

Mgmt 652 – Final Paper

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I. Overall Assessment (800 Words)

Throughout my career, I have sought experiences to enhance my strengths and mitigate my weaknesses as an individual, a professional, and a leader. This class has allowed me to better understand what each of these qualities is and how to improve upon them.

Weaknesses

One area I need to improve is Interpersonal Savvy, in particular my ability to develop productive interpersonal relationships beyond specific projects. I have participated on many teams while at Wharton but have had little success growing working relationships beyond the projects' lives. Such relationships, and the social capital they generate, are critical in pursuing success and avoiding catastrophe in situations that extend beyond my personal knowledge, skills and experience (human capital).¹ Many of the changes at Wharton in the 1980's resulted from Prof. Gerrity's ability to communicate with colleagues, develop relationships outside the school and build political capital that allowed him to gain positive movement on issues such as the University's tax system.² Beth Kaplan suggested that she failed to utilize certain connections at Rite-Aid otherwise allowing her to foresee and avoid the accounting crisis presaging her departure.³ Josh Koppelman noted that good leaders should surround themselves with people who are better than they.⁴ My ability to lever personal relationships will prove critical in achieving success, avoiding failure and guiding my team to achieve its maximum potential.

My ability to Inspire Peak Performance leaves much to desire. I demonstrate some *Instrumental Leadership* as evidenced by my learning team contributions, including academic calendars of class deliverables with appropriate follow-up (control), breakdowns of project deliverables (structure), and praise / thanks for individual team member contributions (reward).⁵ However, I must augment my *Charismatic Leadership* abilities to envision, energize and enable my peers. In a recent ethics case competition in which my team placed strongly, I believe that greater empowerment of other team members by me could have diffused personality clashes between other members and enhanced our overall performance. Enhanced Charismatic Leadership will be essential to my ability to effectively delegate to other team-members, a key leadership attribute identified by Platt.

I also must develop a Focus on Results. My upbringing instilled the understanding that working hard leads to positive outcomes. In my pre-Wharton management endeavors, I sought to encourage this attitude in my teams, largely through my own example of always accepting additional responsibilities when asked and making sure that I was the last one to leave the office each night. I continued this approach with my Learning Team by compiling and sharing detailed course outlines for each core course. However, in getting to know my Wharton colleagues, I have realized that equal (and more thoughtful) effort often leads to better results. Koppelman's promotion of a "culture of execution" and the measurement of effect over effort brought this

¹ Baker, "Achieving Success through Social Capital".

² Gerrity, in class discussion, April 8, 2003.

³ Kaplan, in class discussion, April 3, 2003.

⁴ Koppelman, in class discussion, April 3, 2003.

⁵ cf Nadler, Beyond the Charismatic Leader, p. 82-85.

point home for me. Leaders are evaluated on their ability to maximize effect while minimizing effort, not the other way around.

Strengths

I am very Self Aware. This trait shows itself most vividly in my candor in realistically assessing my abilities.⁶ Recognizing my (lack of) physical conditioning, I self-selected onto the “slow” team seeking to scale Mt. Cotapoxi as part of a recent Wharton Leadership Trek. Assessing my inexperience and physical limits helped my team achieve our goal of reaching the summit, even while others who opted for faster teams found themselves outpaced and were forced to abandon the ascent. Warren Bennis suggests that true self understanding comes from reflection on one’s experience.⁷ Whereas climbing the mountain allowed us to practice our skills, standing on the summit provided the opportunity to reflect on who we were and what we had accomplished. This self awareness allows me to know my limits and seek assistance when necessary to achieve desired objectives. Lou Platt’s comment that each leader must respect their own style reminded me that credibility flows from authenticity and that leaders must respect who they are rather than trying to be someone else.

Endurance and Time Management have been essential in taking an expanded MBA course load, preparing detailed core course outlines for my learning team, while pursuing a double degree and engaging in numerous extracurricular activities. My Wharton experience has shown me that these skills are essential to an effective leader’s ability to meet their various commitments while interacting socially. I expect that continued development of these skills will better prepare me for the “all consuming” nature of the top jobs⁸ that lie ahead in my career.

Since coming to Wharton, I have sought to make Engaged Listening my biggest strength. I believe it essential to gain the benefit of the diverse insights available from my peers. Attention to this skill has facilitated a productive relationship on my learning team. Recognizing the value of each member’s opinion fosters mutual respect and enriches our discussions, benefiting all through more thoughtful work products.

⁶ cf Goleman, “What Makes a Leader”, p. 96.

⁷ Warren Bennis, “On Becoming a Leader”, p. 60.

⁸ Gerrity, in class discussion, April 22, 2003, responding to questions about the sacrifices Beth Kaplan made during her career.

II. 12 Month Action Plan (800 words)

Over the next 12 months, I will lever my upcoming experiences to improve both my strengths and weaknesses, maximizing my exposure to diverse individuals and leadership opportunities. I will gain support in my efforts by simply requesting the insights and assistance of those with whom I interact. By explaining my development goals and identifying common ground, I believe individuals will share their views regarding my leadership abilities and assist my efforts. For example, making my improvement objectives clear early in the summer enhances the possibility that my summer employer will make available experiences to facilitate my progress. I will also elicit support through reciprocity, focusing on the joint goals we can attain through cooperation.

With this in mind, my specific leadership development goals are the following:

Goal 1 – Develop social capital with the long term goal of becoming a “professional linchpin”⁹ - With a background in consulting in Eastern Europe, my current pursuit of advanced degrees in business and law, and pending summer internships in London, I am positioning myself between a number of professions and geographic regions. To maximize the potential that I both provide and derive from this positioning, I must maximize my social capital, that is my ability to provide, pass along, and receive resources (e.g., skills and experiences) through personal and business relationships. However, as Wayne Baker points out, social capital, like happiness, cannot be pursued, but ensues from participation in meaningful activities, often focusing on the needs of others (“giving rather than getting”).¹⁰ To achieve this goal, I will form and join groups that promote interests I find personally compelling. The relevant metric of my progress towards this goal is the number of additional organizations to which I make meaningful contributions in the next 12 months. Achieving this goal will enhance my interpersonal savvy and charismatic leadership.

Timeline –

- ***Summer 2003 (London) –***

- Become a “Business Mentor” with The Prince’s Trust (www.princes-trust.org) – Participation will allow me to develop relationships with individuals similarly concerned with aiding troubled youth by leveraging our business connections.
- Attend presentations by trade associations, such as the Anglo-American Business Council, to make business contacts and keep abreast of transnational trade issues.

- ***Fall/Spring 2003 –***

- Start a “personal community” with fellow graduates from my hometown high school to provide career advice for graduating students.¹¹ This will

⁹ A “linchpin” is an individual with relationships that allow them to link diverse groups together, “converting a big world into a small one”. Baker, Wayne, “Achieving Success through Social Capital”, p. 83.

¹⁰ Baker p. 22.

¹¹ Baker p. 101.

provide connections to individuals from diverse (rural) perspectives while allowing me to share the benefits of my experiences with others.

- Pursue personal interest in politics by joining Philadelphia branch of national political organization to gain insight into legal trends and relationships valuable to my business.

- **Goal 2 –Practice leadership skills by increasing my exposure to diverse experiences in unfamiliar surroundings** – Platt suggests that leaders place themselves in unfamiliar situations to force themselves to rely on others (i.e., lead) rather than doing required work themselves. Pursuing this goal will improve my communication (interpersonal savvy) and delegation skills. I will pursue this goal by volunteering for an overseas assignment with the Wharton International Volunteer Project, allowing me to apply my business acumen (a strength) while requiring that I rely on individuals familiar with local rules and customs to achieve established project goals. Success in this endeavour (the key metric) will be measured by my ability to gain the sought for placement.

Timeline –

- **September 2003** - Meet new members of WIVP.
 - **October 2003** – Assist in fundraising efforts of the club (thereby facilitating the probability of subsequent assignment).
 - **February 2004** – Apply for overseas assignment.
 - **May 2004** – Complete overseas assignment, preferably in Latin American, African, or SE Asian regions to which I have not traveled. Seek feedback from local representatives with whom I work.
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- **Goal 3 – Enhance my ability to engage others** – Through this goal, I seek to enhance my ability to inspire peak performance in others and become a more complete leader, one who not only gets team-members to think about achieving goals but who also gains their emotional commitment to achieve the highest results possible. The (improved) performance of the teams on which I participate will measure my progress towards this goal.

Timeline –

- **by May 6, 2003** – Solicit feedback from 3 team members with whom I submitted Cotapaxi (May 6 is a planned reunion of Cotapoxi climbers). Gain understanding whether teammates bought into my focus on scaling the mountain rather than just submitting. If not, why.
- **Fall 2003** – Take Advanced Persuasion Communications course (WHCP 899), seek insight on gaining the commitment of large audiences and look for opportunities to apply insights from other classes I have taken (Mgmt 691 - Negotiations)
- **Spring 2004** – Form a team that competes in the Walter Shipley Ethics Case Competition. Placing higher than this past Spring (2nd place) represents the measure of the effectiveness of my ability to engage others in this endeavor.