

## 16.1: Reading- Managerial Skills

### Managerial Skills

To be a successful manager, you'll have to master a number of skills. To get an entry-level position, you will have to be technically competent at the tasks you are asked to perform. To advance, you'll need to develop strong interpersonal and conceptual skills. The relative importance of different skills varies from job to job and organization to organization, but to some extent, you'll need them all to forge a managerial career. Throughout your career, you'll also be expected to communicate ideas clearly, use your time efficiently, and reach sound decisions.

### Technical Skills

You'll probably be hired for your first job based on your technical skills—the ones you need to perform specific tasks—and you'll use them extensively during your early career. If your college major is accounting, you'll use what you've learned to prepare financial statements. If you have a marketing degree and you join an ad agency, you'll use what you know about promotion to prepare ad campaigns. Technical skills will come in handy when you move up to a first-line managerial job and oversee the task performance of subordinates. Technical skills, though developed through job training and work experience, are generally acquired during the course of your formal education.

### Interpersonal Skills

As you move up the corporate ladder, you'll find that you can't do everything yourself: you'll have to rely on other people to help you achieve the goals for which you're responsible. That's why interpersonal skills—the ability to get along with and motivate other people—are critical for managers in midlevel positions. These managers play a pivotal role because they report to top-level managers while overseeing the activities of first-line managers. Thus, they need strong working relationships with individuals at all levels and in all areas. More than most other managers, they must use “people skills” to foster teamwork, build trust, manage conflict, and encourage improvement.<sup>[1]</sup>

### Conceptual Skills

Managers at the top, who are responsible for deciding what's good for the organization from the broadest perspective, rely on conceptual skills—the ability to reason abstractly and analyze complex situations. Senior executives are often called on to “think outside the box”—to arrive at creative solutions to complex, sometimes ambiguous problems. They need both strong analytical abilities and strong creative talents.

### Communication Skills

Effective communication skills are crucial to just about everyone. At all levels of an organization, you'll often be judged on your ability to communicate, both orally and in writing. Whether you're talking informally or making a formal presentation, you must express yourself clearly and concisely. Talking too loudly, rambling, and using poor grammar reduce your ability to influence others, as does poor written communication. Confusing and error-riddled documents (including e-mails) don't do your message any good, and they will reflect poorly on you.<sup>[2]</sup>

### Time-Management Skills

Managers face multiple demands on their time, and their days are usually filled with interruptions. Ironically, some technologies that were supposed to save time, such as voicemail and e-mail, have actually increased workloads. Unless you develop certain time-management skills, you risk reaching the end of the day feeling that you've worked a lot but accomplished little. What can managers do to ease the burden? Here are a few common-sense suggestions:

- Prioritize tasks, focusing on the most important things first.
- Set aside a certain time each day to return phone calls and answer e-mail.
- Delegate routine tasks.
- Don't procrastinate.
- Insist that meetings start and end on time, and stick to an agenda.
- Eliminate unnecessary paperwork.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Decision-Making Skills

Every manager is expected to make decisions, whether alone or as part of a team. Drawing on your decision-making skills is often a process in which you must define a problem, analyze possible solutions, and select the best outcome. As luck would have it, because the same process is good for making personal decisions, we'll use a personal example to demonstrate the process approach to decision making. Consider the following scenario: You're upset because your midterm grades are much lower than you'd hoped. To make matters worse, not only are you in trouble academically, but also the other members of your business-project team are annoyed because you're not pulling your weight. Your lacrosse coach is very upset because you've missed too many practices, and members of the mountain-biking club of which you're supposed to be president are talking about impeaching you if you don't show up at the next meeting. And your girlfriend says you're ignoring her. (You can substitute "boyfriend" here, of course; we're just trying to keep our exposition as simple as possible.)

### A Six-Step Approach to Problem Solving

Assuming your top priority is salvaging your GPA, let's tackle your problem by using a six-step approach to solving problems that don't have simple solutions. We've summarized this model in Figure 1 below.<sup>[4]</sup>



Figure 16.1.1: How to Solve a Problem

1. *Identify the problem you want to work on.* Step one is getting to know your problem, which you can formulate by asking yourself a basic question: How can I improve my grades?
2. *Gather relevant data.* Step two is gathering information that will shed light on the problem. Let's rehash some of the relevant information that you've already identified: (a) you did poorly on your finals because you didn't spend enough time studying; (b) you didn't study because you went to see your girlfriend (who lives about three hours from campus) over the weekend before your exams (and on most other weekends, as a matter of fact); (c) what little studying you got in came at the expense of your team project and lacrosse practice; and (d) while you were away for the weekend, you forgot to tell members of the mountain-biking club that you had to cancel the planned meeting.
3. *Clarify the problem.* Once you review all the given facts, you should see that your problem is bigger than simply getting your grades up; your life is pretty much out of control. You can't handle everything to which you've committed yourself. Something has to give. You clarify the problem by summing it up with another basic question: What can I do to get my life back in order?
4. *Generate possible solutions.* If you thought defining the problem was tough, wait until you've moved on to this stage. Let's say that you've come up with the following possible solutions to your problem: (a) quit the lacrosse team, (b) step down as president of the mountain-biking club, (c) let team members do your share of work on the business project, and (d) stop visiting your girlfriend so frequently. The solution to your main problem—how to get your life back in order—will probably require multiple actions.
5. *Select the best option.* This is clearly the toughest part of the process. Working your way through your various options, you arrive at the following conclusions: (a) you can't quit the lacrosse team because you'd lose your scholarship; (b) you can resign your post in the mountain-biking club, but that won't free up much time; (c) you can't let your business-project team down (and besides, you'd just get a low grade); and (d) she wouldn't like the idea, but you could visit your girlfriend, say, once a month rather than once a week. So what's the most feasible (if not necessarily perfect) solution? Probably visiting your girlfriend once a month and giving up the presidency of the mountain-biking club.

6. *Implement your decision and monitor your choice.* When you call your girlfriend, you're pleasantly surprised to find that she understands. The vice president is happy to take over the mountain-biking club. After the first week, you're able to attend lacrosse practice, get caught up on your team business project, and catch up in all your other classes. The real test of your solution will be the results of the semester's finals.

### Key Takeaways

- The skills needed by managers vary according to level.
- Top managers need strong **conceptual skills**, while those at midlevels need good **interpersonal skills**, and those at lower levels need **technical skills**.
- All managers need strong **communication**, **decision-making**, and **time-management skills**.

### Check Your Understanding

Answer the question(s) below to see how well you understand the topics covered in this section. This short quiz does **not** count toward your grade in the class, and you can retake it an unlimited number of times.

Use this quiz to check your understanding and decide whether to (1) study the previous section further or (2) move on to the next section.

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.com/assessments/197>

- 
1. Brian Perkins, "[Defining Crisis Management](#)," Wharton Alumni Magazine, Summer 2000, accessed October 8, 2011. ↩
  2. Brian L. Davis et al., *Successful Manager's Handbook: Development Suggestions for Today's Managers*, Minneapolis: Personnel Decisions Inc., 1992, p 189. ↩
  3. Brian L. Davis et al., *Successful Manager's Handbook: Development Suggestions for Today's Managers* (Minneapolis: Personnel Decisions Inc., 1992, p 189. ↩
  4. Shari Caudron, "Six Steps in Creative Problem Solving," *Controller Magazine*, April 1998, 38. Caudron describes a systematic approach developed by Roger L. Firestien, president of Innovation Systems Group, Williamsville, NY. ↩

### Contributors and Attributions

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Adaptation and revision. **Authored by:** Linda Williams and Lumen Learning. **Provided by:** Tidewater Community College. **Located at:** [courses.candelalearning.com/introbusiness2xtccmaster/chapter/6-6-managerial-skills/](https://courses.candelalearning.com/introbusiness2xtccmaster/chapter/6-6-managerial-skills/). **Project:** Introduction to Business. **License:** [CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike](#)
- An Introduction to Business. **Authored by:** Anonymous. **Provided by:** Anonymous. **Located at:** <http://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/an-introduction-to-business-v2.0/s10-06-managerial-skills.html>. **License:** [CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike](#)

---

16.1: Reading- Managerial Skills is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.