



Decision-Making Exercise (C)

Please read these instructions carefully. They describe a group decision making process called the **devil's advocacy** method. You must utilize this process to develop recommendations for Bruce Reid, CEO of Blake Memorial Hospital (See Assigned Reading: The Case of the Unhealthy Hospital). *Please remember that this entire exercise must be completed in one hour.*

In this process, your group divides into two equal-sized subgroups. One subgroup develops a set of recommendations. The other subgroup plays the devil's advocate, carefully probing all elements of their argument. Through a systematic, repeated exchange of ideas and critiques, the entire group arrives at a final set of recommendations.

Please follow the key steps¹ outlined below:

Key Steps:

1. Read "The Case of the Unhealthy Hospital" carefully. Please do not discuss the case with any other group or class member.
2. Assign one subgroup (Subgroup #1) to develop their assumptions and recommendations. Assign the other subgroup (Subgroup #2) to play the role of the devil's advocate. At this point, both subgroups should find separate physical locations in which to work.
3. Subgroup #1 should discuss the case and develop a set of recommendations for the Blake Memorial CEO. You should carefully construct a supporting argument with an explicit list of assumptions, facts, and data. When complete, record your results on the Subgroup #1 Recommendations Form (**Exhibit 1**). Please take no longer than 15 minutes to complete Step #3.
4. Meanwhile, Subgroup #2 may discuss the case amongst themselves, but not with any other members of the class.

¹ Adapted from Sandberg, Schweiger, and Rangan, "Group Approaches for Improving Strategic Decision Making," *Academy of Management Journal*, 1986, Volume 29, No. 1, pp. 51-71.

Doctoral candidate Michael A. Roberto prepared this case under the supervision of Professor David A. Garvin as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of an administrative situation.

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5. The two groups come together. Subgroup #1 provides the others with a copy of their Recommendations Form. In addition, Subgroup #1 makes a brief oral presentation of their recommendations and supporting argument.
6. The two subgroups separate again. The devil's advocates develop a logical, plausible critique of the others' recommendations. This critique should explicitly identify problems with the assumptions, facts, and data that underlie Subgroup #1's decision. You should build a logical argument as to why the Blake Memorial CEO should not accept the others' recommendations. When you finish, complete the Subgroup #2 Critique Form (**Exhibit 2**). Please take no longer than 15 minutes to complete Step #6.
7. The two subgroups come together. The devil's advocacy group provides the others a copy of their Critique Form and briefly explains its main points.
8. The two subgroups now remain together and work towards an agreement. Subgroup #1 revises its decision in light of the valid criticisms raised by the others. As they do so, Subgroup #2 should examine the revised recommendations and offer additional, reasonable critiques. This revision/critique/revision cycle should continue until both subgroups can agree on a final set of recommendations that provides a logical, reasonable course of action for the Blake Memorial CEO.
9. Record the ultimate decision and supporting assumptions, facts, and data on the Final Recommendations Form (**Exhibit 3**).
10. Please individually complete the Student Survey (**Exhibit 4**).

Exhibit 1 Subgroup #1 Recommendations Form

Recommendations:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Assumptions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Key Facts/Data:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Exhibit 2 Subgroup #2 Critique Form

What assumptions do you find invalid or irrelevant to the decision?

What key facts/data do you find invalid or irrelevant to the decision?

Please briefly describe your argument as to why the other group's recommendations are problematic?

Exhibit 3 Final Recommendations Form

Recommendations:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Assumptions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Key Facts/Data:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.