Manufacturers Group: You are a Vice President for a Defense Contractor

Your Background and Biography

You grew up in a military family, moving between army bases with constantly changing surroundings. You worked hard to secure a scholarship to the University of Illinois, where you majored in industrial engineering. On graduation you went to work at the largest defense contracting firm in the country, envisioning a future role in facilitating defense applications that would keep the nation secure.

After 20 years of hard work you are now a vice president responsible for global supply chain management. Your job is to make sure that your company’s engineers and the subcontractor firms around the world who work with them can deliver advanced weapons to governments.

The rare earth elements are crucial to your products now and are unlikely to be replaced. Your company’s lasers are erbium-dependent, and neodymium magnets are essential to the missile guidance and control systems you manufacture. Hundreds of pounds of various rare earth metals are in the warplane pictured on your company’s letterhead.

Your biggest client, the U.S. government, maintains a small stockpile of strategic materials such as rare earth metals to ensure a temporary supply in a time of major crisis. But in ordinary times you need to ensure that rare earths are readily available and are a viable, ongoing business. The absolute price of rare earths is not particularly important in your line of business, but having a reliable supply is very important. U.S. laws also say that government weapons need to be manufactured using materials and components produced in the United States.

In the negotiation your main goal is to ensure a set of values are incorporated in the Sustainability Seal that will support a commercially viable, domestic source of rare earth elements to be used in the many defense technologies your company produces. Transparency and documentation are also important to you in this negotiation, since the accountants in the Pentagon need to be able to track the origins of all the materials used in a weapon.

Your Mission
Your goal at this hearing is to convince the Stewardship Council to include the Manufacturers 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 changing consumer demands require businesses to pursue creative problem solving and innovation in resolving the pressing issues caused by rare earth element mining, supply chains, and manufacturing.
- 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 Manufacturers Group is ranked and how well the Sustainability Seal guiding values reflect your goals.

**SOURCES**

**Group Sources:**

- Manufacturers Case Study: “Using the Rare Earth Elements”

**Individual Sources**