Writing Assignment
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:** 1500-2000 words.
- **Graphics:** You must integrate at least one graphic
- **Sources:** You will integrate at least three sources into the report.

The Situation and Your Role In It

You have been hired for the position of Manager for Customer Service at Forrest Lawn Services, a landscaping company.

Forrest Lawn maintains a robust business in landscaping both residential and business properties. The company has many clients in the local DC-Maryland-Virginia (DMV) area.

The landscaping staff that services residential and business properties comprises 75 individuals. In addition, the company has several staff working in its office in Landover, Maryland. Included among these office staff members is the IT Department, which consists of 10 employees.

The growth of the company has led to some problems that concern you as a new employee.

The History of Forrest Lawn Services

Some history on the company will help to explain the problems Forrest Lawn has now.

Forrest Lawn started off in 2010 as a small outfit, owned and operated by Richard Smith. Richard grew up in Prince George's County, Maryland. He graduated from high school and took a few courses at a local community college. He never graduated from the community college but instead, after completing 18 credits, decided to leave school to start a landscaping business.

Richard started off the business with one truck, three lawn mowers, and a few helpers. He operated the business out of his house. Eventually, as the number of clients grew, so did the number of trucks, lawn mowers, and pieces of equipment. He added new employees to assist with the landscaping.

Richard eventually leased office space in Landover in order to have a more professional and scalable base from which to operate the company. In addition, as the company grew and its office staff grew, so did the technology and IT needs.

For the IT needs of the company, Richard took several steps. He hired a web developer, Sandra Davidson, to develop a website for Forrest Lawn. Sandra used WordPress as the platform. Richard later hired Jack Johnson to develop and maintain a database of customers, past and present. The database includes personal information on the customers, such as physical addresses, email addresses, and, for some, credit card information.

Eventually, Richard hired a few more IT employees, all of whom persuaded Richard to put the company's database on the cloud instead of purchasing an expensive server to maintain in the office. Richard agreed. The company then contracted with CloudCorps, a local cloud company.

The IT Department grew as the company grew. Marsha Nolton was later hired. She maintains the company blog, also on WordPress, but with a different account from that of the website. The blog is an effective marketing tool. It provides weekly updates on services, deals, and other information on the company. In addition, other functions began to involve IT. Jared Stone was hired to run payroll for Forrest Lawn. With Jared's input, the payroll information was put on the cloud. CloudCorps maintains all payroll information on its servers.

Problems That Have Developed

Richard, in hiring the IT staff and organizing the department, was not privy to best practices in security in the area of IT. As a result, some problems have developed.

For example, only Jack has access to the database of past and present clients. Jack logs into the system with an ID and password that CloudCorps has provided him. This is not an ideal situation. If Jack were to experience a medical emergency and become unavailable for a period of time, no one else at Forrest Services would have access to the database. If Jack were to leave the company, no one else at Forrest Services would be able to perform his duties. In addition, CloudCorps has a company policy that forbids it to provide login or password information to anyone other than approved individuals. The only approved individual now is Jack.

Moreover, Sandra maintains the website through WordPress. She uses her personal email and password to log into the system. But she is the only individual in the office who has access to or is able to update anything on the website. Again, if anything were to happen to Sandra, Forrest Lawn would be stuck. No one else in the company can update its website.

Marsha manages the company's blog, also on WordPress. The blog is an excellent marketing tool, with weekly updates on services, deals, and other information on the company posted weekly. However, Marsha is the sole maintainer of the blog. No one else at Forrest Glenn has access to the blog to update it.

Jared runs payroll. Like the others, he is the only individual with any access to the payroll records. Because the records are also on CloudCorps, if something were to happen to Jack, no options are available for anyone else in the company to access the payroll records.

Overall, Forrest Lawn grew at a rapid pace. Richard Smith applied excellent management skills in growing the landscaping business. However, Richard needs help in establishing responsible IT personnel policies for the company. Richard has no background in this area.

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

Your Concern About the Situation

As a new hire at Forrest Lawn, you have observed this situation, and you are concerned. The current arrangement leaves the company in a very vulnerable situation if one of these individuals experiences a medical emergency or has to leave the company for any reason.

In addition, the current arrangement poses a cybersecurity danger to the company. Any one individual, if he or she is dissatisfied with the company or becomes disgruntled for any reason, can take advantage of Forrest Lawn and do great damage with the IT function the individual controls.

For example, personal data on customers resides with CloudCorps' servers, which only Jack Johnson can access. If Jack were to develop a toxic relationship with the company, Jack could use his sole access to customer records and wreak havoc with them, possibly manipulating the company with his control or simply compromising the privacy of the customers. Forrest Lawn, not Jack, would be liable in such a situation.

As Manager for Customer Service, you realize that many of the potential problems that could arise at Forrest Lawn will have an impact on your area. Customers will not have records updated, will not be billed on time, will not receive blog updates, and will be impacted in other ways if any of the situations described above occur.

Moreover, if customers' records are compromised, you will have a customer service crisis on your hands.

Your Task

You are to write a short report to Richard Smith, the owner, and point out the problem with the current personnel policies at Forrest Lawn. You also want to suggest some basic steps the company take take to address the situation before a problem arises.

Some concepts and strategies you might want to point out to Richard include the following:

- separation of duties
- mandatory vacations
- job rotation policies
- agreements with vendors, including password and other login information
- IT confidentiality agreements

Your report will

- be 1500-2000 words in length.
- incorporate at least **three references**.
    - Integrate more than three references if you would like.
    - Cite and list them in APA 7th edition style.
- include **at least one graphic**. The graphic should demonstrate either the current personnel arrangement (and the problems it poses) or your proposed personnel arrangement (and how it addresses the current problems) or both. Of course, if you would like to include more than one graphic, 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 Richard might see your memo. It is not only Richard 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 Richard Smith. He is your *primary* audience. He is not an IT expert, nor is he a human resources professional. In addition, consider his education level and his lack of acumen for IT-related matters.
  - Note that Richard is your boss. You are writing to a superior about a problem that he does not realize is a problem.
  - Understand that, while Richard is your *primary* audience, other members of the IT team are *secondary* audiences. They might see your memo eventually.
    - Consider their level of education. Some of them have bachelor's or master's degrees.
    - Don't offend them. You don't want to write anything that would cause a problem between you and members of the IT Department if they see your memo.
- 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 Richard navigate your document. Provide a table of contents to help Richard see the different sections of your report and help him to find them easily.
- Rule #9: **Contemplate Before You Illustrate**. As you construct your graphic, make sure it adds to your document and does not simply dress up the document. Consider how best to illustrate the current problem or the possible solution with your graphic(s).
- Rule #10. **Cut the Fluff**. Richard is a busy business owner. He is not expecting your report. He has not budgeted time in his 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 Richard Smith)** – *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 Solution**. These two sections together should compose half or more of the length of the report.*

- **Suggested Solution**

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

- **References**