**Personal Case Paper**

**Purpose**

Your personal case paper should describe an organizational event or experience that was significant or challenging for you.  In it, you will *tell what happened* in the event.

The personal case should be a journalistic-like description. It is a *story*, not an analysis or interpretation of the events.  In your final paper, you will have the opportunity to analyze and interpret your case.

**Approach**

Case writing is very much like telling a good story.  You may write the story in the first person or in the third person, as if you were an observer to the events in the story. Either way, describe what happened as you saw it.

Focus the paper around a particular experience or series of experiences, rather than trying to cover many months or years.  A single critical event (or sequence of events) usually works well.  Examples include the early stages of a challenging project, a critical meeting, a tough decision, or a major conflict.  Like a good drama, a good case rarely arises from a situation in which everything was smooth and easy.  Obstacles, conflict, or dilemmas are likely to be the ingredients that make a case interesting, but be sure to pick a situation that you are willing to relive!

**Organization of the Paper**

While you are free to organize the paper to best suit your story, students in other classes in the past have found the following structure to be helpful.

1. Set the stage with a relatively brief description of the organization, the organizational unit, and your role within it.  Be succinct.  Include essential information and don’t overwhelm the case with extraneous details.  This can be your current organization or an organization in which you were previously employed.  Attach an organizational chart for reference.
2. Provide a description of the events and decisions involved in the case.  Stick to behavioral descriptions as much as possible.  Use action verbs (e.g., said, did, took, decided) rather than passive phrases (e.g., it was said; it was decided; it happened) so that your description is clear. You may want to use a chronological outline.  In other words, your case may make more sense if you start at the beginning, put the middle in the middle, and end at the end.
3. End your case with one unresolved problem or a question.  For example, you might ask, “What should the manager do?” or “What could the company have done differently?”

You may disguise your organization and the actors in the case to protect confidentiality.  If you are concerned about confidentiality, even after disguising the organization and participants, consider picking another case.  I do guarantee the confidentiality of papers I receive, but I don’t want anyone to risk being fired for what goes in the case!

I will provide you feedback on your written case. You are free to rewrite it before you use it for your final paper. However, your grade on the Personal Case Paper will be based on your *original* submission.

Personal Case papers will vary in length, but you will probably need 7-8 double-spaced pages to convey any kind of complexity in the case.

\*Adapted from Using Bolman and Deal’s Reframing Organizations: An Instructor’s Guide to Effective Teaching, Second Edition by Joan V. Gallos.

