Exercise:
Management Skills Comprehensive—"Back to Work"
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:
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 try to be 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 articles:

(article 1)
Cutter, C., and K. Bindley (2022, Sep 22). EXCHANGE --- Back to Work* Or Else**. *Wall Street Journal*.

(article 2)
Cutter, C., and K. Bindley (2022, Sep 22). EXCHANGE --- Ordering Everyone Back, With No Regrets. *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)

These articles are all related to issues surrounding coming back to office, either fulltime or in a hybrid schedule; that is, the working environment in a post-pandemic environment. The COVID-19 pandemic was a "once in a hundred years" phenomenon. It has changed society's thinking in many ways. Organizations of all kinds were forced to adapt to the new reality. Some new practices might remain

post-pandemic and some traditional practices might return. As you might guess, there are many opportunities and many challenges.

What makes these articles 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 course. Put differently, Management Skill Development applies to *all individuals in all organizational contexts*. We don't have to know the technical detail of each industry, firm, product, or service line; the principles learned in our course generalize widely. 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 a large, Fortune 500 firm. You are in charge of all training, development, and related onboarding activities for the firm. You had been intimately involved in the design and implementation of the "Work From Home" strategy that your firm's professionals, managers, and executives adopted—rather hastily, like many firms—in March, 2020. You know too that the pandemic conditions will subside at some point, and so you need to analyze and plan, long-term, for a post-pandemic future workplace. One of the challenges will be determining whether employees should come back to office, and if so, how many, which ones, and under what conditions? Probably the biggest opportunities and challenges lay with the firm's managers: they have the basic skills to succeed, of course, but you want to help them know to leverage/adapt existing skills, knowledge, and abilities and learn/apply new skills, knowledge, and abilities post-pandemic. You know that your work will not just be read by your immediate supervisor, but also by other senior executives at your firm.

Your task is to relate these articles to what you have learned in this class. You do this by linking each major element from an article below to one or more ideas using the best (most applicable) 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 each of the articles. 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". And remember to use theory from the textbook and an analogy from a Library article.

(article 1) "Other corporate leaders are arming themselves with new data that help to bolster their case for in-person work. Some are linking identification-badge swipe data with separate metrics to show whether employees who go to the office regularly are more productive and engaged, said Zig Serafin, chief executive of cloud-software company Qualtrics, recounting an experience of one of the company's clients."

Q1.   Which management skill is needed to ensure that the measurement of employee productivity using data is reliable (consistent) and valid (accurate)?

(article 1) "What makes the return effort more complex now is that many employees say they appreciate the flexibility that comes with remote work, and hope to retain at least a hybrid arrangement, according to interviews and surveys. Bosses are often more interested in what they see as the benefits of coming in: promoting collaboration, energizing the corporate culture and helping younger employees connect with colleagues."

Q2.   Which management skill do the managers need to balance the "…[employees desire for] flexibility that comes with remote work…" with the "…benefits [collaboration, culture, connections] of coming in…"?

(article 1) "Some companies say they have had success in trying to balance all preferences. Audio giant Spotify Technology SA said its roughly 8,600 employees, who have been largely remote during the pandemic, returned in recent months in larger numbers than the company expected. That is partly because it hasn't forced them to do so, said Katarina Berg, Spotify's human-resources chief. After Spotify offered most employees a choice on their work setup, about 60% chose to work from an office a majority of the time, while roughly 40% decided to remain largely at home."

"Psychology comes into play on this," Ms. Berg said. "Nobody is telling me that I need to come in. It's just my choice. And I think that is very important for you as a human being, too. I'm smart; I know how I want to do my job, when I want to do my job."

She added: "If you recruit grown-ups and then you treat them as kids, it's going to backfire."

Q3.   Which management skill is related to letting employees choose where to do their work?

(article 1) "Previous campaigns to get workers together in-person -- including one last Labor Day -- largely failed, executives said, as Covid-19 cases surged or workers

simply ignored return-to-office decrees…How strongly a company can push for in-person work now depends on an employer's industry, what competitors are doing and how much leverage companies assume workers have to easily switch jobs, executives say. When Christian Ulbrich, CEO of real-estate company Jones Lang LaSalle Inc., chats with clients or executives at other companies, many ask: What's it going to take to repopulate workspaces? They're also concerned because, as we all know, that message was sent earlier, and it didn't really resonate" with some employees, Mr. Ulbrich said."

Q4.   Which management skill is needed to communicate a message that will "resonate" with employees?

(article 1) "When everyone was working remotely earlier in the pandemic, Mr. Kostelnik said he found that his "A players" were self-sufficient and thriving but his B and C players weren't benefiting from the knowledge and experience of their colleagues."

Q5.   Which management skill is needed to grade employees on an "A", "B", or "C" scale.

(article 1) "It's not about productivity; it's not about the output or making sure you're getting what you pay for," he said. "The office is a resource."

Q6.   Which management skill is needed to make an office a "resource"?

(article 1) "While worker preferences about flexible work might not budge, people's willingness to show up at an office may be affected by factors like concerns over proximity bias, the tendency to favor those physically close to you, and worries about job security amid an uncertain economy."

Q7.   Which management skill is needed to avoid "…proximity bias…"?

(article 1) "When it comes to primary motivators for going into the office, "putting in facetime" rose from 2% last quarter to 10% in the most recent quarter, according to a survey of more than 10,000 knowledge workers from Future Forum, a consortium funded by Slack Technologies LLC, Boston Consulting Group and MillerKnoll. That is not good," said Brian Elliott, executive leader of Future Forum, referring to making an appearance in front of superiors as a reason for going to the office. Workers should ideally be motivated to go in to collaborate and build relationships with colleagues, Mr. Elliott said, not because they feel it's important for the boss to see them working."

Q8.   Which management skill is needed to distinguish between employees who are just "putting in [in office] facetime…[to make] an appearance in front of

superiors…or because the [employees] feel it's important for the boss to see them working." and employees who are "…motivated to go in [to the office] to collaborate and build relationships with colleagues,…"?

(article 1) "Marriott hasn't mandated specific days for a return, though Mr. Capuano said he expects office attendance to grow over time -- particularly as workers start to feel left out. Already, he has noticed a shift during daylong hybrid meetings. When the in-person group breaks for lunch and rejoins the meeting in the afternoon, laughing together as the meeting resumes, those at home seem to look on with what Mr. Capuano described as the same expression of children peering into a store window in a Norman Rockwell painting. "You can tell they miss some of that unofficial interaction," he said."

Q9.   Which management skill is needed to help [out-of-office] employees feel included and not left out?

(article 2)

Q10.   Support (agree) or Challenge (disagree) with Mr. Ishbia's perspective on enforcing the requirement for all employees to come back to the office. As with the other questions, of course, you defend your argument with textbook theories and appropriate analogies.

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 10 (engagement and commitment points).