

Exercise:
Management Skills Comprehensive—Clorox CEO Rengle
wayne.smith@csun.edu
[updated: Sunday, September 27, 2020]

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 professionals.

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:

Terlep, S. (2020, Sep 26). Exchange --- A New CEO Faces a Clorox Wipes Challenge. *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 Ms. Linda Rendle, the new CEO of the The Clorox Company (Clorox). Clorox is more than 100 years old, a large, Fortune 500 firm, and a leader in consumer goods worldwide, especially in disinfectant products. As you might guess, and especially during the COVID-19 outbreak, a new CEO has many opportunities and challenges. In addition to being female, CEO Rendle is 42 years old.

What makes this article so interesting is that we can learn about Management Skills Development from CEO Rendle’s career. She has used, or will use, 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 at Clorox. You report directly to the Vice-President of Human Resources at Clorox. You have been involved in the strategy discussions at the executive level, and additionally, you oversee all training, development, and related onboarding activities for the firm. You want to learn from Ms. Rendle, so that you can strategically and systematically improve your talent development pipeline at Clorox.

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 also use a strong, appropriate analogy from a non-textbook course reading (Library) 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, which management skill or skills can we learn from CEO Rendle? (Note: The final three questions are different. They are more about you—the student—personally. They link the reflections we've done to this assignment.)

"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. Her bosses ultimately agreed and the company substantially broadened the Clorox Green Works product line, moving more aggressively into major categories such as home care and laundry rather than sticking to niche offerings. Within months of the brand's 2008 launch, sales surpassed those of established green players such as Seventh Generation and Method."

Q1. What management skill did Ms. Rendle display "speak[ing] up" and challenging senior executives in a business meeting?

"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.’”

Q2. Which management skill does a manager need to “...make things bigger”?

Q3. Which management skill does a manager need to be “...unafraid of having an opinion...”?

“A year ago, Ms. Rendle was entirely focused on getting more customers to buy Clorox products. Now, she has an almost singular mission: ramp up production of cleaning products as the company struggles to meet pandemic-fueled demand for items such as disinfecting wipes and sprays.”

Q4. Which management skill does a manager need to focus the bulk of their attention “...on a singular mission”?

“She was central to the company’s decision in June to pull advertising from Facebook in what Clorox said was an attempt to distance itself from hate speech on the platform.”

Q5. What management skill did Ms. Rendle display when she understood the strategic importance of contemporary corporate social responsibility issues, including “...to distance itself from hate speech on [Facebook]”?

“Then-CEO Benno Dorer, who had led the company since 2014 and remains executive chairman, said he had been impressed by her confidence and results and had identified her as a potential successor. He wanted to test her ability to develop and execute a major corporate strategy.”

Q6. What management skill did Ms. Rendle display impress a boss with “...confidence...” but also, not become arrogant in the process?

Q7. Which critical management skill does a manager need to “...*develop*...a major corporate strategy.”?

Q8. Which critical management skill does a manager need to “...*execute* a major corporate strategy.”?

“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.”

Q9. What management skill did Ms. Rendle display when she changed her mind and stopped production of a product “...she championed years earlier...”?

“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.”

Q10. What management skill does Ms. Rendle display when she “...interacts with her sons during [business] video calls...”?

“Clorox marketing and strategy chief Stacey Grier, 15 years Ms. Rendle's senior, said Ms. Rendle has been a valuable mentor. Ms. Grier took over the top marketing job in 2019. Ms. Grier joined Clorox in 2016 after spending 25 years at ad agencies, often working with Ms. Rendle.”

Q11. Which critical management skill does a manager need to be “...a valuable mentor”?

“Before I 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'?”

Q12. What management skill does Ms. Rendle appear to embody when making key decisions?

(personal questions)

“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.”

Q13. Over the years many students have told me (Prof. Wayne) that MGT 370 helps just as much in their personal life as in their professional life. Assume that you want to find (or have found) a significant other or life-long partner. Or if you prefer to remain single, just substitute “colleague” for “partner.” What management skill or skills do you look for in a significant other, life-long partner, or perhaps colleague?

Q14. Ms. Rendle is about twice the average age in class, and she made a substantive strategic contribution to the firm when she was 29, less than 10 years older than most of you. Although each student in class will navigate their own success, of course, it's reasonable to assume that all students desire to be successful. All of the management skills discussed in this class are important. Of all of those skills, which is the one skill that you believe is your key *strength* and therefore can be leveraged as part of your success?

Q15. ...(similar to above) Of all of those skills, which is the one skill that you believe is your key *weakness* and therefore requires more learning on your part?

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 (engagement and commitment points).