

**Management Skills Development:  
Introductory Analysis of the Movie “Buck”**  
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**Course:**        *MGT 370*  
**Title:**         *Management Skills Development (3 units)*

“There are five managerial roles; they are to set objectives, organize, motivate and communicate, measure, and develop people.”

---Peter Drucker (1909-2005)

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to help structure the discussion for the critical management topics of *planning, organizing, leading, and controlling*. There are no right or wrong answers for this assignment. This assignment blends two ideas. 1), Some management principles are difficult to observe (especially when the point of a movie is ostensibly to entertain not teach), and 2) this is good, initial practice in applying the theories you’ve learned in MGT 360 and the theories you are beginning to learn in MGT 370.

## **Part I. — Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior**

The first part of this document is related to the central topics learned in MGT 360: *Planning, Organizing, Leading, and Controlling*.

### ***Planning***

For example, *Buck*, the rider (manager) gives the horse (professional) “something to do”. The rider “warms-up” the horse in the morning. The horse has developed skills in order to accomplish goals. The horse learns what a typical work day “at the office” involves.

“Planning is the process of setting performance objectives and determining what actions should be taken to accomplish them. Through planning, a manager identifies desired results—goals and objectives, and ways to achieve them—action plans.”

1. With respect to a *horse*, identify at least one management skill displayed by Buck that is related to planning.
2. With respect to an *individual*, identify at least one management skill displayed by Buck that is related to planning.

### ***Organizing***

For example, *Buck*, the rider (manager) and the horse (professional) work together to “round-up” the cattle. The horse has learned its existing surroundings, knows its own stable, and how to interact with other horses. The horse has learned how to use space and time effectively.

“Plans must be implemented. Organizing is the process of assigning tasks, allocating resources, and coordinating the activities of individuals and groups to accomplish plans. Organizing is how managers put plans into action by defining jobs and tasks, assigning them to responsible persons, and then providing support such as technology, time, and other resources.”

3. With respect to a *horse*, identify at least one management skill displayed by Buck that is related to organizing.
4. With respect to an *individual*, identify at least one management skill displayed by Buck that is related to organizing.

### ***Leading***

For example, *Buck*, the rider (manager) develops a relationship with the horse (professional) both through task-related skills and emotionally-related skills. Eventually, the rider doesn’t need to train the horse. It’s a “feel”. The rider and the horse are one.

“Leading is the process of arousing people’s enthusiasm and inspiring their efforts to work hard to fulfill plans and accomplish objectives. Managers lead by building commitments to a common vision, encouraging activities that support goals, and influencing others to do their best work on the organization’s behalf.”

5. With respect to a *horse*, identify at least one management skill displayed by Buck that is related to leading.
6. With respect to an *individual*, identify at least one management skill displayed by Buck that is related to leading.

### ***Controlling***

For example, *Buck*, the rider (manager) can get injured, physically and emotionally, when the horse (professional) is “out of control”. The horse developed poor skills, knowledge, and abilities because the horse’s prior rider (the horse owner), prior parent (mother), and prior peers (other horses, especially “studs”) did not provide timely and relevant feedback when it was most needed.

“The management function of Controlling is the process of measuring work performance, comparing results to objectives, and taking corrective action as needed. Managers exercise control by staying in active contact with people as they work,

gathering and interpreting performance measurements, and using this information to make constructive changes.”

7. With respect to a *horse*, identify at least one management skill displayed by Buck that is related to controlling.
8. With respect to an *individual*, at least one management skill displayed by Buck that is related to controlling.

## Part II. — Management Skills Development

The second part of this document is related to the topics discussed in our textbook Chapters: Introduction and Developing Self-Awareness (Chapter 1) and our Library readings. In Management Skill Development, explanation or prediction from academic theories is important because that knowledge applies—often broadly and deeply—in organizational practice.

We will also use ideas from the Library articles that we’ve read. In Management Skills Development, an analogy from practice is important because it is a demonstrated ability that we desire. Making strong analogies is also a key part of critical-thinking.

Recall that this class is about Management Skills *Development*. We make the assumption that management skills can be acquired, improved, and demonstrated by any individual. To test that assumption in practice, we a) identify a phenomenon, b) use textbook theory to explain or predict that phenomenon, and c) draw appropriate and strong analogies from our Library articles to support our use of theory.

9. Can you identify something from the movie that demonstrates a change in *Buck*? That is, can you identify something that initially appeared to be a gap (or deficit) in Buck’s management skills but then eventually Buck acquired (or learned) a management skill over time.
  - a. (phenomenon) Identify a substantive change in Buck.
  - b. (theory) Using at least one of the key theories from the textbook for this or a prior week (either the Introduction or Chapter 1, summarized below), discuss which management skill best explains or predicts that substantive change and subsequent behavior.
  - c. (analogy) Support your answer with an analogy from one of the key ideas from the Library readings for this week or a prior week (summarized below).
10. Can you identify something from the movie that demonstrates a change in *someone other than Buck*? That is, can you identify something that initially appeared to be a gap (or deficit) in that person’s management skills but then eventually that person acquired (or learned) a management skill over time.
  - a. (phenomenon) Identify a substantive change in someone other than Buck.

- b. (theory) Using at least one of the key theories from the textbook for this or a prior week (either the Introduction or Chapter 1, summarized below), discuss which management skill best explains or predicts that substantive change and subsequent behavior.
- c. (analogy) Support your answer with an analogy from one of the key ideas from the Library readings for this week or a prior week (summarized below).

(Key Ideas)

Textbook—Introduction

- *Management Skills*: Verbal communication (including listening); Managing time and stress; Rational and creative decision-making; Recognizing, defining, and solving problems; Motivating and influencing others; Delegating and engaging others; Setting goals and articulating a vision; Self-awareness; Team building; Managing conflict
- *Developing Management Skills*: Self-assessment, Skill learning, Skill analysis, Skill practice, Skill application
- *Leadership and Competing Values*: Collaborate (“clan” skills), Create (“adhocracy” skills), Complete (“market” skills), Control (“hierarchy” skills)
- *Essential skills*: Personal-level, Interpersonal-level, Group-level

Textbook—Chapter 1. (Developing Self-awareness)

- *Sensitive Line*: The point at which individuals become defensive or protective when encountering information about themselves that is inconsistent with their self-concept or when encountering pressure to alter their behavior.
- *Emotional Intelligence*: This refers to the ability diagnose, understand, and manage social cues (especially related to self-awareness, self-control, empathy, motivation, and social skills).
- *Personal Values and Moral Maturity*: Values help define our morality and our conceptions of what is “good”. Moral maturity refers to the stages of growth in moral judgment: from self-centered to conformity to principled.
- *Cognitive Style*: This refers to the inclination each of us has to perceive, interpret, and respond to information in a certain way.
- *Orientation towards change*: This refers to the fact that as the environment in which managers operate continues to become more chaotic, more temporary, more complex, and more overloaded with information, your ability to process information is at least partly constrained by your fundamental attitude about change (it is especially affected by one’s “tolerance for ambiguity” and “locus of control”).
- *Core Self-evaluation*: Beyond personality, this refers to the fundamental evaluation one has of oneself.

Library—Sandberg (Tardiness Contagion)

- “The problem with lateness is that it's more contagious than punctuality.”
- “...people ‘can't get motivated well before their deadlines...’”
- “One late person can dictate the schedule of many colleagues.”
- “‘Most chronically late people consistently underestimate time by 25% to 30%’...”

#### Library—Shellenbarger (Impromptu Speech)

- “Impromptu pitches, toasts and talks far outnumber planned presentations in the workplace.”
- “It's a skill experts say can be mastered with a little emotional intelligence, and some practice structuring your responses in clear, simple ways.”
- “Three steps are easy to remember and can help get your points across without rambling. One approach is to state the problem, describe the solution and summarize the benefits, he says. Another is to use a "what, so what, now what?" mental road map -- stating the issue or topic, explaining why it matters and laying out next steps.”
- “Assume you'll be asked to speak and always be ready.”
- “Have in mind a simple three-part structure for your response.”
- “Practice answering questions in informal settings, such as around the dinner table.”
- “Be aware of your body language under stress and avoid misleading tells.”
- “Treat your anxiety as a normal response and tell yourself: I'm excited.”
- “Focus on what listeners want and need to know, rather than on yourself.”
- “Speak in a conversational tone and avoid rushing.”
- “Strive to convey information and meaning rather than to perform perfectly.”
- “Ask trusted colleagues or mentors for feedback on how to improve.”

#### Library—Wartzman/Crosby (Employee Engagement)

- “‘The yield from the human resource,’ [Drucker] wrote, ‘really determines the organization's performance.’”
- “In calculating our scores [for company performance], we drew on 37 indicators covering five different areas: customer satisfaction, employee engagement and development, innovation, social responsibility and financial strength.”
- “For our most recent test, we computed effectiveness scores from 2012 and put them up against last year's scores. And we found that the 50 biggest overall gainers on our list during that span shot up by an average of 11.2 points in employee engagement and development.”
- “Many of the biggest gainers in total effectiveness during the past six years were propelled by a substantial upswing in their employee score.”

- "...the best managers keep a close eye on all five dimensions of performance. But if you're trying to figure out where to focus first, you can't go wrong by taking good care of your people."

#### Library—Terlep (Clorox)

- "Linda Rendle was 29 years old and the junior-most manager in a meeting of Clorox Co. executives when she spoke up to say their approach to launching a line of earth-friendly cleaners wasn't ambitious enough."
- "'Normally in the room, I'm the person trying to make things bigger,' said Ms. Rendle, who started this month as chief executive of the Oakland, Calif.-based maker of household staples. 'You have to be absolutely unafraid of having an opinion and to advocate for that opinion.'"
- "Ms. Rendle, 42 years old, is among the youngest executives to lead a Fortune 500 company and one of only a few women. She is the first woman to run Clorox, even though the company has been selling mostly to women for decades."
- "Among the steps Ms. Rendle has taken to bolster supply of cleaners: halting production of some specialty offerings, including the Green Works line she championed years earlier, in order to simplify manufacturing. Green Works, with its natural ingredients, is not among the products recommended by the U.S. government as a protection against the new coronavirus."
- "While the pandemic keeps employees and their children home for the foreseeable future, Ms. Rendle said Clorox is working on ways to help workers with child care. Her husband, a part-time middle-school administrator, handles remote learning for their boys, 8 and 13 years old. Still, she said she makes a point of interacting with her sons during video calls to put other employees at ease."
- "Clorox marketing and strategy chief Stacey Grier, 15 years Ms. Rendle's senior, said Ms. Rendle has been a valuable mentor."
- "'Before I [Linda Rendle] do anything that's hard, I say: 'What's the worst thing that will happen if you do this?'" she said. "And: 'What's the worst that will happen if you don't?'"

#### Library—Davidson (Soft-Skills)

- *Scope of issue:* [The gaps in soft-skills] spans age groups and experience levels. "[It's hard] to teach someone "common sense" [or] work ethic."
- *Proportion:* [Increasingly...many jobs...] require workers to take on broader responsibilities that demand critical thinking and empathy. [Overwhelmingly, executives] said soft skills were equally important or more important than technical skills. [Technical skills are needed in the short-run, but] soft-skills are needed for success in the long-run.
- *Competition:* Competition is heating up for workers with the right mix of soft skills.

- *Resources:* [Increasingly] companies are investing more time and capital in teasing out job applicants' personality quirks, [developing] tests and other screening methods, and beefing up training programs.
- *Recruiting:* "We've never spent more money in the history of our firm than we are now on recruiting".
- *Teams:* [The] firm's associates must be able to work in teams. "You can't just be the general of your own army."
- *Employment Life-Cycle:* Soft-skills have always been important tools for managers, but now employers are finding them more important than ever before "at the lower end of the org chart," and "the focus is earlier on in one's career."
- *Technical Areas:* [Soft-skills, perhaps may be especially important] for recent college graduates in technical fields such as computer sciences, accounting, and finance.

Library—Buchanan (Drucker on Management)

1. Make sure your own objectives and your team's objectives are in alignment with the company's overall mission.
2. Maintain a clear list of priorities--never more than a few, and always tackled one at a time--as well as "stop doing" and "never start" lists.
3. Carefully track where your own time goes and never waste others' time by triggering the "recurrent crisis" through lack of foresight, overstaffing projects, holding too many meetings or sending out information that is either irrelevant or hard to understand.
4. Favor the future over the past and focus on opportunities, not problems.
5. Staff and promote by, first, gaining clarity around "What are we trying to do?" and then matching people's strengths with those key activities.
6. Invite dissent and be confident that important decisions "should be controversial" and "acclamation means that nobody has done the homework."
7. Remember that every decision you make is "like surgery". It is an intervention into a system and therefore carries with it the risk of shock."
8. Don't blame others when things go wrong.
9. Understand that the critical question is not, "How can I achieve?" but "What can I contribute?"
10. Routinely demonstrate that "leadership is not characterized by the stars on your shoulder. An executive leads by example."

## Library—Samuel (Learning from Autism)

- “I like to think I was a considerate colleague when I worked in an office. I paid attention to cultural and gender differences. I made an effort to run inclusive meetings and write inclusive articles. But for all my attention to diversity, I didn't pay attention to one crucial form of difference: the way people think.”
- “It took my autistic son to wake me up to the truth.”
- “I was able to recognize how often I was asking him to do something he couldn't do, rather than something he wouldn't do. Even more important, I started to see the connection between his wiring and his talents, like his mathematical ability and his extraordinary vocabulary.”
- “Once I recognized those distinctions as a mom, I started seeing them in my professional relationships, too. Just as my son had a learning and communications style of his own -- and strengths that came along with it -- my colleagues and I each had our own distinctive wiring that shaped how we approached the world. Recognizing that, and learning to deal with each other's ways of thinking, makes for stronger understanding and smoother communication. And better business.”
- “Another area helped by my new way of thinking involves nonverbal cues. It never dawned on me that many people's wiring isn't set up to read throat clearing or glances at a phone as signs that it's time to wrap up a chat, so they need more direct signals. But now if I find someone isn't picking up on my cues, I say explicitly, for instance, "I need to end our conversation now so that I can get back to work. Such a simple thing -- but I was totally blind to it before my son opened my eyes.”
- “As I became more conscientious about working with my colleagues' diverse thinking styles, I also learned to acknowledge and ask for help with my own style -- even when that help involved admitting a weakness.”
- “Recognizing all these variations hasn't crowded out my concern for other kinds of diversity in the workplace. I don't have a whole lot of patience for using differences in thinking as an excuse for gender bias or cultural insensitivity. If anything, noticing different thinking styles has helped me become more effective in working across a wide range of differences within the workplace. The more I acknowledge and embrace my colleagues' quirks -- not to mention my own -- the more I'm able to tap into their unique strengths.”

### **Length:**

For this 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 5 (engagement and commitment points).