

Assignment #1: Consulting Proposal

Although you now run your own consulting firm, you previously worked for an organization (e.g., a university department, a business, etc.—you choose) whose boss had been at his position for five years. This person knows you, has known you for some years, and has (so far as you can tell) a pretty good opinion of you and your work. He strikes you as being a fair person, though he is exceedingly autocratic and tends to make snap decisions.

When he first began in his current position, the administrative structure of the organization was responsible for a good deal of inefficiency. Few procedures were in place for accomplishing the organization's business. Thus, one of the boss's first tasks was to devise a new organizational structure and new procedures. At the time, many in the organization were shocked by the new procedures which, compared to the old ones, struck the employees as being extremely strict, even rigid. But as time passed, the employees grew to accept the new boss's methods because they quite readily saw that the organization was being run more efficiently than before.

In the last two years, however, the organization has grown enormously, at least in terms of professional staff, but the support staff (secretaries, word-processing operators, etc.) and available equipment have remained virtually the same. As a result, the organization is facing new inefficiencies, which the current procedures aren't helping to correct.

A simple solution, of course, would be to buy new equipment and to hire new support staff, but the organization has fallen on hard times of late. Given that situation, another solution might be to lay off some of the professional staff, but that wouldn't be a good idea because projections show that the organization will soon be financially healthy again.

To remedy the problem, your former boss has requested that you submit a proposal to study the situation, the results of which, of course, would be recommendations for solving the current problems. As far as you can determine, the boss requests your possible assistance because he respected your work when you were under his employ and because you not only have inside knowledge of the organization but also the necessary objectivity that stems from your outside perspective.

Although the study could go in several directions, after a two-hour meeting with the boss, you tentatively agreed on a feasibility study to determine which of the following three possible solutions would be best: hiring temporaries, leasing additional hardware, instituting flex-time, or some combination.

Although the boss appears to be the primary decision-maker, in an uncharacteristically unautocratic move he has formed what appears to be a committee that will evaluate your proposal. This committee includes him and four others.