

A CONSULTANT'S DREAM OR NIGHTMARE?

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SYNOPSIS

This decision case focuses on Lee McBride who is embarking upon his first organizational consulting project as a part of his senior honors thesis. His potential client is Whispering Pines, a not-for-profit retirement home established in 1927. Located in a town in the Midwest, Whispering Pines never made the transition to a modern nursing home model and now faces occupancy, management, and Board problems. In recent years, the Board has dwindled to 4 members, none of whom have business management experience. One of the Board members, unable to quantify his suspicion that the organization is in a serious downward spiral, is interested in engaging Lee to complete a preliminary organizational assessment. Lee quickly identifies an overwhelmingly wide range of issues and, is asked to prepare a report outlining the actions that would be necessary for the organization to become viable and self-sustaining.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

1. Use guidelines to decide whether or not to accept a consulting engagement.
2. Identify important considerations related to the entry and contracting phases of a consulting engagement.
3. Identify relevant types of data and methods for data collection.
4. Identify important considerations related to preparing and delivering feedback.
5. Recognize potential ethical issues.

APPLICATION

This decision case is primarily intended for graduate students in an organization development or organization behavior course that includes content on consulting skills and processes. It could also be used with upper-level undergraduates in a variety of courses that include content related to organizational effectiveness, organizational improvement, change management, strategic planning, and/or intervening in organizational systems. Because of the relatively simple organizational structure, this case can provide a developmental experience to help students prepare to address more detailed and complex capstone cases.

KEY WORDS Not-for-profit, consulting process, organizational behavior, organizational assessment, consulting ethics, change management, strategic planning.

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