ACADEMIC CASE STUDY / HARVARD UNIVERSITY

When more investment is not enough

Connecting strategy, investment and people to understand sustained performance.

AUTHOR-WRITTEN WEBSITE ADAPTATION / SEPTEMBER 2026

THE PROBLEM

Higher spending and rising enterprise value do not automatically produce stronger operational performance. Using a professional sports organisation as an academic example, I explored how the business, its investment decisions and its workforce could become better aligned.

MY APPROACH

I examined the organisation through three connected lenses: corporate strategy and governance, the composition of the team, and the performance of the people within it. Literature and public information informed an analysis of decision rights, recruitment, marginal expenditure, analytics and culture.

THE CENTRAL FINDING

The quality of an investment depends on the system and the people that put it to work.

WHAT THIS SHOWS

A disciplined way to move beyond the size of a budget. Clarify the performance barrier, understand how decisions are made, evaluate the contribution of each investment, and enable people to execute together.

Status: Academic analysis based on literature and public information. Recommendations were not a commissioned engagement; no implementation or attributable return is claimed.

Five questions behind performance.

The original study used a sports setting to examine a broader management challenge: making corporate ambition, investment and everyday execution work together.

01 **WHO DECIDES - AND WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?**

Map the relationship between the executive team, operational leaders and the workforce. Clear decision rights can reduce conflict, but effective coordination also depends on listening to the people closest to performance.

02 **WHAT DOES THE NEXT INVESTMENT ADD?**

Assess an addition by its contribution to the whole system, rather than by reputation alone. The analysis applies marginal expenditure and portfolio thinking to talent: complementary strengths, fit and resilience matter alongside individual capability.

03 **HOW DOES EVIDENCE IMPROVE JUDGEMENT?**

Use analytical information to challenge assumptions, identify overlooked value and evaluate weaknesses. The paper also recognises uncertainty: a favourable metric cannot guarantee future performance or replace contextual managerial judgement.

04 **WHAT MAKES PEOPLE EFFECTIVE TOGETHER?**

Align roles, routines and incentives with a shared direction. Flexibility and development can strengthen the workforce, while excessive pressure, unclear purpose or poorly handled status differences can undermine morale and execution.

05 **WHAT SUSTAINS VALUE OVER TIME?**

Connect near-term choices with long-term capability, financial discipline and stakeholder trust. The recommendations emphasise balanced investment and coherent leadership rather than assuming that a larger budget alone will solve the performance problem.

FINANCIAL LENS

The study examines allocation, relative value and the cost of errors. It does not establish a causal return on investment or claim that its recommendations produced a financial or sporting outcome.

Source and scope. Adapted from Nitesh Chawda's 2017 submission for MGMT 5515, The Business of Football, Harvard Extension School, Harvard University. This original website summary anonymises the organisation and the individuals discussed. It is an academic work sample; no university endorsement, adoption or client relationship is asserted.