

**Exercise:**  
**Management Skills Comprehensive—Second Chances**  
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[ updated: Saturday, September 26, 2020 ]

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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:**

*Professional* life is mostly orderly and occasionally chaotic. *Management* life, on the other hand, is mostly chaotic, and if you are a successful manager, occasionally orderly. Most professionals are in their “comfort zone”; managers can’t even remember what a “comfort zone” looked like back when they were a professional.

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 an individual project; it is one deliverable per person.

Read the following Wall Street Journal article:

Simon, R. (2020, Jan 25). Exchange --- The Company of Second Chances. *Wall Street Journal*.

(remember—just as you did when finding the Library articles—to put double quotes around the title when searching with it in the ProQuest database)

This article is about a company—Nehemiah Manufacturing Co.—that primarily hires ex-convicts as staff. Ex-convicts are individuals who have been convicted of a crime, but have since served their time in prison and then released. This kind of company is highly unusual. As you might guess, there are many opportunities and many challenges.

What makes this article so interesting is that many of the issues discussed require substantive action on the part of many individuals at all levels of the organization. Consequently, these individuals need some or all of the skills from our MGT 370 class. Put differently, Management Skill Development applies to *all individuals in all organizational contexts*. We don’t have to know the technical detail of each product

or service line; we'll leave that to others. However, many individuals, especially managers, can benefit from our specific help because providing management skill assistance is our field, and we have education and experience in that field.

**Objective:**

Assume that you are the Director of Organizational Development. You report directly to the Vice-President of Human Resources at Nehemiah. You have been involved in the strategy discussions at the executive level, and know that changes in management skills, knowledge, and abilities will be needed for Nehemiah to survive and flourish. You are in charge of all training, development, and related onboarding activities for the firm.

Your task is to relate this article 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, to strengthen your argument and to support your use of textbook theory, you use a strong, appropriate analogy from a non-textbook course (Library) reading or other class materials as well.

The following are major elements from the article. To make it simple, just use a single paragraph (e.g., four to seven sentences or so) to answer each of the following questions. Additionally, just label each paragraph with the relevant question number, such as "Q1".

For each of the issues below, what management skills might a Nehemiah individual need to be successful?

"In one of the tightest labor markets in decades, more employers are willing to give ex-convicts a chance, trying to marry business needs and good intentions. Even large American companies are rethinking whether their responsibilities extend beyond their shareholders. JPMorgan Chase & Co. Chief Executive James Dimon said in October that the bank would step up efforts to recruit people with criminal backgrounds."

Q1. What management skills does a CEO need to convince a Board of Directors at a corporation that hiring ex-convicts is a good strategy?

"Privately held Nehemiah started hiring workers with a criminal record in 2011 at the request of a local nonprofit. The experiment got off to a rocky start. Many workers continued to struggle with substance abuse or mental illness; some were homeless, the company says. 'We didn't understand all of the challenges,' says Dan Meyer, Nehemiah's chief executive and veteran of Procter & Gamble Co. and Bristol-Myers Squibb. Employees showed up one day, only to disappear the next."

Q2. What management skills do the managers need to understand the challenges of hiring ex-convicts?

“At a loss, Nehemiah enlisted the support of a social-service worker to help employees with anything from finding housing to staying clean. ‘They were thinking that providing jobs would fix things,’ said Dana Merida, who initially provided social services for Nehemiah employees a few hours a week and now heads the company's three-person social-service team. But some of them would take a break and never come back, she said. ‘If you are homeless, couch surfing, how productive can you be?’”

Q3. What management skills might a social service professional have, either through education or experience, that other professionals might not have?

“Karrie Norgren, a 26-year-old recovering heroin addict, said she wasn't reliable when she first joined Nehemiah in 2018. But ‘something clicked’ after she missed three days of work and Ms. Merida sat her down for a chat. She now runs a small team of employees as a line captain.”

Q4. What management skills might have “click[ed]” for Ms. Norgren?

“Gina Johnson, 56 years old, has a seventh-grade education and was in and out of prison for drug-related crimes. Nehemiah helped her find housing, clean up her credit record and set a budget. She now runs a team that fulfills Amazon orders for items from Nehemiah and other companies.”

Q5. What management skills that might have been learned by others from 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade did Ms. Johnson eventually learn?

“Since its first days, Nehemiah has become more deliberate about identifying candidates who are likely to be good, reliable employees and has developed a more formal system for providing them with support.”

Q6. What management skills are needed by the hiring managers to improve the overall HR recruitment and onboarding process?

“Nehemiah’s approach to hiring works only if the entire company is committed to it,’ said Matt Mooney, a vice president with nonprofit Cincinnati Works, which helps people with criminal records find work and navigate barriers to self-sufficiency. ‘If you have front-line supervisors who are not comfortable, it will collapse,’ he said.”

Q7. What management skills do the front-line managers on the manufacturing floor and assembly line need to be successful?

“There's a misconception that Nehemiah will hire anybody,’ said Mr. Palmer. ‘No, we won't. If we bring on somebody who is not ready to work, it will impact our

operations.’ Conversely, Nehemiah’s approach also means it can spot potential other employers might overlook. When Rayshun Holt came to Nehemiah roughly two years ago, Ms. Merida said he immediately stood out as someone the company wanted. Ms. Merida said she was impressed by Mr. Holt’s passion, humility and sincerity when he told his life story. I knew this was a born leader who could really have a profound impact on our employees,’ said Ms. Merida. ‘He could show them that no matter how bad it is, your life isn’t over.’”

Q8. What management skills did Ms. Merida display when she saw a candidate that “...immediately stood out as someone the company wanted.”

“[The company’s founders’ religious] beliefs were a motivator; the pair named the company Nehemiah after an Old Testament prophet. A family member’s struggles with substance abuse has also shaped Mr. Meyer’s willingness to offer workers more than one chance.”

Q9. What management skills did the company founders display when starting this firm?

“He said employees support each other. ‘We tell our stories; we show our scars,’ he said. ‘I will tell my story a million times if it helps one person.’”

Q10. What management skills are needed by an ex-convict to *tell* a story to another ex-convict?

Q11. What management skills are needed by an ex-convict to be *helped* by a story from another ex-convict?

“Its hiring model hasn’t scared away customers, Mr. Palmer said, but the company’s leaders have sometimes struggled to balance heart and head.”

Q12. What management skills are needed by company leaders to “...balance heart and head.”?

**Length:**

For this comprehensive exercise, I’m relatively indifferent to page length. Just write one (or two, if you prefer) paragraph for each question (double-spaced). You 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).