

Organizational Assessment Exercise

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Objective: To interpret organizational communication concepts and issues as they occur in an organization of your choice.

Choosing an organization: As mentioned earlier, any kind of organization that you are interested in is appropriate for the subject of your essay. Make sure it is an organization whose workings you are familiar with and that you have access to.

Issues that your essay must address:

1. Address why your choice is a good example of organization/organizing.
2. How does the organization distinguish itself from its environment and what role does communication play in this process?
3. What are the goals of the organization and how are these goals formulated and communicated?
4. What relationships between communication, effectiveness and efficiency can you observe?
5. Compare and contrast the formal organizational structure of your organization with the informal networks of relationships that have developed/are developing between people in the organization.
6. Describe core managerial values and beliefs in your organization, key organizational practices that construct and enact those values, and how people in the organization interpret or resist those values in different ways.
7. How do key personnel attempt to control communication processes?

Collecting 'data': There are three sources of data that I expect to see you use in your essay: a) interviews b) organizational documents and c) your own perceptions. Ensure that you conduct at least three or four interviews with organizational members. In doing so, ensure that a) your respondents play different roles in the organization and b) you ask them similar questions that allow you to compare perceptual differences. Try developing an interview 'schedule' (a list of questions you would like answered by each respondent). Make sure that the questions are open-ended: don't trap your respondent into giving you yes/no answers. Also make sure you get your hands on organizational documents such as employee handbooks, constitutions, rules, brochures, pamphlets, etc. Finally, use your own experience to talk about the organization. An essay that is based solely on your own experiences, however, will fetch a 'D' at best.

I expect you to let me know how you've obtained your information about facts that you present in your essay, and to reference concepts that you discuss with specific authors. More importantly, I'd like to see you cite your 'data' as evidence for the claims you make about the organization. To reiterate, I will be looking for a balanced use of quotes from interviews you have conducted, documents you've used, as well as your own perceptions. Make sure you present evidence to me such that I know that your essay has not relied mainly on your own preconceived notions about the organization and its goals.

Writing the essay

This is an essay assignment. Do not treat the eight questions detailed above as independent questions as you do when you write homework assignments. Structurally, your essay must have the following: a) an introduction, containing a preview of your essay as well as a decent thesis; b) internal transitions from one content area to another; c) summaries and examples, d) adequately cited material in a citation style of your choice and d) a detailed conclusion that summarizes your essay and main thesis. You may choose to address the issues in whatever order you see fit, so long as there is an overall coherence to your work and the essay itself says something interesting about the organization you're studying.

I expect your essay to be grammatically perfect. I will take points off for shoddy spelling, typos and syntax. The writing lab is, unfortunately, closed this semester because of budget cuts. However, you can also get online help, handouts and a list of other online writing resources at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>. Do not begin by assuming that you write well and will therefore not need a proofreader. If I've not used the words 'well written' when responding to your homework, then you will need help with grammar; at the very least, you will need to have someone look over your work before you hand it in. Have a look at the writing sample (enclosed) to get an idea of what sort of writing I expect.