

Start Strong, Stay Strong:
What the Best Student-Professionals do in MGT 360
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Course: MGT 360
Title: Management and Organizational Behavior (3 units)

“Doing the right thing is more important doing the thing right.” “If you want something new, you have to stop doing something old.” “What gets measured gets improved.”

---Peter Drucker (1909-2005)

Purpose

I have been a paid instructor since 1978. I have been teaching at the University-level since 1984. I have been teaching MGT 360 since 2006. Additionally, I conduct extensive quantitative and qualitative analysis at the end of each MGT 360 class. My observations of how success is crafted and achieved by the best student-professionals are summarized below. Additionally, I’ve enumerated a few common characteristics of students who, inadvertently, fall below the passing bar.

What the *Best* Student-Professionals Do

- Strong student-professionals attend every class unless there is some type of family or medical emergency. Strong student-professionals know that a missed class cannot really be made up; it’s a missed opportunity. Strong student-professionals also privilege punctuality in their lives; they make a deliberate point to always be on time (which often means aiming to be early).
- Strong student-professionals select a *study partner*. Wisely choosing a study partner isn’t an easy task. Also, strong student-professionals know that they want to be the student partner that other student-professionals want.
- Strong student-professionals use the required course materials prudently. That is, they closely read the materials *before* class, they *bring* the materials to class (or have it *available* online), and (this is key) they *review* the course materials again after class including any special notes given by the instructor during lecture. They also wisely use all recommended materials as well.
- Strong student-professionals *start strong*. By that I mean they know intrinsically that it is important to begin well—i.e., put your best face forward—both strategically and statistically. Strong student-professionals *stay strong*. They deliberately and consciously work against “complacency”.

Recurring Patterns Observed Among *Weaker* Students

- Weak students don't improve throughout the semester. They earn "C's" and "D's", even at the end of the semester. Students in this situation misjudge how close they are to the bottom end of the "C's". In this situation it is very easy to drop to a "C-" or even a "D" under these circumstances. Don't do that.

Everyone can improve. I've personally met Nobel Laureates in their 80s who are learning new things every day. So the first thing is to understand and internalize that kind of approach to the world. The second thing is to try to improve a little more on each assignment. You want your final exam score to be a bit better than your mid-term, and your last writing assignment to be better than your first, etc. The third thing is to try to improve faster than your colleagues. Business students understand competition; translate your strong desire for business success into a similar desire for course success. Please know that managers, in particular, *excel* at this learning paradigm.

- Still weaker students are missing a few assignments or don't participate in class, including picking up returned assignments. An assignment not turned in counts as an "F"; i.e., it counts as zero points. Don't do that.

Always turn in something, even if it isn't your best work. Often this means planning ahead. Start with the submission date and work backwards. Mark in your calendar precise milestones of which elements of the work need to be completed by what time along the way. While planning details may differ, the fact that the student has a plan doesn't. Also, students can always visit me in my office ahead of time. Good managers know where their time goes.

- The weakest students essentially "stop out" after the mid-term. But by that time, it's too late to formally drop the course. Students in that situation have earned an "F" or a "UW" (unauthorized withdrawal). Don't do that.

If, by the third week, you think you may have taken on too many course units or other obligations, including work obligations, simply drop the course. There is no shame in that. In fact, it's just the opposite; it demonstrates how you can assess a situation realistically, and develop and implement an action plan. This is good. I assure you that MGT 360 will be offered next semester.

Additional Resources

CSUN maintains a repository of "best practices" to assist students. This repository is referred to as the "Learning Habits" project. This resource is extremely useful. See:

<http://www.csun.edu/institutional-research/learning-habits-reports>