Chapter 20
Interview with John Fernandes, CEO of the AACSB

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1. Where did you grow up? Do you think that it has any impact on your life's work?

I grew up in several places. Born on Martha’s Vineyard, I lived also in New Bedford, Mass, Providence, R. I., and Levittown, PA. New Bedford and Providence instigated my competitive mindset and Levittown encouraged my team commitment. Both have helped me as a manager.

2. Where did you go to school? Why there?

My formal higher education (non-executive) was at Babson College and University of Houston. I went to Babson to learn business and management as an undergrad. At UH I got an MA in Public Administration as I was chief auditor at Houston METRO and needed to better understand motivations and management in the quasi-governmental structure. That is where I learned that service excellence was more important than profit margins. This awakening eventually led me to the not-for-profit association business.

3. What did you do after your first degree (if second degree, where was that done, what did you do after that?) How did you get into your first major area?

I went to work for Exxon right out of undergrad school as an internal auditor because I thought it was more about learning how to manage than catching things that go wrong. Ironically, that experience helped me better manage risks before they hurt you and contributed to my effectiveness as a manager. Later experience with Cameron Iron Works doing internal auditing worldwide and leading audit staff at Houston METRO and New York City Transit helped build a global mindset and managerial acumen.