1)Why does SKS need Deloitte's services? What alternatives were available to it? Would you have approached the improvement problem in the same way if you were an internal operations manager?

Ans: SKS needs Delloite’s services for several reasons like there were facing cash flow problems, they had delayed payment to several suppliers in order to service its payroll obligations.

There were unable to maintain acceptable customer service levels, they had shipped only 77% of customer orders which were able to make in time. I feel there were no alternatives to what SKS could have done apart from going to Deloitte for help as there were focusing improvements in operations, information technology, financial management, and strategy development. Deloitte's main target was to address the cash flow issues and cut down the production costs. Deloitte is an organization that has employee’s expertise in all the fields that would help in like problem in related organizations, which provided the necessary services to address the situation. Deloitte’s initial approach was to cut down the cost in cash investment in raw materials also synchronize production and procurement. This approach has several advantages which leads us to agree with this avenue. First, in recent years inventory has been increasing which reduces cash on hand and represents greater disjoints between production and procurement of materials. As an internal operation manager, I would have made some changes in the working structure and work culture. I would have collaborated with workers whenever problem arises and would have tried to get it resolved. I would have also made a document and would have set priorities which problem should be addressed first.

2) What specific steps would you take to solve SKS' short-term and long-term problems?

Ans: SKS was having lots of problems initially like cash flow shortage and being unable to maintain cash to maintain acceptable customer service levels. They had only shipped 77% of customers’ orders which were able to make in time and only increased to 79% with Maria Chen’s assistance. The long-term problem was that there was a business process that was inefficient and would need to be re-engineered. The first step I would takes was I would address short term problems. I would hire a consultant who would be responsible for decreasing the cash flow by decreasing receivables owned to SKS. I would also instruct him to decrease the inventory. I believe that when there is larger inventory leads to less cash on hand due to the large investment on raw materials and machineries. For long term, I would have spoken to Maria and other consultants at SGS for reengineering approach that would focus on redesigning and cross-functional business problem.

3) What is your assessment of Maria Chen's performance?

Ans: At the beginning itself, Maria Chen faced lots of problems when her project started. From her first day on the job, there was a lack of communication between levels of SKS. She went into the project with a set of goals to be accomplished.

Many people would not have reacted as calmly as her when she was confronted by David Fletcher on the first day of her job. She passed on the information to her supervisor whenever she was in trouble. Her supervisor Annette Wattley-Davis helped her during the initial days as she was not familiar with the industry nor with the situation. Wattley-Davis encouraged her to employ the knowledge of her constituents and colleagues in order to further her understanding of the situation. She made some errors in the spreadsheet which led to failure in the first presentation. I feel that she could have done better when she was in trouble and took had taken better decision to address the issues.

4) Imagine that you are Chen. A foreman comes up to you on the shop floor and asks, "How many times have you done this before?" What will you say?

Ans: I would say that I have done this several times but in different scenarios. In one such case when a problem arises, I would have solved the problem and improved the condition of the workers. Whenever there is a specific problem regarding SKS I would have consulted my colleagues who are experts in the fields and would have solved the problem.

5) What should Chen do?

Ans: I feel that Marie Chen could have done better even though she had to face many problems initially like there was a lack of communication between the levels of SKS and pressure from the president of SKS to cut down the production costs. She was given 6 weeks to cut down the costs and show improvements. Whenever she encountered a problem, she should have put strategy and address the issues and show improvements.