



The Art & Craft of Discussion Leadership

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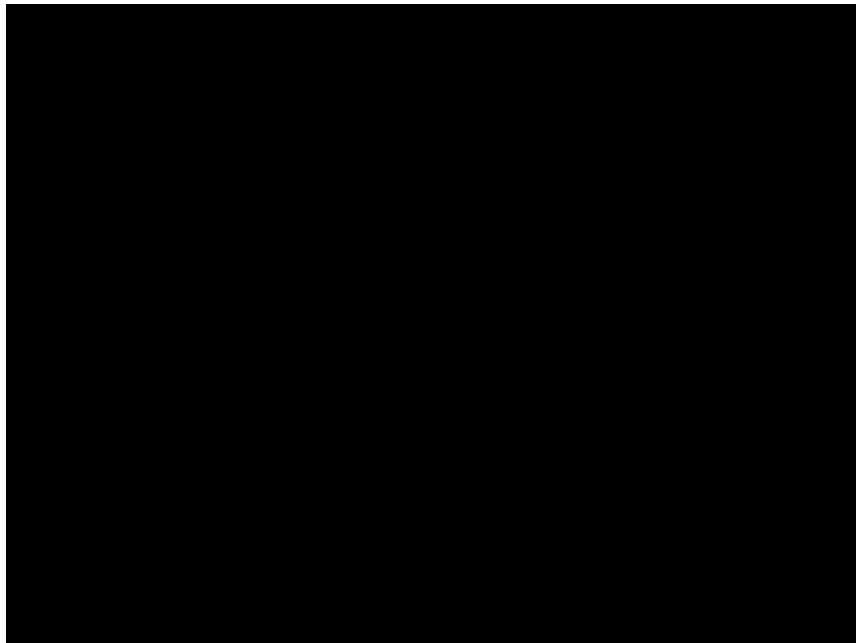
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e-Types “Plot Summary”

- Design firm based in Copenhagen
 - Profitable, very busy
 - Expanding base of international clients
 - 25 people
- History of mergers
 - Retains original “Smash the World” spirit
- In their own words...





Team Danmark Competition

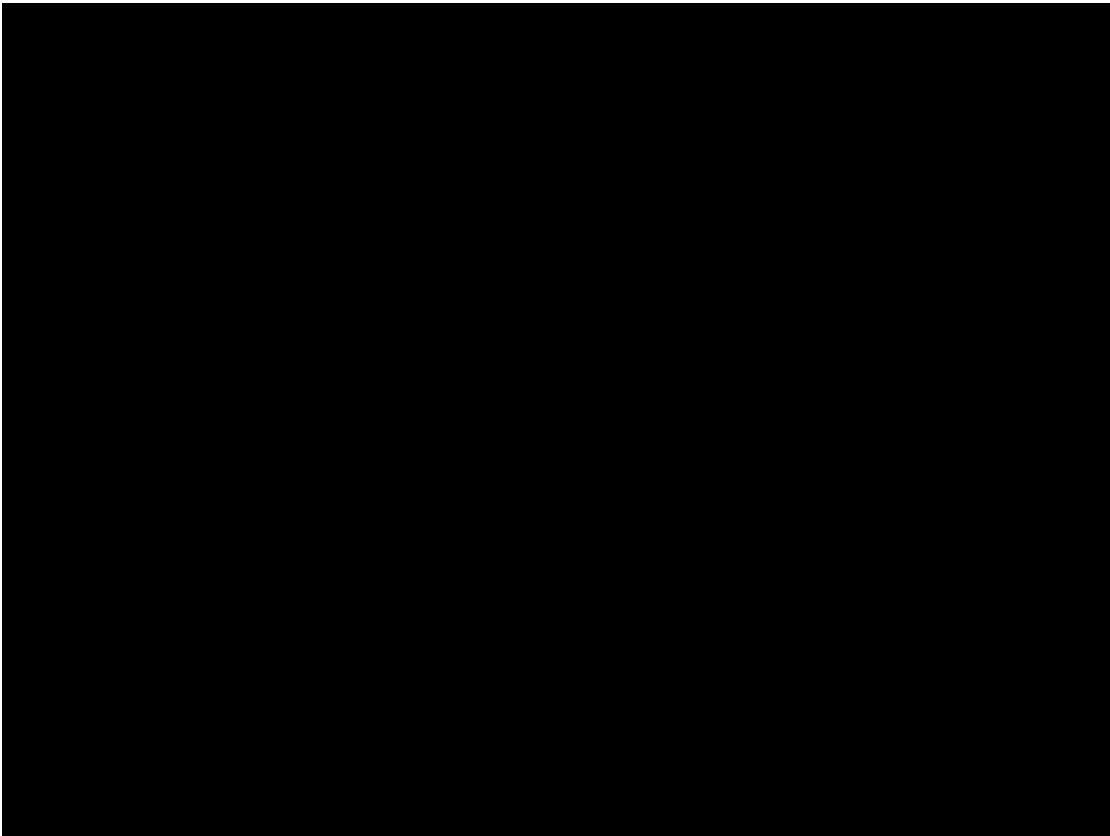
- Competitive situation, bidding against several other firms
- Very high visibility for winner
- Problem: e-Types has two designs, not one
 - Classical design (p. 19, 21)
 - “Edgy” design (p. 18, 20)
- Question: What to present to client?



The Team Danmark Decision

- Option 1: Present only “edgy” design to client
 - Probability of winning competition est. 20%
- Option 2: Present only classical design
 - Probability of winning competition est. 80%
- Option 3: Present both, let client choose
- In their own words...



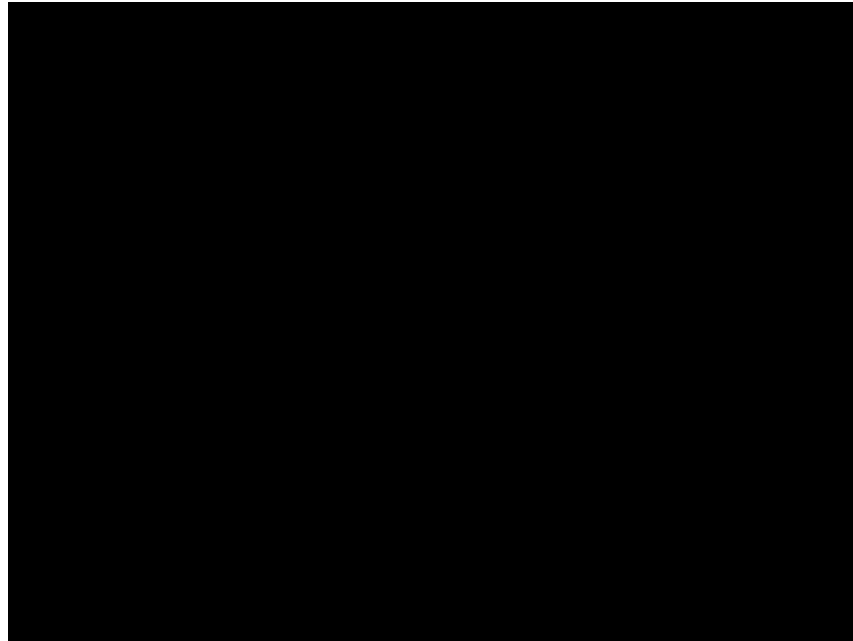


What should e-Types present
to the client?





What Happened



Pedagogical Objectives in e-Types

- Discuss strategy issues in creative industry companies
- Student's discover for themselves some of the issues addressed by Porter's Theory of Generic Strategies
- Might well assign a more formal reading on Theory of Generic Strategies after this discussion
- "Pouring glue on their brains..."



Some things I might have done that you might have noticed...

- Ask questions that were “underspecified” (too general), thus require students to provide additional structure to answer
 - “How can this company make more money?”
- Restate something someone said back to them in a more extreme version (will they agree? Expand range of views)
- Asked someone to speak up or signaled it
- Walked away to redirect who speaker was addressing (from prof to classmates)
- Meta-comments: Telling students what I’m doing pedagogically
 - E.g., Tell them you’re restating in a more extreme version or starting simple then moving to complex
 - Meta-comments are not only okay, they’re a very good idea...



Other Components of the Learning Model

- Individual preparation
 - Read and analyzing materials thoroughly
- Discussion before class
 - Priming the pump – talking with others about the case
- Reflection and Closure
 - Deciding for yourself what it all means
 - Formulating general principles

All are important, need to set up ways to accomplish all of these...in your context



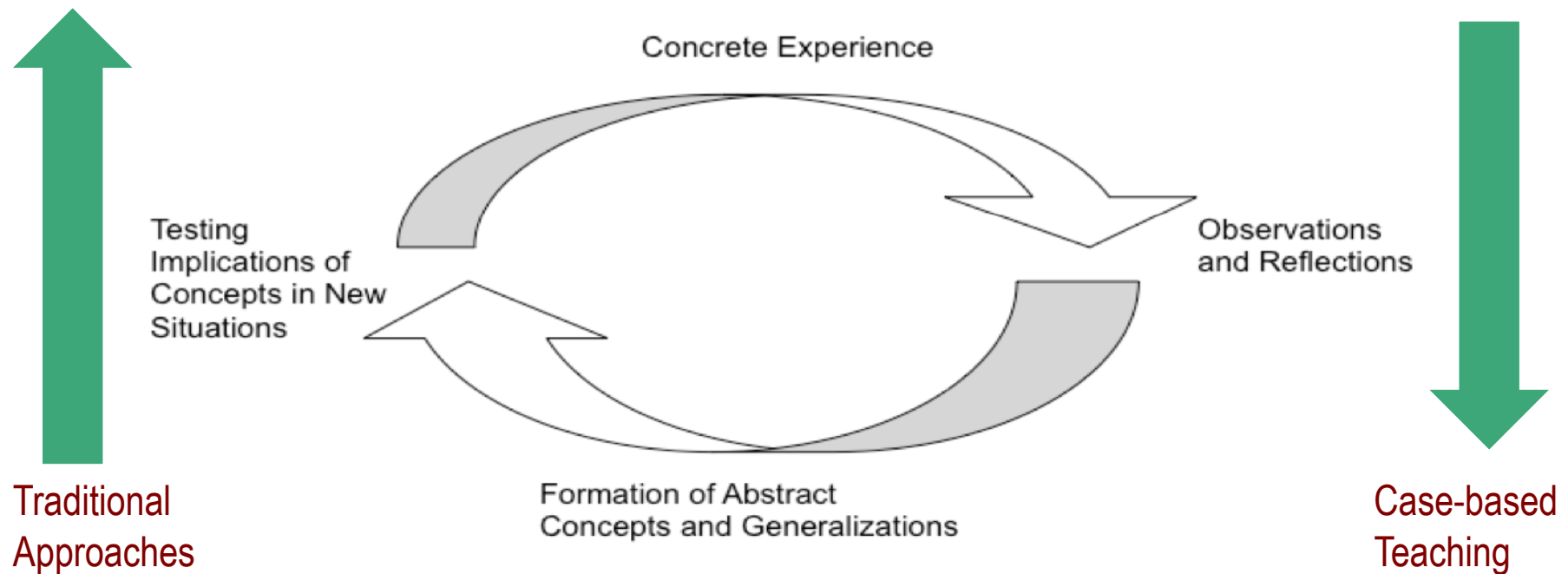
Case-Based Teaching

- A misconception
 - “The case method is ‘theory free’”
 - “The case method deals with practice, rather than theory”
- No...the case method accesses and teaches theory *inductively* rather than *deductively*
- Beginning with specifics, we re-derive general frameworks
- Instead of more usual classroom approach (e.g., lectures):
 - Beginning with general frameworks and asking students to demonstrate their understanding of the frameworks by applying them to specific cases



Kolb, 1976

The Experiential Learning Model



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The Case-Based Teaching Challenge

- Orchestrating the emergence of theoretical material that covers the territory you are aiming for
 - Must tolerate individual departures from orthodoxy (even if “wrong”)
 - Students will leave a discussion without learning whose theory they’ve learned; if you want them to know it’s Mintzberg’s, you’ll have to provide supplementary reading (usually after the fact)
 - The method can work in very technical areas (operations, finance)
 - Course design very important (more on this later) as a way of completing the deductive part of the Kolb cycle...



An Inductive Approach Shifts the Learning Contract

- Less about knowledge transfer in one direction, from the professor to the students
- More about student interaction with each other in a joint effort to arrive at helpful principles and frameworks
- Conveys an obligation to students to help fellow students learn by participating in the search for frameworks, principles
- In some schools, this may be a *big* departure from what students are accustomed to
- Requires a lot of forethought by professor to “orchestrate” rather than force the development of ideas and theoretical frameworks
 - Patience (to let ideas emerge) and good content (cases) make this work



Stating the Learning Contract Explicitly

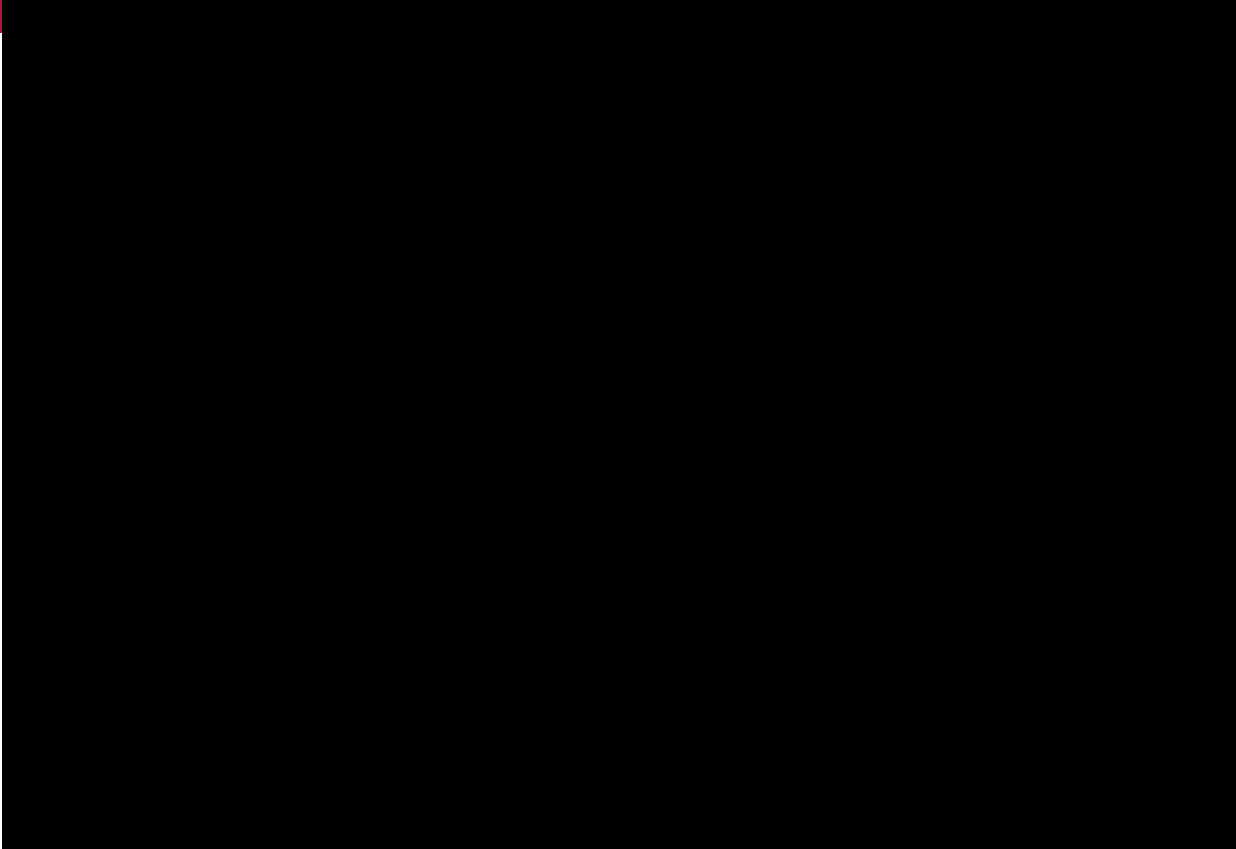
(What I tell my students on the first day...)

- You have an obligation to help your classmates learn by bringing your observations, insights, and experiences into the discussion
- To fulfill your part of contract, you must be prepared for class
 - Do the reading before you come to class
 - Don't just read, analyze
 - Be in command of the details (who, what, when, where, how, why)
 - Have opinions about what should be done
- If you think you'll have trouble coming to class prepared, you might want to reconsider taking this course
 - You won't get much out of this mode of education if you are not coming to class prepared, and others won't learn much from you
 - You'll also be unprepared for the exam



David Garvin...on asking questions





Grading

- The HBS Way
 - 50 percent of grade is participation
 - Quality criteria for student comments: Did it help others learn?
 - Very different criteria from “Was the answer right?” (implies a very different learning contract)
 - Possible for a student to answer exactly correctly and do badly on participation, if no one else learned from the answer
 - Effort intensive for faculty (immediately record grades after class)
 - [Documents/FYTOM 2004/Class participation analysis v4 12-9-04.xls](#)
 - Obviously, this approach helps a lot with student prep motivation and stimulates discussion participation
 - However, it is not allowed at some schools
- Alternatives...?



Course Design

- Arrange cases in a logical progression
- Works best when inductive principles from one class build on inductive principles from earlier class
 - Students build a macro framework by putting together the micro frameworks induced from each individual case
 - You have choices about how directive to be in bringing about the creation of that macro framework
 - *Adventures of an IT Leader* example
 - See Austin, Nolan, and O'Donnell in Sep 2009, *AMLE*
- Can interleave “deductive materials” such as journal articles
 - After related case discussion usually, but before can also work



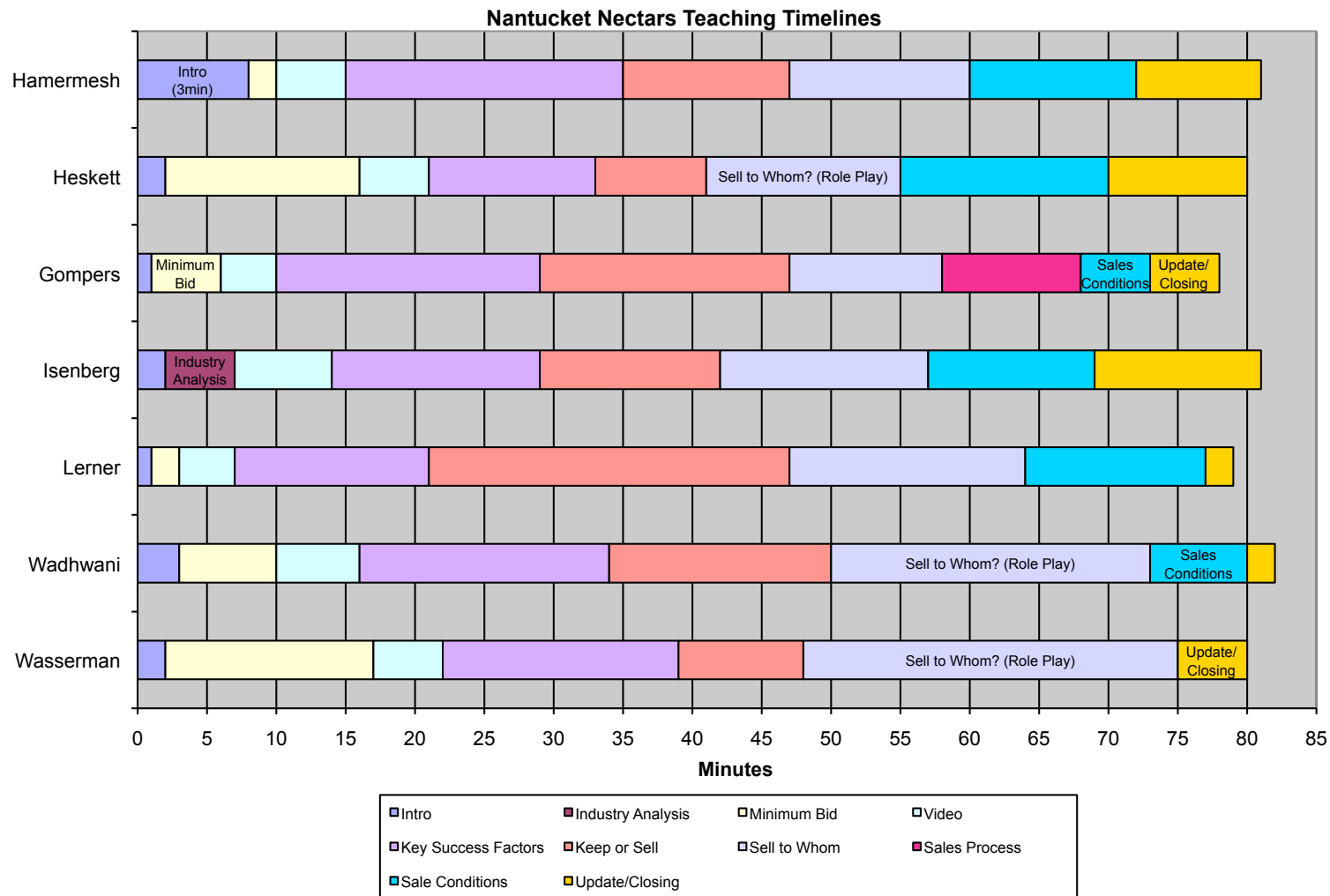
Other adjustments/issues specific to your school?

- Some I've experienced...
 - Case-based learning contract is very different for some students, who are distrustful and/or disoriented (what will you test me on?)
 - Contractual "learning objectives" oriented grading criteria presents (surmountable) challenges for case exams
 - Students startled/worried that I want to know their names
 - Participation grading not allowed, class attendance not required (some students never come to class)
 - No established practice of small group discussions
 - Rooms not designed for discussion
 - Limited/no background info on students (privacy issues?)

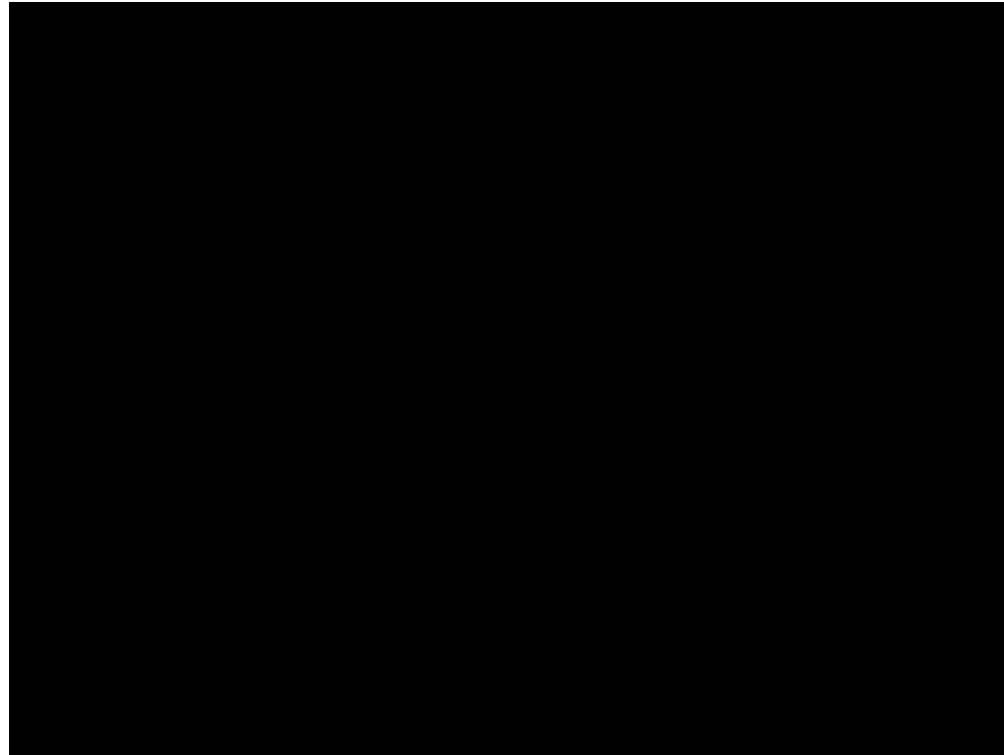


Same Case, Different Timelines

Huge variety within the “case method”



How do you know if its working?



David Garvin

