

**Sample Discussion Questions**  
wayne.smith@csun.edu  
[ updated: Thursday, May 1, 2008 ]

---

**Course:** BUS 302  
**Title:** *The Gateway Experience* (3 units)

“A major stimulant to creative thinking is focused questions. There is something about a well-worded question that often penetrates to the heart of the matter and triggers new ideas and insights.”

---Brian Tracy (1944-)

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to help BUS 302 students ask critical questions after listening to a presentation on a difficult business case. In BUS 302, discussion questions are one of “clarification,” “difference of analysis/opinion/experience,” or “extension/exploratory.” The following questions are examples of questions that are well-designed.

### **Clarification**

“Hello. My name is John from Team 2. I think your presentation was really good. I learned much from your chart on profit maximization. I have a clarification question. Can you explain how you calculated the real discount rate that you used in the present value calculation?”

“Good afternoon. My name is Olga from Team 3. I am the Human Resources manager at the firm. I can tell you really spent some time thinking about each part of your presentation. I especially liked the discussion regarding the legal duty to mitigate damages—I had forgotten that detail from College. I would like to ask a clarification question. Can you help me understand how your consulting firm concluded that additional training in first aid techniques is needed for our staff?”

### **Difference of Analysis**

“Hi. I am Tess. I am part of the Team 1 group. Your firm did a splendid job. I especially liked the discussion surrounding the difference between direct and indirect costs. I have a question. In our analysis of this case, our team allocated plant overhead by square footage on the assumption that it was more equitable in the long run. I noticed that your firm allocated plant overhead based on the cost of equipment in the plant. Can you explain in more detail why you chose your allocation method?”

“Good morning. My name is Dr. Paul Gray from Group 3. Your firm made a nice presentation. I agree with your conclusion that the contract was never legally valid in the

first place. However, I came to different conclusion regarding the strategic role of real estate holdings in our financial portfolio. I didn't place much value in real estate holdings due to recent changes in the sub-prime market, but I notice that your firm recommends that we aggressively pursue real estate holdings over the next ten years. Can you help me understand your decision logic behind your recommendation?"

## **Extension**

"Hello. My name is Alice from Team 5. I think your presentation was structured in a very clear manner. I agree that our firm has to re-think its strategic mission and vision. At the end of the presentation, you recommended that we develop a marketing strategy alongside a production strategy. Do you have any additional ideas on how to develop such a marketing strategy?"

"My name is Bob. I am one part of Team 4. I think your presentation was very useful to our firm. I agree that the bank should have migrated from ATM cards to debit cards on a faster timeline. You mentioned on slide #4 that credit unions have gained market share in the past ten years. I know it wasn't part of your presentation, but why, in your own experience, do you think that is?"