MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIOS

AN OVERVIEW

Portfolios may be broadly defined as collections of representative work in a specific area; they are multifaceted and serve as a record of growth and progress in that area. In developing your management portfolio you will demonstrate your mastery of many of the topics covered in the class and your development in the understanding of management. The portfolio will also give you something at the end of the course that is uniquely yours to use as you wish in the future.

I will ask you to choose a particular organizational/managerial/work setting (e.g. university, museum, large multinational company, small business) to provide a context for the material you develop for the portfolio. One of the first items in your portfolio will be a description of the organization you have chosen. Many of the later items in the portfolio will be constructed with this organizational context as the setting.

Various things can be assembled in a portfolio. Portfolios are being used in many setting for many purposes. Since this portfolio is being developed in a management class the objective is to have the portfolio consist primarily of examples of the types of work that managers are required to produce in the course of their jobs. In assembling your management portfolio, certain items will be required of everyone in the class. Some of these will consist of specific responses you will develop to meet a problem posed. In other words, you will need to act like a manager in your specific setting and respond to an organizational problem. Other required items will be more reflective and show your responses to selected readings, thoughts on discussion questions or reflections on the art and science of management.

Portfolios, however, are very flexible. In addition to the items that I ask everyone to turn in, you may submit optional material as part of your portfolio. Any optional material that you include should be included to demonstrate your increasing mastery of the skills of management. For instance, you might submit memos that you have written at your workplace or solutions that you have proposed for various managerial problems. I will give you comments on these optional items, however, they are neither required nor will they count towards the final grade of the portfolio.
The format of the documents in the portfolio will vary according to the task being assigned. Some of the documents will be memos or letters, some will be specific managerial documents such as budget presentations, and some will be brief essays. Most of the documents will be fairly short; others will be lengthier but none should exceed 5 or 6 pages in length. There will be a portfolio submission due approximately every two weeks.

Through this portfolio it should be possible to see that you have understood the concepts we have read and discussed, that you have applied these concepts to simulated managerial problems, and that you have exercised your judgment about situations based on managerial principles. There will be many ways to approach the problems given you. Just as in real life management, there is no ONE right way to do things.
Management Portfolio Item 1

Organizational Paper

Organizations now play a very important role in most people's work life. In the past 200 years, the United States has changed from a country where almost all workers were self employed either as farmers or independent craftspeople to one in which almost every worker is employed by an organization. Today most people spend their entire work life as one employee among many working in an organization. The purpose of this entry in your Management Portfolio is to help you think about an organization in managerial terms.

For this paper you are to select a library or information agency or a corporation that you are somewhat familiar with and to describe it in 3-5 double-spaced pages. To provide continuity in the Management Portfolio this organization will be used as the context for many of the later entries. If you have worked in an organization in the past or are working in one in the present, that organization might be a good choice for you. However, you don't need to have actually worked in an organization to be familiar with it, so you can choose any organization that you wish for this exercise. If you have trouble selecting an organization, I would be happy to help you.

Organizations can be described in many ways. To help you start your analysis of the organization you have chosen, I have posed some questions below. You don't have to answer each question and there may well be other aspects of your organization that you wish to describe.

- Provide the full name of the organization. If it is a part of a larger organization, provide the name of the larger organization and describe how the smaller unit fits within the larger one.
- Where is the organization located? Where is work performed? Sometimes the answer to these two questions is different, sometimes the same.
- What is unique or distinctive about this organization? Does it have a mission statement or a statement of purpose? If so, what is it?
- How large is the organization you selected? You can describe the size of an organization by the amount of space it occupies, by the number of staff it has, by the amount of its budget, by the number of clientele it serves. Some measures are more useful for particular purposes. For this
exercise, choose any measure you like. You may have to estimate size. Be as accurate as you can.

- How old is your organization? Does it have a long history and tradition or is it a relatively young organization?
- What services and/or products does it offer? Are these products/services offered for a fee or free to everyone or only to a certain class of clients? How is it organized? Does it have a flat structure with few layers of management or is it hierarchical with an organization chart with many layers? Has it gone through any sort of reorganization or reengineering in the recent past?
- Is the organization a public or a private agency, or does it have elements of both?
- Who are the consumers or users of the organization's products and services? Often clients (users, patrons, customers, whatever term you choose) can be separated into various categories. For example in a university environment, clientele are often separated into faculty, students, and staff. Sometimes each of these categories is further separated as well. Some organizations think of primary and secondary client groups. You may wish to comment about this aspect for your organization.
- Who are the organization's competitors? How do you think competition should be defined for the organization? Would you describe the environment in which the organization operates as stable or rapidly changing? Responsive and supportive or hostile?
- Would you describe your organization's technical system (how work gets done) as "craft-like" so that responses are individualized and unique to each client, or is it more "mass market oriented" and machine-like so that each client is treated the same and services and products are relatively uniform, or would you characterize the technical system as a process in which items (or people) flow through the organization and are acted upon as they move through (for example, like a university)?
- What kinds of people work in the organization? What skills, knowledge, educational credentials, or experience do people need in order to work in the organization? Are most of the workers recruited locally or does the organization recruit certain workers at a national level? Are there a lot of different categories of people or do most of the people in the organization have a similar knowledge and skill set? Would you characterize the dominant group as professionals, technicians, scientists, humanists, managers, or how?
- Does the organization offer training to its human resources? How are newly hired people introduced to the agency? Are there opportunities for staff to continue their learning through staff development offerings or on the job training?
• Is the organization hierarchical in nature so that it is clear who works for whom or is it flatter and more collegial so that people work together in teams?

• Are the rules and policies of the organization written down and publicly available or is the atmosphere more informal?

• Are people paid a salary, or on an hourly basis? Are there contract employees? Are hours of work flexible or fixed? Are the people paid a rate that is competitive with others in the same industry or location?

• What kind of reward system is there? Is the morale within the organization high? Are people who work there generally satisfied?

• Why did you choose this organization? Is it one you have worked in? Do you plan (or hope) to work in a similar organization some day?
Management Portfolio Item 2

Interview a Manager

This document will report the results of your interview with a manager. If you know one who works in the organization you described in your first management portfolio item that would be ideal. If you are not able to talk to someone in that organization talk to one in another organization. Either interview the manager at their workplace or perhaps offer to take him/her out for coffee or lunch. Ask the person you interview questions that will help you get an insight into what managers actually do and what you should be doing to prepare yourself to be one. What are the most difficult parts of being a manager? The most frustrating? The most rewarding? What has this person learned from being a manager? How do they keep up-to-date? What ethical dilemmas have they faced? What difficult decisions have they had to make? How do they make decisions? What is his/her management style? What career advice could they offer you?

These are some possible questions but add your own and reshape the ones above if you wish. After the interview write a summary of what you learned (800-1000 words). A bit of advice: It is always wise to make an interview appointment with the manager well ahead of the time you would to speak with him/her and writing a thank you note afterwards is always a nice touch. If you have trouble finding a manager to interview, please come and talk to me.
Management Portfolio Item 3

Stakeholder Analysis

This part of your management portfolio will give you the chance to analyze in a bit more depth one aspect of the organization you chose for the first assignment. Management systems theory tells us that all organizations are affected by both internal and external factors. The national economic conditions, the availability of skilled labor, and even weather conditions have an impact upon an organization. In addition to the general forces that affect all organizations, each organization has specific groups that can exert influence upon that particular organization. One of these groups is an organization's "stakeholders." The so-called stakeholders group in an interesting one because it consists of a mix of entities (individuals, associations, etc.) with some who are external to the organization and some who are internal. As the name implies, a stakeholder is someone or some group who has an interest in what happens in a specific organization and who is affected by that organization. If we were making a list of the stakeholders of your ILS School included in the list would be students, staff, faculty, the university administration, employees, alumni, the American Library Association, research sponsors, donors, etc. So the list of stakeholders for any organization is apt to be numerous and varied.

Think about the stakeholders of the organization you described in your first portfolio assignment. You should be able to think of at least 8-10. If you chose a subunit of a larger organization, you will likely want to focus upon the overall organization for this analysis. Make a list of these stakeholders and briefly describe them. Then, describe as best you can the influence that each stakeholder group has and pressures they might exert. Some questions you might want to consider in doing your analysis are: On what issues would particular stakeholders want to have influence? Which stakeholders have contradictory or conflicting interests and which have interests that might work together? How much power do you think each of these stakeholders has over your organization? Can you cite any examples when stakeholders interests have caused organizational change? Have there ever been instances you can think of that stakeholders perhaps exerted undue or unnecessary influence upon the organization? What can managers do to ensure that a balance is maintained between the interests of individual stakeholders and the interest of the organization as a whole? Does the organization have any specific means of communicating with its stakeholders? Does the organization's management do a good, adequate, or
inadequate job of dealing with the various stakeholder groups? Can you suggest any improvements the organization might make in dealing with stakeholder groups?

Your stakeholder analysis should be no more than 1000 words in length.
Management Portfolio Item 4

Time Management

Richard Daft states that one of "the most interesting findings about managerial activities is how busy managers are and how hectic the average workday can be." Daft also stresses that managerial work is characterized by variety, fragmentation, and brevity and that managers perform a great deal of work at an unrelenting pace. Those same statements could be applied to the life of the average graduate student who is often trying to balance school, family and work demands at the same time.

One of the tasks that effective managers learn early is how to manage their time. The first step in becoming more efficient in time management is to actually analyze how you spend your time. For this entry in your Management Portfolio, I would like you to keep a detailed log of your time for three "typical" days--I would imagine for most of you that would mean three days between Monday through Friday but if you want to use one weekend day that is fine. During those three days record your major activities (for example, work, study, sports, recreation, sleep, family, etc.). See below for what a typical entry might look like. When you have your record in hand, combine all the times spent on these activities and then write a brief report (500-750 words) about what you discover. Are there major activities missing that you wish you had more time for? Did you uncover any surprises about how you spend your time? Can you think of any improvements in how you are managing your time? What would those improvements be? Overall would you judge that you manage your own time as effectively as you could. Turn in your essay, and a pie chart depicting the major categories of how you spend your time. You don't need to turn in your time record.

Example of a Time Log

8:00-8:30 Bus to Campus
8:30-9:00 Coffee and read the Newspaper
9:00-11:00 Class
11:00-12:00 Study in Library
12:00-1:00 Lunch
1:00-5:00 Work
Management Portfolio Item 5*

Your Board of Directors and Managerial Philosophy

All good managers have a philosophy of management that guides them in making managerial decisions. In addition, many managers try to pattern their actions after those of people they admire and wish to emulate. After reflecting on your own work experiences and the variety of people with whom you've worked:

A. pick a personal board of directors --a small set of individuals whose life and leadership you would like to emulate. (You don't have to have known all of these personally and they may be either historical or contemporary figures. But, there should be no more than ten individuals on your board.). Provide a sentence or two about each about why you would want them to be on your personal board of directors. Then,

B. write your management credo --a set of eight or more principles or values which you want to characterize your life as a manager. Both your board and your credo should be selected carefully. Both should be durable so you could take them with you when you change positions or organizations.

* This exercise is adapted with permission from one used by Professor Monty Lynn in his course, Leading and Management, at Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas.
Think about the type of job you would like to have for your first position after you graduate. Consider your strengths, weaknesses, skills, experiences, interests, and values as they relate to your career plans. Consider geographic preferences and restrictions. Ideally, before you apply for any job you need to "know yourself." Then look at the jobs listed on various ILS job lists or in the classified ads in a newspaper or a periodical to find either a specific job you actually want to apply for (if you are near graduation) or a job of the type you would like to have when you graduate. This should be a position for which you feel that you are qualified on the basis of your education and your experience. Write a cover letter and a resume for that specific position.

One of the most important parts of getting a job is composing a cover letter and a resume that will be impressive enough to have your application seriously considered. There are estimates that an employer spends an average of 15 to 20 seconds scanning a resume so it is critical to make a good first impression. There are many sources you may want to refer to for help in writing a good resume and cover letter. Some sources are available online—for instance information about cover letters and resumes can be seen at resume.monster.com. There are also many books available on the topic of writing good resumes and cover letters in the campus library or in bookstores.

Optional: When you go for an interview you usually face a series of tough interview questions. Assume you have gotten through the initial screening for the job you have applied for and have been invited for an on-site interview. To find how well you might answer some classic interview questions, go to http://news.monster.com/a/business/how-to-answer-tricky-interview-questions-83d6bd for some classic questions and other useful interview tips.