Case Outline Recommendations. Introduction This “sets the stage” for the case. Give appropriate background setting so that the audience is appropriately prepared for what you will review and recommend in the case. Do not get “fluffy” and do not start to indicate potential solutions. Incorporate the elements from the reading but keep it in the third person. Points are usually lost in this section by NOT providing enough detail. A person unfamiliar with the case should be able to read the introduction and understand not only the situation, but also have a good understanding of the company involved. Decision Maker(s) Who would be involved in any strategy decisions with the company explored in this case? Do not just say “CEO” because strategy decisions are rarely made in a vacuum. This section only requires a list of names and titles. You may start the section off with “The decision makers in this case include:” and then list names and titles. Do NOT include an extremely large amount of names. THINK. Who would you expect to present your recommendation to…realistically? You will write the report from the perspective of a consultant who has been hired to analyze the company and recommend a course of action. Problem Statement Do not confuse this with offering a solution. Do not write anything that IMPLIES a solution (the company “needs to” or “has to” do whatever). This is a concise statement that explores the problems facing the company, their probable causes, and potential impact on the company. For example, “The recent downturn in the economy, coupled with an increase in competition from multiple fronts, has put significant pressure on the competitive advantage and financial growth of Blue Nile.” That is really enough for the problem statement—simple, clear, and powerful. Note that the example statement I gave had no hint of any solution. Think of this formula: Because of this, this, and this, THIS BAD THING will likely happen. Example: Because of a downturn in the economy, the aging of the target demographic, and increased competition in this market, the company will likely lose significant market share. Identify Alternatives This should include 4-5 viable and individual alternatives. HINT: If a supervisor asks you for 4-5 options, ALWAYS give the higher amount. Each alternative should be one that you could make an argument in support of. Do not create a “placeholder” alternative. Status Quo is NOT an alternative. “Evaluate strategy” is not an alternative. That is what you have been “hired” to do. It is assumed you are doing this to produce the alternative. Do not create an alternative by combining two or more alternatives. That can be done as part of your recommendation. That gives away your recommendation and it makes the report more confusing to the audience. Provide enough detail about the alternative so that the audience has a general idea of it. It does not have to be deep-level detail—save that for the analysis section and recommendation section. Format this section so that each alternative is easy to read. Be sure to NUMBER each alternative. You may create sub-headings, bullet-points, or separate paragraphs. The alternatives should not be discussed in one narrative. It becomes too difficult for the client to read. For example: “1: Create a new product targeting the retiree demographic. This would take advantage of a under-targeted group of consumers.” Action (Recommendation) What, based on the analysis, do you recommend the client do? Remember, do not use first person. Make a clear, concise statement of the recommendation to open the section. For example: “Based on the analysis, Blue Nile should implement Alternative #2, expand its marketing efforts to extend its name recognition to combat the increased competition from both online and traditional diamond retailers.” Be sure to include the number of the alternative(s) you are using. DO NOT recommend that they do more than 2 alternatives. Companies will be less likely to implement ANYTHING if you ask them to do too many things. Then more detail can be added to complete the picture. However, be careful not to be redundant. Use the end of this section to lead into the next section. This section is where you SELL your recommendation. Points are often lost here by being too brief and not doing an effective job of influencing the audience. Implementation and Evaluation What steps would you advise the client to take to implement your recommendation? Be specific. This should be a list of numbered, brief steps. NOT A NARRATIVE. For example: “The following steps should be taken to implement the recommendation: 1. Conduct initial customer satisfaction survey. 2. Decide on target demographic. 3. Measure potential growth rate of new target. 4. Create focus groups of new target. Etc.” You may also want to address these questions in this section: What problems can be anticipated along the way? How would you advise the client to deal with them? How will you know if the strategic initiative is working? What methods will you use? How often will you measure? Who will measure? What time frame do you suggest before results should be seen? Anticipate the questions your client may ask. Generalization This section is about translating the lessons of the case analysis to business in general. What are the lessons for business in general to learn from this case? Are there current situations that these lessons could be applied to? Keep this in the third person.