Consumers Group: You are a Chief Merchandising Officer for a Large Electronics Retailer

Your Background and Biography

You grew up in northern Minnesota and, not wanting to move far from your family, you decided to enroll at the local campus of the state university, where you studied marketing. You started your career with an internship at the regional office of a major electronics retailer. Now almost 20 years later you are the chief merchandising officer.

In this position you are in charge of merchandising and product management, reporting directly to the CEO. You decide what categories of products consumers can buy in more than a thousand stores in the United States and Canada. You oversee a staff that picks individual products to sell. You are also responsible for deciding what products the company advertises and how it engages with customers.

Part of your job is staying ahead of consumer trends. Your company sells lots of digital TV screens, headphones, speakers, smartphones, and many other products that use rare earth elements in their design. You are aware that young consumers express a higher interest in buying products that are produced in ethical and sustainable ways. You would like to have a variety of sustainability-certified electronics to advertise to ethically minded consumers. And looking at the really big picture, you believe it might help your business if manufacturers had other sources of rare earth elements outside of China, since tensions over global trade and tariffs have the potential to raise the prices you have to charge consumers in order to make a profit.

In this negotiation you want a Sustainability Seal that is easy to explain to consumers and that consumers will believe is making the world a better place. You hope it will promote a diversity of sources of rare earths. You are also committed to having your stores be sites where consumers can drop off their old phones for recycling because you would like to champion recycling programs for smartphones.

Your Mission

Your goal at this hearing is to convince the Stewardship Council to include the Consumers Group’s recommendations in its final Sustainability Seal guiding values. To make this argument effectively, you must do the following:
Complete the assigned readings listed at the bottom of this page. Work closely with the other members of your group to develop clear answers to the Stewardship Council’s questions. Use as much specific information as possible to develop strong arguments for your position that sustainable rare earth production must ensure the availability of products that meet society’s needs, while producing them in ways that are ethically and environmentally acceptable to a range of purchasers. Read as much as you can about your position and the positions of the other groups. Complete written reflections on your character, interest group, and readings as assigned.

**Your Victory Objectives**

- **You will receive 10 points** if the Stewards select your group’s proposal as the final Sustainability Seal guiding values.
- The Stewards will rank the interest groups by how well their goals are represented in the final Sustainability Seal guiding values. **You will receive between 1 and 4 points** based on how the Consumers Group is ranked and how well the Sustainability Seal guiding values reflect your goals.

**SOURCES**

**Group Sources**

- Consumers Case Study: “Can Consumer Choices Make Rare Earth Production More Sustainable?“

**Individual Sources**