Common Errors - Information Competency

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Course: *MGT 360*
Title: *Management and Organizational Behavior* (3 units)

"Understand the purpose of inspection; that is, for improvement of processes and reduction of cost."
---*W. Edwards Deming (1900-1993)*

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to enumerate how students lost points for this assignment. This assignment has been given each semester since Fall, 2006. All individuals make mistakes. Wise individuals learn from their mistakes and the mistakes of others. Wise individuals learn as much as possible the "easy" way; that is, they learn via education in class. "Learning on the job," that is, learning via experience, is more expensive. Speculating for a moment, my guess is that most of the following errors were rooted either in 1), not allocating enough time, and/or 2), not having another person double-check your work.

The following errors are ordered from most common to least common.

Misaligned decimal places

Discussion:
If numbers are the placed in a table, or in a format similar to a table, then the numbers should be aligned by decimal place.

Recommendation:
One can set a decimal-aligned tab stop, use a Courier (monospaced) font, insert a table, or "copy-and-paste" a spreadsheet.

Incorrect formula for percent change

Discussion:
The appropriate formula for "percent change" is:

$$\left[\frac{(new - old)}{old}\right] \bullet 100$$

Recommendation:

If you don't know a formula, you need to consult a reference, ask a class colleague, or ask the instructor.

Incorrect number of decimal places

Discussion:
The phrase "number of decimal places" refers to the number of decimal places to the right of the decimal place.

Recommendation:
One has to specifically look for this requirement in the question. The number of decimal places can change depending on a number of circumstances.

Fading (illegible) text

Discussion:
It can be difficult to estimate precisely when the "toner" or "ink" in the printer will run out.

Recommendation:
Be prepared.

Incorrect answer for the median

Discussion:
I noticed a few students simply took the average of the two "middle" numbers of the hot dog data. But the hot dog data is sorted by day not dollar sales. Students need to sort (i.e., order) the data by dollar sales. The median is the "middle" of the dollar sales not the "middle" of the month.

Recommendation:
Always ask yourself if this calculation makes sense (both conceptually and computationally).

No comments

Discussion:
The assignment calls for a sentence or two detailing the strategy that you used to obtain the answer(s) for each section. Even assignments that "look like" they have a significant quantitative component may have a significant qualitative component as well.

Recommendation:
After you obtain an "answer" to the question, go back and re-read the question. Ask yourself—Did I answer all the parts of the question?

Unit Sales rather than Dollar Sales

Discussion:
Section I., Question 1 asks you to compute the descriptive statistics for the *dollar* sales, not the *unit* sales. In this problem, the unit price doesn't change, however, this is an oversimplified example.

Recommendation:
Read carefully.

$ sign and % sign in wrong place

Discussion:
Always place the dollar sign before the number and always place the percent sign after the number. The only exception to the dollar sign is if you need to specify the country of currency as well (such as USD).

Recommendation:
Read carefully. Ask the instructor or show the instructor your work ahead of time.