

Assignment:
Organizational Opportunity/Challenge Essay
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Course: *MGT 360*
Title: *Management and Organizational Behavior (3 units)*

“Are you a student?”
---the question I am always asked by the employee cashiers at CSUN Sierra Center

“At each stage in the process, ask the question ‘why’ five times.”
---Taiichi Ohno (1912-1990)

Goal:

I want you to reflect briefly on a substantive issue germane to this class, and I want to capture a small writing sample from each of you. This assignment is straightforward.

Objective:

In narrative essay format, I want you to describe the most engaging organizational opportunity or most intractable organizational challenge that you have ever encountered as an employee. The organizational issue can be an opportunity that is just waiting to be exploited (leveraged), or perhaps it was indeed leveraged successfully. Similarly, the organizational issue can be a challenge that is just waiting to be addressed (resolved), or perhaps it was indeed addressed successfully. You can describe the issue itself, the issue and the approach (successful or not), or the issue and what approach you would take if you could.

I am less interested in which issue you select; I am more interested in your attention to detail, your critical reasoning, and your due diligence with respect to language use and grammar. More to the point, *all* issues in organizations are management issues. The challenge for managers, therefore, is to apply the theory and practice of management and organizational behavior to address, and perhaps resolve, the issue (opportunity or challenge) to deliver persistent and consistent value in the organization.

If you have little or no work experience, you may describe an issue that you have encountered as a customer. If this is your situation, at the top of the essay simply state “I have little or no work experience”. Finally, only choose an issue from the University if you are employed at the University.

As to critical thinking, the “VALUE” critical thinking rubric on page 3 of this document can be used a general guide. Beyond that minimal requirement, students should employ typical expository, composition, and communication techniques in this brief essay.

Length:

This essay is to be no less than one and one-half pages in length and no more than two full pages in length. Other relevant formatting requirements (“style guide”) are linked from the course web page. Recall also that for all written assignments in this course, 10% is deducted from the content score for each type of error in language use.

Performance Measurement:

The maximum number of points for content is 10.

Tips:

Students should also read and comprehend the details in Chapter 1 “Management Today” of our Schermerhorn textbook even though this chapter comes later in our class outline. This chapter contains key ideas that can improve the rigor and relevance of your critical thinking essay. Some key ideas regarding management and organizational behavior from this chapter are as follows:

- What elements of *planning*, *organizing*, *leading*, and *controlling* do you observe in your organizational issue?
 - “Planning is the process of setting performance objectives and determining what actions should be taken to accomplish them. Through planning, a manager identifies desired results—goals and objectives, and ways to achieve them—and action plans.”
 - “Plans must be implemented. Organizing is the process of assigning tasks, allocating resources, and coordinating the activities of individuals and groups to accomplish plans. Organizing is how managers put plans into action by defining jobs and tasks, assigning them to responsible persons, and then providing support such as technology, time, and other resources.”
 - “Leading is the process of arousing people’s enthusiasm and inspiring their efforts to work hard to fulfill plans and accomplish objectives. Managers lead by building commitments to a common vision, encouraging activities that support goals, and influencing others to do their best work on the organization’s behalf.”
 - “The management function of Controlling is the process of measuring work performance, comparing results to objectives, and taking corrective action as needed. Managers exercise control by staying in active contact with people as they work, gathering and interpreting performance measurements, and using this information to make constructive changes.”

- Does the leveraging of the key opportunity or the resolution of the recurring challenge require better knowledge and use of contemporary ideas related to *talent*, *technology*, *globalization*, *ethics*, *diversity*, *careers*, or *connections*?

- Do the professionals and managers involved envision the same organizational *purpose* and evaluate organizational *performance* similarly?

- Are there severe *communications* issues between two or more individuals in the organization? Are there communications issues between *levels of management*?

“VALUE” Critical Thinking rubric:

When writing a college-level essay—even a short one—it is helpful to review the basic elements of “critical thinking”. The following critical thinking “rubric” is excerpted and adapted from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU):

<http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/CriticalThinking.cfm>

Before final submission, endeavor to see if your essay would be considered “relatively strong” on all or most of the following elements as applicable to your unique essay.

Element	<i>Relatively Strong</i>	<i>Relatively Weak</i>
<i>Explanation of issues</i>	Issue/Problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/Problem to be considered is stated without clarification or description
<i>Evidence</i>	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.
<i>Influence of context and assumptions</i>	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others’ assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
<i>Student’s position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)</i>	Specific position is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position are acknowledged. Others’ points of view are synthesized within position.	Specific position is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.
<i>Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)</i>	Conclusions and related outcomes are logical and reflect student’s informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspective discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes are oversimplified.