

FIRST ASSIGNMENT: EXPERIENCE INVENTORY

Name: Chad E. Sweeton

Major: MPA

School or Department: CPAP

Location—Blacksburg, Arlington, Richmond, Other (please specify): Blacksburg

TASK 1: Please post a professionally appropriate photo of yourself to your Canvas profile.

CS (please initial): I have posted a profile photo to Canvas.

OR

(please initial): I will post a profile photo to Canvas by (date)

TASK 2: Please answer the following questions.

- 1) What is your reason for taking this course (e.g., required, sounded interesting, recommended)? Required/recommended for the degree path. However, there is clear applicability for my current profession.
- 2) What are two (2) things you hope to learn in this course:
 - a. Improve my understanding of people and organizations.
 - b. Identify effective tools to enhance my leadership abilities.
- 3) What are some examples of your previous work experience?

Type of Organization	Job Title/Type	How Long You Worked There
DoD	Strategic Engagement Coordinator	1 Year
DoD	Cavalry Officer / Combat Medic	15 Years
Medical	Paramedic	2 Years

- 4) Please use the next page to write about an experience you had in a job or school when you had to interact with a manager or instructor. You might prefer to write about something you remember as a positive experience when a manager handled something well. Conversely, you might prefer to write about an experience when you thought the manager could have handled something better. Either is appropriate as long as you are constructive in your description. Regardless, you should **not** mention names of people or the organization (to keep it anonymous). Describe what happened, including important details and the reasons why you feel the way you do about what occurred.

At the end of two years of working on a challenging assignment, I was appointed to a new position within my organization. Though I lacked the resident knowledge and expertise required for the position, the CEO reassured me that I had the tools to excel. My predecessor was instructed to “teach me the ropes” to mitigate issues in this crucial department. However, after just a few days, I found myself alone in the office, attempting to decipher systems and processes foreign to me as my predecessor and supporting staff had been absent. As I sought to navigate the steep learning curve solo, it became evident that institutional knowledge was necessary to meet the established minimum standards. I was met with unwarranted ire when I addressed the issue with my new supervisor. “You were hired to do the job, so do the damn job,” he shouted before pointing me back to my office.

Over the coming weeks, I learned enough to stay afloat as the only person in my office, yet I continued to voice my reservations during staff meetings. As my department wasn’t a priority then, many of my comments were dismissed with a simple, “You’re doing fine” or “I’m not seeing the issue.” That is, until the proverbial “ball” was dropped.

A significant failure was realized less than a month after assuming the position and countless pleas for assistance. Once identified, I immediately reported it to my supervisor, who berated me endlessly in front of the office. While I was reeling from the shock, he asserted that I was “trying to make [him] look bad” and that he would “make [my] life miserable.” Although unwarranted, he was true to his word. My life was miserable.

Over the next week, I didn’t leave my office. I showered down the hall, took naps at my desk, and ate whatever my coworkers brought me from the convenience store. I was ridiculed during work hours and endless calls throughout the night to ensure I was “actually working.” I was defeated mentally, physically, and emotionally. This carried on for nearly 12 days before the CEO was made aware of the situation by a concerned coworker.

While a solution was ultimately discovered and crisis averted, this interaction has stayed with me. While I handled the situation to the best of my ability, my confidence has yet to recover. As for my supervisor, I assess he felt failure under his watch would stifle his ambitions for further advancement. He likely had supervisors do the same to him and felt this would help me grow. Nonetheless, his actions showed me how **not** to lead or manage.

The lessons from the experience established a base for my understanding of organizational leadership:

1. One must be cognizant of and willing to listen to employees’ concerns.
2. Emotional responses can be destructive to individuals and teams. Taking a moment to provide a measured and appropriate response can be the difference between generating a solution and fracturing a relationship.
3. “Treat people like people!” We all have jobs, but employees are people, not tools. Having a little empathy and humanity goes a long way.

SECOND ASSIGNMENT: ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Appendix 2.C

After completing the questions, the results closely mirrored what I have grown accustomed to in the workplace and are a fair representation of what I value. (1) Service: Makes the most logical sense not just in service to the Country but to those I serve alongside. I strive to be a “Servant Leader.” (2) SE: I believe this reflects my upbringing, as financial stability was never present, and I fear regressing to that point. Working for or with someone placing that at risk would be a severe concern. (3) TF: I like being the one with the answers, trusted and valued for my expertise.

However, the results do not reflect the behavior I wish my subordinates would mirror. Specifically, “LS” was ranked last on my list, though I would prefer those working for me to value it more. Additionally, “GM” surprised me that it ranked 7th. While I have become jaded concerning those who chase rank, I hope I can inspire others to seek positions of increased responsibility.

Appendix 2.D

As I assess the results, I have reasonable Emotional Intelligence. I’ve learned that emotions can be viewed as a sign of weakness, which may indicate my lack of response to verbal attacks. The best thing about terrible leaders is learning what not to do. Just because I get stressed doesn’t mean I should show it and ruin someone else’s day. Question 7 made me think of the quote, “No one will remember what you said, only how you made them feel.” One can’t be a positive/trusted leader 99% of the time; it must be 100%!