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Abstract	<p>In this chapter, we explore Xenophon's philosophy of management and identify nine dimensions of business management, as well as the competencies (the knowledge, skills, and virtues) that good management requires. The scientific contribution of this chapter does not only consist in the fact that this is the first publications in which Xenophon's philosophy of management is systematically analyzed. Historical analysis can also help to question the self-evidence of our contemporary conceptualization of management. Xenophon's philosophy of management enables us to criticize the contemporary focus on profit maximization and to articulate an intrinsic relation between business and society; to criticize the contemporary disconnectedness of business management and to develop a broader set of individual competencies and know-how that is required for business managers; to criticize the contemporary focus on management and control; and to rehabilitate the role of business management as ability and capacity that involves know-how, actual engagement, and virtuous competencies. Finally, this concept of management challenges contemporary conceptualizations of the differences between private and public management in political philosophical debates.</p>	
Keywords (separated by "-")	Xenophon - Philosophy of management - Management - Virtue - Control	

1 Xenophon's Philosophy of Management

2 Vincent Blok

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13 Abstract

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AU1

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 30 ical debates.

31 Keywords

32 Xenophon · Philosophy of management · Management · Virtue · Control

33 Introduction

34 In philosophy of management, there is a relatively lack of interest in the history of
 35 the concept. For instance, in the first volume of the *Philosophy of management*
 36 journal, Alan Bray raised the provocative question “Why is it that management
 37 seems to have no history?” indicating that the practice of management as a corpus of
 38 knowledge and skills received only little attention in the literature (Bray 2001).
 39 While in the second volume, Fontrodona and Melé propose Aristotelian philosophy
 40 as a theoretical foundation of management (Fontrodona and Melé 2002), the history
 41 of philosophies of management is relatively absent in subsequent volumes.¹ With AU2
 42 this, I do not mean that philosophers are not explored to reflect on issues in
 43 management. On the contrary, philosophy of management has a strong tradition in
 44 applying ideas of philosophers to management issues, like Stoic ideas on ethics of
 45 management (Bowden 2012), Aristotle’s ideas on corporate responsibility and
 46 management practice (Gimbel 2005; Hartman 2015), Dewey’s ideas on innovation
 47 management (Bordum 2007), Levinas’ ideas on whistleblowing (Loumansky and
 48 Lewis 2013), or Heidegger’s ideas on leadership (Krentz and Malloy 2005). But
 49 these ideas of the big names of the philosophical tradition are often not further
 50 developed into a full fledged philosophy of management of Aristotle, Heidegger, or
 51 Levinas. This seems to be legitimate, as these philosophers themselves often did not
 52 develop an explicit philosophy of management themselves.

53 There seems to be at least one exception in the history of philosophy, namely
 54 Xenophon, who can be seen as the first philosopher that reflected systematically on
 55 the concept of business management. In *Oeconomicus*, published around 385 B.C.,
 56 Xenophon introduces a dialogue between Socrates and Critobulus, a wealthy young
 57 man, and Ischomachus, a noble and successful manager, about economy.²
 58 *Oikonomia*, as Xenophon understood it, is far removed from our contemporary
 59 understanding of economics and is primarily concerned with household

¹In fact, interest in the history of the concept of management is more often found outside the particular subdomain of philosophy of management, for instance, Mondzain (2005) and Agamben (2007).

²At first sight, it seems to be strange to consult Socrates’ vision on business management, as he is normally seen as very negative about profit making and business (Plato 2013). Because the historical comparison between the Socrates of Plato and Xenophon is beyond the scope of this chapter, we purely focus on Socrates contribution to the question what is (business) management as it appears in Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* in this chapter.

60 management (Deslandes 2018). The fact that *oikonomia* originally concerns house-
 61 hold management, rather than economics, may also explain why economists are
 62 often hesitant to read Xenophon as an economist (Lowry 1979). The domain of the
 63 household is not limited to the private sphere of the house in which we live but
 64 extends to all property that enables the owner of the household to make a living.
 65 This legitimizes us to take Xenophon's philosophical reflections on household
 66 management as a philosophy of business management. In this chapter, we
 67 explore Xenophon's philosophy of management and identify nine dimensions of
 68 management (1) and the knowledge, skills, and virtues that good management
 69 requires (2).

70 While general philosophical studies of Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* provided
 71 already insightful interpretations of his work (Strauss 1989), the scientific contribu-
 72 tion of this chapter consists in the fact that, to the best of my knowledge, this is the
 73 first publication in which Xenophon's philosophy of management is systematically
 74 analyzed from the perspective of *business* management. Historical analysis can also
 75 help to question the self-evidence of our contemporary conceptualization of man-
 76 agement, and to explore new directions in our conceptualization of management, as
 77 we will explore in section three. It also challenges contemporary conceptualizations
 78 of the differences between private and public management in political philosophical
 79 debates. This is the second scientific contribution of this chapter.

AU3

80 **Nine Dimensions of Business Management According to** 81 **Xenophon**

82 One of the first philosophical conceptualizations of management occurred in the
 83 work of Xenophon. In the *Oeconomicus*, business management concerns the totality
 84 of the assets of the owner. Although these assets are a necessary condition to make a
 85 living, it is not a sufficient condition as these assets have to be managed in order to
 86 become profitable and generate wealth for the owner (Xenophon 2013: 1.15;
 87 3.1–3.3). What are the main dimensions of business management that can be
 88 found in Xenophon's work? In our reflections on the nature of business management,
 89 we have to abandon the contextual factors that can be found in Xenophon's work, as
 90 he lived in an agricultural society and in a period where management mainly
 91 concerned the management of slaves.

92 Business management concerns the functional order and ordered arrangement of
 93 the business that is led by a superintendent (*episkopos*) that is in control of the
 94 business, even in case of accidents and unforeseen situations, so that it's ordered
 95 functioning is guaranteed and maintained. This control of the manager is compared
 96 with a ship:

97 Now I saw this man in his spare time inspecting everything that is needed as a matter of
 98 course on the ship. I was surprised to see him looking them over and asked what he was
 99 doing. 'Sir', he answered, 'I am looking to see how the ship's equipment is stored, in case of
 100 any accident, or whether anything is missing or mixed up with other equipment'. (Xenophon
 101 2013: 8.15–16)

102 Business management is understood here as the establishment of a functioning
 103 order in which all natural resources have their proper place, all human resources have
 104 their proper task and role³, and the business manager regulates and governs the
 105 proper use of these natural and human resources in order to make profit. This
 106 involves the structuring of the business and the assignment of an appropriate place
 107 to each part of the business. Xenophon speaks about grain that has to remain dry and
 108 wine that has to remain cool, but we can extend this to the appropriate design of the
 109 production and distribution process of a business, the structure of business units, etc.
 110 Next, it concerns the placement of employees in this functioning order. The first
 111 dimension of business management that we can discern is the establishment and
 112 maintenance of a functioning order of the business in order to make profit.

113 A second dimension of business management occurs if we consider the ordered
 114 functioning of the ship we encountered before. In first instance, the establishment
 115 and maintenance of a functioning order of the business enables the manager to act
 116 appropriately in times of setback or unforeseen circumstances that threaten the
 117 survival of the ship in stormy weather. But another aspect of this functioning order
 118 is that it constitutes a “paradise” of beauty that evokes admiration (Xenophon 2013:
 119 4.13; 4.21). We can think of Xenophon’s example of the ship in which all equipment
 120 is well stored – e.g., rope is not lying around but well-ordered and organized – and
 121 that provides peace of mind and energy to work in, but we can easily extend this
 122 example to well-established organization structures in which all disparate tasks and
 123 roles work together as one (Xenophon 2013: 8.7). Xenophon provides the example
 124 of a chorus:

125 A chorus is a combination of people; but when its members do as they please, it becomes
 126 mere confusion, and there is no pleasure in watching it; but when they move and sing in an
 127 orderly fashion, then those same people at once seem worth watching and worth hearing.
 128 (Xenophon 2013: 8.3)

129 This order is not only a functional order but evokes admiration because of its beauty
 130 – everything is more beautiful when set out in order according to Xenophon (2013:
 131 8.20) – and nothing is so good for human beings as order (Xenophon 2013: 8.3). It is
 132 important to acknowledge that for the Greeks, the beautiful does not only has
 133 aesthetic but also moral significance. The second dimension of business manage-
 134 ment that we discern is that the manager establishes and maintains the functioning
 135 order of the business in such a way that its (beautiful) order evokes public
 136 admiration.

137 A third dimension of business management is that the ordered functioning of the
 138 business does not only serve the private interests of the owner of the business – e.g.,

³Although Xenophon himself explicitly talks about slaves, we conceive the term in more neutral terms as subordinates. On the one hand, Xenophon’s description of the role and treatment of slaves resonates with modern ways of treating employees as we will see. On the other, both slaves and employees can be formally seen as subordinates of the business manager who is the owner of the assets.

139 a grand harvest – but also the public interest of society. A farm does not only provide
 140 food and luxury by which people live and enjoy their life but also the environment in
 141 which public services can be practiced. Xenophon provides the example of agricul-
 142 ture that enables man to work on the land *and* prepare them to defend the state:

143 She gives increased strength through exercise to those who labour with their own hands, and
 144 hardens the overseers of the work by rousing them early and forcing them to move about
 145 briskly. For on a farm no less than in the city the most important operations have their fixed
 146 time. Again, if a man wants to defend his city by serving in the cavalry, farming is his most
 147 efficient partner in furnishing upkeep for this horse; if in the infantry, it energizes his body.
 148 (Xenophon 2013: 5.4–5; 11.17)

149 We can easily abstract from this particular context and argue that management
 150 establishes a functioning order that serves simultaneously private – sales of food
 151 products – and public purposes – serving a healthy society by promoting a healthy
 152 lifestyle. In the end, business management is not a goal in itself but should enable the
 153 business manager to serve the interests of his friends and the state according to
 154 Xenophon (2013: 6.9).⁴ Only those who serve the state and are loyal to society are
 155 held in the highest esteem by the state (Xenophon 2013: 6.10). The third dimension
 156 of business management that we can discern is that the business manager establishes
 157 and maintains the functioning order of the business in such a way that it integrates
 158 public and private interests.

159 In order to establish and maintain the functioning order of the business, the
 160 manager has to engage in the business operations himself via direct labor according
 161 to Xenophon. This seems to be strange for a business owner in the Greek context, as
 162 labor is scorned and held in low regard in ancient Greece (Xenophon 2013: 4.2). But
 163 Xenophon is more positive about direct engagement in the business operations of the
 164 business manager via direct labor – planting, for instance (Xenophon 2013: 4.22–24)
 165 – as it contributes to their happiness as purpose of life (*eudaimonia*) (Xenophon
 166 2013: 4.25). The joy of direct labor provides satisfaction and self-confidence, as their
 167 mastery in the production of the products and services that the business provides
 168 matures.⁵ Another aspect of the positive assessment of direct labor may be the
 169 double purpose of business operations that we encountered before, for instance,
 170 farming (private interest) and preparing to defend the state (public interest). One
 171 other important reason for direct involvement in labor is that an important task of
 172 managers is to teach their employees, which requires know-how as we will see.
 173 Here, direct labor is not a goal in itself but serves the manager's aim to fulfil his role

⁴Throughout this chapter, he or his can be replaced by she or her.


⁵While historically, direct labour is primarily associated with pain and suffering, Xenophon associates it with joy and pleasure. This may be explained by the fact that he, as business manager, is *free* to engage in direct labour while his employees are *necessitated* to engage in direct labour in order to survive. This may also explain why Karl Marx criticized Xenophon's "characteristic, bourgeois instinct" (cited in Strauss 1989: 203). At the same time, we could argue that Xenophon's appreciation of direct labour helps us to criticize the disconnection between the workforce and the management level that can often be observed in contemporary bureaucratic organizations (see §3).

174 as business manager and his role as public servant. The fourth dimension of business
175 management is the involvement of the manager in the business operations via direct
176 labor.

177 The fifth dimension of business management concerns the manager's engagement
178 in the business operations via the work of other people, i.e., the management of his
179 subordinates to perform all roles and tasks in a proper way. His task is to give
180 subordinates a proper role and task and manage them in such a way that they are not
181 imprisoned and enforced to perform their task in a proper way, but that they are free
182 and willing to work for the business manager (Xenophon 2013: 3.4).

183 At a first level, he has to cooperate with his wife in order to become successful
184 according to Xenophon. Although Xenophon argues that the business manager has
185 to instruct his wife in the right way of doing things (Xenophon 2013: 3.11), and with
186 this, may make the impression that he sees his wife merely as subordinate like
187 Aristotle⁶, it is clear that Xenophon is in fact very positive about the role of the wife
188 in business management and that he stresses cooperation and partnership with her in
189 growing the business:

190 I think that the wife who is a good partner in the household contributes just as much as her
191 husband to its good; because the income for the most part is the result of the husband's
192 exertions, but the expenses are controlled mostly by the wife's management. If both do their
193 part well, the estate is increased; if they act incompetently, it is diminished. (Xenophon 2013:
194 3.15)

195 If we abstract from classical role models, we can argue that Xenophon highlights
196 here that the business manager cannot maintain the functioning order of the business
197 all by himself.  because he is focusing on sales, for instance, he needs first of all to
198 cooperate and partner up with other managers who manage expenses. The mainte-
199 nance of the functioning order of a profitable business requires a team of managers
200 that "mutually service" (Xenophon 2013: 7.19) each other and form a partnership,
201 balancing income and expenses, external and internal affairs, etc. As it is clear that
202 for Xenophon, the wife contributes equally to the success of the business, we can
203 abandon his literal connection of males as manager of the external affairs and
204 females as managers of the internal affairs (Xenophon 2013: 7.20–7.26) and high-
205 light the functional difference between the management of income, for instance,
206 marketing and sales, and the management of expenses, for instance, procurement.
207 Next to performing his or her own specific role as manager of income or expenses,
208 for instance, the manager has to manage a management team together with other
209 managers in order to make the business profitable. The management of a manage-
210 ment team is the first level of engagement of the business manager with business
211 operations via the work of other people.

212 At a second level, the business manager has to establish a management system
213 because he cannot control everything himself, for instance, in case of other branches

⁶According to Aristotle, females are naturally subordinate because of their limited rationality (Aristotle 1944: 1260a9-15).

214 of the business that are not under his direct control. One way to maintain the
215 functioning order of the business is by establishing internal rules and regulations
216 that all employees have to comply with, for instance, maxims and governance
217 procedures that safeguard right behavior. Xenophon provides examples like “thieves
218 shall be punished for their thefts” (Xenophon 2013: 14.5), but we can easily abstract
219 from these examples and extend it to other and also more positive core values of a
220 company like honesty and integrity. It is interesting to observe that Xenophon
221 focusses on the content of these rules, for instance, that the maxim we just mentioned
222 makes greed unprofitable to the offender and benefits the upright employee
223 (Xenophon 2013: 14.6).

224 At a third level, the business manager maintains the functioning order of the
225 business by assigning proper roles to trusted middle managers that send him reports
226 about their business performance, and that can perform the management tasks in the
227 name of the business manager. This middle manager should have the same personal
228 characteristics as the business manager as owner of the assets, for instance, self-
229 control and eagerness to improve the business (Xenophon 2013: 9.11–12; 14.1))
230 (see §2 for the further discussion of the competencies of the manager). The business
231 manager is the superintendent that oversees and governs the middle managers so that
232 they adhere to the arrangement of tasks and roles, and inspects the performance of
233 the business (Xenophon 2013: 9.14–15; 14.1). Like the business manager oversees
234 and governs the middle managers, the middle managers oversee and govern the
235 employees. Also these middle managers are seen as partners of the business
236 manager:

237 We also taught her to be loyal to us by making her a partner in all our joys and, if we had any
238 trouble, inviting her to share that too. We trained her to be eager for the improvement of our
239 estate by making her familiar with it and by allowing her to share in our success. And we
240 developed in her a sense of justice by giving more honour to the just than to the unjust, and
241 by showing her that the just live in greater wealth and freedom than the unjust. (Xenophon
242 2013: 9.12)

243 A key task of the business manager is to select the middle managers who are
244 attentive to the business affairs. He selects those who have a passion for making
245 money and have a desire to win the approbation of the business manager (Xenophon
246 2013:14.9) and avoids those who are hard drinkers, sluggards, fall desperately in
247 love (Xenophon 2013: 12.11–15), and remain dishonest even though they are well
248 treated. He has also to review the performance of the middle managers and to reward
249 high performance and to honor them, and to punish low performance. It is important
250 to see that for Xenophon, reward does not only consist in the provision of monetary
251 rewards but also in the promotion of good performing middle managers in the scale
252 of honors (Xenophon 2013: 4.7). This can be done formally via promotions in rank,
253 but also informally by giving trust, by entrusting an important task, and by providing
254 honor to particular employees.

255 This does not mean however that the business manager can delegate all roles
256 and tasks to the middle management. According to Xenophon, as the business
257 manager experiences best the profits of good management and the losses of bad

258 management, some management tasks can only be performed properly by the
259 business manager himself or another member of the management team, and cannot
260 be delegated to the middle managers or employees. Although Xenophon does not
261 provide examples, we can think of management decisions that can have a major
262 impact on the profit and loss of the business.

263 One can negatively argue that the principle-agent problem explains why the
264 business manager cannot delegate all management tasks to the middle managers,
265 e.g., that the business manager as owner of the assets (principle) can never be sure
266 whether the middle manager (agent) will act in his best interest or will be tempted to
267 serve his own interests instead. More positively formulated, however, one can also
268 argue that the business manager cannot delegate all management tasks to the middle
269 managers because of the considerable importance of teaching and training, as we
270 have seen. This requires his leading by example and therefore, his direct engagement
271 in the business operations anyway. This brings a fourth level of engagement with the
272 business operation via the work of other people to light, namely people management
273 of the employees of the branches that are under his direct control. At this level,
274 management consists in leading subordinates in such a way that they obey willingly
275 and contribute to the profitability of the business, instead of running away in times of
276 setback (Xenophon 2013: 3.4; 4.19). This requires not only the ability to manage
277 inflowing and outflowing streams of resources, to superintend the value adding
278 process performed by employees, but also rewarding good behavior and punishment
279 of employees who are misbehaving (Xenophon 2013: 7.42). Rewarding employees
280 does not only consist in monetary rewards, but also in showing that being obedient is
281 more advantageous for the employees, and by providing particular rewards that are
282 valuable for the individual employees; the one who loves nice cloth is more
283 rewarded by a nice robe according Xenophon (2013: 13.6–9). Furthermore, it also
284 involves a differentiation in rewarding, by providing the better employee with
285 superior gifts. Direct people management also involves the skill to care for the
286 employees (Xenophon, 7.37), as those who are cared for feel grateful and more
287 loyal. As a consequence, the employees will follow the business manager and serve
288 his interests. And according to Xenophon, this ability to lead employees that are
289 willing to follow constitutes a good manager⁷:

290 Those you may justly call high-minded who have many followers of like mind; and with
291 reason may he be said to march ‘with a strong arm’ whose will many an arm is ready to
292 serve; and truly great is he who can do great deeds by will rather than by strength. So too in
293 private enterprises, the man in authority – foreman or manager – who can make the workers
294 eager, industrious, and persevering – he is the man who gives a lift to the business and swell
295 the surplus. . . . But if at the sight of him they stir themselves and a spirit of determination and

⁷Xenophon wrote another book on leadership, based on his experience of a military campaign in which the Greeks fled for the Persians by fighting their way back to Greece (Xenophon 1989). Although there are several overlaps between Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* and *Anabalis*, a further comparison between the two works is beyond the scope of this chapter, which focusses on business management in general and not on leadership only. See for an analysis of Xenophon’s concept of leadership, Humphreys (2002).

296 rivalry and eagerness to excel falls on every workman, then I should say: this man has a
297 touch of the kingly nature in him. (Xenophon 2013: 21.8–10)

298 As said, the direct engagement in people management is not a purpose in itself but
299 establishes the know-how of the business manager that enables him to teach the
300 middle management. The middle manager cannot learn to be a good superintendent
301 if the teacher (the business manager) himself models inattentiveness according to
302 Xenophon (2013: 12.18–19). It is primarily “the master’s eye” that makes the middle
303 manager good (Xenophon 2013: 12.20), and this requires at least some direct
304 engagement in the actual business operations of the business manager. With this, a
305 sixth dimension of business management emerges, namely training and teaching of
306 employees and middle managers. The business manager has to manage his sub-
307 ordinates by teaching them how to perform particular skills well, such as producing a
308 grand harvest, making bread out of grain, cloth out of wool, to superintend and take
309 care of the business. We can easily abstract from Xenophon’s examples of the
310 agricultural sector and extent it to any value adding process in business life. By
311 teaching an employee how to make cloth from wool, for instance, the manager
312 doubles the value of the employee because he is able to add more value by making
313 cloth from wool, than only the production of wool, for instance (Xenophon 2013:
314 7.41). Teaching also concern teaching of loyalty to the business manager, although
315 loyalty is best learned by rewarding those who contribute to the prosperity of the
316 business.

317 Although the business manager establishes and maintains a functioning order of
318 the business, Xenophon acknowledges the fundamental role of risk and misfortune.
319 However well the functioning order of the business is established and managed,
320 foresight of future affairs is fundamentally limited, and it is always possible that
321 unforeseen circumstances occur. On the one hand, the emergence of unforeseen
322 circumstances explains why a business needs a well-managed functioning order, in
323 which all employees blindly know where to find equipment and resources to
324 adequately address challenges, like a ship that is assaulted by a hailstorm. We can
325 easily abstract from Xenophon’s examples of hailstorms and frosts that impact
326 agricultural practice, and argue that managers have to deal with imperfect foresight
327 and contingency. On the other hand, although the establishment of a functioning
328 order helps to manage the business well in case of an accident, Xenophon acknowl-
329 edges the fundamental limitation of the role of management. In the context of Greek
330 society, this acknowledgment leads to management practices to propitiate the Gods
331 and to ask the blessing of the Gods before engaging in business operations (Xeno-
332 phon, 5.19–20). This acknowledgment of the fundamental limitation of the role of
333 management of the functioning order of a business is the seventh dimension of
334 business management.

335 The eighth dimension of business management concerns the extension of the
336 business by proper asset management. Proper asset management, on the one hand,
337 prevents that all assets are fixed in buildings, etc. and are therefore not available and
338 usable to make a profit or that these assets are out of direct control (for instance, in
339 foreign countries) but instead are arranged carefully in the proper place and managed

340 to make profit (Xenophon 2013: 3.3). On the other, asset management consists in the
 341 acquisition of new low performing sites and to make them profitable in order to sell
 342 them later on for a higher price, next to autonomous growth of the business via good
 343 management practices. It is important to notice that the purpose of these acquisitions
 344 is not only to make profit but also for reasons of pleasure:

345 ‘Well farmed land’, he would say, ‘costs a lot and can’t be improved;’ and he said that where
 346 there is no room for improvement there is not much pleasure to be got from the land: landed
 347 estate and livestock must be continually improving to give the fullest measure of satisfaction.
 348 (Xenophon 2013: 20.23)

349 But the aim of business management is not to increase property as such. The aim of
 350 business is to satisfy the wants of the business manager (Xenophon 2013: 2.4) and to
 351 serve his friends and the state: “Surely those who can maintain their own estate and
 352 yet have enough left to adorn the city and relieve their friends may well be thought
 353 affluent and powerful man” (Xenophon 2013: 11.10). And even when Xenophon
 354 seems to suggest that the increase of property is a purpose in itself, this increase is
 355 limited by the condition of self-control, which prevents greed and impulsive behavior,
 356 by the condition of fairness and honorability (Xenophon 2013: 7.15; 11.8), and
 357 by the condition of providing pleasure. The ninth and last dimension of business
 358 management is therefore that management is conditioned by the human needs of the
 359 business manager as owner of the assets on the one hand, which may be different for
 360 each individual manager (Xenophon 2013: 2.4), and by his service to society on the
 361 other.⁸ Xenophon provides examples like the entertainment of foreign guests,
 362 playing the benefactor to the citizens and contributing to the defense of the state
 363 (Xenophon 2013: 3.6), but we can easily generalize these examples toward a serving
 364 role of business to society. According to Xenophon, those business managers who
 365 cannot afford these services will be punished by the public (Xenophon 2013: 2.7).

366 In the table below, we summarize the nine dimensions of business management
 367 that we encountered in Xenophon’s work in this section (Table 1).

368 Key Requirements of Business Managers According to Xenophon

369 After having identified the key dimensions of business management according to
 370 Xenophon, we can also identify the key personal characteristics of the business
 371 manager. Although management is a branch of knowledge (*episteme*) according to
 372 Xenophon (2013: 1.1), it in fact concerns the *practice* to employ the assets – arable
 373 land, for instance – in a particular spatial-temporal context and in such a way that
 374 they become profitable – provide a rich harvest, for instance. Business management
 375 then does not only involve knowledge – e.g., understanding the “what” of farming –

⁸Xenophon is against profit maximization as such and his notion of the limitation of the economic sphere by the political sphere resembles Aristotle’s conceptualization in this respect (Aristotle 1944). The further comparison between Aristotle and Xenophon is beyond the scope of this chapter.

t.1	Table 1 Nine dimensions of management that can be found in Xenophon	AU4
t.2	1. Management concerns the establishment and maintenance of a functioning order of the business in order to make profit.	
t.3	2. Management concerns the establishment and maintenance of a functioning order of the business in order to evoke public admiration.	
t.4	3. The establishment and maintenance of a functioning order of the business serves both private and public interests in an integrated way	
t.5	4. Management consists in the engagement of the business manager in the business operations via direct labor.	
t.6	5. Management consists in the engagement of the business manager in the business operations via the work done by other people (a) Collaboration and partnership with other business managers in a management team (b) Establishment of a management system with internal rules and regulations that employees have to comply with (c) Assigning proper roles to trusted middle managers (d) Direct people management of employees and/or middle managers	
t.7	6. Management consists in training and teaching of employees and/or middle managers	
t.8	7. Management acknowledges the fundamental limitations of the establishment and maintenance of the functioning order of the business, and acknowledges the fundamental role of risk and misfortune	
t.9	8. Management consists in proper asset management in order to increase profit and pleasure.	
t.10	9. Management consists in proper asset management in order to serve society	

376 but also skills – e.g., understanding the “how” and “when” of farming (Xenophon
 377 2013:15.8) – as well as the right virtues to successfully operate as a farmer and
 378 produce a grand harvest – e.g., being attentive and able to govern employees, for
 379 instance (Xenophon 2013: 15.5). Just like knowledge and skills, also these virtues
 380 are a necessary condition of successful business management according to
 381 Xenophon. He identified various virtues of the business manager, for instance,
 382 eagerness (in opposition with unwillingness), diligence (in opposite to idleness),
 383 moral courage (in opposite to moral cowardice) care (in opposite to negligence), and
 384 self-control (in opposite to gambling and consorting with bad companions) (Xeno-
 385 phon 2013: 1.16–1.20).

386 In modern language, we can frame these three components of knowledge, skills,
 387 and virtues in terms of the individual *competencies* to use the assets of the business
 388 in a particular context and situation (cf. Blok et al. 2016), so the combination of
 389 knowledge (*episteme*), virtue (*arête*), and skills (*technè*) that enables an individual

390 business manager to fulfil his tasks successfully.⁹ We will discuss now the three
 391 components of these individual competencies of business managers as we can find
 392 them in Xenophon's work.

393 **Knowledge Involved in Management Practices**

394 Xenophon argues that business management concerns a branch of knowledge by
 395 which business managers can increase their business (Xenophon 2013: 6.4). A first
 396 part of this knowledge concerns the knowledge as described by the nine dimensions
 397 how to establish and maintain the functioning order of the business. Business
 398 management builds in this respect a field of knowledge as the manager has to
 399 understand the job and how and when to do it. Otherwise, a doctor could do the
 400 job of a manager as well (Xenophon 2013: 13.2).

401 This knowledge of business management is required for three reasons: first, this
 402 knowledge enables the business manager to engage in various dimensions of
 403 business operations himself (dimensions 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9). Second, this knowledge
 404 enables the business manager to manage the middle managers and employees
 405 (dimension 5). Only a manager who has knowledge about the what, how, and
 406 when can govern his middle managers and employees in a proper way according
 407 to Xenophon: "The greatest lesson to learn is how each job ought to be done; and
 408 you added that if a man doesn't know what to do and how to do it, no good can come
 409 of his management" (Xenophon 2013: 15.2). Third, this knowledge is required to
 410 enable the business manager to teach and train the middle managers:

411 Of course I try to train them myself, Socrates. For the man has to be capable of taking charge
 412 in my absence; so why need he know anything but what I know myself? For if I am fit to
 413 manage the farm, I presume I can teach another man what I know myself. (Xenophon 2013:
 414 12.4)

415 A second layer of knowledge concerns the sector-specific expert knowledge of the
 416 domain in which the business manager is operating, e.g., the what, how, and when of
 417 farming (Xenophon 2013: 15.6). This is required for two reasons. First, this knowl-
 418 edge enables him to engage in the business operations via direct labor himself
 419 (dimension 4). Secondly, a large part of the work of the business manager consists
 420 in teaching, for instance, teaching how to generate a grand harvest in farming. This
 421 requires the business manager to have particular expert knowledge about farming,

⁹Framing the particular *episteme* involved in business management in terms of individual competency solves an interpretation problem (Bragues 2007), as Xenophon calls management an *episteme* and a *technè* in this book, and is actually consulting a good practitioner in management in the second half of the book, and is not only looking for universals or ideas that can be applied in different cases of business management. Although Agamben is right in his observation that management is less epistemic and more a way of being (Agamben 2007: 17), he misses this threefold notion of competency as a combination of *episteme*, *arête* and *technè*.

422 for instance (Xenophon 2013: 7.41). Only if the manager knows what, how, and
423 when to do farming, i.e., when his mastery of farming is established and matured, he
424 is able to teach and manage employees that are involved in farming practices
425 (dimension 6). In this respect, his mastery of the products and services that are
426 produced by the business comes first and is primary, while his mastery of his
427 employees is secondary. At the same time, the manager should be open to learn
428 from others as well, even his employees: "Stand before the loom and be ready to
429 instruct those who know less than you, and to learn from those who know more"
430 (Xenophon 2013: 10.10).

431 Xenophon explores the knowledge that is required for farming, for instance,
432 knowledge about the nature of the soil as fertile soil for the produce, the particular
433 plants that can grow properly in a particular region, the right time for sowing and
434 reaping, given the nature of the soil and the local climate. This indicates that the
435 knowledge that is required is not only the knowledge of the what (theoretical
436 knowledge) but also knowledge of the when and how (practical knowledge) that is
437 developed through practice. This sector-specific expert knowledge holds for the
438 what, how, and when of farming but is different in each specific sector.

439 Another aspect of this practical knowledge is that it is combined with action.
440 Xenophon indicates that many people may know, for instance, the best way of
441 marching in formation through an enemy's country, but that only a few carry it out
442 accordingly. The good manager does not only have knowledge about what ought to
443 be done in a specific situation but also takes care that it is actually done this way
444 (Xenophon 2013: 20.14). Xenophon calls this attentiveness (Xenophon 2013: 20.6),
445 a competency that clearly resonates with the modern competency of action compe-
446 tence, i.e., the ability to actually *take* responsibility (Blok et al. 2016). Attentiveness
447 is characterized by the ability to oversee the work that has to be done and by taking
448 care that the business operations are actually effectuated according to the planning,
449 by planning the work and by effectuating it accordingly (Xenophon 2013: 20.18).

450 A further cognitive aspect is the ability of the business manager to acknowledge
451 the limitations of his individual competencies, and the acknowledgment of roles and
452 tasks of other members of the management team that have to be balanced in order to
453 maintain the functioning order of the business. There are different roles that have to
454 be played in the business and the perfect balance and partnership can be threatened if
455 one of the managers is only focusing on his own role or task, neglecting the
456 importance of the others. "But because both must give and take," good managers
457 are characterized by "memory and attention" (Xenophon 2013: 7.26). Why?

458 Just because they are not equally well endowed with all the same aptitudes, they have the
459 more need of each other, and each member of the pair is the more useful to the other, the one
460 being competent where the other is deficient. (Xenophon 2013: 7.28)

461 Memory (*mneme*) is the retention of the managers' own role and task, for instance,
462 production, and attention (*epimeleian*) is the ability to acknowledge the importance
463 of the role and task of other managers to maintain a profitable business, for instance,
464 sales. This idea is confirmed by Xenophon's argument that the good manager

465 requires the power to practice self-control to acknowledge the necessary balance and
 466 partnership between the different roles and tasks to maintain a profitable business
 467 (Xenophon 2013: 7.26).

468 **Skills Involved in Management Practices**

469 Xenophon repeatedly indicate particular skills of the business manager, like the
 470 ability to train middle man and employees (Xenophon 2013: 5.14); the ability to
 471 govern man by rewarding those subordinates who act properly and punish those who
 472 are disobedient; the ability to motivate and encourage his subordinates (Xenophon
 473 2013: 5.16); a large part of management concerns the skill to maintain the function-
 474 ing order of the business. Xenophon speaks about the manager as superintendent that
 475 guards the rules and regulations of the company, inspects the business and the task
 476 performance of the employees. This skill overlaps with practical knowledge and
 477 constitutes manager's attentiveness.

478 **Virtues Involved in Business Management**

479 Throughout Xenophon's work, several virtues of the business manager are
 480 discussed. Business management requires self-control in general (Xenophon 2013:
 481 7.15) and particular control like eagerness (in opposition with unwillingness),
 482 diligence (in opposite to idleness), moral courage (in opposite to moral cowardice),
 483 and care (in opposite of negligence) (Xenophon 2013:1.18–19). The (middle)
 484 manager should be loyal (Xenophon 2013: 12.5), avoid gambling and consorting
 485 with bad companion (Xenophon 2013: 1.20).

486 According to Xenophon, the good manager is characterized by the practice of
 487 specific virtues, as a virtuous manager will be honored by his employees, and better
 488 manages the business (Xenophon 2013: 7.43). Xenophon identifies particular vir-
 489 tues, like high-mindedness. Further, the manager should act in an integer way by
 490 showing himself as he is and without finery because otherwise he could deceive
 491 people (Xenophon 2013: 9–10). It is not a problem and even desirable if the manager
 492 looks healthy because he is doing physical exercises – Xenophon refers to manage-
 493 ment by walking around, which also strengthen the health of the manager
 494 (Xenophon 2013: 10.11–12) – but it should be real health and no finery like make-
 495 up, high heels, etc. to make a better impression or to pretend to be something more
 496 than he actually is.

497 A final aspect of the manager's virtues is his acknowledgment that his success is
 498 not only dependent on his own performance but dependent on the Gods that grant
 499 prosperity to the one who knows his duties and is thoughtful and careful accordingly
 500 (Xenophon 2013: 11.8). The business manager prays for health, esteem in the city
 501 and wealth, for instance, and acts and behaves according to these prayers (Xenophon
 502 2013: 11.8), e.g., he acts as the best possible version of himself. He honors the
 503 Gods by helping his friends if they need anything and supply what the state lacks
 504 (Xenophon 2013: 11.9–10). In short, the business manager acts according to the way

505 he wants to be seen by the Gods. We can frame these virtues in terms of integrity,
506 sincerity, and modesty.

507 In describing the individual competencies of business managers, we do not
508 distinguish between knowledge, skills, and virtues of business managers and middle
509 managers but provide a complete list of possible knowledge, skills, and virtues that
510 are needed. Although one could expect that knowledge how to establish the func-
511 tioning order of the business is more important for the business manager than for the
512 middle manager, both require people management skills, attentiveness, and virtues
513 like self-control. Xenophon is rather explicit in this, when he argues that in case a
514 business manager assigns a middle manager to perform part of the tasks in his name,
515 the same characteristics of self-control, memory, and attention are applied to the
516 middle managers (Xenophon 2013: 9.11).

517 Another issue that has to be taken into account is that according to Xenophon,
518 nonetheless the important role of teaching and training, this does not imply that he
519 believes that all knowledge, skills, and virtues can be learned. People management
520 skills, for instance, are partly a gift that is required next to teaching:

521 Mind you, I don't go so far as to say that this can be learned at sight or at a single hearing. On
522 the contrary, to acquire these powers a man needs education: he must be possessed of great
523 natural gifts; above all, he must be inspired. For I regard this gift as not altogether human but
524 divine – this power to win willing obedience: it is manifestly a gift of the gods to the true
525 votaries of self-control. (Xenophon 2013: 21.11–12)

526 Finally, according to Xenophon, the competencies of the business manager that are
527 identified in the *Oeconomicus* are not only applicable to *business* management but
528 also to military management and political management.¹⁰ On the one hand, this
529 shows already that business or economic management is integral part of the political
530 management of the state (Blok 2019). On the other hand, it raises the question which
531 of these competencies are particularly applicable on *business* management only.

532 In the table below, the various knowledge, skills, and virtues that can be found in
533 Xenophon's work are summarized.

534 Discussion and Conclusion

535 It is striking that this early conceptualization of management resonates pretty much
536 with the insights provided by Henry Fayol, who can be seen as the founder of
537 management theory. According to Fayol's management theory, which is still taught
538 today at business schools, management has five functions: planning, organizing,
539 instruction, coordination, and control (Fayol 1949). While the first, second, and fifth
540 function of management corresponds with the first dimension of business

¹⁰The question whether political and economic management can be reduced to each other in a general concept of management that holds for both domains, or whether the two remain separate aspects of steering is beyond the scope of this chapter (see Blok 2019).

t.1 **Table 2** Knowledge, skills, and virtues (competencies) of business managers that can be found in Xenophon

t.2	Knowledge	<p>Knowledge how to establish the functioning order of the business, how to manage people, etc.</p> <p>Sector-specific expert knowledge, e.g., the what, how, and when of farming.</p> <p>Practical knowledge to effectuate and to actually engage in the business operations.</p> <p>Self-knowledge of the limitations of the knowledge and skills of the business manager.</p>
t.3	Skills	<p>Training skills</p> <p>People management skills (e.g., reward and punishing, motivation and encouragement, taking care)</p> <p>Maintenance skills (e.g., guarding rules and regulations, inspection)</p>
t.4	Virtues	<p>Self-control, eagerness, diligence, moral courage, care, loyal, high-mindedness.</p> <p>Integrity, sincerity and modesty</p>

541 management that we found in Xenophon's work, the third and fourth function of
 542 management corresponds with the fifth dimension we found in Xenophon's work.
 543 We can even argue that Xenophon's conception of management already moves
 544 beyond the mechanistic perspective of management that is often associated with
 545 scientific management and prefigures the people-oriented perspective that is intro-
 546 duced by the human relations school (Mayo 2003) (Table 2).

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547 Xenophon's insights also resonate pretty much with contemporary definitions of
 548 management, for instance, the one that can be found in the Oxford Dictionary of
 549 Business and Management. Management in the verbal sense concerns the act of
 550 managing an organization or a part of it in order to make most effective use of
 551 available resources, and management in the substantive sense concerns the people
 552 involved in these type of management activities, i.e., the directing, planning, and
 553 running of the business operations (Law 2009; Statt 2004). According to this
 554 dictionary, management has three main components: (1) it concerns an organiza-
 555 tional skill that is taught at business schools, which corresponds with the first
 556 dimension of business management that we found in Xenophon's work; (2) it
 557 concerns the ability to motivate subordinates, which corresponds with the fifth
 558 dimension of business management that we found in Xenophon' work; (3) it has
 559 an entrepreneurial sense and concerns the recognition and exploitation of new
 560 business opportunities, which corresponds with the eighth dimension of business
 561 management that we found in Xenophon's work. Another similarity is that manage-
 562 ment is generally seen as something that can be learned by training, which corre-
 563 sponds with the sixth dimension of business management that we found in
 564 Xenophon's work, although the extent to which people management can be taught
 565 remains disputable, both in Xenophon and in contemporary debates (Law 2009).

566 At the same time, Xenophon's philosophy of management provides a new
567 perspective on business in society. While currently, business management is mainly
568 focused on the establishment and maintenance of a functioning order of the business
569 in order to make profit (first dimension of Xenophon's concept of business manage-
570 ment), Xenophon shows the intrinsic relation between business and society.
571 The aim of business management is not only to evoke public admiration (second
572 dimension of Xenophon's concept of business management), which requires that the
573 business operations both serve private and public interests in an integrated way (third
574 dimension of Xenophon's concept of business management), and that private profits
575 are partly spend to serve society (ninth dimension of Xenophon's concept of
576 business management). This concept of management challenges not only contem-
577 porary conceptualizations of the differences between private and public management
578 in political philosophical debates. It also challenges current business management
579 practices that primarily aim at private interest, and their redistribution via tax
580 payment and philanthropic activities, and calls for the active engagement and
581 integration of societal interests in the business operations in order to increase
582 corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR, seen from Xenophon's perspective,
583 should be an integral part of business management in order to evoke public admi-
584 ration. We could frame public admiration in modern terms as being responsive to
585 societal needs in order to receive a social license to operate by the public. It also
586 requires that business managers integrate both private and public interests in their
587 business operations and solve tensions between economic and societal values. While
588 private interests often prevail over public interests in contemporary business man-
589 agement – think of the example of the food industry that often contribute to public
590 health problems (e.g., obesity, type 2 diabetes) (Tempels et al. 2017) – Xenophon
591 challenges us to integrate private and public interests in business management –
592 think, for example, of food companies that engage in food innovations for public
593 health and serve the common good (Garst et al. 2017).

594 Xenophon's concept of business management challenges contemporary concep-
595 tualizations of management also, because it highlights the necessity of sector-
596 specific expert knowledge and skills, and the necessity of the involvement of
597 business managers in the business operations via direct labor. This challenges
598 contemporary ideas of business management which is often characterized by a strict
599 division of labor between management as superintendent of the business operations
600 and the workforce, and by a strict division of labor between the management
601 knowledge and skills of the business manager, and sector specific or disciplinary

602 knowledge and skills of the workforce. On the one hand, this strict division of labor
603 may explain the instrumentalization of management in contemporary business
604 management, and the disconnection and distance between business management
605 and the business operations at the work floor. On the other hand, Xenophon's
606 concept of business management can help to reconnect and integrate business
607 management and execution. In this, the particular knowledge, skills, and virtues
608 that Xenophon propose may help to develop a broader set of individual competen-
609 cies and know-how that is required for business managers.

610 Finally, Xenophon's concept of business management challenges contemporary
611 conceptualizations of the manager as efficient and clean power, as it is proposed by
612 traditional management science and scientific management in particular (Fayol
613 1949; Taylor 1911). Xenophon helps to acknowledge the limitations and vulnera-
614 bility of business management, i.e., the fundamental role of risk and misfortune and
615 the impossibility to establish full control. There is no such thing as Taylor's "one best
616 way" to operate the business that the manager establishes and maintains. In similar
617 vein, the exploitation of new entrepreneurial business opportunities, which is inte-
618 gral part of business management (Law 2009), may always turn out to fail (Blok
619 2018). This possibility fundamentally limits the ambition of business managers to
620 establish and maintain a functioning order of the business. On the one hand, this idea
621 challenges contemporary "strong" business management practices that primarily aim
622 to increase power and control (Deslandes 2018) and substantiate the so-called
623 "control societies" in the industrial age (Deleuze 1992, 1997). On the other hand,
624 the acknowledgment of failure, risk, and misfortune moves beyond the depiction of
625 the manager as the one who has full power to control, and rehabilitates the role of
626 business management as ability and capacity that involves know-how, actual
627 engagement (action), and virtuous competence.¹¹

628 In future research, these aspects of business management have to be further
629 explored in order to develop a full philosophy of management.¹²

630 Cross-References

- 631 ► [Creating an Effective Business Ethics](#)
- 632 ► [Philosophical Anthropology and Business Ethics](#)
- 633 ► [The Role of Virtue in Good Management](#)

¹¹In this respect, Xenophon can be seen as predecessor of Fiedler's contingency management theory, especially its acknowledgment that there is no absolute best way to manage the business, and the situational character of the management style of the manager (cf. Fiedler and Garcia 1987).

¹²I would like to thank Cristina Neesham and Marian Eabrasu for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

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