple Inc. opened up the opportunity for third party vendors to develop and market iPhone applications through the iPhone “App Store. ” As of April 2009, there were over 35,000 applications officially available for the iPhone and iPod Touch and over 1 billion downloads of Apple Apps.

David and Ian created iBart, which offered instant access to all of the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) information. Its features included allowing the commuter to find the closest BART station, access train departure and arrival information and plot a trip. Since its launch, iBart had been downloaded 89,387 times by unique users. Last year, they launched a successful iPhone program and achieved a large customer base. They were at a critical juncture with their start---up. They could not continue investing their time and money into an enterprise that was not going to yield any financial return. How could they monetize their application in the future? Could they come to an agreement about the vision for their company? What specific growth strategies should they pursue for iBart and Pandav?

Best Mentored Case: *420 Medicard: Medical Marijuana Recommendation Center*
Faye Chacon, California State University, Los Angeles (Student Author)
Annora Halim, California State University, Los Angeles (Student Author)
Sissie McElvaine, California State University, Los Angeles (Student Author)
Hector Nava, California State University, Los Angeles (Student Author)
Hector Ramirez, California State University, Los Angeles (Student Author)
Stephen McGuire, California State University, Los Angeles (Faculty Supervisor)

Marijuana, a shredded form of the plant Cannabis Sativa, was a federally illicit drug except when allowed by a state for medicinal purposes. In California, the state laws enabling medical marijuana included Senate Bill 420 and Prop 215. Medical marijuana could be acquired from dispensaries as long as a patient had a medical marijuana identification card that was attained via recommendation from a physician.

The case is about 420 MediCard, a medical marijuana recommendation center, and the legal, business, and ethical dilemmas that the 420 MediCard physicians faced in their business. Qualifying illnesses for recommendations, such as anxiety or pain, were so broad that they potentially encompassed the entire population. Since marijuana was illegal, there was little room for business growth, but this was a profitable business. Possible modifications to prevent system abuse included tightening regulations, obtaining patients' comprehensive medical history, and networking patient data. Other than overcoming ethical and legal obstacles; 420 MediCard considered how it could gain a competitive edge by promoting differentiation by "going green," joining advocacy organizations, and enhancing customer service by initiating options such as 24/7 verification service.