*Argument 1*

*The following appeared in a memorandum written by the vice president of Nature's Way, a*

*chain of stores selling health food and other health-related products.*

*"Previous experience has shown that our stores are most profitable in areas where residents*

*are highly concerned with leading healthy lives. We should therefore build our next new store*

*in Plainsville, which has many such residents. Plainsville merchants report that sales of*

*running shoes and exercise clothing are at all-time highs. The local health club, which nearly*

*closed five years ago due to lack of business, has more members than ever, and the weight*

*training and aerobics classes are always full. We can even anticipate a new generation of*

*customers: Plainsville's schoolchildren are required to participate in a 'fitness for life' program,*

*which emphasizes the benefits of regular exercise at an early age."*

In this memo the vice president of Nature's Way CNW), a chain of stores selling health food

and health-related products, recommends opening a store in Plamesville. To support this

recommendation the vice president cites the following facts about Plainesville: (1) sales of

exercise shoes and clothing are at all-time highs; (2) the local health club is more popular than

ever; and (3) the city's schoolchildren are required to participate in a fitness program. Close

scrutiny of each of these facts, however, reveals that none of them lend credible support to the

recommendation.

First, strong sales of exercise apparel do not necessarily indicate that Plainesville residents

would be interested in NW's products, or that these residents are interested in exercising.

Perhaps exercise apparel happens to be fashionable at the moment, or inexpensive compared

to other types of clothing. For that matter, perhaps the stronger-than-usual sales are due to

increasing sales to tourists. In short, without mlmg out other possible reasons for the strong

sales the vice president cannot convince me on the basis of them that Plainesville residents

are exercising regularly, let alone that they would be interested in buying the sorts of food and

other products that NW sells.

Secondly, even if exercise is more popular among Plainesville residents than ever before,

the vice president assumes further that people who exercise regularly are also interested in

buying health food and health-related products. Yet the memo contains no evidence to support

this assumption. Lacking such evidence it is equally possible that aside from exercising

Plainesville residents have little interest in leading a healthy lifestyle. In fact, perhaps as a

result of regular exercise they believe they are sufficiently fit and healthy and do not need a

healthy diet.

Thirdly, the popularity of the local health club is little indication that NW will earn a profit from

a store in Plainesville. Perhaps club members live in an area of PlamesviUe nowhere near

feasible sites for a NW store. Or perhaps the dub's primary appeal is as a singles meeting

place, and that members actually have little interest in a healthy lifestyle. Besides, even if the

club's members would patronize a NW store these members might be insufficient in number to

ensure a profit for the store, especially considering that this health club is the only one in

Plainesville.

Fourth, the fact that a certain fitness program is mandatory for Plainesville's schoolchildren

accomplishes nothing toward bolstering the recommendation. Many years must pass before

these children will be old enough to make buying decisions when it comes to food and

health-related products. Their habits and interests might change radically over time. Besides,

mandatory participation is no indication of genuine interest in health or fitness. Moreover, when

these children grow older it is entirely possible that they will favor an unhealthy lifestyle--as a

reaction to the healthful habits imposed upon them nOW.

Finally, even assuming that PlamesviUe residents are strongly interested in eating health

foods and health-related products, the recommendation rests on two additional assumptions:

(1) that this interest will continue in the foreseeable future, and (2) that PlainesviUe residents

will prefer NW over other merchants that sell similar products. Until the vice president

substantiates both assumptions I remain unconvinced that a NW store in PlainesviUe would

be profitable.

In sum, the recommendation relies on certain doubtful assumptions that render it

unconvincing as it stands. To bolster the recommendation the vice president must provide dear

evidence--perhaps by way of a local survey or study--that PlainesviUe residents who buy and

wear exercise apparel, and especially the health club's members, do in fact exercise regularly,

and that these exercisers are likely to buy health foods and health related products at a NW

store. To better assess the recommendation, I would need to know why Plainesville's health

club is nonular, and whv Plainesville does not contain more health clubs. I would also need to

know what competition NW might face in PlainesviUe.