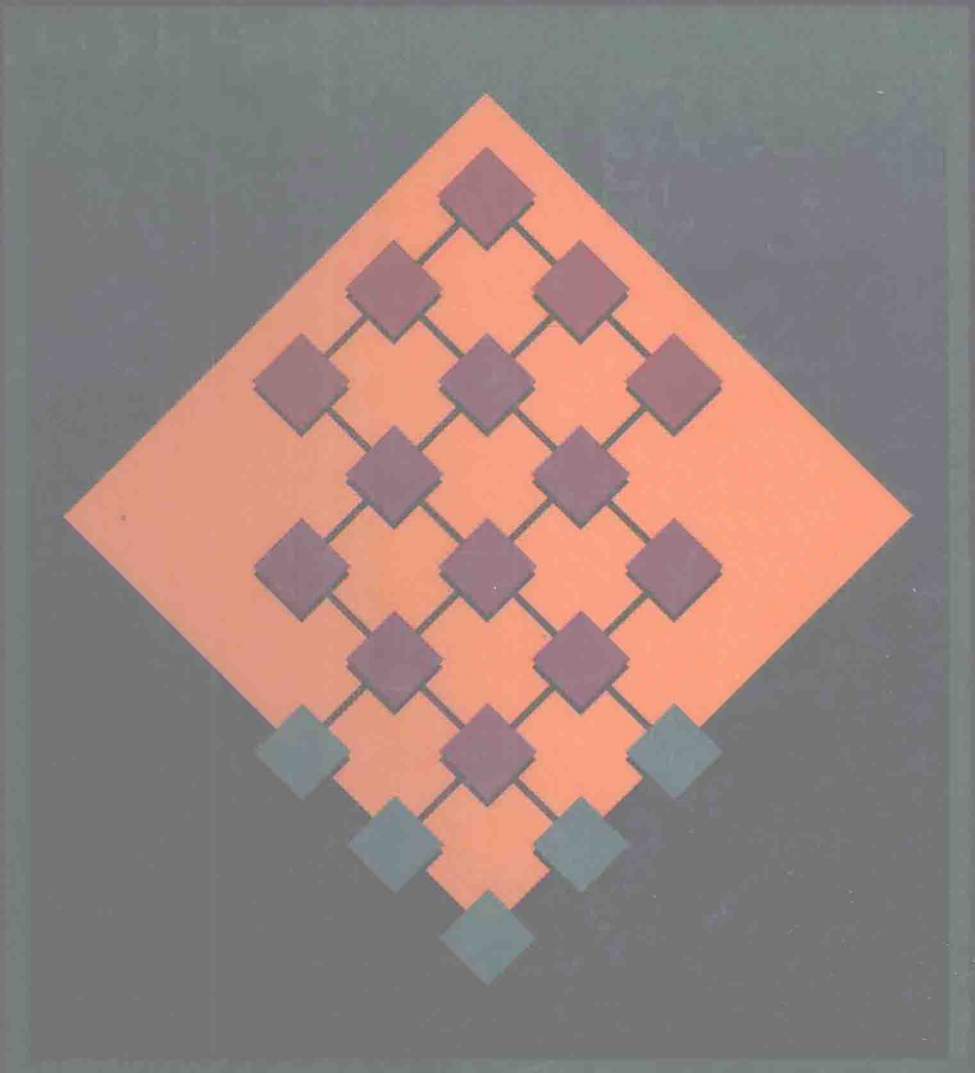
MANAGEMENT SKILLS

PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE



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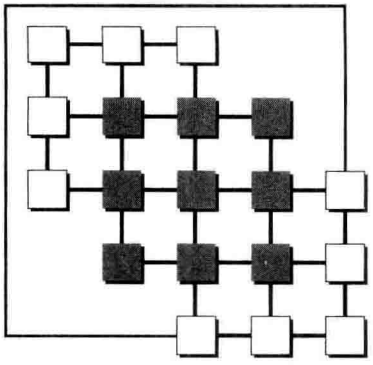

MANAGEMENT SKILLS:
PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE

PATRICIA M. FANDT
University of Washington–Tacoma
with the cooperation of
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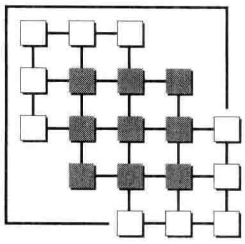

PREFACE

As men and women enter today's competitive business world, they need skills as well as knowledge of the material covered by courses in a business school curriculum. This book is designed to provide business students and future business professionals with the fundamental job-relevant skills and insights necessary for success. The book focuses on applying and practicing specific management skills: interactive skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills, and enabling skills. The learning model for the book is based on these identifiable skills, which are required for successful performance in managerial positions, regardless of the level or organizational setting.

The book can be used alone as the primary text in a course designed to develop competencies and managerial skills, or to supplement a more traditional text—either in organizational behavior, management principles, or general business courses—to accomplish the same objective.

PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The text is based on learning through experience and is directed toward student involvement in developing and practicing job-relevant managerial skills. The text focuses on applying practical knowledge that is particularly relevant for present or prospective managers. The material is presented in the form of self-assessments, in-basket exercises, and skill-building exercises. Learners assume the role of a manager in various situations that require them to use the particular skill being taught.

Approach: Real World Management

The book contains in-basket exercises that are based on real-life situations and take place in a variety of settings. Whether or not the settings resemble a student's own organization or experience is unimportant. The problems presented are similar to those all managers face. The method of teaching in the text is based on practice. What students learn will be derived from a situational

analysis and reinforced by practice and application. Learners can practice the skills over a range of situations and become aware of the importance of these skills to managerial success.

Before practicing a particular skill, learners have an opportunity to assess their level of competency by using assessment instruments in each module. Because the assessment instruments and the text material are closely related, students should find these tools especially helpful.

The in-basket exercises and the assessment instruments are based on materials developed by Wilson Learning Corporation (WLC). WLC is a human resources management consulting firm with more than twenty-five years of experience working with a wide variety of organizations across many industries and at all levels of management training and development. The in-basket exercises and the assessment instruments have been tested and used extensively in management training programs. The reliability ratings and validity of the assessment instruments are provided in the *Instructor's Resource Manual.* Additionally, the assessment instruments have been tested with a group of undergraduate and graduate business students; normative data is provided.

Content Focus

Studies examining the skills used by successful managers show that they need to work productively with others (using interpersonal and leadership skills), communicate effectively both in writing and orally, formulate and execute solutions to problems (using perception, organizing and planning, and decision-making skills), and recognize the need for and adapt to change (using decisiveness and flexibility skills). It is notable that these skills are behaviors. This is important because, unlike personality attributes, behaviors can be learned.

Evidence indicates that many managers have not learned these skills, and corporate America is aware of these shortcomings. A recent survey of Fortune 500 CEOs was conducted to determine their satisfaction with business school graduates. While many respondents were satisfied with the technical and analytical skills of business school graduates, most were not satisfied with graduates' management or interpersonal skills. Modern organizations need competent leaders. These are people who can help the organization prosper in a world of constant change and intense competition. Such leadership calls for technical, analytical, and interpersonal competence.

The text emphasizes how to learn these valuable managerial skills through the use of skill assessment instruments, practice, feedback, and role modeling. An intricate component of this text is a package of videos that allows the instructor to demonstrate successful managerial skills. Learning in all nine modules takes place through practice and experience guided by feedback from the instructor.

Skill Interrelationships

Managerial skills are interrelated and build upon one another in complex ways. For example, clarifying a goal and establishing a system to assure that necessary information is readily available (organizing and planning), combined with an ability to determine and understand essential factors (perception), should lead to

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heightened ability to evaluate facts in order to reach logical conclusions (decision making). Once the logical conclusions have been reached and courses of action have been selected based on the data, an individual is better able to assign tasks to others, following the requirements of the course of action (leadership). Getting others to follow the course of action requires an ability to pass those ideas on to them in a way they will accept (oral and written communication and interpersonal skills). Skills that facilitate the demonstration and development of all of the other behaviors are decisiveness and flexibility.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

Management Skills: Practice and Experience is organized into four parts—Interactive Skills, Communication Skills, Problem-Solving Skills, and Enabling Skills. **Interactive skills** are presented in Part I. These skills require face-to-face interaction with people and include interpersonal and leadership skills. **Communication skills,** including talking with and writing to others, are of critical importance for managers. Oral and written communication skills are covered in Part II. **Problem-solving skills** include formulating and executing solutions to problems. These skills are of critical importance when dealing with schedules, procedures, and other management issues. Part III covers the skills of perception, decision making, and organizing and planning. **Enabling skills,** covered in Part IV, are required both when working alone and when working closely with others. These skills always involve some type of action or reaction that helps tie the other three skills categories together. Flexibility and decisiveness fit in this category.

Each module is organized into six sections:

- **Introduction:** This section introduces the skill and provides a brief overview of how the skill is used in managerial work.
- **Skill Assessment:** This section provides a skill assessment instrument designed to test for the skills and behaviors presented in the module.
- **Skill Understanding:** This section defines and presents an overview of the skill, including conceptual foundations and basic principles.
- **Skill Practice:** This section asks learners to assume the role of a manager in an organization and then presents them with a number of related situations in the form of in-basket exercises. Exhibits and relevant materials are provided to make the situation realistic. Learners then have an opportunity to practice using the individual behavioral components of the skill. The videos are an important tool for use in this section since they provide specific actions that show learners how to improve their skills.
- **Assessment of Change:** This section provides a review of the skill and another opportunity for skill assessment. Once learners have completed the module, their behavior can be measured so that changes can be determined in their competency. Learners retake the first self-assessment instrument and then complete a second assessment instrument. Taken

together, the skill assessments provide a complete analysis of learners' progress and areas in which they can work to improve.

- **Skill-Building Exercises:** This final section provides several additional exercises that are focused on real-world application of skills. These exercises often ask learners to apply the new behavior outside of the classroom. The exercises can be completed individually or in a work group.

Supplemental Resource Materials

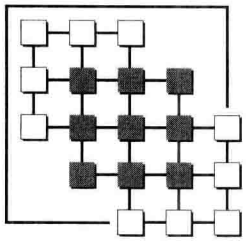
Supplemental resource materials include the *Instructor's Resource Manual*, a computerized test bank, and a distinct video package.

Instructor's Resource Manual

The resource manual includes an overview of content material and a detailed lecture outline. Specific guidelines on how to help students use the self-assessment instruments, including reliability and validity data for each assessment instrument, along with normative data, are provided. Suggested responses for the in-basket exercises are given along with teaching tips for helping students gain insight from their responses. Instructions are also included for each of the skill-building exercises at the end of each module. Transparency masters are included for all the figures in the module.

Videos

A distinct video package differentiates this text from others on the market. Each module has a separate video that is closely linked to the specific skills in the module and parallels the Practicing Skills section and the in-basket exercises. The videos have a contemporary focus, provide role-modeling behaviors, and are action-oriented to capture students' attention and provide them with an opportunity to see the day-to-day world of the manager. The videos help the instructor by supporting and extending the material in the module but are not required for the module to be fully utilized if audiovisual equipment is not available. The videos are based on material professionally produced and developed by Wilson Learning Corporation.



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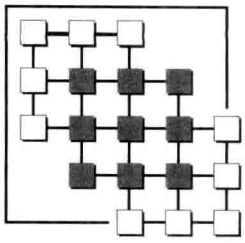

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