

Instructional / Teaching Note

Using Industry Analysis and Manager Interviews for Career Planning: A Classroom Exercise

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Abstract

*The purpose of this paper is to describe a self-assessment assignment which details how an industry analysis and manager interview can be used to provide a realistic **perspective of a student's desired future management position**. In this assignment students conduct a comprehensive analysis of the industry and position which they desire to hold in the future. One of the central themes and part of the assignment is conducting a qualitative interview with a sitting manager in the job they wish to pursue in the future. Students are encouraged to conduct interviews with more than one manager and if possible, to engage in a day (or longer) of shadowing the manager. The assignment highlights the importance of understanding the work environment and position sought for graduating students and how a classroom exercise can be used post-graduation. In addition, suggestions on adding interview questions and post-assignment assessment are given. While this assignment has been used in **the author's MBA Leadership class**, it can easily be adapted and modified for use in other graduate or undergraduate curricula within, or outside, of business disciplines.*

Key words: Qualitative Interviews; Shadowing; Mentoring; Coaching; Manager and Leaders Skills; Action Research.

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Introduction

A key outcome measure for many undergraduate and graduate business programs is to have their graduates not only employed, but gainfully employed in positions that reflect their professional and academic experience and credentials. However, with the changing and dynamic market conditions in our global economy this is becoming increasingly more difficult (see Lim, Chen, Aw, & Tan, 2016). Beyond preparing graduates of business programs for the positions they will seek, business faculty have an obligation to also provide a realistic perspective of both the industry and its attractiveness for employment opportunities, as well as a realistic perspective of the positions within it.

In almost every undergraduate and graduate business program in the U.S., Europe and elsewhere, especially in those accredited through AACSB, you will find a foundation management class and often a class on leadership (AACSB, 2015). Our role as professors of management is not only to teach the theories of management and leadership but also to help prepare our students to work in management and leadership positions. However, it has been the experience of the authors that numerous graduating students voice disappointment in their jobs after graduation, despite having studied and prepared for this position throughout their undergraduate and sometime graduate programs. Even students who have done internships, as part of their undergraduate program, after working in the job for a short period of time, find that the reality of the position was not a good fit for them personally and professionally. Not only do students find the job they trained for is not what they thought or imagined it would be, but often the job they sought after years of study is either no longer available or is dramatically over subscribed with applicants applying for it. A study by Burning, Glass, and the Strada Institute found that 43% of undergraduate students are **'underemployed' in the job they took after graduation** (Cooper, 2018).

In most management and leadership courses, students will learn about the science of management and leadership through an emphasis on both theory and skill development. However, successful management and leadership requires much more than understanding theories and learning specific skills. How a manager and leader perform in any given scenario, varies according to the situation and is often dependent on a multitude of contextual factors. Although case studies, which are frequently used in most graduate management and leadership courses provide a good tool for understanding how a manager or leader behaved in a given situation (Christensen and Carlile, 2009), **truly understanding the "art" of management and leadership** requires a much more in-depth analysis of the industry and the position. Such analysis offers the potential to link applied experiences to enhanced management and leadership development (Hall & Rowland, 2016). For students to become better able to adopt and exemplify the behaviors of established managers and leaders within a targeted industry requires an education pedagogy that addresses not only cognitive knowledge, but also applied activities that respond to the fundamental values, emotions, and experiences of the manager or leader in which they hope to emulate and follow.

Although there are multiple, innovative educational approaches used to learn a subject such as management and leadership, the challenge for the instructor is to find an approach that will not only teach the knowledge and skills of management and leadership but which can also provide an applied, experiential, and realistic perspective of the industry, the desired job, and the on-going changes and trends that managers are **currently facing**. **In order to help students to understand these 'realities' of the desired job they seek or hope to pursue**, they need direct exposure to the job and those that are currently working in the field.

For more than ten years, the authors of this paper have used an industry analysis, a qualitative manager interview, and an optional shadowing assignment in our

management and leadership classrooms as methods for going beyond the normative approach to management and leadership education. In doing so, we address the essential need of students to not only learn about the theories and concepts of leadership, but to also provide learning that can directly impact their personal lives and workplace behavior over a longer period of time.

In this paper, we begin by describing the theoretical basis for our assignment in the area of action research and experiential learning and the merits of using qualitative interviews. We further provide an overview of future trends in the job market for our graduating business students. From this, we briefly describe a self-assessment assignment given to our MBA leadership students, which includes an industry analysis and a qualitative interview with current working professionals who are in the position which the student desires in the future. In describing the interview assignment, we discuss the framework and methods used to bring the assignment together for students to maximize their learning while giving them a better understanding of both market conditions and employment opportunities for the position in which they hope to work at in the future.

Background: Theory, Practice, & Trends

Action Research and Experiential Learning

“What I hear, I forget; What I see, I remember; and What I do, I understand”

The often-heard quote, *“What I hear, I forget; What I see, I remember; and What I do, I understand*, is attributed to Confucius in 450 B.C.E. (<https://simple.wikiquote.org/wiki/Confucius>). Building on this concept, Edgar Dale (1969) in his model: the **‘cone of learning’ says that** a student learns 10% by reading, 20% by listening, 30-50% by watching, 60-70% by participating, and 90% by doing. **Thus, learners retain more information on what they “do” as opposed to what they may “read, hear or see”**. The ideas behind this quote and **Dale’s cone of learning** forms the basis of action research and experiential learning.

The essence of action research and experiential learning theory (ELT) is students’ **learning from their experiences and ‘learning by doing.’** Research has shown that the learning process is **greater when ‘active learning activities’ are used in the classroom** (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; and Meyers & Jones, 1993). Much of the research and applied activities with ELT in management has focused on managers, teams, organizational problem solving and decision making (Kolb & Kolb, 2008). For example, Kumar (2012) argues that one of the best ways for an organization to adopt and internalize the basic tenets of total quality management (TQM) is through experiential learning, which is facilitated by an action research methodology. Furthermore, Kayes, Kayes & Kolb (2005) stress the importance of an experiential learning approach in work team learning, development and maturation. In the management classroom, professors integrate experiential learning activities in a variety of manners, such as case studies, group exercises, debates, role play, simulations, etc. to enhanced active learning by **‘hands-on’ exercises** (Keys & Wolfe, 1990). In fact, experiential learning, based on a study of students, found that it is more effective than case studies at promoting certain types of learning (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006).

Additional teaching techniques, such as the flipped classroom model, collage construction, journaling, and student generated thought-provoking questions have also been used to contextualize knowledge learned in the classroom (Chavas, 2016; Albert & Beatty, 2014, Colakoglu & Littlefield, 2011). While each of these activities provide value, most are limited to the classroom and to past or fictitious situations. The industry analysis and manager interview assignments described in this paper are distinctive by

providing real time, applied, genuine experiences **that enhance students' leadership** development through experiential learning.

Qualitative Interviewing

The interview is one of the most common and powerful methods we use to gather data and understand people (Fontana and Frey, 1994). It has a variety of forms and multiple ways it can be used. Interviews can employ both closed-ended and open-ended questions and can be either structured or unstructured. In structured interviews, the interviewer asks a set of pre-established questions with a limited set of response categories, while unstructured interviews are much more open-ended (Dipboye, 1997). However, whether structured or unstructured, allowing the interviewee to elaborate on their responses provides the greatest breadth and insight.

While the history of interviewing can be traced back to ancient Egypt (Babbie, 1992), the science of interviewing gained prominence as a clinical tool for diagnosis and testing in the early 20th century (Fontana & Frey, 1994). In management, academics and consultants use interviewing to better understand the varied decision making, processes, and changes going on in an organization. In academia, informational interviews have been used for career development (Bolles, 1972). Furthermore, the interview is often cited as the most widely accepted selection tool in the organizational hiring process (Morin & Denis, 2010). Adelman (1993), in quoting Lewin, in regard to action research (of which interviewing is part), **says it "gives credence to the development of powers of reflective thought, discussion, decision and action by ordinary people" (p.8). Berg (2004) adds that these approaches and processes "embrace principles of participation, reflection, empowerment, and emancipation of people and groups" (p.197).** In regard to using interviews, Reardon (2016) suggests that it has the capacity to allow researchers or students to compare and contrast reported experiences of persons employed in different capacities, with those who come from different levels of experiences and career trajectories in order to better understand the meaning and importance of these experiences. Reardon (2016) further relates that in a review of over 450 students who have completed her interview assignment, many of the students reported in their written papers outlining the assignment, that they found the interview to be a profound, life-altering experience.

Interviews can also be used in conjunction with job shadowing exercises. Job shadowing provides opportunities for employees, interns, as well as students to not only learn about a position, but gain comprehensive knowledge about what the employee who holds a particular job does every day. Although, mentoring and coaching are done in many organizations to prepare individuals to assume and perform in varied job positions (Merrick, 2019), shadowing, in particular, is effective in helping employees, students or interns understand the duties and responsibilities of a specific position (Heathfield, 2019).

Job Markets and Future Trends

In the not too distance past, there was an unwritten covenant or compact between workers and their organizations which roughly stated: ***You don't have to be a star; you just need to be faithful, obedient and only modestly competent - and the organization will take care of you, and will be your home as long as you want - you are family*** (see Gaynor, 2015). However, in the last few decades this covenant or compact between workers and the organization has changed. The implicit psychological contract between the organization and its employees suggests: ***If you are productive and add value - if you keep learning and your skills are current, you'll be okay...if you don't keep***

on achieving and demonstrating value to the organization there will not be a job for you (Barwick, 1995).

We have moved from a society based on human capital to intellectual capital. No longer can workers expect to work for the same firm for their lifetime; employees have to constantly update their skills, and continually demonstrate their ability to add value to the organization. Further accelerating this process is globalization and the fact that we are part of a global economy. Technological change and innovation have also **dramatically altered workers' roles**, which requires workers to constantly update their skills and adapt in the ever present globalized, dynamic, diverse job market. **Today's** graduating business student is not only competing with workers in their local market or national market, but with workers located all over the world.

A recent study by LinkedIn reported that young people will change jobs more frequently **than their parents. For example, Generation X'ers who graduated college from 1986-1990** averaged two job changes in their first ten **years' post**-graduation. Whereas, Millennials will change jobs, which will require a new set of learning and knowledge skills, at least four times before the decade post-graduation (Long, 2016). While a few years ago it was estimated that the typical worker would have seven careers in a lifetime, Ed Surge, a LinkedIn executive said people will change careers 15 times over their lifetimes (Long, 2016). In a study of 500 Million LinkedIn users, a little less than one third reported that they had 15 job changes, while the overall average was 11.7 job changes between the age of 18 and 48. While this is a very high number of job changes for Millennials, it should be noted that this involves retrospective data, thus the future could result in more pressure to change jobs more frequently (Young, 2016).

According to Hirschler (2016), events such as economic downturns and increases in automation (e.g., artificial intelligence, robots, etc.) will result in the net loss of 5.1 million jobs over the next five years in fifteen leading countries (these countries account for approximately 65% of total workforce) (Chang, 2016). The World Economic Forum (WEF) predicts a total loss of 7.1 million jobs from 2015-2020 as a result of technology and disruptions in the economy (Cann, 2016). In the Dell Technologies Realize 2030 report (authored by the Institute for the Future composed of a panel of tech, business, and academic experts), made the staggering prediction **that: "85 percent of the jobs will exist in 2030 haven't been invented yet"** (Hinder, 2018; Tencer, 2017). Thus, based upon this prediction, one could look at any kindergarten class and expect that most of the jobs the kindergarten students will have in the future have not yet been created!

Hence, graduating business students (undergraduates and MBAs) will be subject to business environments in a constant state of change, characterized by disruptions in the economy, the advent of new automation, continuous and improving technologies, globalization, and shifting patterns in employment migration. These trends will challenge business graduates worldwide to constantly assess and reevaluate the current job market. Through the industry analysis and interview assignments described herein, students are forced to engage in experiential learning that will expose them to these environmental conditions. Coupled with classroom applications, this learning will require them to be environmentally aware, nimble, and strategic in the way they approach the future job market.

The Assignment

The assignments described in this paper come from an MBA Leadership course at a mid-size, public university, AACSB-accredited, college of business in the Southeastern United States. For approximately ten years, students from this course have completed **an 'individual strategic professional development plan' as part of the course** requirements. The Industry Analysis and Manager Interview assignment has the following learning objectives:

1. Conduct an analysis of a desired industry and targeted company.
2. Practice effective interviewing skills with a sitting manager in a preferred occupation.
3. Identify and assess the application of leadership skills and concepts.
4. Recognize the demonstration of different styles and approaches to leadership in diverse situations
5. Demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills.

The learning objectives for this assignment have also been mapped to stated assurance of learning (AOL) objectives for both the College of Business and for the Department of Management. Such objectives coincide with the requirements and standards specified by AACSB (2015).

This assignment goes further than the normative approach to management/leadership education, and it is felt that it can impact students' personal and professional lives over a longer period of time beyond the confines of one semester **or one's degree program**.

Although the course is composed of several assignments, including case studies and leadership exercises, the primary assignment **for the course is the 'individual strategic professional development plan'**. This particular assignment requires students to complete: (a) industry analysis with an organizational role assessment and manager interview; (b) individual self-assessments and skill practice activities; and (c) strategic plan for continued self-improvement and career management. It is the intent of the assignment that it can serve as a 3-5-year **plan for students' personal and professional development**. The three distinct sections of the assignment are generally completed throughout the semester with opportunities for students to turn in incremental components for developmental feedback before final submission, or as three separate assignments culminating in one final report (Rubens et al, 2017).

Throughout the semester, the instructor emphasizes to the students the nature and intent of the assignment: ***"this assignment is highly personal and meaningful for your life and career goals"***. In addition, the students continually receive reinforcement that the strategic professional development plan is intended to be a personal plan or guide for their own self-development both throughout the semester and well beyond. Throughout the class, students are told how their ability to present an integrated **analysis of 1) one's selected industry, 2) self-assessments of leadership and management skills, and 3) a strategic plan for personal and professional development**, can - *as a set* - be one of the most valuable and useful outcomes of a student's graduate education. Given that this broad assignment contains multiple sections, it is beyond the scope of the current paper to provide details of each part. Thus, we focus specifically on the first section of the assignment: the industry assessment and the subsequent manager interview, which we consider to be foundational to the overall assignment.

Industry Assessment

The industry assessment consists of an introductory examination of the student's current job and/or career plan and an in-depth analysis of the industry, company and position that they are in, or looking to go into in the near future after their graduation.

Introduction: **The assignment begins with a short introduction to the student's current position, the industry they are currently employed in (if they are employed) and their general career goals and direction they wish to follow. Students provide detailed information related to their position (or desired position), roles, duties and responsibilities (job description).**

Industry Analysis: In this section, students are required to introduce their desired industry and the changes occurring in this specific business environment. The **situational assessment of the student’s chosen industry typically takes into account** important historical, financial, and situational factors. The process requires students to initially examine the industry broadly, and then narrow their focus (as much as possible) to the specific occupation/job they are looking to pursue in the future. The specific steps or recommendations for this assignment include:

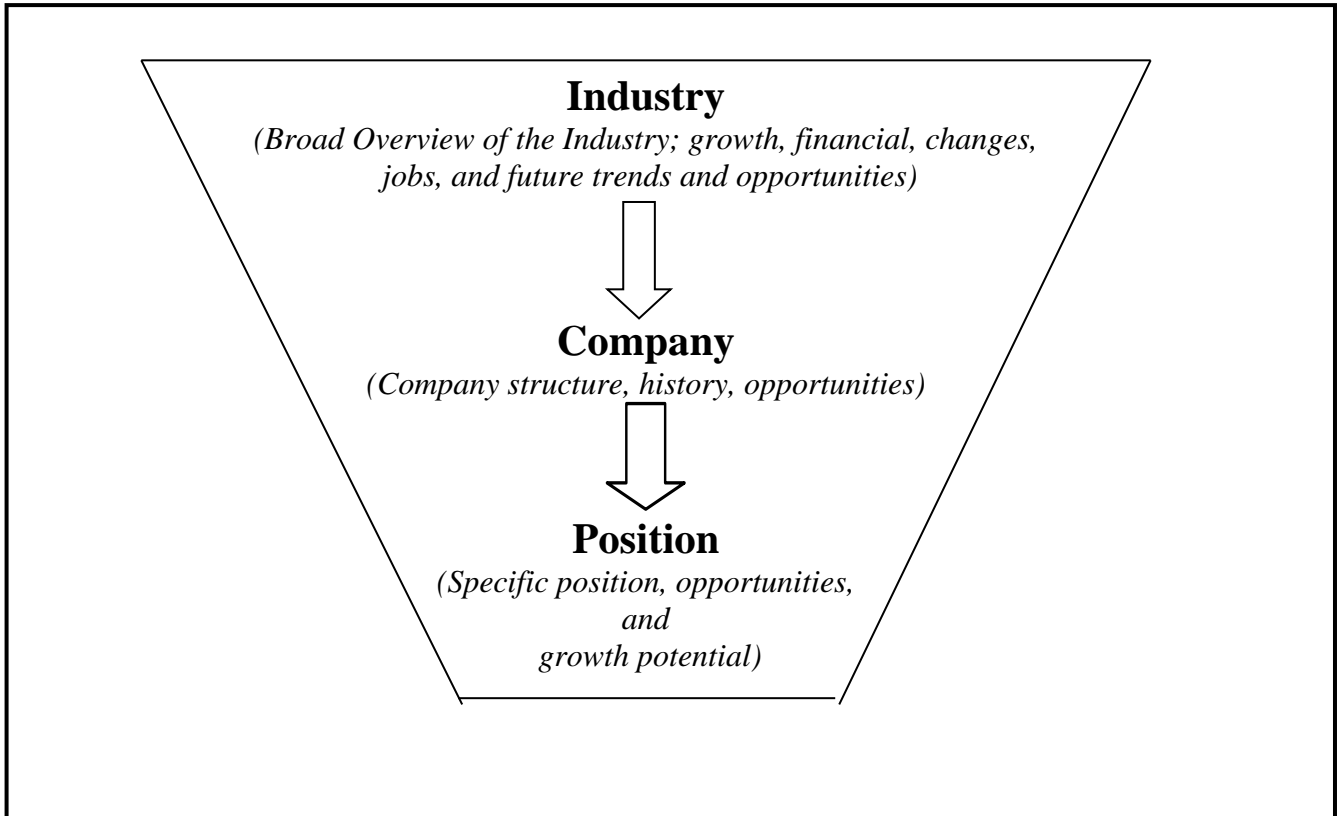
- a) *The Industry.* A broad review of the industry, including the historical development of the industry, as well as the major competitors in the market (national databases and industry databases are considered in this review). This broad review looks at the industry but also includes an external review of the environment, growth in the field, changes, opportunities and future trends.

- b) *Situational Analysis.* Following the broad industry review, the students are then asked to narrow their review to *focus* their analysis to the specific competitors in the industry leading to a targeted examination of the specific company that they currently work for and/or desire to work for in the future. As the students start to narrow down the review to the competitors and the specific company they are looking at, students are asked to include, where feasible, the financial statements and other supporting data on the selected companies. Items such as annual reports and SEC filings are considered in this review. In this section, students are also asked to conduct an external and internal environmental SWOT analysis. **The external environment analysis includes the company’s industry structure, industry change drivers, value chain, the positioning and strategies of competitors, etc. The internal analysis might include the company’s strategy, strategic intent, structure, culture, and leadership.** With both the industry and company review, the students will use outside sources from common library databases, such as, **Dunn and Bradstreet’s Industry Norms, Value Line Investment Survey, Standard and Poor’s Industry Surveys, and Standard and Poor’s Research Insight.** In addition, students are asked to review articles from major news sources, such as, *Fortune, Bloomberg Business Week, Financial Times, and The Wall Street Journal*, on both their selected company and its primary competitors. In regard to changes in the company and industry, students are asked to describe how these changes will impact the roles of senior leaders and affect opportunities within the industry and for the targeted company. **The identified changes must be grounded in both students’ own impressions of the industry and those expressed through available public information.** It is felt that this format provides the students with valuable opportunities to build their own arguments for explaining the changes taking place in their industry with strong grounding on what others are saying through empirical evidence (research), professional communication, and public forums.

- c) *Job/position analysis.* Students are then asked to progressively narrow their analysis even further, all the way to the specific job they see themselves working at in the future. In pursuit of better understanding this job, its requirements and responsibilities, the student will conduct an in-depth interview with a person or persons (students are encouraged but not required to conduct multiple interviews) in this industry who are current jobholders. The interview is designed to assess a typical workday for the relevant position, and identify important problem-solving activities, required skills, and expectations for the job. The questions address key potential opportunities in the field. Students are encouraged to spend time shadowing their interviewee and are further encouraged to establish a mentoring relationship with this individual (See Manager Interview below).

Figure one below shows the industry assessment model. The manager interview assignment is described in further detail later in the paper.

Figure 1:
Industry Assessment Model



Manager Interview

By interviewing at least one (preferably two or three) managers, students gain a greater understanding of the skills necessary for success as a leader in today's business organizations. Interviewees should **be managers working in the students' desired future** occupations. Interviewing more than one manager provides the opportunity to see consistency across managers in skill areas of importance and helps to identify contextual differences requiring situationally specific skill competencies. Students are also encouraged to shadow their manager if possible. Shadowing of the manager for a set period of time, while not easy to do, often affords the student the opportunity to experience the "art" of management/leadership; for while it is easy to recognize and learn about various skill areas that are crucial to **a manager or leader's** success (the science), it is often the application (or the art) of the skill knowledge that is as important for the success of a manager or leader.

- a. *Interviewee Selection:* In preparation for the interview students are asked to identify the individual and/or individuals sitting in the position they would like. As noted above this identification is based on the industry analysis conducted prior to the interview. In most cases, the individual manager(s) come from a local company determined from **the student's** exhaustive industry analysis. In some cases, the students select the managers they report to, or another manager from their current employer (the student identified that this is the

position that they would like to be employed in within the next 3-5 years). In select circumstances, students can do skype or virtual interviews – phone interviews are discouraged.

- b. *Interview Questions:* Students are given a list of questions to use as a guide for their interview and they are also strongly encouraged to come up with their own specific questions that would facilitate their own personal learning from this interview activity. The structured questions are designed to provide an understanding of the background of the interviewee, issues faced by the manager, his or her strength and weaknesses, critical issues they face, how they prioritize and their managerial style, as well as what they would like accomplished in the future. In addition, questions assess the types of attributes the manager deems important for the person who would be replacing him/her in the future. The structured interview format concludes with asking the manager to rate a list of skills and behaviours that they use during their typical workday. Students are also encouraged to probe for other knowledge skills and abilities that they commonly do in their position (See Table one – questions).

- c. *Interviewing Process:* In preparation for the interview, the student is instructed to research material on conducting qualitative interviews and qualitative research techniques. The instructor highlights to the students that conducting an in-depth interview is a much harder task than it may seem. Prior to asking the interview questions, students are instructed on the importance of gaining trust and establishing a rapport with the interviewee. This is especially important when the student interviewer is meeting the manager for the first time and does not work with them. **Although the interview is basically a 'structured interview' with a pre-established set of questions, the student is instructed to go beyond the stated response given by the interviewee and to probe and ask follow-up questions.** This probing and follow-up are particularly important when students ask managers to rate their own skills and behaviours. Students are also encouraged to use paraphrasing when appropriate to ensure comprehension, and the importance of engaging the interviewee in a conversation versus a rigid sequential question and answer format. Students are further instructed on the importance of listening and not interrupting the interviewee or giving answers for them – let them speak and give their responses! At the beginning and end of the interview, students are instructed to inform the interviewee of the nature and **purpose of their research and that the interviewee's name**, if desired, will not be included in their final report paper (See Table one – Introduction and Instruction).

- d. *Interview documentation:* We strongly encourage students to take notes, or even record their interviews, emphasizing the importance of properly documenting the conversations. We stress that, in most cases, without proper documentation, individuals are not able to capture all the essential information provided in an **interviewee's responses. Therefore, having ongoing notes and documentation of the interview will help the students to later provide a written account of their conversation.** The importance of documentation in the interview process cannot be overstated (Campion, Pursell & Brown, 1988).

- e. *Interview Write-up:* As part of their final report the students write up the interview in its entirety. The first part of this section is an introduction to the interviewee(s) and their background, followed by a clear and concise written history of the interview: questions asked, responses, and follow-up questions. We typically allow students to present their interview in one of two ways; a detailed transcript which lists each question and response, or a detailed summary that provides the most important information obtained from the

interview. Examples of both formats are given (and discussed) in class. Following this section, students write up their own reflections of the interview and how it pertains to their career, job, and future.

- f. *Follow-up activities:* Students are strongly encouraged to shadow the manager for one or more days. In addition, students, when possible, to form a mentoring relationship with the manager selected for the interview. Mentoring provides a forum from which the student can have an on-going learning relationship as they progress in their own management and leadership development. In fact, there is evidence in the literature demonstrating a high correlation between the process **of mentoring and a protégé’s potential for enhanced development and competency** across a number of management and leadership skill areas (Scandura & Williams, 2004).

Table 1:
In-depth Interview/Shadow Day

Introduction and Instruction

- As part of the industry assessment the student will develop an in-depth picture of the role of a manager and the skills required to perform that job successfully by interviewing individuals who use these skills. Your assignment is to interview at least one manager in your future desired position, however if you wish you may interview more than one as part of this assignment. The person interviewed must be employed full-time in an organization/profession/ industry that is of interest to you. You may use the questions stated below and in addition, you are strongly encouraged to come up with your own specific questions that will facilitate your own personal learning.
- PLEASE NOTE: YOU SHOULD ASK PROBING AND FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS! Just asking the listed questions in the order listed and taking whatever answers you get no matter how brief defeats the purpose of this assignment. Try to flesh out the responses to a level that allows you to come away from the interview with some tangible insights that will facilitate your personal growth and future success. The need to ask follow-up questions is especially true for question 15.
- A good interview does not rigidly adhere to the order of questions. Rather it flows naturally as part of a conversational dialogue. Your job is to steer the conversation so that by the end you have hit upon all of the areas of focus as pre-determined by you prior to the interview. TAKE NOTES during the interview. It is the only way for you to remember what is said.
- Please treat these interviews as confidential! The names of the individuals interviewed do not matter – only their opinions, perceptions, and behaviours. Assure the managers that no one will be able to identify them from their responses and that the information given is for your own personal development. Please keep detailed notes of your interviews, as **well as the interviewee’s job title and** a brief description of his or her organization.

Interview Questions

1. Please describe a typical day at work.
2. Describe yourself to me.
3. What education and training have you received? How has it enabled you to be a better manager?
4. What are the most critical problems you face as a manager?
5. What are your greatest strengths as a successful manager?
6. Tell me a time when you felt most successful and why.
7. What are the most critical skills needed to be a successful manager in your line of work?
8. How do you deal with difficult employees?
9. What are the major reasons managers fail in positions like yours?

10. What are the outstanding skills or abilities of other effective managers you have known?
11. What are your three highest priorities in your work life?
12. How would you describe your managerial style?
13. What do you want to achieve in the next five years?
14. What legacy do you want to leave?
15. If you had to train someone to replace you in your current job, what key skills and abilities would you focus on?

Skill Item Rating (Provide explanation for rating and examples)

Instructions:

- On a scale of 1 (very rarely) to 5 (constantly), ask the manager to rate the extent to which he/she uses the below listed skills or behaviours during their workday?
- Please have the manager provide an example where possible.
- Add any additional skills or behaviour given by the manager at the bottom of the table with an explanation and/or example of how these additional activities are used.

Rating	Item	Example/Comment
	Managing personal stress	
	Orchestrating Change	
	Managing Time	
	Delegating	
	Facilitating Group Decision-Making	
	Goal Setting	
	Decision-Making	
	Identifying Problems	
	Disciplining Others	
	Verbal Communications	
	Interviewing	
	Performance Evaluation	
	Empathizing	
	Motivating Others	
	Team Building	
	Managing Conflict	
	Problem Solving	
	Achieving Self-Awareness	
	Conducting Meetings	

	Gaining and Using Power	
	Negotiating	
<i>Additional Skills/Behaviours:</i>		

Follow-up Exercise

Although it is not done in every class by every instructor, a classroom follow-up exercise has been conducted with the interview assignment. In this exercise, the students in the class share the general information about the person they interviewed. Following this, the instructor leads a discussion about the specific types of managers and leaders and the difference between a manager and leader. The discussion highlights the differences between transactional and transformation leadership styles and issues of power (Edwards, Schedlitzki, Turnbull, & Gill, 2015, as well as issues put forward in Zaleznik’s (1992) **seminal article: ‘Managers and Leaders: Are They Different’; e.g.,** personality, goals, relations, sense of self, etc.

Assignment Assessment

The assignment is assessed utilizing the following detailed rubric that reflects the assignment learning goals and provides useful feedback to the student. The rubric follows the assignment instructions and helps to ensure that consistent standards are followed for individual assignment submissions. There are point values for each of the main sections of the assignment corresponding to exemplary to unacceptable. The rubric is shared with students ahead of the assignment and is available to them for reference as they complete the assignment activities. The rubric helps the instructor in clarifying expectations and clearly illustrates to students how to meet them. Students are encourage to self-evaluate their assignment using the rubric before submission.

Table 2:
Industry Analysis and Manager Interview Rubric

Grading Rubric	Unacceptable Not included or less than minimal requirement	Fair Just meets minimal requirements	Good Contains all requirements	Exemplary Extends well beyond stated requirements
Introduction (5 pts)	0-2 pts.	3 pts.	4 pts.	5 pts.
Part A: (20 pts) Industry Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a broad review of the industry, including its historical development, major competitors, environment, and future trends. Explore market growth/market share of competitors. Discuss industry in terms of future trends, opportunities and challenges. 	Section includes less than half of the items requested. Most items completed at a level below desired level of detail. No personal opinions expressed 0-13 pts.	Section includes most items requested. Some completed slightly below desired level of detail. Some opinions expressed. 14-15 pts.	Section includes all items requested. Completed at an acceptable level Expresses own opinion but does not support with empirical evidence. 16-17 pts.	Section includes all items requested. Completed above expectations. Express own opinions but also grounds them with empirical evidence? 18-20 pts.
Part B: (20 pts) Company/Situation Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the specific company that you would ideally work for in your desired future occupation? Provide details on this company (what is its history, 	Section includes less than half of the items requested. Most items completed at a level below desired level of detail.	Section includes most items requested. Some completed slightly below desired level of detail. Identifies a couple of	Section includes all items requested. Completed at an acceptable level Identifies potential changes in industry and	Section includes all items requested. Completed above expectations. Identifies potential changes in

<p>mission, values, etc.)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete an external environment analysis that includes the company's industry structure, industry change drivers, value chain, the positioning and strategies of competitors, etc.? • Complete an internal analysis that includes the company's strategy, strategic intent, structure, culture, and leadership. 	<p>Does not identify potential changes in industry.</p> <p>0-13 pts.</p>	<p>potential changes in industry.</p> <p>14-15 pts.</p>	<p>company based on own impressions with some cited supporting research.</p> <p>16-17 pts.</p>	<p>industry and company based on own impressions and grounded in research. .</p> <p>18-20 pts.</p>
<p>Part C1: (20 pts) Job/Position Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States clearly desired future occupation • Discussed why they want to work in their desired future occupation • Discussed current position, why they are in this position, and how this position will help or hinder their progress to their desired future occupation • Presents research to determine future employment projections on demand/growth, and for desired future job • Includes detailed job description for this occupation that includes essential job duties and the necessary knowledge, skill, and abilities (KSA) to perform this job 	<p>Section includes less than half of the items requested.</p> <p>Most items completed at a level below desired level of detail.</p> <p>Does not describe why they want to work in position and how current occupation will help or hinder their progress</p> <p>0-13 pts.</p>	<p>Section includes most items requested.</p> <p>Some completed slightly below desired level of detail.</p> <p>Describes why they want to work in position and how current occupation will help or hinder their progress but provides little research on job prospects, salary, etc.</p> <p>14-15 pts.</p>	<p>Section includes all items requested.</p> <p>Completed at an acceptable level</p> <p>Describes why they want to work in position and how current occupation will help or hinder their progress; Provides some research on job prospects, salary, etc. Includes job description.</p> <p>16-17 pts.</p>	<p>Section includes all items requested.</p> <p>Completed above expectations.</p> <p>Describes why they want to work in position and how current occupation will help or hinder their progress; Provides detailed research on job prospects, salary, etc. Includes job description that includes essential job duties and KSAs necessary.</p> <p>18-20 pts.</p>
<p>Part C2: (20 pts) Manager Interview(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States rationale for interviewee(s) selected • Uses suggested questions and additional questions created for interview • Asked probing and follow-up questions to ensure depth of responses 	<p>Interview process not included</p> <p>Information gathered not included</p> <p>Does not include relevance of interview to future career goals and leadership development</p>	<p>Conducts one interview/ does not indicate length of interview</p> <p>Provides minimal responses to at least 12 questions on leadership skills</p> <p>Vague statement regarding personal use of</p>	<p>Indicates in-depth interview of at least 30 minutes and shadows individual for part of day</p> <p>Provides expanded information gathered in narrative or chronological fashion on</p>	<p>Interviews/ shadows multiple individuals</p> <p>Compares and contrasts answers provided from multiple interviewees on leadership skills</p> <p>Clearly notes how information will be used in</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents interview in narrative or chronological fashion • Shadows the interviewee • States usefulness of interview to future career goals and leadership skills development 	0-13 pts.	information gathered to support career goals and leadership development 14-15 pts	leadership skills Explains relevance of interview to career plans and leadership development 16-17 pts	future career decision making and for leadership development 18-20 pts
Information gathered (10 pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressed own opinions but also grounded them with empirical evidence • Used and cited common library databases and other printed information • Cited the sources used to gather information 	Did not use and cite common library databases and other printed information. 0-6 pts.	Used and but did not adequately cite common library databases and other printed information. 7 pts.	Used and cited some common library databases and other printed information. 8 pts.	Used and cited extensively common library databases and other printed information. 9-10 pts.
Conclusion/Summary (5 pts) Described the usefulness of this project to future career goals/interests	Not included 0-2 pts.	1-2 sentence conclusion/minimal self-reflection 3 pts.	Conclusion that integrates the assignment with future career goals with some personal reflection 4 pts.	States evaluation of assignment with future career goals with ample personal reflection 5 pts.

Conclusion

Graduating business students all over the world are confronted with a job market and work environment unlike any seen by previous generations. The advancement of technology, coupled with globalization, and uncertainties in economic markets are presenting new and unique challenges for graduates. These challenges stem from not only the uncertainties to finding a job, but the importance of finding the right job.

It has been the authors' experience that although graduating business students have knowledge of the skills of management and leadership, they often lack a realistic perspective of the job market as well as the specific duties of the position which they hope to pursue. The authors feel that this misunderstanding with industry and position **is due to the student's perceptions and the business curriculum in many business schools.** A number of authors, Pfeffer & Fong, (2002), Mintzberg, (2005), and Bennis & O'Toole (2005) to name a few, **have voiced that business schools "are on the wrong track"**. Mintzberg (2005), in particular, caused the biggest disruption with his publication: **"Managers Not MBAs: A Hard Look at the Soft Practice of Managing and Management Development"**. The text provides a harsh critique of business schools in the U.S., stating that they are focusing on the wrong people and the wrong techniques in educating managers and they, the business schools, need to get back to bringing real-life experiences into the classroom. A Federal Reserve researcher talked about a disconnect from what you learn in college and what you do, citing that only 27 percent of college graduates were working in a job that matched what they studied, while **38 percent were in jobs that didn't even require a college degree** (Frazee, 2018). In a study by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), they found that over

74% of HR managers have difficulty in hiring qualified recent graduates for positions (SHRM 2015)

In the introduction of this paper, the authors reference their experience with graduating students who have voiced the disconnect they found with the realities of the manager role and position from what they studied. It is the authors' belief that the skills and behavior, and much of the realities of the position, can only be ascertained from speaking to those who are in the position. Edward Hall (1976) used an iceberg to describe how we see culture: some aspects are visible; however, a majority lie beneath the surface. Similarly, in a management position, much of what we may teach or what is observed lies **in the domain of 'explicit knowledge'**. However, a majority of what the person actually does, and which **is imperative for success in the position is 'tacit knowledge'**. **Just as we look at knowledge and IQ as the intellectual aspects of a job or position, much of the individual success in the position—especially for managers and leaders—rests with the individual's emotional quotient (EQ) or emotional intelligence (EI)** (Goldman, 2004; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001; Goleman, 1998).

Finding not only a job but the right job is key for graduating business students. The authors have observed students graduating with varied degrees and hopes of finding that dream job to be quickly disappointed realizing that jobs in their given field are few and far between. Thus, the first step in any job or career pursuit is understanding the market and the current and future trends in employment. Second, and very important is understanding the realities of the specific job. The manager interviews provide an opportunity for business students to not only find out about the **'unwritten' realities of the position** which the student would like to pursue, but also an unvarnished look at what duties, responsibilities and behavior is expected from the position. A number of our students, as part of this assignment, have added one to two **days 'shadowing'** of the manager in his/her desired position. The authors have found with students adding this activity to their assignment, especially if they end up working in the same business establishment, that a longer-term **'mentoring'** relationship between the student(s) and manager was established. It is the authors' opinion that this is especially important for Millennials and the upcoming Generation Z. These generational groups, when compared to earlier generational groups, do not frequently have identified peers or mentors that they can look up to and emulate. As baby boomers retire, their knowledge of the institution and their tacit knowledge of the job is lost unless there is a formal process to codify this knowledge. Interviews, as well as mentoring, can help capture this knowledge and help it to be passed on to other generations.

In implementing this assignment, the authors' stress the importance of emphasizing the applied aspect of the assignment and how it will directly impact the student now and in the future. Also, although it was done informally, it is encouraged that the instructors provide a rigid post-assessment on the effectiveness of the assignment and how the specific assignment, in time, improved job and career obtainment and goals. Cornell, Johnson, and Schwartz (2013) asked students three questions directly after a structured interview assignment: What did they learn? What surprised them? and What would they change? In addition, these authors send students a follow-up 5-point Likert type survey which dealt with the success of the assignment both in experience and building confidence (Cornell, Johnson, and Schwartz, 2013). It is felt that this type of more structured follow-up is important in assessing the overall goal of the assignment and in making the necessary modification in the assignment that might be necessary.

In conducting interviews, especially with younger students, a more structured interview with a set of specific questions can keep the student interviewer focused on the content and potentially minimize the impact of variation in the content (Kvale & Brinkman, 2008). However, with older students and/or students with more experience,

the interview can be adapted to a more experiential learning format where questions can evolve in his/her understanding of the interview content (Tennant, 1997). In the manager interview although the students were given specific questions to ask, the students were encouraged to probe for more detail and have the interviewee expand on their responses. Beyond the set of questions given, especially if the assignment is given in an undergraduate or graduate leadership class, instructors might consider including questions specific to the topic of leadership. For example, Smith and Roebuck (2010) **used an 'interview with a leader' as a major assignment in their leadership class. In** their assignment, the students interviewed a leader and asked specific leadership questions such as: What is the **leader's** self-description of his/her leadership style? What is his/her personal philosophy of leadership and how did he/she develop it? What are their views on followership and group processes? What are **the leaders'** opinions on gender, culture and ethics? How do they lead others? Questions such as this, or **questions pertaining to the leader's path to a leadership position, their role models,** future vision for themselves, etc., could reinforce some of the concepts that were learned in the leadership class and be easily incorporated into the interview process.

Earlier in the write-up of this paper, the authors note that the assignment described is part of a larger assignment that several of the authors had implemented in their classes (Rubens, et al, 2017). This larger assignment, as previously noted, included a comprehensive professional self-assessment. In the comprehensive assessment (in addition to the industry analysis/manager interview) the students took a variety of personality and occupational assessment, as well as self-improvement exercises, and integrated the results into a strategic plan of professional development. Although the comprehensive professional strategic plan is quite lengthy and time-consuming, some instructors might want to either expand slightly on the industry analysis and manager interview assignment (add a self-assessment component) or have the students do a comprehensive career development project.

In closing, this assignment helps students in several ways. First, it helps the graduating student to understand the job market and provides a vehicle for them to capture the knowledge of the position not afforded through classroom bound activities. Second it provides students with an assessment technique that they can employ not only upon graduation but regularly in their careers to respond to the changing demand in the market. The later point is particularly important not only because of the changing, global nature of markets in which people work, but because of the emergence of AI and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. **The 'knowledge doubling curve' predicts that knowledge 'doubles' every 12 hours (Lodestar Solutions, 2019).** Thus, as Industry 4.0 becomes more dominate and as more and more jobs become obsolete (replaced by AI) being proactive to employment trends and the **need to acquire 'new knowledge for new jobs'** becomes paramount. Finally, this assignment can serve as a reminder to students that education and learning is not a linear process, it is a dynamic, ongoing process that must continuously be updated.

Epilogue

At the conclusion of writing our paper the COVID-19 pandemic started to appear in nations around the world. At this time, the pandemic has ravaged nations all around the world causing untold deaths (and still counting), disrupted economies, and redefined how nations and its people live, work and exist. Historically, pandemics have produced changes in society; CoVID-19 will be no different – there will be changes in not only our social order and interactions, but in how we work. These changes are yet to be seen. One of the primary themes of our paper is helping business students understand trends in the market and the jobs they assume. This understanding will be more important than ever for business students graduating in a post COVID-19 world.

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