

SAMPLE MANAGER INTERVIEW

Management and Organization BUS 5523

Texas Woman's University

School of Management

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SUBMISSION DATE

LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW TO KENYATTA HENDERSON

Description of Manager

Supervisor Name recently received a fifteen year gratitude award from Head Start of Greater Dallas, Inc. in June of 2011 in the company's awards ceremony. She has loyally worked for the company for fifteen years and within this time she has worked for the company Supervisor has worked as a family advocate for twelve years and as a site manager for three years. Currently, Supervisor Name is a site manager at Science Place II Head Start located in Southeast Dallas.

During her occupation as a family advocate, from 1996 to 2008, she would help families with resources they needed. She would create a case and record the family's needs, establishing goals and objective with the family, and record the family's progress toward meeting their goals and objectives. She would also provide the families with information of community resources available to them in the areas of emergency assistance, educational opportunities, parenting classes, employment training and counseling. One of the important objectives to Supervisor as a family advocate was to encourage involvement from fathers and other men in the child's education. As a family advocate Supervisor offered trainings to parents and/or guardians on topics such as child abuse, child support, and prevention of substance abuse. She also provided trainings on topics of stress management, parenting and many other related topics that are significant to foster self-reliant families.

In 2008 Supervisor had the opportunity to become a site manager for Science Place II Head Start. She decided it was time to advance in her career and decided to take the opportunity. As a site manager at a Head Start center Supervisor has the responsibility of ensuring the center staff is complying with federal Head Start Standards and Texas Child Care Licensing Standards. She is responsible for safeguarding that the center is maintaining a high quality of services to the

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children and families enrolled and participating in the program. She oversees twenty employees in the center that provide services in the areas of education, family advocacy, nutrition, health, and mental health. Overall, Supervisor has the responsibility to not only meet but exceed the objective of the agency to provide children with the skill to academically succeed and tool for families to become self-reliant.

Description of Organization

Head Start of Greater Dallas, Inc. is a federally funded early childhood education program with forty different center locations throughout the Dallas County that services over 4,000 low-income, preschool age children, and their families. Head Start's mission is "provides children with the foundation of skills and knowledge they need to be successful in school and life and fosters self-reliant families and communities" ("Head Start History," 2011). The program began in 1965 as a part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's 'War on Poverty.' In 1967 the Head Start program was sponsored by the Dallas Independent School District as a summer program. Since 1967, the organization has accomplished that more than 50,000 children that attended the centers enter school ready to succeed in their academics. Not only has it accomplished school ready children but it has also succeeded in aiding thousands of families to become self-reliant" (Head Start).

With over \$30 million in federal funds provided annually, Head Start of Greater Dallas administrates over forty Head Start program locations in the Dallas County. From the \$30 million of federal funds Head Start is required by regulations to match %25, approximately \$8 million, of the total amount in in-kind donations ("Head Start History," 2011).

Children receive educational, health, mental health, and nutritional services with Head Starts programs. If the program is unable to provide services within the program, the program

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will refer the children to providers that the families can afford. If a family is in need of services that the program has available for them the services are provided, and just as with the children if the services are not available through Head Start, the program will refer them to a different provider. All the services that the Head Start Program has to offer the children and their families are at no cost to them as long as the families meet the qualifying federal poverty guidelines.

Leadership Philosophy, Style, Strengths, and Skills

As a site manager, Supervisor is required leadership skills to maintain the center's high quality services. Supervisor's leadership consists of influencing people with a variety of elements. She influences the staff by providing them with a purpose. She will motivate each staff member to do their best to accomplish the organization's mission. She is also very persistent when motivating the staff. Supervisor will also give direction to the staff to achieve the center's goal and objectives. If a staff member is having a difficult time completing their task, she will motivate that staff member and make suggestions as to how she or he can accomplish the task.

Supervisor uses a democratic style when the center is making a decision as an entire group. She will leave the topic open for discussion, and let's staff members make proposals, voice their concerns, and agree on a method to achieve the goals and objectives. She considers she has a participative leadership style. She believes in team work and working together as a team to accomplish a common goal. In all the meetings Supervisor will deliver a task that the employees need to accomplish as a team. She assigns different groups of employees to organize a meeting each month to present and inform the rest of the employees on an early childhood education topic of their choice. In her opinion, this allows all employees to have the opportunity to work together to achieve a common goal.

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Her attitude towards leaderships is straightforward, she believes in leading by example. Supervisor's philosophy of leadership is to be an achiever and not a follower. As a site manager for the center Supervisor has accomplished many goals and objectives in a short period of time. As an achiever she has accomplished a national center accreditation and she has accomplished the in-kind funds goal. These goals are challenging to achieve but she has accomplished them in just three years as a site manager, demonstrating her leadership philosophy.

When asked how she learned her and developed her leadership style, Supervisor stated that she had learned from her previous supervisors. She also stated that in addition to taking characteristics from previous supervisors, her personality is a major factor that shapes her leadership style presently. Supervisor also stated the leaders that have made the greatest impact in her life are her grandmother and mother. She suggests they were both strong family leaders. Both her mother and grandmother have implanted the morals, beliefs, values, and integrity she now utilizes to become the best she can be as a leader. She also stated that she admires leaders who demonstrate social justice and equality for all people. Equality for all people being a characteristic she implements in her leadership style by being fair to all employees and families.

As a site manager, Supervisor has differentiated a leader to other managers. She believes that different to managers, leaders tend to go beyond what is being asked. They are listeners, coaches, mentors, counselors, educators, supporters, and facilitators. Managers, on the other hand are overseers. Managers tend to be more structured and make sure the job is accomplished. Supervisor believes that in order to be a leader she must first be a manager.

Supervisor has acquired the skill of being an active listener since becoming a site manager. She takes this skill as being the most helpful skill as a leader. As a site manager she has an open-door policy that she enforces with her staff. She is always willing to listen to the

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employees, whether they need to speak to her about work related problems, or personal issues that may be in conflict with the job. And taking into consideration that the staff has changed to a more diverse staff, she has changed her leadership style to accommodate for these changes. In a more diverse workforce, Supervisor suggests that treating all people with fairness and respecting their differences has been the most helpful in leading a diverse workforce. The current staff is now more diverse than ever in the center. And because she made it an objective to have a more diverse student population, she has hired staff from diverse cultural background.

When time are tough in the center, Supervisor motivates and inspires people by listening to their concerns, giving them positive affirmations, and using the word of God. She utilizes religion more often to motivate and inspire her staff when they are having a tough time and to figure out how to take the center in the right direction. Aside from praying, she involves the team in the decision making process to make the best decision to achieve the center's goals and objectives. Once a decision has been made she encourages the staff to buy and take the active into her vision to enhance the organization's services. She also shares with the employees the rewards and benefits involved with bringing into line themselves with the overall vision.

Although she has been in a leadership role for three years, Supervisor has acquired some important lessons about leadership in this short period of time. As a leader, Supervisor has learned that she cannot please everyone. However, as a leader she makes the decisions that are best for the organization and to achieve the organization's goals and objectives. As a leader she has learned that her leadership styles need to change according to different situations. She states she cannot use only one leadership style and that different situations require different leadership styles.

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Supervisor has also had difficulties as a leader. She has to give an account for everyone and anything that may go wrong in the center. If a staff member in the center has made an erroneous decision, as a site manager she is the one to take the responsibility. Working with different attitudes and personalities has also been challenging to her as a site manager. She has figure out how to work differently with each employee's attitudes and personalities. Taking ownership for the things that goes wrong in the center even though she has not made the decision is one of the greatest tasks.

For leaders of the future, Supervisor has straightforward advice to offer. She advises that as a leader one needs to be fair to all staff and families. As guidance she also suggests that leaders are to be humble and gentle. And something she has learned as a leader is to be slow to anger. There will be many times in which a leader will need to control their anger. She also guides new leaders to be professional at all times. It is one of the most important suggestions she has for new leaders. Another major suggestion she has for those taking a leadership role in a professional environment is to avoid dual relationships with other employees. One of Supervisor's characteristic as a leader is that she keeps personal information at home. She does not fall into personal conversations with her colleagues at any time.

Supervisor states that she what she is most proud of in her role as a leader is that she has had the capacity to build a team that loves and cares for children. With her motivation and inspiration she has accomplished that the center's staff take a loving and caring role to the children the center is servicing. By taking this caring role the center takes into consideration many factors to make the best decision to positively impact the children in the center. Supervisor has been able to instill in the employees that the decisions they make now will influence the children for the rest of their lives.

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Description/Observation of their Most Outstanding Behaviors

In the school year 2010 - 2011, Supervisor decided it was time for the center to be accredited by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). “The NAEYC Academy sets and monitors standards for high-quality early childhood education programs and accredits programs that meet these standards” (“About NAYEC,” 2011). To obtain this type of accreditation, an early childhood education program must be at the highest standards nationally. It takes a great deal of effort and commitment to become NAEYC accredited. With a commitment to make Science Place II Head Start be recognized as one of the best centers in the Head Start of Greater Dallas organization, Supervisor set goals and objectives to the staff and ensured the goals and objectives were met. With her persistence she was able to motivate and inspire the staff to complete all standards that NAEYC was to evaluate.

While the staff was preparing for accreditation the center’s environment grew tense. The majority of the staff felt the pressure and felt an enormous weight on their shoulders. Some staff members were talking about resigning and leaving because they felt the stress of dealing with meeting all the standards. When Supervisor noticed the period of tension, she remained calm and serene. She had the staff work together as a team and work on the same objectives at the same time, instead of having everyone working on a single task. Supervisor would reassure everyone that their effort would be compensated at the end. Working together as a team relieved the staff members from the pressure and they were able to accomplish the ultimate goal.

In May 2011, a NAYEC monitor was at Science Place II Head Start for a whole school observing the center. Towards the end of the day she had accomplished to observe all the areas she needed. She met with Supervisor for about two hours and gave her the good news. She

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stated to Supervisor that she could now say that Science Place II Head Start was NAYEC accredited. The accreditation award letter was received two months later in July 2011.

In just two years of becoming a site manager, Supervisor had accomplished what other site managers that had been in that leadership role for more years had not. With her leadership skills and style she motivated her staff to accomplish a very significant objective. Her persistence in meeting an objective had made her earn the recognition of the CEO and other colleagues. It was a very important goal that she was able to accomplish with her perseverance and tenacity. She made the center staff work as a team and complete the most important goal for the center.

Not only has Supervisor been able to accomplish NAYEC accreditation. She has made it possible for the center to accomplish many more important goals. She has made it possible that for the 2010-2011 academic year the center reach the in-kind funds goal for Science Place II Head Start. The center was able to surpass the in-kind fund goal through a variety of methods overseen by Supervisor. Another main goal that was accomplished by Science Place II Head Start under Supervisor's leadership has been the zero violations through the Texas Child Care Licensing Standards.

With all the goals Supervisor has accomplished in just a few years as a site manager, she has earned the respect and recognition from the administrative staff and the CEO. She has also earned the respect and recognition from her staff. Supervisor states she is proud of what the center has accomplished as a team. She also suggests that the center would have not accomplished the goals if the center had not worked as a team and family. She also reinforces that it was not just her leadership skills that made it possible to earn recognition, but that her staff has made it possible through their teamwork and outstanding efforts.

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Suggestions for Improving Effectiveness

As a religious and family woman, Supervisor Name tends to motivate her employees with religious inspirations when employees speak to her about their worries, whether personal or work related. A suggested improvement is to re-evaluate this method and be aware that not all employees have a religious preference. She needs to take into consideration that not all employees may feel comfortable that their site manager is motivating them with religious thoughts. As much as this method may be inspiring to the majority of the employees, not all employees may agree with this methodology.

But as I have observed, it is an overall tendency in the organization. I have noticed that in the company's ceremonies or training events, the majority of administrative employees tend to send religious messages to the rest of the staff. Administrative staff, including the CEO, uses this method to inspire their employees. I have observed that it is a methodology that the company has become very comfortable with. But, this method is contrary to what we are told in the new hire orientation.

In the new hire orientation we are told by the human resources department that there are to be no religious comments or suggestions during our hours of employment. As new hires we are warned to be careful about any religious comments we may carelessly make in the presence of other employees. But, we do see staff with leadership positions utilizing this religious method to give across a message to others.

As leaders in the company, administrative staff, need to be cautious when motivating their employees. If the company's human resource department states to new hires that there should be no religious comments or suggestions, this policy should be implemented overall. It

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seems that the company has become very comfortable with this motivational style that it is even used in the majority of the company's celebrations and trainings.

Process for Developing Leaders in the organization

Head Start of Greater Dallas, Inc. provides each employee with a career track during the evaluation after the first thirty days probationary period. The professional development plan is designed to involve the employees completely. It consists of questions the organization utilizes to provide employees guidance to complete their individual objectives within the organization. In-house employment and advancement is a priority to the organization. If an employee is interested in advancing careers within the organization, the organization offers their full support. It is one of the most important benefits provided by the organization to its employees.

According to the career advancement the employee has chosen the immediate supervisor will provide the organization with the employee's information and career advancement interests. The employee will then have the opportunity to attend trainings and meetings available to reach their career goal. Each employee has the opportunity to re-evaluate their professional development plan on an annually basis and make modifications if needed.

Insights Gained and/or Things Learned from this Interview

As I become more and more interested in a leadership career I find myself learning from others' success as well as from their mistakes. From interviewing Supervisor Name I see the point of view of a new leader in the process of learning more and more to become a successful leader. One of the important characteristic that I see in Supervisor and plan to utilize is perseverance. During the first years in a leadership role she was able to accomplish many objectives that her colleagues haven't, even though they've been managers for a longer time than she has.

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After the interview I understood that a true leader will accomplish goals and objectives when she or he is determined. That is a quality that I will take in mind keeping. As a determined leader one can accomplish many goals and objectives. Being firm to one's objectives will allow leaders to guide others toward a common goal. It takes one determined leader to direct others into the correct path even during the toughest times.

As Supervisor mentioned in the interview, leadership styles and characteristics change as the work environment changes. One leadership style may function for certain areas or times while others may not. It is up to a leader to maintain a stagnant leadership method or decide to change it as it is required. Supervisor mentioned different situations require different leadership styles.

Working with a diverse group of people with each person having a different personality will require a leader to adapt to the different personalities. A leader must have the ability to work with different people and their attitudes. As a leader one must be capable to adjust their guidance methods to be able to work with each person differently, but at the same time guide all people to a common goal.

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Interview Questions and Answers

1. How would you define leadership?

Leadership is influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization. (Big Dogs and Little Dogs')

2. How would you describe your leadership style?

According to the different types of leadership styles, I would best describe my leadership style as Participative (Democratic). I believe in team work and everyone working together to achieve a common goal.

3. What is your personal philosophy of leadership?

My philosophy of leadership is leading by example. As a leader you should be doer and not a follower.

4. How did you learn and develop your leadership style?

I learned my and developed my leadership style from my previous supervisors, and my personality also shaped my leadership style.

5. In your opinion, what does a leader do that distinguishes him or her from other managers?

Leaders go beyond what is being asked. Leaders are listeners, coaches, mentors, counselors, educators, supporters, and facilitators. Managers are overseers, they tend to be more structured, and making sure the job is done. I believe in order to be a leader you must first be a manager.

6. What leader has made the greatest impact on your life? How and why?

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My grandmother and mother, because they were both strong leaders in my family. They implanted in me morals, beliefs, values, and integrity.

7. Who do you greatly admire or consider to be the greatest leader? Why?

Individuals who demonstrate social justice and equality for all people.

8. What skills have you acquired that have been most helpful to you as a leader?

The skill I have acquired is being an active listener.

9. What do you think is most helpful in leading a diverse workforce?

To treat all people with fairness and respect differences has been the most helpful in leading a diverse workforce.

10. How do you motivate and inspire people when times are tough?

I motivate and inspire people with by listening to their concerns, positive affirmations, and the word of God.

11. How do you go about figuring out the right direction to take an organization?

Through prayer, and involving my team in the decision making process.

12. Once you know where your organization is headed, how do you align people with your vision?

I encourage them to buy/take an active role into the vision for the betterment of the organization. I will also share with the team the rewards and benefits involved with aligning themselves with the vision.

13. What are some of the most important lessons about leadership that you have learned?

As a leader, you cannot please everyone; however, as a leader you must do what is best for the organization. Also as a leader, you cannot use only one leadership styles. Different situations require different leadership styles.

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14. What do you think is the most difficult aspect of being a leader?

Having to give an account for everyone, working with different attitudes and personalities, and taking ownership for the things that goes wrong.

15. What advice would you offer for leaders of the future?

Be fair, be meek, be slow to anger, be professional at all times, and avoid dual relationships.

16. What are you most proud of in your role as a leader?

I have built a team that loves and cares for children.

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References

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