

Exercise:
Management Skills Comprehensive—The “New Workplace”
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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:

Neeley, T. (2021, Aug 16). The New Workplace (A Special Report) --- Employees are Back, Bosses, Don’t Blow It. *Wall Street Journal*.

Murphy, K. (2021, Aug 16). The New Workplace (A Special Report) --- Don’t Kid Yourself: The Fear Is Here For a While. *Wall Street Journal*.

Gino, F., and D. Cable (2021, Aug 16). The New Workplace (A Special Report) --- What Bosses Can Do To Reduce Anxiety for Returning Workers. *Wall Street Journal*.

Capelli, P. (2021, Aug 16). The New Workplace (A Special Report) --- Here Comes The Two-Tier Workplace. *Wall Street Journal*.

West, T. (2021, Aug 16). The New Workplace (A Special Report) --- Ways To Bridge The Hybrid Communications Gap. *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 “The New Workplace”; 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. 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 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”.

For each of the issues below, what management skills might a post-pandemic individual need to be successful (the author's name of article is in parentheses)?

(Neeley) "...treating workers like children...", "...reinforcing tech exhaustion...", "...rebuilding the work-life wall...", "...going back to the 'butts-in-seat' metric...", "...refusing to experiment..."

- Q1. The author identifies five key issues that managers must keep in mind to be successful post-pandemic. Identify the most important one of these five issues. Why do think that issue is so important? What skills, knowledge, or abilities will your firm's managers need to be successful in addressing this issue?
- Q2. Identify the second most important one of these five issues. Why do think that issue is so important? What skills, knowledge, or abilities will your firm's managers need to be successful in addressing this issue?

(Murphy) "The first step to managing fear is actually being aware of it. This isn't always easy because fear often masquerades as other emotions, such as sadness, anger, irritation or even excessive cheerfulness. Fear can make some people breathtakingly intolerant and hypersensitive. Others might withdraw into themselves, seeming aloof and unfriendly. Fear also inhibits people's ability to accurately read social and emotional cues, leading to all sorts of inappropriate, inept or awkward exchanges."

- Q3. What management skills do the managers need to understand the challenges of fear on the part of some employees?

(Murphy) "Similar to labeling, mindfulness can also put the brakes on anxiety. The idea is to get people to slow down and ask themselves: "What's the dialogue in my head right now?" "Where in my body am I putting my tension?" The heightened awareness allows people to re-center so they can resume whatever they were doing with clearer intention. Even hard-charging law firms and staid government agencies now embrace starting meetings with 10 minutes of mindfulness, according to Loretta Cooper, an organizational consultant with the Wheelhouse Group in Fairfax, VA. 'Before Covid, I used to get feedback that mindfulness practices were a little woo woo,' she says. "People aren't pushing back anymore."

- Q4. What management skills do the managers need to learn about and apply the principles of *mindfulness* or related strategies to address fear on the part of the employees?

(Gino/Cable) "...ask employees for their input...", "...celebrate lessons learned...", "...emotions matter..."

- Q5. The authors identify three key issues that managers must keep in mind to help employees with anxiety. Identify the most important one of these three issues. Why do think that issue is so important? What skills, knowledge, or abilities will your firm's managers need to be successful in addressing this issue?
- Q6. Identify the second most important one of these three issues. Why do think that issue is so important? What skills, knowledge, or abilities will your firm's managers need to be successful in addressing this issue?

(Cappelli) "It's a common refrain these days: Let workers decide where and when they work. The impetus, of course, stems from the pandemic, when employers sent office workers home for a year and a half, with surprisingly few hiccups. Productivity didn't suffer, and workers enjoyed their newfound freedom. Now, we're told, companies can't go back to the old, controlling ways without workers revolting. That may be, but here's what almost certainly will happen if the hybrid advocates win the day: Companies will have a two-tier workplace, with on-site workers getting the bulk of the promotions and raises."

- Q7. Support (agree) or Challenge (disagree) the author's perspective. As with the other questions, of course, you defend your argument with textbook theories and appropriate analogies.
- Q8. Make a general recommendation to your boss regarding a general Work-From-Home (WFH) strategy for your firm. Should all employees come back to the office? Most? Some? Manager's discretion? Employee choice? Varies by region? Varies by Job Type/Function? Varies by Seniority/Performance? Other criteria? As with Q7, of course, you defend your argument with textbook theories and appropriate analogies.

(West) "...fewer screens...", "...create turn-taking rules...", "...kill the chat box...", "...give priority to in-person time for newcomers and independent workers...", "...when people come to work, give priority to 'social networking' over than 'getting down to business'..."

- Q9. The author identifies five key issues that managers must keep in mind to be a successful communicator post-pandemic. Identify the most important one of these five issues. Why do think that issue is so important? What skills, knowledge, or abilities will your firm's managers need to be successful in addressing this issue?
- Q10. Identify the second most important one of these five issues. Why do think that issue is so important? What skills, knowledge, or abilities will your firm's managers need to be successful in addressing this issue?

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).