

A DAY IN THE LIFE



MARYAM

Manager
Houston

A MANAGER'S PERSPECTIVE

Maryam is a Manager with Alvarez & Marsal in Houston, where she has worked with the firm's finance leadership, IT and human resources teams. She focuses on maintaining a healthy lifestyle, while contributing and bringing value to A&M, her clients and her team.

In her latest assignment, Maryam is working with a client in the energy space, an area where she brings significant experience and expertise. Here is an account – in Maryam's own words – of a typical day working as an A&M Manager.

6:00 a.m.

My alarm goes off and I start the day by checking email on my BlackBerry in case anything urgent has come through overnight. If I need to respond to someone before I arrive at the office, I do that while I am still at my apartment.

7:15 a.m.

I head to the office at 7:15, aiming to arrive a little earlier than my client. Some clients really appreciate it and, depending on the industry, that time varies. For some engagements, I've had business meetings as early as 6:30 a.m.

7:45 a.m.

After a coffee, I'm ready to put my priorities in line for the day. Once my team arrives, we discuss the tasks for the day and any risks or issues that we need to mitigate. It is important for me to tell them what I am focused on and what our priorities are. Currently, I am working on a cost-reduction project related to labor savings at an oil and gas company that is highly confidential and involves key executives. I spend about half of my day in meetings with each executive, and then try to prepare materials and make decisions incorporating everyone's thoughts and objectives. This task is not unique to my current engagement.

In consulting, you are generally working with various stakeholders who have different ideas on how things get done. Being able to work with and manage various personalities and expectations is a constant, but welcome challenge.

10:00 a.m.

I'm called into an unexpected meeting with the General Counsel. He wants to talk about potential risks and how we need to mitigate certain aspects of our project that we may not have considered. I listen to his concerns, then offer my thoughts. He asks me to participate in a call with another law firm in the afternoon, which I imagine will take a couple of hours. I start to get the feeling it is going to be a chaotic day. Many times on this engagement, I've been pulled into last-minute conversations and meetings, and I've realized how important it is to have a supportive team who can help pick up in areas where I may not be able to focus.



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10:45 a.m.

I get back to my desk and start working on validating a model I've been building around the annualized savings of the cost-reduction effort. The VP of Operations opens my door slightly and asks me to come to his office. We discuss conversations he has had with counterparts in Asia early in the morning, as well as his thoughts and reactions. Before I realize it, I have a list of to-dos. When clients begin pulling you into conversations more and more, it is a good sign, because it indicates that they value your input and want your involvement. Building trusted relationships with the client is always a focus of mine, but this takes time, proven results and hard work.

2:30 p.m.

We have a status meeting with all of the C-level executives and the A&M team. Our meeting is only scheduled for 30 minutes, but it becomes clear early on that the CEO has a few things to cover with his direct reports before I start giving a status update of our cost-reduction project. Our A&M Managing Director is in the meeting, and I'm happy he is there to cover some questions in his area of expertise. A number of issues come up during the meeting and it goes over almost an entire hour. While I try to be sensitive to meeting times, sometimes I let a meeting run its course because it's hard enough getting the right executives in the room together at the same time.

6:00 p.m.

The call is over and I'm ready to leave the office and go for a run outside. I can't emphasize enough the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Being able to clear my mind after a hectic day is crucial. Some nights I get together with previous clients or colleagues. Consulting is interesting in that you almost have two jobs. One with the firm that employs you, and one with your client. You have to make sure you dedicate enough time to both – whether that means drinks with your clients after work or dinner with your team to thank them for all the hard work, it is part of the fun. Maintaining a genuine and thoughtful relationship with your team is crucial to the success of any client engagement.

11:15 a.m.

I arrive back to my computer and start reading and responding to e-mails, while informing my team of the latest news. I realize I am starving and, luckily, I have a healthy lunch waiting for me in the refrigerator. I warm it up and bring it back to my computer to continue working.

12:00 p.m.

The CEO walks into the conference room where I am working with my team and asks me to pull some data and analytics for him. Fortunately, I didn't have lunch plans and spend the next two hours gathering the materials he has requested.

4:00 p.m.

Back in my office, I jump on a call with the General Counsel. As the conversation begins, I update the outside legal firm of the issues and risks related to our project. They request data from us and the General Counsel gives me authority to begin interfacing with them. When working for a company, legal issues need to be treated delicately and it is possible to forget I'm actually not an employee of my client, even though sometimes I feel like I am.

8:30 p.m.

I log back online with a cup of tea in hand. I finish up work from the day while making a quick dinner and fall asleep around 11:00 p.m.

ABOUT MARYAM NADERI

Maryam is a Manager with Alvarez and Marsal Business Consulting and has worked with the firm's IT, finance leadership and human resources teams. Maryam brings broad industry experience in the software, telecom, higher education, non-profit and energy fields. Her roles have spanned across training, process design, reduction in force, software selection, organization design and cost modeling, among others.

Maryam's notable assignments have included: facilitating strategic cost reduction and reorganization of a \$700 million contract drilling company across an entire organization from back office to operations; facilitating the ERP software and leading the system integrator selections for a \$700 million contract drilling company; software selection and implementation of Oracle Hyperion Planning for a \$5 billion provider of contractor services.

Maryam earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and Chinese from Trinity University. She is fluent in Farsi and Chinese (Mandarin) and speaks conversational Spanish. She is certified in Hyperion System 9 Financial Management and Hyperion Planning System 11.

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