

Discussion Task #1

A cornerstone of most communities in southwest Minnesota is the church. Whether it's Catholic or one of the many Protestant religions, the Christian church has always played a major role in the community. However, in recent years most churches have seen a drastic decline in attendance among younger adults and their families. As a result, many have been forced to close because they no longer have enough members to remain viable.

The church leaders in your community have requested a joint committee with the town leaders and concerned citizens regarding this problem and what the future may entail for the churches and the programs they carry out for the community. Your group has been requested to be part of this committee since you are the future leaders of the community, and any decisions made will affect your generation the most.

Your first task is to identify at least 4 ways how the church has affected and been part of the community in the past. Consider programs and activities within the churches and the economic and social benefits they have provided to the community.

The second part of the task is to determine why so many of the younger generation no longer attends church or has a church affiliation within their community. Come up with at least 3 reasons.

The final part of the task is to determine a course of action into the future. If the trend continues, who will replace the church in providing the benefits and programs listed in the first part of the task? Alternatively, if churches are to continue, what will they need to do in order to attract younger people and make it relevant for them to attend.

Discussion Task #2

You are employees of a multi-location regional manufacturing and distribution company of widgets. The owner of the company built the business from the ground up and is firm in his belief that happy employees are the heart of the business and that you can accomplish more with personal contact and a handshake than you can via teleconferences. He often says more business deals were done on the golf course or at a restaurant than in the office. Because of this, he schedules several social events for his employees and their families each year to encourage social networking and create an in-person community within the company. He also schedules yearly in-person gatherings with the employees from each of the different company sites. Any potential future customers are also given the personal touch.

The president of the company believes that these in-person meetings and social gatherings have little value and are an expense the company could eliminate if they went strictly to on-line meetings. He is also an advocate for working from home if desired.

The owner would like to have the input of his employees before making any immediate decisions and has asked your group for feedback regarding the elimination of in-person gatherings and the option of working from home.

The owner has asked your group to identify at least 3 benefits and 3 drawbacks of conducting business in-person, and at least 3 benefits/drawbacks of virtual business communication. After evaluating your lists, you should present to the owner which option your group feels is better both economically for the company and in terms of employee productivity. If your group decides a blend is best, you will need to explain how to integrate both styles to meet the desires of employees while still attaining the company's financial goals.

Discussion Task #3

An NPR article titled, "A Forgotten History Of How The US Government Segregated America" details how previous racist housing laws (post-WWII up to the Civil Rights era) - a process known as "Redlining" - have resulted in generational economic fragmentation based on geography. A segment on Last Week Tonight by comedian John Oliver titled, "Environmental Racism" points out how those redlining practices have resulted in a fragmentation of health based on race - that a disproportionate amount of minorities live near industrial and manufacturing areas that produce a much higher level of pollution, resulting in a much higher increase of health problems among minorities.

You are committee members of the Federal Housing Administration, tasked with identifying possible remedies to this situation. Your task is to come up with a list of at least 6 recommendations (guidelines, rules or laws) to the president. 3 recommendations should involve working on possible solutions to help those currently affected by those historical practices. The other 3 recommendations should be preventative measures to further reduce the likelihood that similar "redlining" or other discriminatory practices do not happen in the future.

As you come up with your list, you will need to consider the government's role in regulating commerce, free markets, pollution, and how much control the government can exert over private realtor companies, while still effectively combating the issue.