



Question 3.2

Using your recent work experience, describe how you have applied professional judgement to prioritise issues.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

PREPARATION OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION PROGRAM

APAP (“the company”) is the fully owned subsidiary of AP LTD (“Corporate”), a large electronics retailer. The company has around 150 employees and can source original design manufacturers (“ODM”) as business partners (“BPs”) in the Area 14 region (covering around 120 BPs).

In October 2018, Corporate was planning to participate in the competition for the Ethics Company award. As part of the competition, it required the company to have an effective anti-corruption (“AC”) program in place. I was responsible for preparing a customized AC program addressing the company’s corruption risk in the JKL market. The deadline for this was the end of the fiscal year.

The following issues were identified by me as priorities according to ISO37001 framework.

- a) The company needed to prepare a written acknowledgement of company’s anti-corruption requirement for local employees and business partners.
- b) The company should set-up an ethics hotline with local language translation.
- c) The company should develop AC training for both local employees and BPs.
- d) The company should develop a due diligence process covering BPs, focusing on corruption risk.
- e) The company should establish an investigation protocol as part of the AC program.

The key challenges that I encountered at this stage was the limited budget and staff resources, i.e., only US\$2K budget for ethics related expenditure, and part time support from legal and HR. It meant that time and resource constraints might limit the ability to complete the tasks above, so I needed to prioritize the issues.

Having considered the impact of delaying each of the tasks, the budget constraints, the estimated number of employees and BPs involved in each of the tasks, with reference to my study on AC program and the project management skill, I decided that the written acknowledgement of AC policy prepared by legal was the first priority. It was the foundation of the AC program to ensure employees and BPs understand what needs to be complied with and their responsibility for compliance. Meanwhile, sufficient time was required for drafting and approval of the legal documents.

The next priority was the set-up of an ethics hotline with local language translation. It was also a critical part in providing relevant parties a channel to raise concern on corruption. Sourcing for the hotline service provider took time and money. I was luckily offered, by the corporate ethics team, use their Ethics hotline platform which local languages could be added. The estimated cost was US\$1.1K.

Next, I reviewed the current BPs list and preliminarily assessed their corruption risk based on their company nature (listed or private), scale and any corrupt scandal in public news. Accordingly, I engaged a consulting firm to conduct the screening of the BPs whose corruption risk ranking was high. The expenditure was around US\$0.9K.

The next priority was the AC training. Per management's suggestion, there was a townhall meeting for local employees and an appreciation event for BPs before fiscal year-end. I could use this meeting to deliver AC training to both and also get the signed acknowledgement from them after training. That meant I did not need to visit individual BPs to deliver training and reduce spend on travel and staff time.

Finally, I drafted the investigation protocol in accordance with feedback from the other tasks. Based on such prioritization, I successfully submitted the program both within the limited budget and on time. I am pleased to say that Corporate also won the prize.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

PRIORITISING START-UP TASKS WITH LIMITED CASH

The Community Law Centre (CLC) was a member of TCA. The CLC asked me for advice.

As a start-up entity, one of the key challenges for the CLC was the lack of financial resources. One of my immediate tasks was to develop a solid foundation for the CLC - including recruitment of staff and implementing an IT infrastructure, amongst other things. Whilst the five founders provided different support, this was mostly intangibles. The only source of income during the early stage was a three-year grant from the Tin Chang Foundation (TCF). The grant was paid in quarterly instalments in advance and the CLC needed to invest in certain items (e.g. staff and IT) in order to become operational. Prudent management of cash flow was therefore important.

The following issues were identified by the board as priorities:

- The need to develop an IT system to support the work flow of CLC, in particular to record details of cases handled and by whom;
- Recruitment of additional staff who would be responsible for case management and working with volunteers;
- Recruitment of volunteers to work at CLC, who would be asked to help with cases handled by CLC and with fundraising; and
- Development of the suite of pro bono services that could be offered by CLC by the volunteers.

One of the key challenges that I encountered at this stage of development was the lack of financial and staffing resources. Armed with just £50k (c.£25k- being the first instalment from TCF) and an administrator, it meant that it was not possible to resolve the above issues at the same time, and some of these issues were interlinked.

Having considered the potential impact for delaying each of the tasks and the cash flow constraints, I concluded that it was vital to first recruit operational staff as there would generally be a gap between recruitment and the candidates joining. It would not deplete the bank balance in the first quarter. On that basis, I decided to place an advertisement first.

The next priority was to develop and implement an IT infrastructure. I took a staged process and started with the core requirement, i.e. basic PCs, email system etc, so that we became operational. My rationale was that a comprehensive system for managing volunteers and cases could be added once the CLC gained full momentum. There was also an opportunity for me to apply for capital grants from the Singapore government for major IT spends that improve productivity.

I then discussed pro bono service ideas with the court representatives and developed prototypes of these services. This was less urgent than the recruitment of operational staff, as without operational staff the pro bono services could not be provided by CLC as the necessary support facilities would not be in place.

Finally, I was able to produce volunteers' job descriptions based on the pro bono services identified. I chose to approach things in this order as I judged that if I had recruited volunteers before this their skillset might not have matched with our requirements, leading to poor engagement.

At the end of the quarter, I reported my progress to the Board and TCF, as I wanted to better engage them by sharing the impact made from their contribution. This also served as a helpful discussion point to prompt TCF for the next payment, allowing me to maintain positive cash flow.

By adopting this approach, I successfully 'jump started' the CLC, and achieved significant impact before the official launch later in the year.