Model for Teaching the Management Skills Component of Managerial Effectiveness to Pharmacy Students

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Although researchers differ concerning the importance they place on various attributes of managerial effectiveness, three basic components are critical: appropriate behaviors, motivation, and skills. This paper focuses on the management skills component of managerial effectiveness. It reviews the relevant management literature related to what effective management skills are, why they are important, and describes one model, based on empirical research, for teaching management skills to pharmacy students. Two basic assumptions are made. First, most pharmacists are managers since they must manage others *(e.g.,* a staff pharmacist may manage a pharmacy technician). Second, basic management skills are transferable from one setting to another. This assumption is based on the fact that, despite the incredible technological advances during the past one hundred years, the basic skills needed for effective, growth-producing human relationships has remained relatively stable for virtually every industry. In addition, there is considerable empirical support for the notion that management skills are transferable across industries and practice settings.

INTRODUCTION

What managerial effectiveness components do pharmacists need to be efficient and effective managers? What skills do pharmacy managers really need? How do they acquire the behaviors, motivation, and skills to be effective managers? What can pharmacy educators do to improve the process by which students acquire these behaviors, motivation, and skills? These are fundamental questions pharmacy management educators must consider when designing management courses.

An assumption is made that pharmacists are managers since they must manage others *(e.g.,* a staff pharmacist may manage a pharmacy technician). Although researchers differ concerning the importance they place on various attributes of managerial effectiveness, three basic components are critical: appropriate behaviors, motivation, and skills(1-5).

This paper focuses on the last component of managerial effectiveness: management skills. The goal is to use research findings from the business literature in an attempt to answer the aforementioned questions concerning the managerial skills component of pharmacy management education. The reasons for examining the business literature are twofold. First, there is

a dearth of published refereed journal pharmacy research in the area of requisite management skills pharmacists need to be effective managers. A search of the International Pharmaceutical Abstract (IPA) database revealed several refereed articles related to management skills in the pharmacy literature. For the most part, these articles discuss such things as common mistakes supervisors make and conflict management techniques for supervisors(6,7). One recent article used a problem-based learning format to redesign a large lecture based human resource management course for pharmacy students (8). Objective assessments indicated that pharmacy students improved both their content knowledge as well as higher cognitive level skills such as problem-solving (8). Included in the IPA search were abstracts of several poster presentations regarding pharmacy management skills. Although difficult to

fully assess, the general theme of these presentations described the importance of salient management skills *(e.g.,* time management, interpersonal, conflict resolution, negotiations) to managerial effectiveness(1-9). A search of the MEDLINE database revealed several articles related to such topics as stress management, achieving balance in one's life, and teaching empathic communication skills to health supervisors(10-12). While quite useful for readers, these articles do not answer a basic question: How do students and managers develop and/or improve their management skills?

A second reason for reviewing research from the business literature for this paper is that business schools, as a result of pressure from employers, have been at the forefront in teaching management skills in an attempt to graduate students with effective management skills. An assumption is made that basic management skills are transferable from one setting to another. This assumption is based on the fact that, despite the incredible technological advances during the past one hundred years, the basic skills needed for effective, growth-producing human relationships has remained relatively stable(13). In addition, there is considerable empirical support for the notion that management skills are transferable across industries and practice settings(1-5).

This paper describes a model that teaches students to manage rather than regurgitate management principles. Making a distinction between teaching about management and teaching to manage has been discussed by several authors (14-17). For example, more than twenty-five years ago, Mintzberg(15, p. 60) stated:

> Management schools will begin the serious training of managers when skill training takes its place next to cognitive learning. Cognitive learning is detached and informational, like reading a book or listening to a lecture. No doubt much important cognitive material must be assimilated by the manager-to-be. But cognitive learning no more makes a manager than a swimmer. The latter will drown the first time he jumps into the water if his coach never takes him out of the lecture hall, gets him wet, and gives him feedback on his performance. Our management schools need to identify the skills managers use, select students who show potential in these skills, put the students into situations where these skills can be practiced, and then give them systematic feedback on their performance.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. First, the relevant literature related to managerial effectiveness in general and the key requisite skills for managerial success is reviewed. Next, a model for teaching management skills to pharmacy management students is discussed. The model is based on Social Learning Theory(18-20). Finally, specific issues associated with teaching management skills in the pharmacy curriculum are discussed.

LITERATURE ON EFFECTIVE MANAGERIAL BEHAVIOR

Researchers seeking to differentiate effective managers from ineffective ones generally agree that there are a multitude of behaviors that successful managers exhibit(1). Included among these are the following basic role sets(21):

1. Controlling the organization's environment and its resources (*i.e.,* the ability to be proactive and stay ahead of environmental changes in both short and long range planning),
2. Organizing and coordinating (the manager organizes subordinates' behaviors around tasks and coordinates interdependent relationships to accomplish organizational goals),
3. Information handling (using information and communication channels for identifying problems and for understanding the changing environment to make effective managerial decisions),
4. Providing for growth and development (the manager's role is to provide opportunities for his or her professional growth as well as subordinates professional growth),
5. Motivating employees and handling conflict (the manager enhances the positive aspects of motivation to foster a climate whereby subordinates are encouraged to perform well), and
6. Strategic problem solving (the manager takes responsibility for his or her own decisions and ensures that subordinates' effectively use their decision-making skills).

Research has concluded that these six behaviors explained greater than 50 percent of the managerial effectiveness(21).

A second component of managerial effectiveness revolves around personal motivation. Even if pharmacy managers recognize and accept the need to embrace these six basic role sets of effective managerial behavior, they will not engage in them unless they are motivated to do so. Thus, a desire to manage is a factor that influences managerial effectiveness. According to Miner and Smith motivation to manage comprises seven categories(21):

1. Authority acceptance (a desire to accept the authority of superiors),
2. Competitive games (a desire to engage in competition with peers involving games or sports),
3. Competitive situations (a desire to engage in competition with peers involving occupational or work activities),
4. Assertiveness (a desire to behave in an active and assertive manner),
5. Imposing wishes (a desire to tell others what to do and to influence through sanctions),
6. Distinctiveness (a desire to stand out from the group in a unique and visible way), and,
7. Routine functions (a desire to carry out the day-to-day activities associated with management).

More successful managers are more likely to achieve higher scores on motivation-to-manage inventories that measure these desires (1). In other words, if pharmacists enjoy these seven factors and are willing to do them, it is a good predictor of their willingness to engage in effective management behaviors.

Assuming that a pharmacy manager engages in the aforementioned behavioral role sets and has the motivation to do them, he or she still must possess the requisite skills to implement them effectively (1,2-4). According to the literature on management skills, effective managers must be competent in four different skill areas (1,15,23,24):

1. Conceptual skills involve an understanding of how the different components of the business are related to each other and to the business as a whole. Decision-making, plan-

Table I. Most frequently cited managerial skills[a]

1. Verbal communication (including listening).
2. Managing time and stress.
3. Managing individual decisions.
4. Recognizing, defining, and solving problems.
5. Motivating and influencing others.
6. Delegating.
7. Setting goals and articulating a vision.
8. Self-awareness.
9. Team building.
10. Managing conflict.

[a]See ref. 5.

ning, and organizing are specific managerial activities that require conceptual skills.

2. Human Skills require the ability to understand oneself, work with others, to understand and to motivate others. Human skills include developing self-awareness, managing personal stress, coaching, counseling, motivating, managing conflict effectively, and empowering others.

3. Technical skills revolve around the ability to use the tools, procedure, and specialized knowledge and techniques of one's field. This might include competency in financial management techniques, general and specific computer skills, and pharmaco-economic analysis.

4. Political skills include the ability to enhance one's position, build a power base, and establish the right connections. Skills in this area include gaining power and influence.

Do pharmacy managers need competence in all these skills to be successful? The answer is a qualified yes. Research has demonstrated that all four skills are important for managerial success(1,24). However, managers at different levels may need to be more proficient at some skills than others. For example, as one moves up in an organization *(e.g.,* upper level executives), conceptual skills are required to a greater extent than at lower managerial levels *(e.g.,* supervisory)(1,3-5). It has also been shown that human skills *(i.e.,* ability to listen, verbally communicate, show patience and empathy, and understand a subordinate's needs) are most important to success at any managerial level.

Because pharmacists are likely to work in a variety of diverse settings and because many work at middle and lower managerial levels, developing students' managerial effectiveness should include instruction in appropriate behaviors, motivations and skills, particularly the human skills component of managerial success.

Since competent managerial human skills are a critical (perhaps the most critical) component of managerial effectiveness, it is important that pharmacy students develop their proficiency in these skills. Especially with the significant changes taking place in health care in general and pharmacy in particular, effective managerial skills are imperative. Pharmacy graduates who aspire to a career in management may have the motivation to manage. They may have a conceptual understanding of appropriate managerial behavior to manage effectively. However, if they do not have the basic interpersonal managerial skills they may be ill-equipped for healthcare in the 21st century(1-4). To send motivated pharmacy graduates into a health care setting with only a cognitive grasp of the necessary behaviors for managerial success probably will not prepare them to be proficient players(27).

CRITICAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS

To answer the question, "what are effective management skills?" it is necessary to determine which skills differentiate effective managers from less effective ones. Several studies have attempted to identify the skills and competencies that separate effective performers from less effective ones (5,15,17, 26-29). For example, Luthans *et al.* examined 52 managers in three organizations (27). The major focus was to identify those skills associated with the most effective managers compared to the least effective managers. Results revealed that significant differences in skill levels existed in the following areas: *(i)* building power and influence; *(ii)* communication with insiders and outsiders; *(iii)* goal setting; *(iv)* managing conflict; and (v) decision making.

A survey of 428 personnel administrators asked them the skills managers needed in order to be successful in their organizations(28). It was reported that interpersonal skills, written communication, enthusiasm, technical competence, and the ability to listen and give counsel were listed as critical.

Camp *et al.* focused their research on why managers fail. Their sample included 830 managers in various industries in the United States (29). The study included 166 focus groups and revealed that the major reasons managers fail include ineffective communication skills, poor interpersonal skills, failure to clarify expectations, poor delegation, inability to develop teamwork, inability to motivate others, and a lack of trust.

Another study identified 402 individuals rated as highly effective managers in their organizations in the fields of business, healthcare, education, and state government by asking senior officers to name the most effective managers in their own organizations(5). Those individuals were then interviewed to determine common characteristics of managerial effectiveness. Questions asked included:

1. How have you become so successful in this organization?
2. Who fails and who succeeds in this organization and why?
3. If you could design an ideal curriculum or training program to teach you to become a better manager, what would it contain?

The ten most common characteristics of effective management skills identified were all behavioral skills. They are common across industries, levels, and job responsibilities. They are also very similar to other published management studies on the subject (5). Table I includes the most frequently cited skills of effective managers based on a representative sample of studies that relied on a heterogeneous mix of respondents from a multitude of diverse industries.

A TEACHING MANAGEMENT SKILLS MODEL

Management skills are linked to a rather complex knowledge base (more so than other skills such as those associated with a trade or a sport)(14). In addition, management skills are inexplicably connected to the interaction of other people. As such, effective use of these skills often involves a nonstandardized approach to managing human beings (unlike a standardized approach to performing trade skills such as welding).

So, how can schools of pharmacy incorporate management skills training into their curricula? Given that the name "skills" implies one can develop and improve upon them *(e.g.,* basketball, clinical), it is imperative that, to develop and improve management skills, students receive a significant dose of practical application. However, it must be recognized that

Table II. A model for developing managerial skills'

	Components	Contents	Objectives
1.	Skill assessment	Survey instruments, Role play	Assess current level of skill competence; create readiness to change
2.	Skill learning	Written text, Behavioral guidelines	Teach correct principles with rationale
3.	Skill analysis	Cases	Provide examples of appropriate and inappropriate behavior
4.	Skill practice	Exercises, simulations, role play	Practice behavioral guidelines, adapt to personal style and receive feedback and assistance
5.	Skill application	Assignments	Transfer classroom learning to real-life situations; foster on-going personal development

[a] See ref. 5.

practice without the requisite conceptual knowledge is not optimum. Thus, developing requisite management skills must include both conceptual learning and behavioral practice (14). The approach found to be most effective in helping students gain proficiency in developing their management skills is based on Social Learning Theory (18-20). This approach is widely used in supervisory training programs, executive education programs, and corporate training universities in the United States (5,26). One component of Social Learning Theory focuses on changing behavior through a modeling process (18). Although an extension of operant conditioning *(i.e.,* it assumes that behavior is a function of consequences) it also posits that individuals learn through both observation and direct experience. It relies on cognitive as well as behavioral work by combining rigorous conceptual knowledge with practice and observation (18). Thus, much of what people learn comes from watching and emulating the behavior of models such as parents, teachers, peers, television, and supervisors, among others. For example, a large distributor of medical supplies to physicians' offices utilizes social learning in training its sales representatives (30). After a one-week orientation program, new employees spend 12 weeks in the field with veteran sales representatives to learn about the job and what is expected. After the field training, the representatives attend work shops at the home office to develop the skills they observed in working with their veteran sales models.

According to Whetten and Cameron, one useful way of incorporating Social Learning Theory concepts into a management skills training program comprise five components(5). Table II describes the model. The first component is skill assessment. Students must be aware of their level of skill competency. They must also be motivated to improve upon it if they are to benefit from the course. Many people get very little feedback as to their skill level. In the work place, this feedback might be given only once a year in the form of a performance evaluation. For students, it might come in the form of a midterm and final course grade. The problem with both forms of assessment is that they are often too narrow in scope and may fail to assess competency in critical skill areas. Therefore, in order to help a student understand what skills to improve and why, skill assessment is a necessary component of management skills development. Additionally, because people are generally resistant to change behavior, an assessment instrument may increase the likelihood of behavioral change by illuminating their strengths and weaknesses. As such, assessment activities such as self-evaluation instruments and case studies help students identify which skills need to be improved.

A second component in the proposed management skills model is skill learning. It is imperative that behavioral principles have an empirical grounding in social science theory and

that the results are reliable (as opposed to common sense generalizations and simple prescriptions for management success). In other words, empirically tested principles should take precedence over anecdotal or opinion data (14). The objective is to provide students with sound rationale for behavioral principles. These principles serve as a foundation for subsequent practice and application activities. As such, a lecture-discussion format is best for presenting the skill learning component.

The third component of the model is skill analysis (5). Whereas skill assessments might utilize survey instruments to assess current skill levels, and skill learning might use a lecture-discussion format to teach students, skill analysis is best demonstrated through the use of cases. Cases can illustrate both effective and ineffective applications of behavioral principles. Skill analysis bridges the gap between intellectual understanding and behavioral application because critiquing a manager's performance in real life cases enhances students' understanding of the skill learning material.

Next, skill practice can be used so that students can internalize the first three components by actually role-playing in an attempt to adapt the behavioral principles to their personal styles (5). For example, "time management" is one of the most identified problems faced by managers. One exercise might include keeping a time log for a week by recording each 30-minute block of time used. After doing so, students can pair up with others to discuss how they used their time. Feedback can then be given and ideas for improving and refining time management skills may result.

The fifth component in management skills training is skill application(5). The goal is to apply what is learned in the classroom to a practice setting outside the safety of a laboratory (the classroom). Without this step, application to the real world is often problematic. Application exercises take the form of a type of problem-centered intervention where the student must analyze a situation and determine the degree of success or failure. For example, an activity concerning the time management lesson might be:

> "Implement at least three of the techniques suggested in the time management skills survey that you are not currently using but think you might find helpful. In your time log, keep track of the amount of time these techniques save you over a one-month period. Be sure to use that extra time productively."

Empirical evidence suggests that using this type of learning model to teach management skills is significantly more effective than the traditional lecture-discussion-case method approaches (20,31-34). Furthermore, as previously discussed, management skill training can have a significant impact on the bottom-line performance of a firm.

SPECIFIC ISSUES REGARDING TEACHING MANAGEMENT SKILLS

This paper argues that the inclusion of management skills training into the pharmacy curriculum can help students better manage themselves and others. However, there are many issues that must be addressed when considering adopting a management skills format.

One issue that must be reconciled is the fact that fewer subjects can be covered in a management skills training course than in a traditional pharmacy management course. Considerable extra class time must be provided to allow for the analysis and practice of new behaviors. Much of classroom time must be spent in discussion and practice as opposed to lecture.

Another issue that must be addressed is the question, "Do large class sizes prevent the implementation of the active learning strategies needed to teach management skills?" Smaller classes are preferable to larger classes since, logistically, it is much easier to provide personal feedback, adequate practice time, and small-group exercises to a class of 15 as opposed to a class of 100. However, large classes can be taught management skills using strategies that call for a little less involvement in active learning exercises (26). An option for many instructors may include the use of teaching assistants to take different sections of the large class. For example, one option is to have a large lecture meeting one day a week followed by small discussion sections conducted by teaching assistants.

Scheduling of class time must also be considered. It might not be best to allocate a traditional 50-minute time slot to a management skills class. Perhaps a two-hour block (for skills analysis and practice) could be preceded by a one-hour lecture. Also, care must be taken by the instructor to maintain students' sense of self-worth and dignity. Derogatory or insensitive feedback may be more damaging than helpful as students try to improve their management skills (26).

CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this paper was to discuss a model for teaching management skills to pharmacy students. What management skills are and the most effective ones, based on empirical evidence, were discussed. A model, based on how management skills are taught at innovative business schools, was presented. It is important to realize that, even if pharmacy students do not enter the middle or upper management ranks of their chosen work place settings, learning management skills can help them become better managers of many aspects of their life, relationships, and careers. Holt eloquently summed the intent of teaching management skills by equating management skills to intelligence (35):

When we talk about intelligence, we do not mean the ability to get a good score on a certain kind of test or even the ability to do well in school; these are at best only indicators of something larger, deeper, and far more important. By intelligence we mean a style of life, a way of behaving in various situations. The true test of intelligence is not how much we know how to do, but how we behave when we don't know what to do.

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