Appendix A

Case Study (Adopted from Brenner and Brenner (2010))

Background information.

Your team founded *TripDetective* eight years ago, which was the first price comparison engine in Germany allowing to compare hotel and flight prices and to make a reservation. *TripDetective* is more than just a search engine, it is also an online community, where diverse information about trips can be published by the enterprise as well as by its customers. The enterprise grew very fast, now it counts more than 800 employees and seven millions visitors per month and is one of the largest price comparison engines in Europe. However, in the previous months the profit was vastly reduced. As an entrepreneurial team you were asked by the investors to analyze the situation and its causes and to suggest further steps, which are supposed to improve the profitability. A written analysis is required.

Please imagine that you are a member of the entrepreneurial team and perform this analysis. Following information is available to you:

Information about the cooperation.

Some days ago *TripDetective* succefully acquired an American price comparison engine, *YourHome*, counting two million of land houses in about 200 countries, as a business partner. Information about this cooperation is still not available to the online community where customers can exchange information about hotels and destinations.

Information about the quality certificate.

The application for the service quality certificate of a prestigious consumer organization is taking longer than it was planned. The *TripDetective* team dealing with the consumer organization informed you that the consumer organization does not always meet the deadlines.

Development of employee number between 2008 and 2016.

Average number of hotel and flight reservations made via *TripDetective* per day.

Sickness absence in 2015 and 2016 (average number of days).

Information from the marketing unit.

This summer a new aggressive marketing campagne was designed. In the advertising spot Mr Tobias Kastner, who is a leading actor of the serial *Whistleblower,* was supposed to uncover *TripDetective* as an organization which collects all the data about hotels and flights and saves it properly. In the beginning, the negotiation with Mr Kastner was successful, but in September he refused to enter into a contract. He did not inform *TripDetective* about the reasons for this decision.

Information about compensation policy.

Seven months ago the well-established variable boni were replaced by a new compensation system following the current trend and consisting of the ad hoc boni and peer boni. Ad hoc boni are high only under the premise that the enterprise was successful within a business year. Depending on the enterprise’s benefit the sum of the monetary reward is calculated and provided to the single divisions, where the managers distribute them between their employees. Despite this, *TripDetective* started to distinguish between the divisions: e.g., while the Marketing division receives ad hoc boni instead of variable boni, the IT & Development division does not receive any boni at all. It is explained by the fact that for the IT & Development division no concrete goals could be defined in advance, otherwise their innovative thinking would be limited too stringently.

Peer boni are usually small amounts of money, which are distributed by colleagues, e.g. as a reward for a high engagement or willingness to help.

While peer boni are widely accepted by the employees, ad hoc boni cause a lot of [complaint](https://www.dict.cc/englisch-deutsch/complaint.html)s. High performance employees particularly provide following feedback to managers: they find it not fair, that their monetary reward depends on external factors such as the current market situation or the performance of their colleagues. They often mention poor transparency and notice that in contrast to *TripDetective* its direct competitor *SearchStar* makes the information about compensation and boni publicly available since 2014.

Information about media presence.

On 2nd September 2016 the prestigious newspaper reported about a [written warning](https://www.linguee.de/englisch-deutsch/uebersetzung/written+warning.html), which another well-known price comparison engine, *MyHoliday*, received from the [Cartel Office](https://www.linguee.de/englisch-deutsch/uebersetzung/cartel+office.html). Its partner hotels had a contract obligation not to offer lower prices even if guests asked for the room reservation directly at the reception desk. Therefore *MyHoliday* had a possibility to raise the prices without fearing lower price offers, which is a critical problem for the free market.

Despite this, a hotel chain plans to proceed legally against *MyHoliday:* the price comparison engine bought multiple Internet addresses including a combination of a hotel and destination names, pretending that customers made a reservation directly by the hotel chain. In fact, they were still booking via *MyHoliday.*

An avalanche of further investigative articles focusing on [delinquency](https://www.dict.cc/englisch-deutsch/delinquency.html) of different price comparison engines was triggered. They listed, for example, illegally received or faked quality certificates, manipulated hotel rankings, hidden service fees and original prices, which were signed as “70% off” offers.

Table A1

*Standard solution for the case study designed following the example of Brenner and Brenner (2010)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Problem | Possible reason(s) | Solution approach(s)/idea(s) |
| no online community for rent land houses | unplanned delay, unmotivated social media team | 1. to develop an online community (e.g. by providing points or discount for rating the land houses) |
| the application for the service quality certificate takes too long | irreliability of the consumer organization | 1. to insist on meeting deadlines. 2. to find another consumer organization working faster |
| lack of job satisfaction and high sickness absence | the fast growth of the employee number, retarded development of the HR development, negative reaction to ad hoc boni | 1. to analyze the new reward system in detail (IT and development experts may perceive missing boni as unfair, because they contribute a lot to enterprise’s success). 2. to follow the *SearchStar’s* example |
| decrease of the number of hotel and flight ticket reservations since September | the [written warning](https://www.linguee.de/englisch-deutsch/uebersetzung/written+warning.html) by [Cartel Office](https://www.linguee.de/englisch-deutsch/uebersetzung/cartel+office.html) and the scandal focusing on *MyHoliday* which may break customer’s trust in price comparison engines in general | 1. to dissociate *TripDetective* from *MyHoliday* clearly (e.g. through an interview with the members of a management team) 2. to speed up the acquisition of the service quality certificate |
| No contract with Mr Kastner threatening the new marketing campagne | unclear, possibly the *MyHoliday* scandal | 1. to ask Mr Kastner about the reasons 2. to adjust his contract 3. if Mr Kastner refuses the cooperation, start negotiation with other actors |

*Note.* The last column contains 10 ideas which were supposed to be generated during the experiment. For each of these ideas only one point was given in the gamification condition, because they were not evaluated as “creative”. For any other idea two points were given to a team in the gamification condition. These numbers served only as a feedback for the participants and were not considered in the later data analysis.