

Teaching Case Hoe werkt steward-ownership?

Hoe Patagonia - en andere bedrijven - hun missie beschermen

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Teaching Case

How does steward-ownership work?

Teachers manual



Dear teacher,

It's great that you want to include the topic of steward-ownership in your teaching program. This teaching case offers an accessible way to do so, requiring minimal preparation or specialized expertise from you while providing a solid introduction to the topic along with several active learning activities.

Structure of the teaching case

The case is designed for students in higher education, ranging from third-year Bachelor's to Master's level. It includes a main text of approximately 15 pages, along with thematic chapters that delve deeper into topics such as HR, social entrepreneurship, and legal and fiscal aspects. Additionally, there is an animated infographic to support understanding. Finally, six interactive activities have been developed, which you can use in your lessons as you see fit.

Duration and opportunities for in-depth exploration

Depending on how much depth you choose to explore or how many activities you incorporate, the case can be covered in as little as 1 hour or as much as 3 hours. It can also be spread over multiple sessions.

We recommend assigning the **main text** and **infographic** as preparatory reading to ensure students come to class with a solid foundation. You can begin the lesson by having students summarize the content of the text in a format of your choice. A **PowerPoint presentation** is available to help you review this basic knowledge with the entire class.

It's up to you to decide which **in-depth chapters** students will read, whether you assign them as pre-reading or cover them during class, and how many and which **working methods** to use. Below, you'll find a brief description and estimated duration for each activity, allowing you to create your own tailored "menu" for the lesson.

	Getting started with..	Format	Duration	Notes
1	Choosing steward-ownership	Role-play, whole class or in small groups	45-60 minutes	Preparation can be assigned as homework.
2	Protecting the mission	Answer questions followed by group discussion	15-60 minutes	Can also be assigned as a homework task.
3	Selecting stewards	Pressure cooker exercise with presentations	2 x 45 minutes	Work in small groups, present results to the whole class.

4	<u>Starting a steward-owned business</u>	Pressure cooker in groups	65-90 minutes	Overlaps with activity 3; especially suitable for entrepreneurship students.
5	<u>A capital injection for a steward-owned company</u>	Role-play, whole class	60-90 minutes	Particularly suitable for finance students.
6	<u>a new legal form</u>	Writing an opinion piece, possibly a debate	30-60 minutes	Can also be assigned as a homework task.

Learning objectives and connection to courses

Below are several learning objectives (knowledge and skills) associated with using this teaching case. Whether these objectives are achieved, and to what extent, depends, especially for skills, on how the case is used in the lesson.

Knowledge

The student:

- Understands what a mission-driven enterprise is and the core characteristics of steward-ownership.
- Knows how steward-ownership compares to traditional forms of business ownership.
- Is familiar with different ways to structure steward-ownership.
- Can name examples of steward-owned companies and has an understanding of the types of businesses in the Netherlands that adopt steward-ownership.

Skills

The student:

- Recognizes practical challenges faced by steward-owned entrepreneurs and can develop possible solutions.
- Maps out the steps a new organization can take to become steward-owned.
- Analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of transitioning to steward-ownership for different types of existing organizations.

This teaching case aligns well with programs in or related to the economic field, such as commercial economics, business administration, finance, tax & advice, business economics, HRM, international business, and creative business. The topic also fits well with programs in entrepreneurship and the social domain, such as public administration or law. Additionally, the case can be used in other educational programs, such as minors or master's programs closely related to these themes.

Prior knowledge

Students are expected to have a basic understanding of how decision-making typically works within companies. If this is not the case, it is worthwhile to briefly introduce this concept before starting the teaching case.

Who decides what?	Traditional companies	Steward-owned companies
Business strategy and performance	Shareholders	Stewards
Operational decisions	Management team/board	Management team/board
Day-to-day decisions	Employees	Employees

Patagonia is frequently in the news; checking recent developments can help you address student questions more effectively.

Below, you will find a brief explanation and instructions for each activity. These instructions are meant to be read alongside the student assignment.

1. Getting started with... choosing steward-ownership

Explanation

This role-playing exercise focuses on the conversation about the future of Patagonia between its founder, Yvon Chouinard, and his children. Yvon wants to transition Patagonia into a steward-owned company, prioritizing the company's mission and securing his legacy. During a discussion at his home in Wyoming, Yvon shares his vision and asks his children to consider how this decision will impact their future.

This assignment allows students to explore the different interests and considerations involved in the transition to steward-ownership. By stepping into different roles, they gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities of this transition. The assignment concludes with a reflection on the arguments presented and a discussion on how Chouinard's children actually responded to this decision. This exercise provides insights into entrepreneurship as well as the personal values that play a role in sustainable business practices.

Instructions for use

This activity is estimated to take 45-60 minutes. The duration can be shortened if preparation is assigned as homework, or extended with a longer debrief session.

Preparation

- This role-play can be conducted in different ways, depending on the characteristics of the group and class size. Below are two options: a whole-class format and a small-group format.
- After dividing the roles, allow the group(s) a set preparation time—10 minutes is recommended. During preparation, discuss with the rapporteur(s) how they will structure their notes to document the discussion effectively.
- Decide in advance whether to set a time limit for the role-play, for example, 10 minutes per discussion.

Execution

- [This video](#) provides a brief summary of Patagonia's story and can be watched at the beginning as an introduction.
- Whole-class format: Five students are assigned (or volunteer) to play the roles of Yvon and his children. During the preparation phase, the group divides into roles. A moderator and/or rapporteur can be appointed to help structure the discussion. The disadvantage of this format is that not all students may be actively engaged. The

advantage is that all arguments are discussed collectively, and time management is easier.

- Small-group format: The class is divided into groups of 10-15 students. In each group, some students take on the roles of Yvon and his children, while one or two students act as rapporteurs or discussion leaders. The remaining students support the role-playing participants by helping them construct arguments.

Conclusion

- The discussion is concluded by systematically summarizing all arguments, with the rapporteur leading this process.
- The teacher can then draw a conclusion and optionally give a short presentation on how Yvon Chouinard's real children ([Fletcher and Claire](#)) reacted to this decision (as far as known). Alternatively, students can read about this themselves.
- Instead of or after this step, students can be asked to share their own opinions on how they would handle a similar situation and explain their reasoning.

2. Getting started with... protecting the mission

Explanation

This assignment focuses on defining the purpose of a steward-owned company. Using a text about the company Camping Zeeburg, students explore the advantages and disadvantages of securing a mission through a golden share. This assignment can be completed in class or assigned as homework, with a brief discussion of the answers during the next lesson.

Instruction for use

The estimated duration of this activity is 15-60 minutes. The shortest version involves assigning the task as homework and discussing the answers in class. The longer version has students completing the assignment in class, followed by a structured discussion.

Preparation

Decide whether students will complete the assignment as homework. If so, determine whether they should submit their answers in advance or bring them to class for discussion.

If the assignment is done in class, ensure that all students have access to the base text. Choose whether students will work individually or in small groups.

Execution

For in-class execution, students first read the short text and answer the questions, either individually or in small groups. Provide a time limit, with 20-30 minutes suggested (allowing slightly more time for group work).

Conclusion

Discuss the students' answers in a structured way.

For the first question, about the specificity of the mission statement, you can draw a continuum on the board ranging from very general to very specific and have students place Camping Zeeburg on this scale.

For the discussion on advantages and disadvantages, encourage students to consider their answers based on three key themes: continuity, positive impact, and room for entrepreneurship.

For the second question, about real-life scenarios, connect the discussion back to the previously identified advantages and disadvantages. Have students link their examples to one or more of these points. If time allows, students can first discuss their examples in small groups and then select the best example to share with the class.

Wrap up the discussion with the final question, where students share their personal opinion. Ask a few students to explain their views, focusing on which advantage or disadvantage they find most compelling and why.

The class discussion can be kept brief or extended, depending on available time and the depth of discussion..

3. Getting started with... choosing stewards

Explanation

In this group assignment, students will design a selection process for stewards in a steward-owned company. This is a pressure cooker session where groups receive five tasks, each with a limited amount of time.

Each group is assigned a company and, in five steps, explores which qualities and skills are essential for stewards. They determine who selects the stewards and how many are needed. Finally, each group presents their plan and receives feedback from the class based on predetermined criteria.

Instruction for use

The estimated duration for this activity is 2 x 45 minutes. The session can be shortened by assigning preparation as homework or extended with a more in-depth discussion at the end.

Preparation

Introduce the topic by explaining that students will explore how stewards are chosen in a steward-owned organization. Divide the class into small groups of 3-4 students. As preparation, students should read Chapter 3.1.2 either in class or as homework.

Each group is assigned a company, such as a technology company (Fairphone), a sustainable chocolate brand (Tony's Chocolonely), or an organic supermarket (Odin). The company should have a social mission, but it does not necessarily have to be steward-owned.

Below is a list of suggested companies.

Company name	Activity	Website
Fairphone	Sustainable and ethical smartphones	www.fairphone.com
Tony's Chocolonely	Sustainable and fair chocolate	https://nl.tonyschocolonely.com/
Odin	Organic supermarket	www.odin.nl
Yumeko	Sustainable bed and bath textiles	www.yumeko.nl
Social Capital	Connecting people with vulnerable job markets	https://socialcapital.nl/

The Rock Group	Sustainable consulting agency	https://therockgroup.biz/nl/
Rataplan	Chain of thrift stores	https://rataplan.nl/
Confed	Assembly company	www.confed.eu
Breedweer	Facility services	www.breedweer.nl
Thrive Institute	Knowledge institution	https://thriveinstitute.nl/

You can also allow students to choose their own company, but plan extra time for this if needed.

Execution

Students will work in a pressure cooker format, completing four steps within a limited time. The fifth step is a presentation with feedback. Suggested time limits are provided for each step.

Step 1: Identifying the Organization and Its Stakeholders (15 minutes)

Students list the key stakeholders of the company. This can be done simply by writing down names or by conducting a structured stakeholder analysis using a model if they are familiar with one. If not, a model can be introduced..



Step 2: Defining Steward Qualities (10 minutes)

Students create a list of 5-8 essential qualities for stewards. The instructor should check in on the groups and provide guidance if their approach is too one-sided.

Step 3: Representing Stakeholder Interests (15 minutes)

Students create a list of stewards with associated profiles, linked to the interests that should be represented. They decide whether stewards should be independent (but knowledgeable about a particular interest) or directly connected to a stakeholder group. The instructor should support students in this process and encourage them to justify their choices.

Step 4: Designing the Selection Process (10 minutes)

Students outline the selection process for stewards in their company.

Consider giving students a short break after Step 4 before moving on to presentations.

Conclusion

Step 5: Presentations and Feedback (*Minimum 5 minutes per group, 30-45 minutes for the class*)

Each group presents their plan in about 3 minutes, covering:

- Steward profiles
- Selection process
- Key considerations

The rest of the class provides feedback and evaluates the plan based on three criteria:

- Is the mission well-represented in the choice of stewards?
- Are the qualities of the stewards aligned with the company's needs?
- Is the selection process fair and transparent?

Students can ask questions and, if desired, rate each presentation using a score system (e.g., 1-10 or another scale).

Wrap up by summarizing the key insights from the presentations and discussions.

4. Getting started with... starting a steward-owned business

Explanation

In this activity, students will explore what it means to start a business as a steward-owned company. They will analyze the implications for different aspects of their operations, assess the advantages and disadvantages, and ultimately make a reasoned preliminary decision: whether to start as a steward-owned company, transition to steward-ownership later, or not adopt steward-ownership at all.

This activity is especially suitable for students focused on entrepreneurship and those planning to start their own business.

Instructions for use

The activity takes at least 65 minutes, but it is recommended to allow more time. A good approach is to divide it into two sessions (e.g., 2 x 45 minutes with a break).

Preparation

Ensure that the steward-ownership framework is printed on large sheets for students to fill in. Additionally, prepare blank large sheets for listing the advantages and disadvantages in Step 3.

Execution

Step 1: Steward-ownership framework – 20-30 minutes

Students complete the framework in their groups. Each section has a provided explanation to guide them. Depending on how far they are in developing their business ideas, this step may take more or less time.

Step 2: Review the framework from another group (1) – 10 minutes

Encourage students to provide feedback on at least two other groups' frameworks. If suitable, consider having one group member stay behind to explain their work, while the others visit different groups.

Step 3: List advantages and disadvantages, and draw conclusions – 15 minutes

Groups create a list of pros and cons. You can link this discussion to the elements of the (Social) Business Model Canvas if relevant. In the final five minutes, students must formulate a well-reasoned conclusion.

Step 4: Review the pros and cons from another group (2) – 10 minutes

Students provide feedback on at least two other groups' conclusions. Again, you can consider having one person stay behind to explain while others move between groups.

Finalize your conclusion (10 – 30 minutes)

This final step aligns with Step 5. Give groups time to review the feedback they received and revise their conclusions if necessary. Depending on available time, you can either have each group present their findings or simply state their decision and main argument in a brief discussion.

5. Getting started with... a capital injection for a steward-owned company

Explanation

In this assignment, students take on the perspective of a steward-owned company that wants to scale up and needs a capital injection to do so. The challenge is to determine how a steward-owned company can receive funding while ensuring that the separation of profit and voting rights remains intact. Students will explore three possible options for financing and evaluate their suitability based on specific criteria.

Instructions for use

The activity takes at least 60 minutes, but additional time can be allocated for deeper discussions and analysis.

Preparation

Divide the class into four groups, three groups will each explore one financing option, one group will act as the board of the fictional steward-owned company "True Jeans". Students should read Chapter 4.1 in preparation, either in class or as homework.

Execution

Step 1: Preparation - 20 – 25 minutes

Explain the assignment and its objectives. Give the four groups time to research and discuss their assigned topic.

Step 2: Pitching and questions - 15 - 20 minutes

Each of the three financing groups pitches their option to the board of True Jeans. The board then asks questions to assess how well the financing option aligns with steward-ownership principles. Each pitch lasts 2 to 3 minutes, followed by 3 to 5 minutes of questions from the board.

Step 3: The board's choice - 10 minutes

The board deliberates and announces its decision. During this time, the rest of the class may take a short break.

Step 4: Joint reflection - 10 minutes

Students step out of their assigned roles for a collective reflection on the arguments presented during the discussion.

Conclusion – 5 minuten

Wrap up the lesson with an open discussion on key takeaways. Did students gain a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges of securing capital in a steward-owned company? What insights did they find most valuable?

6. Getting started with... a new legal form

Explanation

In this assignment, students will explore the new legal form "rentmeestervenootschap", which is intended for steward-owned companies. Typically, the Ministry of Economic Affairs gathers sector input through public consultations. Students will write a response to the ministry from the perspective of a specific stakeholder, such as an existing steward-owned company or a business considering the transition to steward-ownership. This provides a real-world context that is especially relevant for fields like business administration and public governance.

Instructions for use

This activity is estimated to take 30-60 minutes. It can be shortened by assigning preparation as homework or extended with a more in-depth discussion afterward.

Preparation

Check the current status of the legal form's development by searching for "rentmeestervenootschap" online. Adjust the assignment accordingly if the legislative process has progressed further.

The core task is for students to write a letter about the new legal form from a stakeholder perspective.

- Decide whether students will choose their own perspective, select from predefined perspectives (see suggestions below), or be assigned a perspective by the instructor.
- Determine whether students will complete the assignment individually or in small groups.

Execution

Assign students the task of writing a response letter to the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Possible perspectives include:

- An existing steward-owned company
- A business considering transitioning to steward-ownership
- An entrepreneur starting a new steward-owned company
- A representative of traditional businesses, such as VNO-NCW
- An investor representative, such as VEB
- The Chamber of Commerce (KvK)

Students should have 20-30 minutes to write their letter.

If the assignment is individual, consider grouping students with the same perspective afterward to identify the top three key points from their letters.

If you want to provide examples, refer students to public consultation letters from similar legislative processes, such as those submitted during the consultation on the [Maatschappelijke BV \(BVm\)](#).

Conclusion

Discuss as a full class the key elements of the proposed legal form mentioned in students' letters. Organize these elements by theme (e.g., financial, social, ethical) or let students decide on a classification. Analyze with students where interests align and where they differ among stakeholders.

For further depth, shift to the perspective of the Ministry of Economic Affairs: Which arguments do students believe will be most persuasive to the ministry, and why?

