

## The Student as a Manager

By

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Here are some of examples of what can come up during your pursuit of this degree – and how we suggest you should respond, as a capable, motivated manager.

- 1) “There’s just too much to do. I’m taking four classes, I have a full-time job, two kids, and my mom’s having health problems, so I spend a lot of time taking her to the doctors.”**

*Management Observation: You have set some very unrealistic expectations of yourself. You have over-obligated your resources and you are heading for failure. Recognize this in the “Planning” function of management. The cost of this sort of mistake in judgment is not just failing to reach your goals. Along the way, you will suffer emotionally through higher stress, you may lose confidence in yourself, and you may establish a reputation as a sub-par manager. If others are relying on you as part of a team, you will likely also let them down in failing to pull your weight.*

*Academically, if you expect your professors to adjust to your needs, you’re 1) going to be disappointed; and 2) going to sound immature and unprofessional. As an adult, you are expected to set reasonable goals, not wish for impossible dreams.*

*Solution: Judgment and choices are better made when you know what is involved, when you understand the true burden of your choices. Seek information & advice about how to schedule your obligations. For example, some courses require more time and effort than others – find out which ones and don’t schedule them together. Re-set your priorities – and timeline, if necessary – so that you are successful. Remember, the best predictor of future performance is: past performance. Do not set a pattern or history of poor performance; it will follow you endlessly.*

- 2) “This is an on line program. I don’t have time to come to campus or get involved in activities there.”**

*Management Observation: Recognize that activities on campus – student association meetings, review or help sessions by faculty, etc. – are for your benefit. Such activities are voluntary by the association or the faculty – if they can find the time to improve the educational experience, perhaps you should ‘manage’ to make an effort in this direction as well. Additionally, most of these activities are scheduled long in advance to give students ample notice to rearrange their schedules as to take advantage of these opportunities.*

*A “Satisficer” is someone who does the bare minimum to get by – as a student or as a manager. In doing so, they set patterns and expectations of themselves that will color their performance in the future. Such managers are marginal performers – not someone who can be depended on to “do what is needed” even if it takes sacrifice. Their future is limited by their attitude and their frequent recourse to “excuses” rather than results. Don’t let this sort of mediocrity become a hallmark of your career.*

*Academically – and professionally – involvement with other students improves your network of resources (and your networking skills) and can create greater opportunities for collaboration in the future. It also serves as proof in the job search process of your ability to look beyond the immediate, to take advantage of opportunities, to do more than “satisfice.”*

*Solution: decide what sort of academic and professional future you want; if success is your goal, recognize it will take sacrifice and perhaps more effort than you like. But moving out of your “comfort zone” is a pre-requisite if you truly intend to succeed.*

### **3) “I just didn’t have time to study for that exam, so I didn’t do very well.”**

*Management Observation: In your career, you will not be judged by your excuses, but by your results. There are no excuses for poor performance – only closed doors to your future. This performance failure may be excused once – but at the second instance you will have created a reputation as a failure. There are very, very few “second chances” in management.*

*Academically, if you expect a “re-take on the exam” or an opportunity “to do some extra credit work” you’re 1) going to be disappointed; and 2) going to sound immature and unprofessional. Is it possible to over-prepare for an exam? Sure. So what? Heaven forbid you learn a lot in the process. And the alternative – failure to adequately prepare – is a prescription for disaster both in school and in a career.*

*Solution: always over-prepare for the first exam. You never know what to expect on that first exam, and this way you can create positive expectations for yourself and by your professor. Then make it a habit to always over-prepare – it will save you the embarrassment of failure.*

### **4) “I don’t think it’s fair that I have to set up my own internship.”**

*Management Observation: As a manager, you must have both technical/task skills (know what you’re doing) and relationship skills. This requirement will bolster your abilities in both of these areas and acquaint you with the process of showing initiative. It will make you aware of the personal impact you have on others – in your dress, your speech, your personal integrity and confidence. If you find this an onerous burden, perhaps management is not a suitable career path for you.*

*Solution: if you have been successful in networking with faculty and students, you will likely have some leads on potential internship sites. Preparing and arranging a professional visit to such a site is an invaluable rehearsal for your future. Think of this as a process, not a task – you may need to ask for help, but being proactive – always – is a testimonial to your management ability.*

**5) “I’m about to graduate (or start developing my internship) and I need letters of recommendation from faculty but I don’t know any of them well enough to ask because it is an on-line program.”**

*Management Observation: It is absolutely essential that you develop the skills to build and maintain relationships, in person and via technology.*

*Solution: You do this in at least two ways: 1) have something to contribute to the other person – helpful insights, intelligent questions to promote conversation, observations/tactful suggestions about the course, its structure, content, ... 2) ask for help – not massive help, but insight, advice. Relationships are built on listening, not talking. Always start from that perspective.*

*Do not embarrass yourself or your instructor by asking for such a letter if you have less than an “A” grade in his/her course. Many professors will refuse to write a letter of “recommendation” if you are not worthy of “recommendation” – and grades are a sign of that. And a letter that avoids mentioning your academic performance is usually noted by the reader to mean, “this person wasn’t my best student.”*

*Remember, too, that a recommendation is intended to offer the reader insight into the character, maturity, and potential of the person. If you have not made an effort to develop some degree of personal relationship with your recommender - including communication about your goals, successes, and general perspective on your career - you should not expect a writer to feel comfortable making such a recommendation.*

**6) “Sometimes I feel like my professors don’t respect me and my efforts.”**

*Management Observation: Respect is earned, not given. It is also easily lost and not easily recovered. A professional effort & demeanor on your part will be reflected in your judgment, maturity, communications, integrity, and personal accountability, throughout the program.*

*Solutions:*

- a) Every communication with faculty should be professional. Use of abbreviations (OMG! or LMAO for example) should never be used. Profanity and vulgarity should likewise never be used. Crude, rude, or bigoted language is absolutely inappropriate. Two guidelines: i) never send an email when you are emotional; give yourself to calm down and express yourself professionally; ii) ALWAYS proofread your email, IM, etc., before you send it.*
- b) Email salutations should address “Professor” or “Mr./Ms./Mrs.” - ... “Hey” is neither a salutation or a title. It shows immaturity and a pronounced lack of professionalism.*
- c) Check your spelling, grammar, syntax, and punctuation before sending a message. Small errors here indicate a lack of attention to detail – or a poor education. Either one is a death sentence in your career.*

- d) *Timely communication – recognize problems as they arise and deal with them. This is also known as, “When you realize you’re in a hole, stop digging!” Presenting a faculty member with a problem when it is too far along to fix it only points out your lack of personal management. While everyone experiences the occasional unexpected emergency, procrastination leading to failure is never excused.*
- e) *Be realistic in your requests. Some students have, occasionally, asked the instructor to rearrange the course schedule to meet their specific needs. This is not realistic, nor does it reflect an appreciation of the potential impact on other students or the instructor. It is immature, self-centered, and will further erode the respect which you should be seeking.*

Let’s be clear – all the examples above represent a small fraction of students. Most HSA students are professional in their approach to the program. But this is not your traditional “college” experience. It is grooming graduates for careers of increasing responsibility, with increasingly high expectations of them by their employers. The habits practiced in this program should be the same ones that will serve you well throughout your professional career.

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