Assignment:
Organizational Opportunity/Challenge Essay
`wayne.smith@csun.edu`
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Course: *MGT 370*
Title: *Management Skills Development* (3 units)

"The five functions of management are 1), setting objectives and planning, 2), organizing the group, 3), motivating and communicating, 4), measuring performance, and 5), developing people."
---Peter Drucker (1909-2005)

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:
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 skills development (and MGT/OB principles) 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 two and one-half (2½) pages in length and no more than three (3) 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. This essay must have at least five (5) paragraphs; 50% is deducted automatically if not.

Performance Measurement:
The maximum number of points for content is 10.

Tips:
Students should also read and comprehend the details in the Whetten/Cameron textbook. These chapters contain key ideas that can improve the rigor and relevance of your critical thinking essay.

Some key ideas regarding management and organizational behavior from the <u>Introduction</u> chapter are as follows:
- What strengths or weaknesses do you observe in one or more of the following five keys area of Management Skill Development: Skill assessment, Skill learning, Skill analysis, Skill practice, or Skill application? (see p. 10)
- Can you distinguish between management skills and leadership skills? How are they similar? How are they different?
- Which elements of Collaboration, Creation, Completion, and Controlling (see p. 10) play a key role or roles in the opportunity or challenge?

Some key ideas regarding management and organizational behavior from <u>Chapter 1</u> are as follows:
- Can you observe a "Sensitive Line" in one or more of the individuals involved?
- Are various components of Emotional Intelligence displayed?
- Is there an ethical issue? Can you evaluate the moral maturity of an individual?
- What is the cognitive style of an individual? Of you?
- Is there an issue related to the posture, or orientation, towards change?
- Do one or more of the individuals do a core self-evaluation—that is honestly, genuinely, and authentically reflect on one's own position or perspective?

Can you draw an analogy or relate an idea from the Sandberg, Shellenbarger, Wartzman/Crosby, Terlep, Davidson, Buchanan, or Samuel articles, or the movie "Buck"?

Don't forget the fundamentals of Principles of Mgt./Org. Behavior (MGT 360) either.
- What elements of *planning*, *organizing*, *leading*, and *controlling* do you observe in your organizational issue?
- 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	*Relatively Strong*	*Relatively Weak*
Explanation of issues	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
Evidence	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.
Influence of context and assumptions	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.
Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)	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.
Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)	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.