SPE 202 Semester Project – Step Three  
Fall 2005

At this stage of the project your group has an idea of what your general topic is and you have done some basic research into the issue. One note here...you really never stop researching. So as new issues come to light in the development of this project, remember to get additional information.

In this step of the project your group is being asked to define the problem. What you did in the first step was identify something that isn’t as it should be or something that you think needs to be different. Just because you have a topic doesn’t mean that you have identified the REAL problem. That’s what this stage of the process is all about.

For example, let’s assume that in a company that sells computers we’ve noticed that the time of our calls to the support line are about 20 minutes longer than last year. The more time on the phone means more money. We know what the situation is...support phone calls that are lasting too long. But we don’t know why.

There could be quite a few reasons for why this is happening and during this step of the process you need to get to why the situation is the way it is.

In order to complete this step of the process review pp. 260-263 of your textbook. The author’s present some methodologies for identifying the problem. Your group should utilize one of the methods presented to identify the problem. It is also suggested that your group try another method as well to see what happens.

Your group may also find the information at the following links helpful:

Drilling Down method (http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_02.htm)
Cause Effect (http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_03.htm)

Once you utilize one of these methods, your group will write two to three pages that will become a part of the group paper. This section should contain the following:

- A final identification of the problem
- Why this definition of the problem was selected over others
- A brief description of the process you used to arrive at this
- What worked well and not so well in this process

This project is to be written in APA style. If you don’t have the book on APA style there are a number of online resources that will help you:

- http://www.apastyle.org/
- http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html
- http://www.uwsp.edu/psych/apa4b.htm

There is even software that will do a lot of the work for you:

- APA Perrla (http://www.perrla.com/) Very nice and pretty cheap
- http://www.endnote.com/ (kind of expensive even with a student discount)

Due Date: This is due on Wednesday, October 19th at the beginning of class.