

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
MARSHALL SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

MOR 555

Designing High-Performance Organizations

Spring 2009
Thursdays 6:30-9:30 pm

Instructor: Professor Paul S. Adler
Bridge Hall 308-D
Tel: 0-0748
Email: padler@usc.edu
Office hours: by appointment

Prerequisites: None

Course texts:

- * *Organization Theory and Design*, by Richard L. Daft (9th edition), South-Western
- * Reader: available at the Bookstore

Course goals

Business organizations today face unprecedented challenges. Across virtually every industry, managers are confronted with new conditions of rapid technological change, intense global competition, and growing demands for social responsibility. As traditional sources of competitive advantage are being eroded, "organization design" is becoming a crucial factor in the survival and performance of organizations. Organization design refers to the arrangement of the organization's formal and informal structure as well as its processes, staffing, rewards, and culture.

Research and practical experience have demonstrated that organizational performance is maximized when the organization (a) follows a strategy that fits the demands of the external environment and (b) adopts an organization design that enables it to effectively implement that strategy. Both strategy and organization design are essential: a great strategy that the organization cannot implement is useless. Other courses in the MBA program equip you to develop strategy; this course aims to prepare you to help lead in the design of high-performance organizations, whether as a manager or a consultant.

By the end of the term, you will have learned how to:

- * diagnose organizational problems;
- * assess whether an organization's design will support the business strategy;
- * develop compelling arguments for organization redesign proposals;
- * align strategy, structure, rewards, people, systems, and culture for peak performance.

Overview

We begin with an **introduction** and some **basic concepts** of organization structure.

The next module addresses the **external and internal factors** that influence organization design. Here we discuss:

- * reading and changing the environment
- * organizing to accomplish core tasks
- * organizational issues of size, life-cycle, and control
- * designing an organization to support its culture and ethics
- * compensation as element of organization design.

The final module addresses key **processes** relevant to organization design:

- * designing the organization to support innovation
- * designing the organization to support effective decision-making
- * dealing with conflict, power, politics
- * the organization design process.

Learning in this course

The course combines theory and case studies. The main resource for the theory part is an assigned text, *Organization Theory and Design*, by Richard L. Daft (9th edition). The cases and supplementary readings are available as a course reader at the bookstore.

The primary subject matter in this course is not a set of facts or analytic techniques that you can learn by reading and or doing pencil-and-paper exercises by yourself. While we will discuss numerous conceptual frameworks and theories, the subject matter itself is fraught with ambiguity, and using any of these concepts and theories requires considerable sensitivity to the real context. So what you learn in this course comes primarily from using these concepts as tools to reach deeper intuition, finer instincts, and better judgment.

As a result, the heart of the learning process is our class discussions and your case analysis efforts, rather than my lectures or the textbook. Moreover, the amount of learning you accomplish in this course is a direct function of your personal involvement in these activities: you can't learn to play tennis by watching it.

I will endeavor to create a supportive environment, and I expect students to contribute to that goal too. My aim is make the class a "learning community," where we can all learn from each other. This requires active participation and respect for each other's contributions.

Class process

Class sessions will usually begin with a short oral presentation by one or two student teams – "consulting teams" – presenting to the class as if we were the client in the case. Each team will do two opening consultant team presentations over the course of the semester. The appended guidelines and grade sheets will give you a clear idea my expectations of these.)

We then open the discussion to the class as a whole. As a group, we will try to build a complete analysis of the situation and address the problems and issues its presents.

In the latter part of the session, we segue into discussion of the relevant part of the textbook. This will be in the form of an interactive lecture.

Case analyses

In each case, the basic questions are essentially the same:

- (1) what are the real issues the organization needs to address?
- (2) what alternatives does the organization have in tackling these issues, and which alternative makes most sense?
- (3) what specific action plan would you recommend?

It is for you to identify the specific issues posed by the case and to decide how they can best be addressed. The case questions in the Session Descriptions below are just ideas to get you going, not an agenda for your analysis or for our discussion.

Note: most of these cases present a well-rounded picture of a business situation; they are not merely illustrations designed to exercise or test your knowledge of a given chapter of the textbook. As a result, the concepts needed to analyze the case and to formulate an appropriate action plan are not narrowly bounded by the textbook. In many cases, you will find it useful to invoke concepts from earlier in the course, from other courses, or from your own experience.

I encourage you to meet in teams to prepare these case discussions. You should try to schedule a regular time for your team to meet prior to each case discussion class to share ideas and formulate a deeper analysis of the case issues. Your learning from this course will be greatly augmented if you do this team preparation.

Consulting team case presentations

You should think of these presentations as if they were presentations by a group of outside consultants (your team) reporting to the case company's management team (the class).

Two or three team members should present the team's analysis to the class, using Powerpoint slides and whatever other visual aids they find useful. The opening presentations may

range from 10-12 minutes. Those who take longer than 12 minutes will be penalized. In order to facilitate grading, each team will give me a copy of their slides, notes, and relevant back-up materials. (See my description of the "Talking document" under "Guidelines for Team Presentations" below.)

I have found that these presentations and the discipline you will learn by doing them are one of the things about this course that students find most valuable. Your career in management depends crucially on the skills these presentations rely on — your ability to reason your way through the maze of considerations to get to the heart of the matter, and your ability to communicate complex ideas effectively.

To ensure maximum value from the work you invest in the preparation of these presentations, I will meet with presenting teams as soon as possible after class for 60 minutes, to discuss their presentations' strengths and weaknesses, and to brainstorm how these presentations could be strengthened. After the meeting, I will send you and the class further feedback.

Note: As concerns the grading of the oral delivery, I will not penalize people for language difficulties when their first language is other than English.

Note too: It's not a good idea to have too many team members participate in a single 12-minute presentation. But each team member should participate in presenting at least once.

Note finally: Since these presentations require considerable teamwork, and since teamwork is an important skill in management, students will conduct peer evaluations of their team members after their second team presentation (see Peer Evaluation Form below). These will count towards your final grade.

Class Participation

Your career success depends critically on your skill in articulating and defending your ideas and engaging a productive dialogue with your colleagues. You should consider our classroom as a laboratory in which you can test and improve these skills.

Class participation grades will be determined based on your contribution to class discussion of case studies. Attendance is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a good participation grade. You are expected to be an active participant. Just like in a real work setting, your contributions in discussions are a key part of your performance.

At the end of each case discussion session, I will assign a score to each student on the following scale:

0: absent

1: present with no or minimal participation

2: modest participation: comments that help flesh out a given part of the analysis/discussion

3: good participation: comments that clarify complex issues, synthesize material, and move the discussion forward noticeably

4: excellent participation: comments that challenge constructively the direction of the discussion and reorient it in a productive way.

Some of the criteria that make for effective class participation include:

* **Involvement:** Are you following the discussion attentively? Are you actively contributing ideas? Are you respectful of others in how you formulate your contributions?

* **Listening:** Are you a good listener? Are your points relevant to the flow of the discussion? Do you link them to the comments made by others?

* **Adding value:** Do your comments show evidence of insightful analysis of the case data? Do they make use of relevant practical experience? Are they formulated in a succinct, effective manner? Do your comments clarify and highlight the important aspects of earlier ideas and lead to a clearer statement of the relevant concepts and issues?

* **Risk-taking:** Are you willing to test new ideas, or are all your comments "safe"? (For example, repeating case facts without analyses and conclusions, or simply generic statements that would be true in almost any setting would be considered "safe" and not very useful.) Do your comments raise "difficult" questions that challenge us to think more deeply?

Note: Since during class I may call on students at any time, please avoid embarrassment by telling me before class if you are not prepared.

Note too: if you are uncomfortable with class participation, please let me know at the beginning of term and I will work with you to help you overcome this barrier.

Written Case Analysis Assignment

Apart from two consulting team presentations, you will need to prepare one individual, written case analysis – you have a choice of either of the last two cases: **Kaiser Permanente** or **HP Santa Rosa**. These assignments must be emailed to me before the class or handed in at the beginning of the class session devoted to the case. Details on my expectations are outlined in the section on “Case analysis assignment guidelines” below.

Please note: this is an individual assignment, and I expect you to respect USC’s corresponding Academic Integrity standards. Note that if you assigned to do a team presentation on one of these cases, your written assignment must be on the other.

Grading

The components of the final course grade will be weighted as follows

First team presentation	15%
Second team presentation	35%
Peer evaluation of team work	5%
Individual written case analysis	30%
Individual class participation	15%

Class attendance

Class attendance is essential to your learning in this course. Each student is allowed one absence, no questions asked and no penalty. All further absences will reduce the student's course grade, at the rate of one-third a letter grade for every further absence. This penalty can be mitigated (reduced by 50%) if, prior to the following class, the student submits a thorough written case analysis and notes on the assigned readings. Students with an excessive number of absences are therefore at risk of failing the course.

Classroom etiquette

An atmosphere of mutual respect is in order. So please...

- arrive at class on time: late arrivals are disruptive to your fellow classmates and to the conduct of the class;
- turn off your cell phones before you enter the classroom;
- do not engage in side conversations during class;
- do not pack up and leave towards the end of the class until it is clear the class is over.

Use of laptops etc. during class

Laptop and PDA use is not allowed during this class. In this class, it is far important to participate than to take detailed notes. A few hand-written notes will suffice. After each class, I recommend you can take some time to reflect on the discussion and type up whatever notes seem useful.

Academic integrity

The Honor Code was written by Marshall students and is upheld by Marshall students. It is not my place to “enforce” the honor code — it belongs to you, not to me. I have agreed to support the Marshall Honor Committee in its efforts to make the code relevant and meaningful by providing this reminder and endorsement of the code. A copy is posted in every classroom.

The following information on academic integrity, dishonesty, and the grading standard are placed here at the recommendation of the School of Business Administration Faculty and are taken from the *Faculty Handbook*:

“The University, as an instrument of learning, is predicated on the existence of an environment of integrity. As members of the academic community, faculty, students, and

administrative officials share the responsibility for maintaining this environment. Faculty have the primary responsibility for establishing and maintaining an atmosphere and attitude of academic integrity such that the enterprise may flourish in an open and honest way. Students share this responsibility for maintaining standards of academic performance and classroom behavior conducive to the learning process. Administrative officials are responsible for the establishment and maintenance of procedures to support and enforce those academic standards. Thus, the entire University community bears the responsibility for maintaining an environment of integrity and for taking appropriate action to sanction individuals involved in any violation. When there is a clear indication that such individuals are unwilling or unable to support these standards, they should not be allowed to remain in the University." (*Faculty Handbook*, 1994: 20)

Academic dishonesty includes: (*Faculty Handbook*, 1994: 21-22)

- Examination behavior - any use of external assistance during an examination shall be considered academically dishonest unless expressly permitted by the teacher.
- Fabrication - any intentional falsification or invention of data or citation in an academic exercise will be considered a violation of academic integrity.
- Plagiarism - the appropriation and subsequent passing off of another's ideas or words as one's own. If the words or ideas of another are used, acknowledgment of the original source must be made through recognized referencing practices.
- Other Types of Academic Dishonesty - submitting a paper written by or obtained from another, using a paper or essay in more than one class without the teacher's express permission, obtaining a copy of an examination in advance without the knowledge and consent of the teacher, changing academic records outside of normal procedures and/or petitions, using another person to complete homework assignments or take-home exams without the knowledge or consent of the teacher.

Students with disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The phone number of DSP is (213) 740-0776

Schedule

Date	Theme	Readings	Case
Jan 15	Introduction and overview	Ch. 1	(none)
Jan 22	Basics of organization structure	Ch. 2, 3	Appex
Jan 29	External environment	Ch. 4	Oticon
Feb 5	Interorganizational relationships	Ch. 5	Wal-Mart
Feb 12	Global organizations	Ch. 6	Infosys Consulting
Feb 19	Core tasks and technology	Ch. 7	NUMMI
Feb 26	Support technology	Ch. 8	Intermountain Health Care
Mar 5	Size, life-cycle, control	Ch. 9; Adler	Automation Consulting
Mar 12	Culture and values	Ch. 10	Merck Sharpe & Dohme Argentina
Mar 26	Compensation	Lawler; Nanda and Prusiner	Camp Dresser & McKee
April 2	Innovation	Ch. 11; Clark and Fujimoto	Mod IV
April 9	Decision-making	Ch. 12; pp. 407-411	Ergonomic problems at NUMMI
April 16	Power	Ch. 13	Kaiser Permanente
April 23	No class		
April 30	The organization design process	Daft: pp. 417-429; Adler and Heckscher	HP Santa Rosa

Session Descriptions And Case Questions

Jan 15: Introduction and overview

Case: (none)

Reading:

* Ch. 1

* course outline

Jan 22: Basics of organization structure

Reading: Ch. 2, 3

Case: Appex Corporation (HBS 9-491-082 rev, Feb 10, 1992)

Case Questions:

1. What were the challenges that Shikhar Ghosh faced when he joined Appex?
2. Evaluate the importance of each of the structural changes he implemented. How important were they? What problems did each new structure address? What problems, in turn, did it create?
3. How would you address the challenges that Appex is confronting by the end of the case? (Since we don't know very much about the challenges that will arise due to the acquisition by EDS, it may be appropriate to abstract from those.)

Jan 29: The environment

Reading: Ch. 4

Case: Oticon A/S Consolidated (HBS 9-195-142, Jan 5, 1995)

Case Questions:

1. Assess Oticon's new organization design.
2. What recommendations would you make for the future?

Feb 5: Interorganizational relationships

Reading: Ch. 5

Case: Wal-Mart's sustainability strategy (Stanford OIT-71)

Case questions:

1. Given the fact that Wal-Mart's customers generally are unwilling to pay a premium for environmentally friendly products, how is the company deriving business value from its sustainability strategy, or if not, how can it ensure that it does in the future?
2. Imagine that you are Andy Ruben or Tyler Elm, evaluating the progress of the electronics, seafood, and textiles networks. Which networks have been most successful? What explains the success or lack of it in these networks?
3. How is Wal-Mart motivating its suppliers to continuously reduce the environmental impacts of their products and process, and to share information about how they do that? How can the company stimulate the development of disruptive, breakthrough innovations?
4. As evidenced by Ex 12, Wal-Mart's sustainability strategy has generally been very profitable. However, two initiatives described in the case benefit society and the environment while apparently reduced Wal-Mart's profits. Identify those two initiatives and imagine that you are their internal champion. How do you propose to justify pursuing those initiatives?

Feb 12: Global organizations

Readings:

* Ch. 6

Case: Infosys Consulting in 2006 (Stanford SM-151)

Case questions:

1. What are Infosys Technologies' strategy and distinctive competencies?
2. Why did it decide to move into IT consulting? What is Infosys Consulting's strategy?
3. What are the challenges the two organizations face in managing their interface and their global growth?
4. What plan of action would you propose to Steve Pratt if he wants to "stay ahead of the game"?

Feb 19: Core tasks and technology

Reading: Ch. 7

Case: NUMMI

* extract from "New United Motor Manufacturing, Inc." (from NUMMI Community Relations)

* "Management by stress" by M. Parker and J. Slaughter (Technology Review, Oct, 1988)

* Adler/Cole vs. Berggren debate in Sloan Management Review, Spring 1993, Winter 1994

Case Questions:

1. What accounts for NUMMI's success to date (1993)?
2. How would you characterize NUMMI's organization design?
3. What points of vulnerability should management be worried about?
4. What recommendations would you make to NUMMI management to assure its success in the future?

Feb 26: Support technology

Reading: Ch. 8

Case:

* Intermountain Health Care (HBS 9-603-066)

* Clinical change at Intermountain Health Care (HBS 9-607-023)

Note: Class discussion will focus on the first of these two cases. The second one is only background reading: its description of the Cardiopulmonary arrest case vignette on p. 8-9 provides a useful illustration.

Case Questions:

1. How well is Intermountain Health Care performing?
2. What is IHC's approach to the management of health care delivery?
3. Why does IHC do it this way?
4. Why don't all health care delivery organizations do this?

March 5: Size, life-cycle, control

Readings:

* Ch. 9

* Adler: "Market, Hierarchy, and Trust: The Knowledge Economy and the Future of Capitalism," Organization Science, March-April 2001: 214-234

Case: Automation Consulting Services (HBS 9-190-053, Rev. Nov. 6, 2000)

Case Question:

How should the ACS founders deal with the problems they have identified? Be as specific as possible in making recommendations for each of the four offices.

March 12: Culture and values

Reading: Ch 10

Case: Merck Sharpe & Dohme Argentina, Inc. (A) (HBS 9-398-033, rev. Oct 17, 2006)

Case questions:

1. What is your evaluation of Mosquera's performance one year into his new job?
2. How would you compare the new value system Mosquera is trying to instill with the old one? What are the points of tension between the two?
3. Why is the decision about the candidate a difficult one for Ring? What do you think she will decide?
4. What would you do about the candidate if the decision were yours?

March 26: Compensation in organization design

Readings:

* "Reward Systems," by E.E. Lawler, III, From the Ground Up, Ch. 9, San Francisco: Jossey Bass

* Compensation in Professional service firms (HBS 9-905-039)

Case: Camp Dresser & McKee: Getting incentives right (HBS 9-902-122)

Case Questions:

1. What incentive payment do you recommend for each of the four cases under discussion? Why?
2. Is the BIPS process working? What would recommend to Tom Furman regarding the future of the compensation process at CDM?

April 2: Innovation

Reading:

* Ch. 11

* Clark and Fujimoto: The heavyweight product manager

Case: Mod IV Product Development Team (HBS 9-491-030, rev March 5, 1991)

Case Questions:

1. How has Mod IV ended up where it is now?
2. What should Linda Whitman do now?

April 9: Decision-making

Reading: Ch. 12, and pp. 407-411

Case: Ergonomic Problems at NUMMI (A)

Case Questions:

1. NUMMI is extraordinarily flexible in model changeovers. NUMMI is also extraordinarily efficient. What does it take to excel at both simultaneously – to be so “ambidextrous”?
2. What accounts for the ergonomic problems they encountered in the 1993 model introduction? What decision processes were involved – and where did they go wrong?
3. What recommendations would you make to NUMMI management to assure greater success in the future?
4. What recommendations would you make to UAW Local 2244 to assure the future well-being of its members?

April 16: Power

Readings:

* Ch. 13

* T. Kochan et al., “The potential and precariousness of partnership: The case of the Kaiser Permanente Labor Management Partnership,” *Industrial Relations*, 2008

Questions:

1. Why does Kaiser have a “labor management partnership”?
2. What are its benefits and its costs?
3. How do you assess the progress to date in building this partnership?
4. What skills do managers need to work in “partnership” mode?
5. What recommendations for moving forward would you have for Kaiser’s CEO? For the head of the union Coalition?

April 23: no class

April 29: The organization design process

Readings:

* Daft, pp. 417-429

* Adler and Heckscher: Collaborative community

Case: Hewlett Packard’s Santa Rose Systems Division (A) and (A1) (HBS 9-498-011, 9-498-012)

Case Questions:

1. Evaluate the change process to date.
2. Evaluate the proposed organization changes.
2. What should Wright do about the task force’s concerns?

Guidelines For Team Presentations

[Note: Essentially the same guidelines apply to your written case analysis assignment.]

Think of your presentations as consultant reports. Imagine that you have been given a chance to study the organization and to come up with a diagnosis and a set of recommendations. So let's first set the stage:

- * The client is the relevant manager. Do make sure you identify a specific client, since your action recommendations will need to be ones that this client can implement. In some case studies, it is not obvious who the relevant manager really is; but this is also true in real consulting work, so dealing with that ambiguity is also a learning experience for you.
- * The issues to be resolved may not be obvious; but this too is also true of many real-world situations. The case questions in the session descriptions are offered only to get your thinking going — they are not an agenda for your analysis.
- * Your presentation is to the class, but you should think of the class as if we were the client and his/her management team. Therefore you should not waste time repeating the case facts that would be known to the client. (In real engagements, you might review these case facts to establish common ground and your credibility; but in class, that won't be necessary.)

Now to the substance of your report. Your presentations should include the following elements:

First, one of the most challenging parts of the assignment: you need a single summary slide on which you succinctly tell us what (a) the challenge facing the organization, (b) the root issue that makes it difficult to successfully meeting this challenge (see discussion of "root issue" below), and (c) the basic idea behind your recommendation. Imagine that your client has to cut the meeting short due to an emergency, and you only have one slide on which to summarize your "**take away**" message – this is it. (Note: this is really hard to do! But it will force you to distill your analysis down to its core, and that will help you prioritize and shape the rest of the presentation.)

Second, you should lay out an overview of your presentation — the **agenda**. This slide should not simply tell us what areas you will address in what order: it will be much more impactful if you can summarize in a short phrase the key lesson of each of these parts of the presentation. It should lay out the substantive logic of your argument.

Third comes the body of the report. Here you need to start by identifying the **root issue(s)** facing the client. Think of your work as akin to that of a physician: the patient (client) comes in with a whole set of "presenting symptoms" and it's your job to identify the underlying disease. The organization usually faces multiple issues, and so identifying a single root issue underlying them all is not often easy; but it's a huge advantage if you can do this, since then you can focus your presentation and your recommendation will be solution to this single root issue with multiple ramifications. You simply don't have time to address more than one root issue in a short presentation.

In some cases, there are many issues reflecting several different root issue; but in the space of a 12-minute presentation you can only hope to serious address one of them. You may need to explain this to the client -- acknowledge that you think they face a number of distinct issues and explain that you are focusing on what you think may be the most important one. But I will challenge you to make sure that you have not overlooked some deeper root that underlies a broader range of their issues.

Sometimes the client has a strong opinion as to the nature of their real problem, but you think their analysis is not accurate – in which case, you have to convince them that the real problem lies elsewhere. And sometimes the case describes a situation without explicitly identifying any specific issues at all, perhaps because the client organization is doing very well – in which case, your task will be to identify the deep source of their success and a key source of vulnerability in the future, and what they could do about that.

In sum, identifying a root issue is often difficult. But in real life, it's much more important and difficult to identify the right question than to find the right answer.

Your diagnosis of this root issue should be argued, not just asserted, using the relevant facts of the case and whatever analytic tools seem necessary. Some of the supporting analysis may need to go into an Appendix.

Next, you need formulate a **strategic recommendation** that can address the root issue facing the organization. I recommend you make a clear distinction between this strategic recommendation and an implementation plan: the strategic recommendation specifies a general *compass heading* you are proposing to your client — the general direction they should follow to solve their problem — whereas the implementation plan specifies a detailed *itinerary* (see below). Your strategic recommendation should therefore not be a laundry list of things worth doing: it should define the basic approach that can solve the basic problems facing the client.

The analysis supporting this strategy recommendation must convince the client that your strategic recommendation will indeed solve the basic problem. Remember: there are lots of points of view in the client organization (and in the class) on how to solve its issues, and your job is to convince us that your analysis is the most plausible and that your recommended strategy is the most likely to achieve success. The best way to do this is as follows:

- * To begin, you should identify between two or three fundamentally different, **mutually exclusive, plausible alternatives to your strategic recommendation** for tackling the client's problems. Laying out these very contrasting strategies is an excellent way to clarify for the client the range of options that might reasonably be considered. (To repeat: you are looking for mutually exclusive alternatives here, not variants of the same basic idea).
- * Then you need to analyze the **pros and cons of each alternative**. The best way of making this pros/cons assessment convincing is to identify a common set of criteria against which to evaluate the alternatives. A broad range of strategic and operational factors are potentially relevant, but it is up to you to come up with a small set of key criteria. You should justify this choice of criteria: you can often do that by reference to the priorities implied by the organization's basic mission and business strategy.
- * Third, you need to explain why you believe the pros/cons balance of your preferred alternative is superior to the pros/cons balance of the others. To this end, it is often useful to develop a (rough-cut) formal **decision analysis**, where you use the common evaluation criteria (discussed in the previous paragraph), weight their relative importance (to reflect the priorities of the organization — you need to justify this weighting somehow!), score each alternative on each criterion (justifying your assessments), then calculate an overall score for each alternative. NOTE: putting numbers to these weights and scores is a great way to clarify your thinking, but the numbers will not convince your client: you need to explain in more qualitative language the rationale for your conclusion, and the numbers will just serve to illustrate and make more concrete your reasoning.
- * Finally, you should **test the sensitivity** of the resulting ranking to plausible alternative estimates of the weights and scores. Here is where the benefits of a formal, quantitative decision-analysis reveal themselves: first, it can show whether your preferred approach really "dominates" the alternatives, or if reasonable people using reasonable but different weights and scores would reach different conclusions. Second, if your solution is not "robust" against such disagreements, close scrutiny of the analysis will help you differentiate between the "real issues" — where disagreement would change the final conclusion — and the "non-issues" — where disagreement doesn't matter to the final ranking. An easy way to do this is often to ask: what would proponents of the other alternatives (the ones you are **not** recommending) argue if they were making their best case? What weights and scores would they want to use? Then you can see whether these weights or scores are plausible: that gives you a better sense of the "robustness" of your recommendation, or if further analysis (by you or the client) would be needed. This analysis should be summarized on a slide without any data: here too, numbers rarely convince anyone, so you should use them just (a) to clarify your own thinking and (b) to buttress the credibility of your qualitative reasoning: leave the quantitative analysis itself an Appendix.

Now, having described and justified the main "compass heading" you are recommending, you must try to anticipate likely implementation difficulties. Your **implementation plan** should deal with the strategy's associated hurdles, risks, timing, costs and benefits:

- * First, you should identify the likely **hurdles** that would face your client in pursuing your proposed strategy and explain how your client could overcome these hurdles.

* You should also identify the **risks** confronting your strategy and how they can be mitigated, and if they can't be mitigated, how the client should proceed if these risks do materialize.

* Synthesizing this analysis of hurdles and risks and how to mitigate them, your implementation plan should recommend the **timing** of its key steps: what needs to be done today, next week, next month, next quarter, and next year – and who should be responsible for these activities. This plan will be far more useful if you support it with some reasoning – i.e. explain why you recommend this sequencing and timing rather than another.

* Finally, to convince the client that your recommendation is practical, you should consider the overall “bottom-line” – the **costs** as well as the **benefits** of your plan of action. Reports often forget this elementary consideration! It's a nice way to wrap up the presentation.

* Note: you may not have enough information to ground all the details of your implementation plan in the case data. In that eventuality, just make some plausible assumptions and show us what it looks like. At a minimum, you will have provided the client with a template (straw-man) that they can build on.

* Note too: It's not unusual that your work on the implementation plan brings to the surface new strategic issues that you hadn't considered. In preparing your presentation, you may well find that you need to iterate back to your issue-analysis and strategic-analysis and redo your presentation.

* Note finally: your implementation plan probably has many facets. It's very useful if, alongside an overview of its main components, you dig deeper into one facet that seems to you to be particularly important. If the plan of action involves, for example, a new structure, a new compensation scheme, and a new training program, you might include a chart detailing a proposed agenda for the training program or a detailed organization chart for the new structure. In this way, you can make more concrete the implications of your plan, and show that you have anticipated some of the detailed action planning that it will require. Here too, even if you don't have enough data to defend the specifics, at least you will be showing the client the kinds of things they should be working on.

I will hold you to a **12 minute time-limit**. This may sound draconian, but it is not unlike many real-life situations where the time accorded you to make your case is typically very short. More importantly, this time limit forces you in your preparation to “peel the onion” – to push your analysis of the case issues progressively deeper until you identify a single root cause. You probably won't have time to lay out alternative possible implementation plans: just present one reasoned plan, and it can at least serve as a starting point for discussion.

It is important to be able to present your proposal in a logically compelling and rhetorically convincing fashion. You should work to ensure that your presentation develops its arguments in a logical sequence. Your presentation materials (slides) should be clear – neither too wordy nor too sparse. (Consult the standard references on how to lay out visually intelligible and pleasing presentation charts.)

You need to provide me and the rest of the class with handouts that reproduce your Slides, including Appendices, at 2 per portrait page or 4 per landscape page. That will greatly help our discussion.

Grading Sheet

(for Opening Presentations and Written Assignments)

Grade (0-5 points per component)

Have you identified a root issue confronting the organization?

- * Have you identified a root issue that underlies the “presenting symptoms”?
- * Have you made a compelling case that this is indeed the root issue?

Have you argued compelling for your preferred strategy for tackling the root issue?

- * Have you identified some plausible, mutually exclusive, alternative “compass headings”?
- * Have you analyzed these alternatives’ pros and cons?
- * Have you justified the evaluation criteria you use in this pros/cons analysis and the relative importance (weights) you assign to each?
- * Have you justified the evaluation (scores) of each alternative on each of the evaluation criteria?
- * Have you done a sensitivity test on this analysis to see if reasonable people would reach different results using different scores or weights? Have you used this analysis to pinpoint where the key underlying disagreements might lie?

Does your proposed implementation plan pass the “reality test”?

- * Have you identified the key risks in pursuing your strategy?
- * Have you explained how the client should mitigate these risks?
- * Have you identified the internal and external hurdles facing your strategy?
- * Have you laid out a plan for overcoming these hurdles?
- * Have you tried to assess the overall costs of the plan and to compare them to its benefits?
- * Have you laid out a timed sequence of actions that maximizes the likelihood of success and explained why you recommend this sequence and timing?

Is your argument well presented?

- * Does the argument flow in logical way?

for oral presentations (Note: In grading the oral delivery part of the presentation, I will not penalize people for language difficulties when their first language is other than English:

- * Is the oral presentation engaging?
- * Are audio-visual materials used to good effect?
- * Is the Talking document well crafted?

for written case analyses

- * is the writing technically correct (spelling, grammar, paragraphs)?
- * do the exhibits support the argument effectively?

Total Grade (out of max 20 points):

(Due to Marshall’s grade curve policy, score-to-grade conversions are only approximate: 20-19=A, 19-17=A-, 17-15=A-/B+, 15-13=B+, 13-11=B)

Written Case Analysis Assignment Guidelines

* **Integrity:** This is an individual assignment, and I expect you to respect USC's corresponding Academic Integrity standards.

* **Content:** My expectations concerning the content to be addressed in this assignment are the same as my expectations for the presentations. In its form, however, your paper should be "prose" rather than a "talking document."

- It should be framed as a consulting report to a leader in the client organization. Be explicit about the identity of the client.
- Do not repeat case data. Assume that I am familiar with the case as the client would be.
- The "case questions" in the Session Descriptions are just ideas to get you going, not an outline of your written analysis.

* **Grading:** You are not graded on whether your recommendation is "right" or "wrong," but on whether your reasoning is clear and compelling. I will also be grading your writing. Clear writing is as important to your career as clear oral expression. Make sure your writing is technically correct — spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and paragraphing — and that the logic flows clearly and compellingly. Re-write it a couple of times.

* **Name:** Please put your name on the **back of the last page**.

* **Word limit:** The word limit is 3,000 words plus a maximum of six pages of exhibits. Please note that these are **maximum** limits. You should try to make your paper as concise and coherent as possible. Please show the word count at the end of paper.

* **Exhibits:** Exhibits should be used to support your argument with information that can be presented in a table or chart (such as financial analysis, action timelines, etc.) or that would be too detailed for the body of the paper. They should not be simply an extension of the text. Do not repeat case data.

* **Proofreading:** Please proofread your paper. It should be of the same quality that you would provide to the management of a business with which you were dealing professionally. (Note: handwritten corrections for typographical errors are acceptable in these assignments.)