Writing Assignment #4
Report to Your Supervisor

Summary of the Assignment:

- **Task:** In this assignment, you will write a short report to the owner of a company to which you have just been hired.
- **Length:** 1400-2000 words, single-spaced
- **Graphics:** You must integrate at least two graphics
- **Sources:** You will integrate at least four sources into the report, at least one of which has to come from a scholarly journal or credible trade journal.

The Situation and Your Role In It

You have been hired for the position of Assistant Manager for All Washed Up, a local car wash in Rockville, Maryland.

All Washed Up maintains a robust business. While the business began as a small local car wash, it has now become a local legend. The reason for this emergence is a unique concept that All Washed Up features. **At All Washed Up, customers drive their car to a cleaning station, and 4-5 employees hand wash the car. They also vacuum the inside of the car.**

This concept sets All Washed Up apart from other car washes in the area. Most car washes in the area feature automatic washes in which the customer drives the car into a bay, puts the car in neutral, and waits as the car is pushed through the wash. At All Washed Up, the customer drives to a bay, gets out of the car, and waits in a waiting area. The waiting area is complete with vending machines, hot coffee, and flat screen televisions. The waiting room even has three computers that customers can use if they would like to surf the Internet. Customers use these computers to check email, check their bank account online, or routinely surf the news while waiting for their car to be washed.

While the customer waits in this area, the customer's car is manually, and meticulously, cleaned.

The price at All Washed Up is twice that of regular car washes. But the concept has grown on the local population, and business is increasing. A loyal clientele has developed in the Rockville area. And word has gotten out beyond the area. Residents of Virginia often come into All Washed Up to get their car cleaned, especially if they happen to be shopping in the area or eating out in Rockville.

However, while All Washed Up looks clean on the outside, its business practices have become problematic. Employees are often careless with technology at All Washed Up. In addition, some business practices are simply not efficient. You, as the new assistant manager, are concerned.

The History of All Washed Up

Some history of the company will help to explain the problems All Washed Up has now.

All Washed Up started off in 2012 as a small self-service car wash, owned and operated by Maria Carman. Maria grew up in Rockville, graduated from a local high school, and took a few courses at Montgomery College, a local community college. She never graduated from Montgomery College. Instead, after completing 15 credits, she decided to leave school and, with the help of her uncle, John Jackson, start a car wash. John provided some funds that helped start the business.

Maria started off the car wash on Route 355. Previously, the building was operated by a carpet cleaner. Maria renovated the building into a self-service car wash, with five do-it-yourself car wash bays.

After a couple of years of running her business as a traditional do-it-yourself car wash, Maria was inspired to try a new concept for All Washed Up. Several realizations came to her after opening up her car wash in 2012. She noticed the following:

- many potential customers could not wash their cars by themselves. Individuals with small children and individuals with physical limitations could not get out of their cars and wash them.
- automatic car washes, while expensive, did not clean cars very thoroughly.
- no automatic car washes featured interior cleaning.
- a market existed for an alternative to both do-it-yourself car washes and to automatic car washes.
    - Do-it-yourself car washes featured an arduous physical task for customers, not a relaxing experience.
    - Automatic car washes had long lines that forced the customer to wait in the car. They were usually a stressful experience rather than a relaxing experience for customers.

She also observed the practices of other businesses in how they treated their customers. She noticed that some tire stores had comfortable waiting rooms that customers could sit in as they had their tires installed. She heard about a barber shop in the next county that had amenities people could take advantage of as they waited to get their hair cut. She wondered why a car wash could not have this type of customer service as customers waited for their cars to be cleaned.

Maria was inspired by these ideas. As a result, **in 2016, she changed her car wash business.** Maria had a waiting station for customers built at All Washed Up. She also renovated the do-it-yourself bays into hand-wash bays. She then hired 20 part-time employees, most of whom were in high school or college, to wash cars by hand and vacuum their interiors.

She also hired five full-time employees for various tasks. Three of the five full-time employees have BA degrees from a local university. Two of them are in their early 30s, and one of them is in his early 40s.

In late 2016, All Washed Up began in its new form, as a full-service manual car wash where the customer was king and the car was pampered.

To gain more exposure, Maria wanted a website. She hired Jane Nelson to be her web developer. Jane developed the www.AllWashedUp.com website on WordPress.

Maria realized that repeat customers should be given special consideration. She decided to maintain a database of all customers, complete with car model and make, year, license plate number, vehicle

identification number (VIN), cell phone number, email address, and physical address. She could then track when customers came back for second or third car washes. With this information, she could email them with promotions, discounts, etc. She could text them promotions. She could even send a flyer by snail mail on occasion.

Maria is now 29 years old. She has seen her business begin, grow, change, and expand. She and many of the other employees are proud of what they have built in the past 11 years.

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What You Have Noticed

As a new hire at All Washed Up, you have observed this situation, and you are concerned.

You have noticed that when a customer drives up the bay and gets out of the vehicle, they are greeted at their vehicle by an employee. The customer gives their credit card to the employee. The customer is then directed to the waiting area. This is all done to give excellent customer service and to take any stress off the customer.

The employee then carries the customer's credit card to the counter where the cashier is working. The employee places the card on the counter. During busy times, as many as three customers' credit cards can be on the counter as the cashier rings up the next customer. There can be as many as 10 customers standing around during this time.

You also have observed that the three computers in the waiting area have a shared password for access. The passwords have not been changed in six months. These computers are used by customers to check email, to check banking information, or to perform any number of tasks.

Also, you see that electronic devices are handled in a strange fashion. When employees at All Washed Up clean the interior of the car, they collect any items in the car and put them into a bag before cleaning and vacuuming the car. Sometimes these items are old USB drives or other portable storage devices that are under the seat or on the floor. When the customer gets the bag of items after the car is finished, the customer often discards these items in the waiting room. This occurs because the customer realizes that these devices have not been used for months and are no longer needed (which is why they were lying on the floor of the car in the first place).

The employees at All Washed Up often take these devices and plug them into the shared computer in the waiting room, usually after closing. They do this out of curiosity, as they are interested in what customers might have on their storage devices.

Moreover, as Maria tracks the customer information mentioned above, you see that this customer information is kept on an Excel file on the computer in Maria's office. At least three other full-time employees have access to that computer and can access that file. Because the computer's password gets changed from time to time, Maria has the password written down on a yellow sticky next to the computer.

Furthermore, you have noticed that seven employees work as cashiers at All Washed Up. During the workday, they charge their personal smart phones by plugging them into the USB port on the computer that is used for checking out customers when they pay.

In addition, you have seen photographs shared in cavalier fashion. For example, you have seen Maria take pictures of customers' cars and post them to her Facebook page. You have also seen employees take pictures of themselves next to fancy cars and post them to their individual social media accounts.

Finally, you have talked with Jane, who runs the website. You have discovered that Jane has her own personal WordPress account on which the company website resides and that she uses her personal gmail address as the contact for the account. She is the only individual in the office who has access to the administrative functions for the website and who is able to update the website.

Why You Think There is a Problem

Cybersecurity Issues

- The handling of credit cards when customers come in is problematic. Theft of a person's card number is a risk.
- The three computers in the waiting area feature a risk to personal information. In addition, the possibility of these computers being infected with malware or other pernicious applications is a risk to All Washed Up and its network.
- The handling of discarded electronic devices is risky for both customers and for All Washed Up.
- The practice of cashiers charging their cell phones at the cash register puts customer information at risk. Personal cell phones can be linked to credit card information through this arrangement.

Social Media Issues

- Maria posts pictures of customer vehicles to her personal social media accounts. The license plate is not covered up when she posts the pictures.
- Employees post pictures of unique or expensive customer vehicles to their individual accounts. The license plate is not covered up when they post these pictures.

Business Efficiency Issues that could Emerge into Crisis Customer Issues

- The website is run by one individual, and only that individual. If Jane were to become ill, have a medical emergency, or have to take a leave of absence for any reason, no updates to the website could be made. If she were to leave the company, the website would be terminally stagnant, as the website resides with Jane's WordPress account.
- The database of customer information is kept on an Excel file on Maria's computer. From what you know, three other employees have access to this information. But if all three of these employees leave, no arrangement has been made to train others on how to update the file and use it.
- If any of the employees who have access to the customer information on the Excel file were to leave the company or were to develop a toxic relationship with Maria for any reason, they would have access to sensitive customer information and would be able to wreak havoc on the company with this information. Not only could customer information be compromised, but the company would have a crisis communication situation on its hands if this were to happen.

Overall, All Washed Up grew at a rapid pace. Maria Carman did an excellent job in growing the car wash. Her business acumen in seeing a new market for a new type of customer shows that she is remarkably prescient in understanding the business.

However, her management of employees and of her own activity has created problems.

Maria is not aware of the problem the current arrangement poses.

Your Task

You are to write a short report to Maria Carman and point out the problem with the current personnel policies at All Washed Up. You also want to suggest some basic steps the company take to address the situation before a problem arises.

In your report to Maria, please **select 2-3 of these issues** to address. *Do not cover all of these issues in your report*.

- policies and procedures for shared computers
- a change in credit card handling
- cross-training of employees for the website and/or job rotation policies for the website
- employee training in cybersecurity issues, including handling customers' electronic devices and charging personal smart phones at the cash register
- policies and procedures in the handling of the Excel document that features customers' personal information
- rules and policies for social media accounts, especially when customer information is posted to them

Your report will

- be 1400-2000 words in length.
- incorporate at least **four references**
    - Cite them in <u>the problem</u> section and/or <u>suggested solutions</u> section. The four sources will support the argument you are making in identifying the problems, explaining the solutions, or both.
    - Include at least one source from a scholarly journal or credible trade journal.
    - Integrate more than four references if you would like.
    - Cite and list them in APA 7th edition style.
- include **at least two graphics**. The graphics should demonstrate either the current problems at All Washed Up (and the risks they pose) or your proposed changes (and how they address the current problems) or both. Of course, if you would like to include more than two graphics, you may do so.

You will need to apply the following Golden Rules of Technical Communication:

- Rule #1: **Paper is Permanent**. Make sure your word forms are accurate and your grammar and mechanics are correct. Others in the company in addition to Maria might see your memo. It is not only Maria who might be judging your message based on the quality of your writing.
- Rule #2: **Know your Audience**.
  - Keep in mind that you are writing to Maria Carman. She is your *primary* audience. She is not an IT expert, nor is she a human resource professional. In addition, consider her education level.
  - Note that Maria is your boss. You are writing to a superior about a problem that she does not realize is a problem.
  - Understand that, while Maria is your *primary* audience, other employees at All Washed Up are *secondary* audiences. Some of them might see your report eventually.
    - Consider their level of education. Three of the full-time employees have college degrees and are older than Maria.
    - Don't offend them. You don't want to write anything that would cause a problem between you and other employees.

- Rule #4: **Break It Out**. Instead of writing long, thick, dense paragraphs, you want to write readable text.
  - Bullet information in places if necessary
  - Write short, crisp sentences that are readable.
  - Write short paragraphs rather than long ones, as you deem necessary.

Use your judgment about how to break out your text as you consider the rhetorical situation.

- Rule #7: **Signpost**. Use headings to help Maria navigate your document and understand its different sections. Use subheadings if necessary. Integrate your graphics so that they visually signal points in your text.
- Rule #9: **Contemplate Before You Illustrate**. As you construct your graphics, make sure they add to your document and do not simply dress up the document. Consider how best to illustrate the current problem or the possible solution with your graphics.
- Rule #10. **Cut the Fluff**. Maria is a busy business owner. She is not expecting your report. She has not budgeted time in her schedule to read it. You will need to communicate the current problem and suggest an alternative to it without getting wordy or including information that is not helpful to your purpose.

How the Report Should Be Organized

Your short report will have the following sections:

- **Memo (written to Maria Carman)** – *no more than 150 words*

- **Executive Summary** – *no more than 300 words*

- **The Problem**

  *The bulk of the report will be **The Problem** and **Suggested Solutions**. These two sections together should compose half or more of the length of the report. These two sections will include the four sources that you cite.*

- **Suggested Solutions**

- **Conclusion** – *no more than 200 words*

- **References**

Due Date:

Your instructor will notify you of the due date. You will write a first draft, and your instructor will comment on the first draft and post a grade to the first draft. **The highest grade you can get on this assignment if you post only one draft is 85%**.

You can submit a second draft using the professor's comments as your guide. **Submitting a second draft gives you the opportunity to earn the remaining 15% of the grade.**