

# Free E-Tray Exercise

Ainswell Consulting Partners - Solutions

## Instructions

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Please read the instructions on this page, then turn over the page to begin the exercise.

There are 4 e-mails requiring your response, each appear just as you would use in an office environment. Some of these items may appear to describe isolated issues, while others link to one or more of the other items. Some of the e-mails could require information found on certain documents, these have been provided in the documents section, or they might refer to attachments which are provided alongside the corresponding e-mail.

You need to review each item and then need to select the “Most Effective” and “Least Effective” responses from the options provided.

Your task is to respond to as many of the emails as you can within the time limit of **15 minutes**. You must read the background information which gives you useful information about the role you are being asked to assume and the company you are working for. When replying to the emails try to imagine yourself in a work environment. You will **not** receive replies to any of your emails during the exercise, so reply to the best of your ability with the information you are given.

**The exercise begins on the next page.**

## Background Information

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Founded by acting director Simon Ainswell in 2004, Ainswell Consulting Partners has steadily grown over the past decade and is considered to be a reputable consultancy specialising in small businesses. Initially the firm began as a financial advisory, later branching into various areas of consulting as demand grew for these types of bespoke services. Ainswell Consulting Partners is based in London with no other offices at present, although plans to add satellite offices are likely to develop in the next few years.

## What We Do

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Ainswell Consulting Partners' experience allows us to offer advice to small businesses looking for an edge. General services offered by ACP include: Strategic Management; Operations Management; Risk-Assessment; Change Management; and of course Financial Consulting. Ainswell Consulting Partners work exclusively with small businesses meaning that all clients must meet certain criteria, to ensure that ACP can provide appropriate success strategies.

## Client Criteria

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Key criteria for new clients are as follows:

- Must be based in the UK
- No more than 25 employees
- Average yearly income must not exceed £5.5 Million

If potential clients do not meet the criteria listed above, Ainswell Consulting Partners will be unable to work with them. It is also preferable, although not strictly required, that potential clients operate from a single location so that our resources are targeted with maximum effect. These criteria are to ensure that ACP only accepts business projects suited to their resources and capacity, while helping to maintain a positive success rate.

## Your Task

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You have recently joined Ainswell Consulting Partners as a replacement of a mid-level consultant. There are some issues left unattended to and some new emails to deal with. You must respond to as many of the e-mails in your inbox as possible during the assigned time limit, keeping in mind that you will not be able to make or receive any further contact once the task is over.

For the purpose of this exercise, the date is the 25<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

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## E-mails: E-mail 1

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From: Julie Dunphy

To: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: Welcome to the company

Sent: 12:33 Friday 25<sup>th</sup> April

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\_\_\_\_\_,

We are extremely pleased that you were able to come in at such short notice following from Clive's abrupt departure, it is a huge help to us and it is very much appreciated. On behalf of Miranda, the company, and myself, I would like to welcome you to Ainswell Consulting Partners! We are certain you will be a real asset to the team and look forward to working with you. I have uploaded some useful information about the company in the Documents section of your inbox, and I have also attached a quick brief of who's who to help you settle-in and get up to speed.

Miranda has requested a meeting with you next week to see how your transition is going, preferably at your earliest convenience. I have attached her schedule with the available appointments shaded. I would appreciate if you could look this over and let me know by the end of the day what time I should book this meeting for.

I look forward to meeting you,

Julie Dunphy

*Secretary to Miranda Amos*

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 [Schedule](#)

Miranda Amos

	M	T	W	T	F
9.00am					
10.00am					
11.00am					
12.00pm					
1.00pm					
2.00pm					
3.00pm					
4.00pm					
5.00pm					

*\*Please note that the Wednesday appointment is no longer available.*

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## Competency: *Planning and Organisation*

### Responses:

Thank you for the warm welcome and for providing me with useful documents to help me settle in. Please let Ms Amos know that I would be available to meet with her on Tuesday at 2pm.

*This is the MOST EFFECTIVE response as it is the candidate's soonest availability for a meeting, as preferred by Miranda Amos.*

Thank you for the warm welcome and for providing me with useful documents to help me settle in. Please let Ms Amos know that I would be available to meet with her on Thursday at 10am.

*This is the SECOND MOST EFFECTIVE response as it is an appropriate time and date, but not the soonest available option.*

Thank you for the warm welcome and for providing me with useful documents to help me settle in. Please let Ms Amos know that I would be available to meet with her on Wednesday at 2pm.

*This is NOT AN APPROPRIATE response as the information below the schedule informs the candidate that this appointment is no longer available.*

Thank you for the warm welcome and for providing me with useful documents to help me settle in. Please let Ms Amos know that I would be available to meet with her on Monday at 11am.

*This is the LEAST EFFECTIVE response as it clashes with an important meeting scheduled at this time as listed in the candidate's calendar, to which attendance is mandatory.*

## E-mails: E-mail 2

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From: Eleanor Sinclair  
To: ALL  
Subject: Fire Drill  
Sent: 09:47 Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April

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Just a quick reminder that there will be a fire drill on Monday next week and the designated meeting area is in front of the employee car park. If you have any further questions or issues concerning this matter, please contact David Mayhew. It is compulsory for all to attend as this is important for health and safety awareness, and will be treated as seriously as the real thing.

Kind regards,

Eleanor Sinclair

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**Competency:** *Written Communication and Comprehension*

### Responses:

Thank you for letting me know Eleanor.

*This is the SECOND MOST EFFECTIVE response as it is a polite and courteous response, although not necessarily required.*

Thank you for letting me know. Do you have an approximation of how long it will take? Just so I make sure not to arrange any meetings that might overlap.

*This is NOT AN APPROPRIATE response as it is stated in the e-mail that any questions should be directed to David Mayhew.*

No response required.

*This is the MOST EFFECTIVE response as it demonstrates effective time management, as well as recognises that the message has been sent to "ALL" and thus does not require a direct response.*

Thank you for letting me know, however I am concerned that this could clash with an important department meeting on Monday morning.

*This is the LEAST EFFECTIVE response as not only does the e-mail state that all questions or queries should be directed to David Mayhew, but the fire drill will also be "treated as seriously as the real thing" meaning that if it were to occur during an important meeting, employees would still be required to perform as they would during a real emergency.*

## E-mails: E-mail 3

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From: Peter Holbrook  
To: \_\_\_\_\_  
Subject: Potential Clients  
Sent: 14:02 Friday 25<sup>th</sup> April

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Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

Thanks again for coming in at such short notice; I trust that you are settling in well?

I was wondering if you wouldn't mind looking over these company summaries and seeing which one we should take on as our next project, regarding ACP's client requirements and keeping in mind that a singular office location would be preferable. Unfortunately I do not have time to look through the information and would greatly appreciate your input.

Thank you,

Peter

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### [Breakdown of Company Profiles](#)

#### **VistaCorp**

Registered Address	Annual Income	No. of Locations	No. of Employees	Year Established
118 Saxton Street Morborough Thaines TN17 4GN	£5,910,600	2	31	2001

VistaCorp – A London based company of graphic designers looking to allocate capital required to increase their workforce.

### Soltrex Limited

Registered Address	Annual Income	No. of Locations	No. of Employees	Year Established
15 Montague Way Abbingdon Tollsbury GB6 9LB	£5,430,500	1	22	2007

Soltrex Ltd – A small software company based in London, who wish to reduce unnecessary costs to the business.

### Halcyon Incorporated

Registered Address	Annual Income	No. of Locations	No. of Employees	Year Established
211 Holden Avenue Farningham Cresswell CW16 7TU	£12,750,000	1	106	1999

Halcyon Incorporated – A central heating company based in Madrid. They have requested a financial forecast prior to accepting a business proposal.

### Thorpe Solutions

Registered Address	Annual Income	No. of Locations	No. of Employees	Year Established
6 Maywell House Derry Haynes Ashdown SD13 8CT	£5,350,000	2	24	2005

Thorpe Solutions – A recruitment service seeking advice regarding budget allocation and reduction in outgoings. The company is based in France, but in the process of transferring to a London office.

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**Competency: Interpreting and Analysing Information**

**Responses:**

After looking through the information, I believe that our next client should be VistaCorp.

*This is the SECOND MOST EFFECTIVE response as the company meet one of the client requirements as outlined by Ainswell Consulting Partners.*

After looking through the information, I believe that our next client should be Thorpe Solutions.

*This is the LEAST EFFECTIVE response as it is stated in "Urgent Memo" that Thorpe Solutions are in the process of liquidation and that all projects involving them should be dismissed.*

After looking through the information, I believe that our next client should be Soltrex Limited.

*This Is the MOST EFFECTIVE response as it meets all the requirements outlined in the About ACP document. It also has only one location, which is preferable although not required.*

After looking through the information, I believe that our next client should be Halcyon Incorporated.

*This is NOT AN APPROPRIATE response as the company do not meet any of the client requirements as outlined by Ainswell Consulting Partners.*



## E-mails: E-mail 4

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From: George Savvides  
To: \_\_\_\_\_  
Subject: Laura Mikalski  
Sent: 14:51 Friday 25<sup>th</sup> April

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\_\_\_\_\_

I apologise for getting straight to business, but as you are new here and will be working as a Financial Consultant I thought it was important for you to know that there have been a couple of issues with one of our Juniors as of late. Laura has a tendency to overlook certain details and although this has been discussed with her, we are yet to see an improvement although it is still early days. I would recommend that you task her with some of our less-pressing matters, in order to avoid her making a potentially harmful error.

Kind regards,

George

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### **Competency:** *Interpersonal Sensitivity and Judgement*

#### **Responses:**

Thank you for informing me of the recent issues. I will ensure that she is only given work of lower importance.

*This is the LEAST EFFECTIVE response as it involves distributing low priority work to a staff member without first allowing them a chance to perform well.*

Thank you for informing me of the recent issues.

*This is the SECOND MOST EFFECTIVE response as it is a polite and courteous response to a fellow consultant.*

Thank you for informing me of the recent issues, I will arrange a meeting with her and discuss her performance.

*This is NOT AN APPROPRIATE response as the candidate has not yet worked with Laura Mikalski and has no prior knowledge of her performance, making them an inappropriate person to discuss her past performance issues with her.*

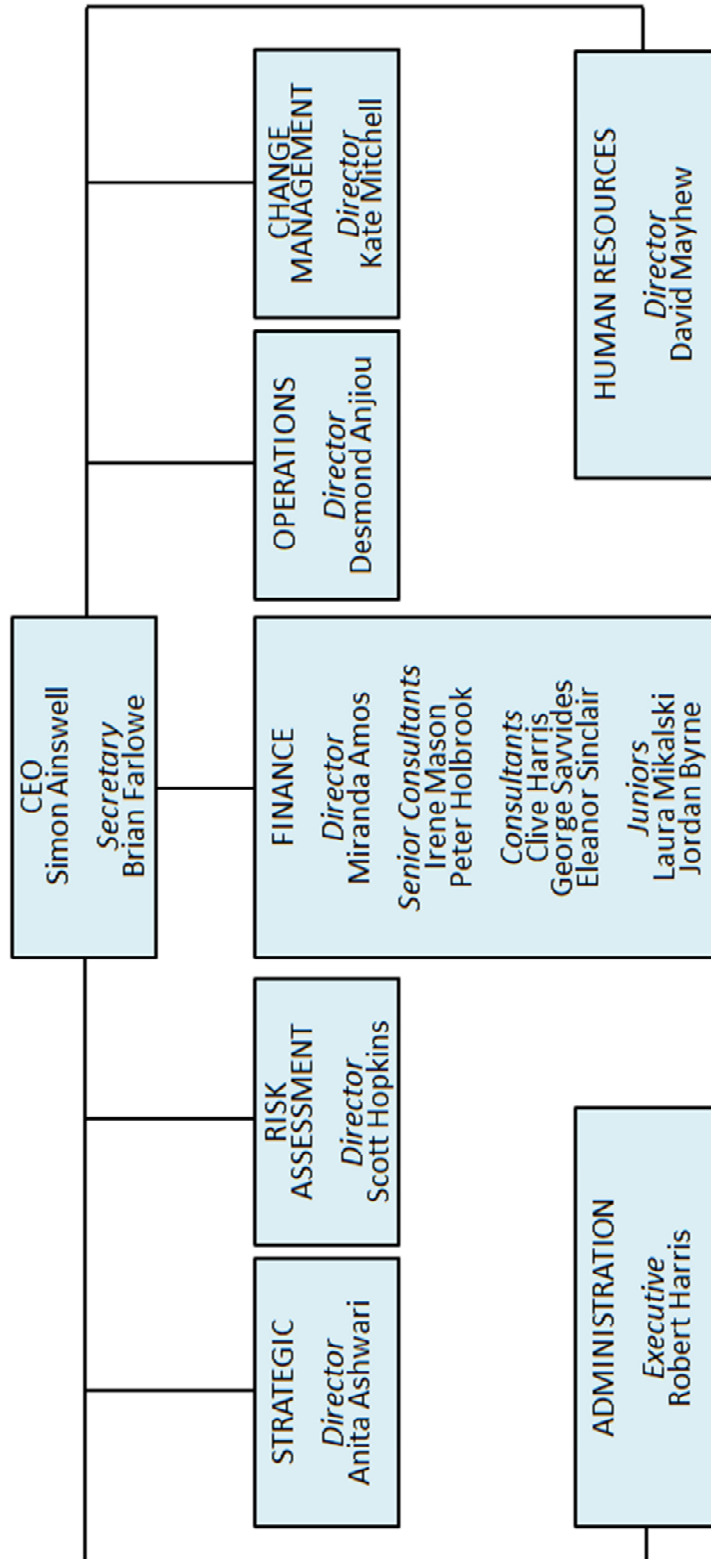
Thank you for informing me of the recent issues. I will give her a chance to prove herself, but keep track of her performance following your advice.

*This is the MOST EFFECTIVE response as it is polite when addressing a fellow consultant and does not jump to any conclusion regarding the competence of an employee they are yet to work with.*

## Summary of documents: Document number and Title

Doc	Document Title
1	Organogram
2	Urgent Memo
3	Calendar

Item 1 - Organogram



Ainswell Consulting Partners  
Organisational Structure - January

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

**To:** ALL

**From:** Julie Dunphy

**Received:** 13:27 Fri 25<sup>th</sup> April

**Subject:** URGENT

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**Message:** It has come to our attention that Thorpe Solutions has gone into the process of liquidation as of this morning. They have provided the following statement on their company website:

*“We regret to announce that Thorpe Solutions are officially in the process of liquidation, following irreparable financial circumstances. It is with heavy hearts that we must abandon our current ventures as we are unable to see them through to completion. Mark Hounslow and Anita West of Firth & Lyle LLP have been appointed as Liquidators and will be responsible for the winding up of the company’s affairs.”*

Due to this unfortunate news, it is imperative that any upcoming projects regarding Thorpe Solutions should be dismissed immediately.

Thank you,

Julie Dunphy

Secretary to Miranda Amos

**Item 3 - Calendar**

**APRIL**

<b>Mon</b>	<b>Tue</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>Thu</b>	<b>Fri</b>
31st	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
7th	8th	9th	10th	11th
14th	15th	16th	17th	18th
21st	22nd	23rd	24th	25th
28th 11am: Department Meeting Compulsory Attendance	29th	30th	1st	2nd

**End of free practice e-tray exercise**