ENGW 3335 Unit #3: Collaborative Project
(Worth 20% of your grade; due April 7)

Overview

All organizations are constantly changing, and rhetoric is a powerful tool for managing change. For this assignment, your team will work with (or for) a real organization in need of change. Your major task is to identify an *unresolved problem* that is negatively affecting the organization or an *unrealized opportunity* that you believe would greatly benefit the organization. This problem or opportunity might be related to technology, communication, business/workflow processes, security, or any other number of topics. Although you may want to choose your current workplace as your project site, you could also offer your services to an academic department on campus, a friend's workplace, or a non-profit organization in the community. **However, the most important stipulation for this assignment is that the situation must be real, not hypothetical.**

To identify this problem/opportunity, you will need to do **primary research** in the form of observations and interviews to verify that a problem/opportunity does exist and that the organization would like to see it addressed. You will then **develop a solution** for the problem, **research your solution**, **develop a plan**, and **write a proposal** to the organization that reports your findings and persuades the organization to enact your plan. Solutions might range from purchasing new equipment or software, to holding a training session, to creating documents to help the employees address the problem.

NOTE: If you choose a team member's workplace as the setting for this project, be sure to secure the full support of your boss or supervisor. He or she should know what you are doing, and you should make sure that your work for this project doesn't cause you to neglect your duties on the job.

Selecting a Site and Topic

As you consider possible research sites, try to choose an organization with which you are intimately familiar, as you will be writing your proposal to members of that organization. Assume that you are respected as a knowledgeable member of the organization, and that your proposal will be taken seriously if it is well-written and persuasive. Assume that your audience consists of individuals who can make decisions regarding the ideas in your proposal. You can also assume that your audience will need to be persuaded to adopt your plan, so you will need to include information about the pros and cons of your proposed solution, as well any relevant information you have collected from internal and external sources.

Choose a topic that interests you, that is real and relatively easily solved, and that you can write several documents about from the same pool of primary and secondary research. For example, possible problems/opportunities might include:

- Ineffective training sessions or materials for new employees
- Lack of communication opportunities among organization members that could be resolved with a better system or communication tool
- Old, troublesome equipment, computers, or software
- Poor physical or electronic security
- Opportunity to change processes or implement a new system/product at the location
- The release of a new technology or option that will benefit your company immediately

These are just some possibilities to get you thinking. Once you've chosen your organization, pay attention to what people regularly complain about and start asking questions about it.

Documentation

The work you complete for this assignment will straddle the line between academic and professional genres. As such, you should follow professional writing and design standards as well as good academic research practices. You will need to gather information from credible sources (which can include people in the affected organization) and document them appropriately using in-text introductions, quotations (if necessary), and footnote or endnote citations. An interview with someone in your office, an employee survey to gauge preference for different options, and comparative or consumer information websites all count as good sources of research. Although this project will not be evaluated on strict APA or MLA style guidelines, your documents should reflect excellence in the principles of written, oral, visual, and electronic communication we have studied this semester.

Deliverables

The primary deliverable for this project is a written proposal or report to your client, 7–10 pages in length. Your document should be well-organized, well-researched, well-documented, and highly persuasive. At minimum, your document should contain the following elements:

- Persuasive introduction to the problem or opportunity
- Evidence of research
- Detailed solution and plan
- Detailed benefits to audience and key parties
- Detailed costs analysis of solution/plan
- Persuasive call to action

Most teams will develop additional deliverables, which will be negotiated between Quinn and each team in the team's memorandum of understanding.

At the conclusion of the project, you should submit your work to Quinn using Google Docs. (Some deliverables may not lend themselves to this format, so we can work out other arrangements, if necessary.) In addition, you should bring a printed copy of your final deliverables to class on April 7.

Evaluation Criteria

Because each team is addressing a unique problem or opportunity in a unique setting, the evaluation criteria for this assignment will be individually negotiated between Quinn and each team. However, at minimum, your criteria should include the following items (or variations on these items):

- Do the documents display an understanding of the rhetorical situation and a sensitivity to your audience?
- Does the project demonstrate your research of the organization and the problem/opportunity you have selected?
- Does the report propose a realistic and reasonable plan that might actually be implemented by the organization?
- Does the report makes succinct and persuasive arguments for following the course of action you recommend?
- Does the report outline specific actions the organization would need to take to enact your proposal?
- Do the documents successfully use visual elements (fonts, figures, headings, lists, layout, etc.) to complement the written text?
- Do all documents adhere to the conventions of standard written English (spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.)?