

**Business Case Development Café Overview**

The Business Case Development Café is a short blended learning experience oriented around the concepts and skills found in the Harvard ManageMentor Business Case Development topic. The Business Case Development topic will help managers:

* *Define the opportunity they want to pursue when building a business case*
* *Explore alternatives for addressing an opportunity when building a business case*
* *Analyze alternatives for their business case and identify the best option*
* *Assess the risks associated with their business case proposal*
* *Create an implementation plan for their business case proposal*
* *Present their business case to decision makers*

The learning experience has three components:

*60 to 90 minutes 60 minutes Ongoing*

Part 1: Pre-work (self-paced, individual)

Before the live Café session, participants are expected to complete the following assignments:

* Review the following online lessons from the Harvard ManageMentor Business Case Development topic:
  + Understand Business Cases
  + Define the Opportunity
  + Explore Options
  + Analyze Alternatives
  + Assess Risks
  + Create an Implementation Plan
  + Communicate Your Case
* Complete the online assessment from the Harvard ManageMentor Business Case Development topic
* Complete the tool “Worksheet for Defining an Opportunity and Generating Alternatives” in the “Define the Opportunity” lesson of the Harvard ManageMentor Business Case Development topic
* Complete the practice activity “Understand Your Audience” in the “Communicate Your Case” lesson of the Harvard ManageMentor Business Case Development topic

Part 2: Café session (live, group)

The Café session represents the core element of the learning experience. The session provides an opportunity for managers to:

* Exchange ideas and questions with others
* Discuss the context of how concepts and skills apply in the workplace
* Practice and begin application of those concepts and skills
* Build momentum and support for applying the concepts and skills in the workplace

The Café session focuses specifically on the following concepts and tasks from the Business Case Development topic:

* Define opportunities and generate alternatives
* Verify your implementation plan
* Target your pitch

Facilitating the Café session as outlined should take approximately 60 minutes. If the facilitator prefers a shorter session or wishes to spend more time on a specific concept or activity, he or she may want to cover only those concepts and activities that are most relevant to the group.

| SECTION | ACTIVITY | TIME |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Introduction** | Show icebreaker question while participants are arriving to the session (WHEN DO YOU NEED A BUSINESS CASE?)   * Introduce facilitators. * Review tips for using technology during the session. * Debrief icebreaker question, calling on 2-3 individual participants to briefly describe their inputs. * Set context: As a manager, you likely know a lot about your organization’s current strategy and the new market opportunities your unit is pursuing. Once you understand how you help your business execute its strategy today, you can identify opportunities to improve its strategic position in the future. Whatever your ideas for improvement are, you stand little chance of getting support, including funding, unless you make a strong business case. The process of building and selling a business case is similar to solving any problem in an organization. We will review key elements of that process during our session today. * Review session objectives. | 10 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Define opportunities and generate alternatives** | Facilitate reflection activity. Review “Worksheet for Defining an Opportunity and Generating Alternatives.” Participants:   * Review the “Steps for Defining Opportunities” infographic; discuss what they found challenging about filling out the worksheet * Volunteer to share the opportunity statements they developed for the pre-work assignment and have the group critique 1-2 of these statements * Assess the common pitfalls that limit the ability to compile and effectively evaluate a complete list of alternatives; discuss additional pitfalls that prevent managers from fully exploring options and analyzing alternatives | 16 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Verify your implementation plan** | Facilitate practice activity. Complete a “What would you do?” scenario about a manager confronting flaws in a business case implementation plan. Participants:   * Review the scenario and discuss possible flaws in the plan * Discuss ways to address the situation and improve the implementation plan * Share personal insights from their own experiences   Facilitate discussion. Participants:   * Consider the importance of a flexible business plan built around execution * Examine common flaws in implementation plans that can cripple a business case * Identify steps to take to avoid implementation plan problems | 12 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Target your pitch** | Facilitate debrief activity: Target your pitch to the audience. Participants:   * Use the practice activity “Understand Your Audience” to assess organizational values, risk tolerance, and signs of resistance. * Brainstorm key factors to include in business case pitches that will appeal to *their* audience. * Consider what it takes to “get to yes” in our organization. | 17 minutes |
| **Applying what you’ve learned** | Review session objectives and skill areas discussed.  Review guidance for applying business case development skills.  Review directions for completing the On-the-Job section of the online Harvard ManageMentor topic, including the action plan.  Close the session. | 5 minutes |

Part 3: Application (self-paced, individual)

After the live Café session, participants are expected to complete the following assignments:

* Complete the online On-the-Job section in the Harvard ManageMentor Business Case Development topic. The section provides learners with an opportunity to choose a skill to focus on and create an action plan for applying and developing the skill. Note: If your organization does not include the On-the-Job section in your configuration of Harvard ManageMentor, ask participants to think of two things they can do over the next 90 days to further apply and develop their skills in this area.
* Execute their action plan over a specified time frame (e.g., 60 or 90 days).
* After the specified time frame (e.g., 60 or 90 days), access the online On-the-Job section in the Harvard ManageMentor Business Case Development topic to update the action plan and reflect on the experience.