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TWO MANAGEMENT EXERCISES BASED ON COMMITTEE WORK

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is two fold - first, to provide two rather simple and effective exercises which can be used in introductory management classes to enhance students' understanding of managerial work. The nature and advantages of these two exercises are discussed. Second, the paper aims to show how faculty members can enhance their efficiency and productivity by using non-teaching assignments (e.g. committee work) to strengthen their classroom performance.

TWO MANAGEMENT EXERCISES BASED ON COMMITTEE WORK

Most introductory management, organizational theory and behavior classes cover the concepts related to managerial work. The two frameworks - classical functional approach and Mintzberg's (1990) role approach are often used to explain the work of management in most textbooks (e.g. Lewis, Goodman, and Fandt, 1995). While it is easy to find description and detail of these approaches in textbooks, finding simple but effective relevant exercises is not as easy. Over the last decade, the exercises that I have found and used are relatively lengthy (e.g. *Committee Dance* by Graft and Certo, 1994) or confusing (e.g. *Managerial Roles* by Burton, 1990) or both.

Last year, after I was elected the Vice President of our faculty senate, I was spending a considerable amount of time in meetings with our administration. My frustration with the amount of time I was spending on non-teaching activities inspired me to create the two exercises described in Figure 1 and Figure 2. These exercises can be used in introductory business courses to teach the functions and roles of management.

FIGURE 1

EXERCISE 1: FUNCTIONS OF MANAGEMENT

The President of our university, Dr. Benz, held a three day retreat in August. In this retreat, President Benz, with the help of his cabinet and administrative council, did the following:

1. Identified the critical issues facing our university in the near future. Also, they prioritized these issues according to their importance.

2. Reviewed our university's progress up-to-date and discussed if the progress was according to expectations. The enrollment figures, financial performance of endowment, quality of students, the progress of assessment outcome programs were reviewed. Decisions were made to make sure the University's progress stays on track.

3. Led the group discussion on the basis of a book, *Once upon a Campus* by Daniel Seymore (1995). With the help of this book, he tried to make everyone see how they and their departments make a difference in the success of our university. He urged everyone to do better and be more responsive to student needs and the changing educational environment.

4. At the end of the retreat, he asked the Provost, Dr. Drushal, to look into the issue of scheduling. Deans' council was given the responsibility of helping Dr. Drushal review and revise the current scheduling process to make it more efficient for the students.

Questions

1. Is Dr. Benz a manager? Why or why not?
2. Which management functions are being performed by Dr. Benz? Identify each one of these functions.
3. How will the performance of these functions help our university?

FIGURE 2

EXERCISE 2: MANAGERIAL ROLES

Which one of the Mintzberg's ten managerial roles is President Benz performing when he does the following:

1. Presents golden watches to the employees who have been at the university for 25 years.

Role:

2. Addresses a press conference announcing the appointment of new Athletic Director and the Provost.

Role:

3. Addresses an All Institutional Meeting giving report on the state of affairs at the university (e.g., Enrollment figures, Budget information)

Role:

4. Attends a meeting of Presidents of Universities in the state where the presidents share their perspectives on challenges facing higher education. (e.g., reduction in Pell Grants and other federal funds, decrease in student enrollment, financial aid programs)

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Role:

5. Addresses faculty at the faculty retreat urging them to challenge students in the classroom.

Role:

6. Works with faculty in developing a merit compensation plan that the Board of Trustees can review and make recommendations on.

Role:

7. Works with the Vice President of Business Affairs in putting a budget together and allocating monies to the five schools.

Role:

8. Gets together with the Presidents of the local banks to work out the details of interest rates on our university's deposits and short term loans.

Role:

9. Gets together with the local police and campus security to work out a plan to reduce vandalism in the dorms.

Role:

10. Works with the Provost in developing long distance learning center using the latest technology.

Role:

Questions

1. What does this exercise teach you about the nature of managerial work?
2. How does the performance of these roles help an organization such as our university?
3. What else did you learn from this exercise?

ADVANTAGES

Some of the advantages of these exercises are:

1. They are very efficient. They can be completed in less than ten minutes each.
2. They allow the introduction of experiential learning early in the academic term as the nature of managerial work is usually the first chapter in most management textbooks.
3. They are simple enough to be used without users' notes, prior preparation, or by inexperienced junior faculty members.
4. They demonstrate that committee and institutional service work does not have to be isolated from teaching. In fact, faculty members can improve their efficiency by using their peripheral work to design exercises, which can strengthen their teaching. In addition, these exercises can be shared with peers at conferences or made available to interested publishers for supplemental teaching materials.

CONCLUSION

In an era in which business schools are teaching its students the value of efficiency and higher productivity, business school faculty members need to practice what they preach. Junior faculty members, who often teach the introductory level classes, are usually pressed for time because of their efforts to balance teaching, institutional service and research. The value of this paper lies in the fact that it shows how time spent of non-teaching activities can be used to enhance one's teaching as well. It enforces the concept of working smarter rather than harder. Also, the two exercises presented here should be of value to a great many ABSEL members since they relate to very basic management concepts covered widely in all business schools.

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