

Exercise:
Management Skills Comprehensive—Culture at Uber
wayne.smith@csun.edu
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Course: MGT 370
Title: Management Skills Development (3 units)

“A manager is responsible for the application and performance of knowledge.”
---Peter Drucker (1909-2005)

“Making good decisions is a crucial skill at every level.”
---Peter Drucker (1909-2005)

Goal:

Leadership varies greatly among businesses. Similarly, *Organizational Culture* varies greatly among businesses. As a MGT 370 student with some work experience, you likely know this. What might be less well known is that organizational culture has not been studied as well or as long as leadership. This may be due partly to the following reasons: culture inside a firm is hard to see, studying culture in a firm requires much cooperation from individuals inside the organization, and frankly, researchers and professionals alike are still struggling with the language of organizational culture. All of this means that we often don't detect subtle, incremental changes (positive, but especially negative) in organizational culture until a major event, or series of events, occurs. In the context of this class, one could view organizational culture as the grand sum of every aspect of Management skill development.

I want you to practice using theories, models, and frameworks from this class. Additionally, I want you to practice them with a real world situation.

This is a team project; it is one deliverable per team.

Read the following Wall Street Journal articles:

Bensing, G. (2017, June 14). Uber CEO Takes a Break as Scandals Roil Firm. *Wall Street Journal*.

Kor, Y. (2017, June 14). Uber Curbs Alcohol, Office Flings. *Wall Street Journal*.

This first article is a summary of the major leadership changes at the ride-sharing start-up firm Uber. The second article is a brief extension of a few of the recommendations for changes at Uber made by a law firm.

Objective:

Assume that you are an independent management consultant. You own your own firm. You have five professionals that work with you. Your company works on a wide variety of engagements (i.e., consulting projects) for many different kinds of firms. Your firm has worked with a few start-ups before but your firm hasn't worked with a firm as large as Uber.

Uber has asked your firm to be one of three management consulting firms to provide a proposal to help explain some of the law firm's recommendations and help implement some changes to Uber's management. You want this contract; a consulting gig with Uber will cement your firm's prosperity for the future.

Part of the bid process to answer some questions that Uber has provided. Your firm needs to answer each question with a rationale that not only satisfies the law firm and Uber, but also is better than the other two management consulting firms competing for this engagement. To do this, you know you need to know your Management Skill Development extremely well. You need to review the articles and use the contemporary language of management skill development as the justification elements.

Your task is relate important elements in the articles to what you have learned in this class. You do this by linking each major element from the article below to one or more ideas using the best theory, model, or framework from our course textbook. Just to be clear: a theory, model, or framework *explains* (what has happened in the past) or *predicts* (what is likely to happen in the future). An educated person uses appropriate theory to persuade and influence. Of course, when you have data, you use data too.

The following are several major elements contained in one or both of the articles. To make it simple, just use two paragraphs (e.g., a paragraph typically contains four to seven sentences or so) to answer each of the following questions. Additionally, just label your response to question with the relevant question number, such as "Q1".

- Q1. Uber's CEO, Travis Kalanick, is taking an indefinite leave of absence. In an email to the employees, he indicated that "...he would shift his responsibilities to 14 direct reports while he is away, stepping in only for major strategic decisions." What management skills do the 14 direct reports need? These skills could be existing management skills that will need to be developed further or they could new management skills that need to be developed from scratch.
- Q2. The law firm's recommendations include "...transferring some of Mr. Kalanick's responsibilities to other managers, including a new chief operating officer position that Uber has been recruiting for but hasn't filled." [Note: A Chief Operating Officer is responsible for the day-to-day activities and key

- projects at a firm.] Additionally, the law firm “...emphasized the role of an eventual chief operating officer as a ‘full partner with the CEO.’” If your firm were to win the engagement contract, your firm would be involved in the “onboarding” process for all new employees, including senior executives. Assuming Uber will indeed be able to hire a chief operating officer soon, what advice would you give to this new individual?
- Q3. The law firm’s recommendations include “...install more independent board seats.” The Uber board of directors has traditionally been comprised of individuals who are senior executives at Uber. What management skills would outsiders—that is, individuals who are employed as executives elsewhere—bring to the Uber board of directors.
- Q4. The law firm’s recommendations include “...elevate the role of the recently hired chief diversity officer...” Clearly, this executive will play an important role at Uber. Ultimately, which management skill does the chief diversity officer need to be successful? Ultimately, which management skill would the chief diversity officer like to see develop, over time, in the other managers at Uber?
- Q5. The law firm’s recommendations include “...establish leadership coaching for executives.” Using the five key steps that begin each chapter in our textbook, outline a broad plan for what your firm would do to help improve the Uber executives’ knowledge of leadership.
- Q6. The law firm’s recommendations include “...roll out mandatory sensitivity training for employees.” Using the five key steps that begin each chapter in our textbook, outline a broad plan for what your firm would do to help improve the employees’ behavior related to sensitivity training.
- Q7. The law firm’s recommendations include changes to Uber’s overall culture including reducing alcohol consumption at work functions. Many start-up firms pay for dinner, lunches, coffees, and yes, even alcohol. Provide a rationale for why—even though other well-funded start-up firms in Silicon Valley provide alcohol on site—the use of company-provided alcohol should be scaled back either entirely or somewhat at Uber. Or put differently, which management skill (or skills) can be potential impaired by alcohol at work?
- Q8. The law firm’s recommendations include changes to Uber’s overall culture including restrictions on “...romantic relationships among colleagues.” Many start-up firms employ a disproportionate number of professionals and managers under 30 years old. Additionally, these individuals are well (sometimes, *extremely* well) compensated. Provide a rationale for why—even though other well-funded start-up firms in Silicon Valley may have remained silent on the subject of inter-office romantic relationships—Uber should seriously consider generating some kind policy or a set of guidelines

on this important issue. Or put differently, which management skill (or skills) can be potential impaired by romantic or intimate relationships with coworkers?

- Q9. An investor and member of the board of directors made an inappropriate (“sexist”) remark and resigned by Uber’s board later that day. Which management skill (or skills) is that individual missing? Justify your answer.

Length:

For this comprehensive exercise, I’m relatively indifferent to page length. Just write two (or three, if your team prefers) paragraphs for each question (double-spaced). A team can probably get not much more than two paragraphs on a page. Other relevant formatting requirements (“style guide”) are linked from the course web page. Recall also that for all written assignments in this course, 10% is deducted from the content score for each type of error in language use.

Performance Measurement:

The maximum number of points for content on this exercise is 1 (participation points).