

Are you Management Material?

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Some people are told that they are management material before they ever begin a career. It is not unusual for the traits of a natural manager to stand out early in life. If you have been on the receiving end of this kind of compliment and you find high income potential and prestige appealing, you may want to consider an education in business management. Competition is fierce for top executive positions. The glamour of executive careers draws many highly qualified candidates to the field. However, becoming a successful manager requires more than a business degree. AIMS administrators are able to recognize the pattern for management from aptitude test results and make suggestions for careers and education that will help you in preparing for a future of executive success.

Each branch of government, every type of business, and all non-profit organizations have one thing in common; they all have a goal. The goals can vary from profit-making to solving problems in society. It is the focus of the high-level executives of these organizations to implement the programs to reach those goals and obtain positive results. The ultimate responsibility of success for the group lies within management's ability to coordinate the individual duties of each member to achieve the final goal. Managers are the glue that binds all of the pieces to form a productive whole.

The specific duties of managers can vary depending on the type and size of organization and the goals of the group. In government, executives can be found at the local, state, and federal level. One primary responsibility of a legislator is the development of laws and regulations. Managers within government organizations may work to implement and maintain order within those regulations. Some may be responsible for particular areas within society, such as health care or education. In the business world, larger companies also divide executive powers into several offices. For example, you will find that the chief executive officer works closely with the chief information officer, chief financial officer, and chief operations officer to ensure each of their duties are being carried out within their departments. Within those departments you could find many other executives in charge of more specific duties. In smaller organizations, executives may be required to oversee a variety of departments or branches. The amount of work required may be the same but because there may be less information, data, or employees to oversee, managers of small businesses or non-profit organizations are usually required to produce results in several areas.

A successful manager is one who is able to delegate authority, communicate clearly, motivate employees, and accomplish goals. Using a comprehensive testing program, AIMS is able to identify the aptitude pattern, the "Abstract Generalist," that corresponds to the aptitude pattern of successful managers. The majority of executives tested, especially of the largest corporations and non-business organizations, possess this aptitude pattern. Managers rely on those working around them to contribute the

specialized skills needed to make each project a success. Executives do not need to have exceptional skills in finance, law, marketing, and other aspects of business. Instead they need the ability to coordinate the efforts of experts in each of these fields in meeting the goals of their organizations. Abstract Generalists have a natural ability to understand the motivations, objections, and interests of others. Those who have reached the top of the chain of command recognize this gift and use it to their advantage in working with a group to solve problems. Without being able to understand and work with the abstract concepts that drive others to be successful, a manager cannot expect full cooperation and respect. Therefore, a manager who does not possess these abilities cannot expect to be successful.

Other important qualities of the Abstract Generalist are the abilities to make important decisions quickly, based on available information, and to focus on making a certain project work with the resources at hand. All of the results of most business decisions may be difficult to predict. Any decision about the future may be influenced by outside factors such as societal changes, economic influences, and political expectations that can contribute to success or failure. Most executive-level business decisions involve a certain degree of risk taking. Some individuals find that type of situation intimidating and frustrating. They may be unable to make a decision because they feel they need more data before moving forward. The Abstract Generalist appears to be much more comfortable when making these types of decisions. People with this pattern are usually able to analyze the situation quickly, make an informed decision using the best options, and move forward with the project. In business, it is essential to work in this manner to have any chance for progress. Not making a decision can easily be more detrimental than choosing what turns out to be the second or third best option. Once the important decisions have been made, Abstract Generalists tend to be able to focus on the project through completion. Many frustrated adults have experience with managers, who do not possess the management pattern, who constantly invent new and better ways of working on a current project. This type of imagination is better suited for other careers. The same result occurs in both of the situations described above, projects are not completed and employees are dissatisfied. Because of the aptitudes required for decision-making and project completion, the Abstract Generalist is at an advantage in the world of management.

There are as many options in obtaining a business degree as there are in business management positions. Many schools offer a traditional Bachelor of Business Administration program with an interdisciplinary approach. This type of general studies degree in business can serve you well in pursuit of many types of management, especially if you prefer to work in a small business or plan to run your own. All managers need to have a solid background in accounting, economics, finance, management, and marketing to handle any of those responsibilities that may come with their position. However, you might want to consider a more specialized degree if you want to work within a larger company or have a particular area of interest. AIMS test results can provide more direction in making your final decision about your degree plan. An introvert with a computational interest and high perceptual speed might find accounting management to be a perfect fit. The structured, professional environment would provide an opportunity to work with and

through others on a level that is comfortable for the introvert. Hospitality management, in the hotel, restaurant, or travel industries, might be your niche if you are an extrovert with a persuasive interest. In those industries, you must have a desire to work with a variety of people in many situations. A self-motivated person with a high score in design and/or number memory should seriously consider a business degree with an emphasis in real estate. A degree in educational administration or government would be appropriate for someone with a social service interest. The aptitude pattern for the Abstract Generalist indicates a career in management; supporting aptitudes and interests can help with the decision on a major within business.

Having a certain aptitude pattern and obtaining a business degree does not guarantee success in management. However, they are crucial factors in heading toward executive levels. Another important factor for Abstract Generalists to remember is that they will have the greatest chances for success in a company that promotes from within. Most people realize that executives did not start in the most coveted positions. You have likely heard the phrase, "you have to pay your dues." You also must keep in mind, while you are paying your dues, that your entry-level position is just that, entry-level. As an Abstract Generalist, your ultimate goal should be to reach the highest level of management possible. Choose your first job carefully; the first offer is not necessarily going to be the best for you. Look for a position that will provide you the opportunity to demonstrate your strengths. Try to find an organization that is open to suggestions and proposals from all levels of employment. Take advantage of heading committees and leading workgroups. Working up to management may mean spending more time working than the next person. If you are in an organization that moves up the most motivated workers to management, your efforts are more likely to be recognized, allowing you to move into the position that best suits your aptitudes.

Along with your hard work, you might want to look into graduate study options for advancing your career. Society in general is becoming more educated, with over a quarter of young adults holding at least a bachelor's degree^I. A graduate degree can give you an edge over the competition. With many options for graduate study available, you could use what you are learning in graduate studies as you work your way through the ranks. Many schools also offer programs that will allow you to earn credit toward an MBA or other professional degree while you are completing your undergraduate studies. Some areas of management do not require graduate studies. In government, for example, your experiences and accomplishments may push you forward faster than another degree. Becoming a college president, however, is virtually impossible without a doctorate degree in your field. The sooner you can make a decision about what your ultimate career goal is, the earlier you can begin planning the education that will help take you there.

There are currently over 1,500 MBA programs offered in all areas of the world^{II}. Depending on the type of management position you are seeking, you are likely to find many programs to suit your needs. The amount of time it takes to complete an MBA varies from college to college and depends on the status of your enrollment, full-time or part-time. You can expect to complete the MBA within 18-24

months if you are able to be a full-time student. If you plan to work while you continue your education, expect to spend between three to five years completing the program. Distance, online, and in-house MBA programs are also options for those who cannot take time to attend normal classes at a college. These types of degrees have their limitations and should be thoroughly considered before entering into them. Networking opportunities, multi-cultural interaction, and professional mentoring are not as likely to take place in this type of alternative education.

Not every person is made of management material. And there is not one particular factor that can determine your level of success in management. Again, it is a combination of aptitudes, commitment, and credentials that has led top executives to accomplish their goals. Recognizing your natural talents is the first step in reaching your goals. Once you are aware of your strengths, you can plan for the education that will use those strengths in a rewarding career.

- I. *Student Effort and Educational Progress, Indicator 25*, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.,
<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2002/section3/indicator25.asp> (2002)
- II. MBA Center London, Hampstead School of English, 553 Finchley Road, NW3 7BJ London, United Kingdom, www.mba-center.net/en/home/ (2003)