Building a “Toolkit” for Success

Overview
Placing at ICDC can only be accomplished with the ability to deliver excellent case study responses. This is because at ICDC, top twenty competitors are expected to compete against one another in a third, and final, case study. This case involves one judge, and replaces all previous cases completed, thus accounting for $\frac{2}{3}$ of final score. At this level, it is expected that every competitor will be able to present a strong role play. This means you need to go above and beyond to distinguish yourself and receive a high score. One of the best ways to accomplish this is through high quality material. Now I’m sure you may be wondering: “How can I possibly come up with numerous advanced concepts, related to the case, in ten minutes?” In my opinion, it’s fairly difficult, which is why I believe it is critical to create your own “toolkit”.

The Toolkit
I realize that I have yet to actually explain what a toolkit is, so I will proceed to do so. In short, it’s a personalized list or document that contains specific facts, concepts, strategies, visuals or any other assets that you can incorporate into your cases. The elements you include should target common themes within your category so that you can employ them when necessary. After successfully creating your toolkit, you will be surprised to see that nearly every case you complete will simply require a unique combination of the tools you have.

Creating Your Toolkit
Creating a successful toolkit is not something that can be accomplished over a weekend. Your toolkit should constantly be growing whenever you discover new elements you can include to your collection. For example, if you’re reading a marketing article and you stumble upon the 80/20 principle (20% of your customers make up 80% of your sales), then be sure to add it to your toolkit if you believe it’s valuable. However, it is important to emphasize that your toolkit should not strictly contain business concepts. This means that interesting ideas you have seen or created yourself can be added as well. To understand what I mean I’ll provide another example. In my original toolkit for HLM, I had a strategy I had created specifically for motivating employees. The strategy was a that a supervisor would assess staff daily and provide them with raffle tickets for accomplishing their duties and additional tickets if they went above and beyond. At the end of the month, employees would be brought together at a non-peak time for a staff lunch where a few raffle tickets would be selected to have the chance to win prizes. This strategy in my toolkit turned out to be incredibly valuable as one of my first two cases in ICDC presented me with a scenario where housekeeping staff where lacking motivation. I tailored the aforementioned strategy to the case at hand and was able to place in top 20 for that specific case. All in all, the content that you add to your toolkit should simply be anything you believe may be valuable to incorporate into future cases.
Additional Examples
To help you get started on building your toolkits, I’m going to include a few examples of different elements I included in my HLM toolkit. However, I stress that a toolkit is a very personalized thing. You may love the content that I display below and choose to incorporate it into your own toolkits. Or you may believe the strategies and ideas I have do not fit well with your category. Thus, be sure to only incorporate elements that work best for you.

Formatting
Before you read over my examples, I want to quickly address how I have decided to format my toolkit. For me, I like to include a title of the concept or idea and then provide bullet point notes to simply jog my memory when reading over my toolkit. I invite you to explore other ways to format a toolkit that works best for you, or to simply utilize the type I have selected for myself. Once again, the examples listed below are from my toolkit for HLM.

Example 1: Empowering the Front Line (Industry Specific Terminology)
- Grant employees on the front line the ability to spend money on behalf of the business to attempt to satisfy disappointed customers
- Must provide a limit → cannot allow employees to spend thousands on a guest’s who had to check in an hour later
- Preferably provide discounts for all food and beverage (F&B) options at the hotel
  - Strong margins on (F&B) → can afford to give a discount
  - Guests may go elsewhere for food anyways therefore by giving a discount the hotel may actually be able to profit
- Train employees to recognize the severity of the unfavourable incident so that they can compensate accordingly

Example 2: Word-of-Mouth Marketing (Concept)
- Hotel bookings are driven by positive word-of-mouth (WOM)
  - People book directly through Expedia, booking.com, etc. and almost always check sites like Trip Advisor for reviews
- Positive reviews can be the differentiator in a guest deciding to book at your hotel
- Act as a cost-effective marketing strategy for your business
- To amplify WOM, can create a small, phone shaped, business card at check-out that contains QR codes for your hotels social media pages (Facebook, Trip Advisor, Google+)
  - Make an iPhone visual for the judge
  - Explain how the front desk employee can mention the card at check-out to promote positive reviews
Example 3: Integrate Room Service into Mobile Application (Idea)

- Makes room service easily accessible and more convenient
- Promotes spending on room service, allowing it to become a strong secondary revenue stream
- Create a visual mock-up of the application
  - Have boxes for options to allow guests to easily navigate the menu (Appetizers, Salads, Mains, Sandwiches, deserts, etc.)
  - Allow guests to set a desired time of delivery → allows guests to have food waiting for them upon their return to the hotel