

ASSIGNMENT

Interview a Manager

Assignment: Interview a manager. Write up your interview, and include an analysis of how this manager implements functions of planning, organizing, leading and controlling.

Good managers are made, not born. Ask any manager, and you'll no doubt hear of a journey they had to take to learn effective skills.

II. Once again, I'm driving you away from your computer and out into the trenches for information. I want you to hear first-hand of the challenges of managing others, and how it compares to your interview with the business owner you had in a previous week's assignment.

I. Choose a manager to manager.

This can be your manager at your job, a friend or family member in a management position, or the manager of a business you frequent. The rule is: the person you interview must supervise at least one other person--the more, the merrier.

II. Contact the manager,

Explain your project, and ask if s/he will spend an hour or so with you talking about the their job. Don't be afraid to cold call. Almost everyone is willing to help students with a class project. Be polite and respectful of the manager's time. Most managers are extremely busy--you will need to meet at the their convenience.

III. Prepare for the interview.

- Read through chapter 6 in your text, "Managing for Business Success."
- Do as much homework as you can BEFORE the interview about the company.
- See Questions for Managers:

IV. Have the interview with the manager.

- Again, most managers are very busy—be punctual and respectful of their time. They may only be able to spare you an hour or so.
- Know that you are a representative of this school and are making an impression for better or for worse--this person may be a valuable contact later. This includes conduct and appearance.
- You may find it useful to tape the interview—with the manager's permission, of course.
- On the following pages you will find suggested questions to ask. You're looking for ways this manager performs the four functions of management (planning, organizing, leading, controlling), and their observations about the role of a manager.
- This information will form the core of your write-up.

- AVOID QUESTIONS ABOUT FINANCE. Don't ask the manager what sales are, what their salary is, what employee salaries are, etc.. These may seem academic to you, but this information is very personal.
- TELL THE MANAGER KNOW AT THE START THAT YOU IN NO WAY WANT TO PRY INTO CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS MATTERS, and to let you know if a question is inappropriate in any way.
- ALL information about employees is protected by law, so any specifics about an employee must be avoided.
- A brief, handwritten thank-you note to the manager following the interview is entirely appropriate. It will set you apart and leave the door open should you need to contact the manager again for any clarification or follow-up questions. If you can't manage pen and paper, a thank-you e-mail is the minimum. This is a skill that will serve you well in your career.

V. Write up your findings.

- Two pages should be sufficient, but longer is OK.
- Your write-up should be in narrative form (i.e., not a checklist or question-and-answer format) of about 2 pages.
- Include an introductory paragraph, the body of the information, and a concluding sentence or paragraph. Include a brief paragraph comparing this interview to the interview you had with a business owner in
- Pay attention to proper word usage, spelling and grammar.

Suggested Questions for Interviewing a Manager

✓ Background

- What products and services does your company offer?
- What is your position in the company?
- How many subordinates do you supervise?
- How many years of management experience do you have and how has the experience affected your approach to management?
- What formal business education or training programs have you received? Has this education and training helped you to manage more effectively?

✓ General

- What are some of the typical issues or problems that you must deal with? How do you try to develop solutions to these problems?
- What's your favorite part of the job? Least favorite?

✓ Planning

- What planning processes are used at your organization and what is your role in the organization's planning?

- What do you see as strengths and weaknesses of this planning process?
- ✓ **Organizing:**
 - What is your role in determining the company organization?
 - Do you allocate/assign of people, time and equipment? At what level?
- ✓ **Leading**
 - What have you found are good approaches for motivating employees? What have you found are bad approaches for motivating?
 - What do you think are effective and ineffective approaches to leadership?
 - What do you believe are keys to effective communications? What obstacles exist to effective communications and how do you try to overcome these obstacles?
- ✓ **Controlling**
 - How do you evaluate employee performance?
 - Is there any type of formal assessment process, and, if so, how is the assessment process used?
- ✓ **Conclusion**
 - What advice would you give to a college graduate about how to perform well as a manager?
 - Thank the manager PROFUSELY for their time.

*Questions drawn from:
pages.towson.edu/kopka/mngt361/management_interview.doc*