

Chapter 3

Basic Management Functions

Great success in any enterprise comes from a balanced combination of three elements: the mission, the leadership, and the people who make it happen. By far the most important is the mission.

—Roger Dawson¹

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Establish the benefits of planning and address the implications of the failure to plan.
- Describe the types of plans used in business activity and identify and explain the key elements of planning.
- Establish the role of planning in an organization's vision and mission.
- Establish the significance of goals and objectives in planning.
- Define action plans and examine the elements of a typical action plan.
- Define organizing and describe its place among the basic management functions.
- Convey the importance of values in organizational life.
- Explain the concept of authority and describe how authority is apportioned to those responsible for its application.
- Define the concepts of "unity of command" and "span of control" as they apply to the role of the first-line supervisor.
- Define the informal organization and describe its potential impact on organizational functioning.
- Define coordinating and controlling, and describe their relationship to the other management functions.

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KEY TERMS

Planning: The projection of actions or desired results in a time period that has not yet arrived, whether minutes or years into the future.

Organizing: The establishment of the structure within which work gets accomplished.

Unity of Command: For each task that must be done, the employee who performs it is directly accountable to someone for its completion.

Span of Control: The number of employees who report to a single leader or who can be effectively supervised by a single leader.

Coordinating: The process of synchronizing activities and participants so that they function smoothly with each other.

Controlling: Follow-up and correction, as necessary.

PLANNING

Planning is the most fundamental of the management functions, and as such it logically precedes all other functions. Planning is the projection of actions intended to reach specific goals. In other words, a plan is a blueprint for the future; it is the expression of what we wish to accomplish or the best prediction of what might occur in the future. Planning begins with the questions of *what* and *why*, then focuses on the *how*, *when*, *who*, and *where*.

Benefits of Planning

Planning ensures that we work effectively and efficiently, or at the very least, it improves our chances of doing so. Planning reduces procrastination, ensures continuity, and provides for more intelligent use of resources. Planning improves our chances of doing things right the first time, reducing the chances of false starts and resulting in the satisfaction of having everything under control at present and knowing what to do next.

Planning is proactive. It decreases the need to manage from crisis to crisis. It is a prerequisite for practically all necessary managerial activities, including teaching or mentoring, preparing for and running committee and staff meetings, conducting performance appraisal discussions or employment interviews, preparing budgets, and numerous other activities. Planning is essential for coping with crises such as fires, natural disasters, strikes, bomb threats, hostage incidents, and all other forms of emergencies.

Because plans work out exactly as anticipated only once in a while, why bother? Is not planning just wasted effort, consuming time that could be

better spent acting and doing? Perhaps those whose thinking runs along such lines feel uneasy because they can see the amount of time spent in planning but are uneasily aware that nothing concrete is happening during that time to advance the completion of the work. However, those who discount the value of planning often discover that, without planning, their efforts are wasted on false starts and misdirection such that valuable time is consumed in setting things right.

If things often do not happen exactly as we planned for them to happen, what have we gained by planning? We have been able to apply our efforts more effectively than without a plan, and even though we might not have hit the target precisely, we nevertheless have acquired some important information. As a result we know by how much the target was missed, and we can proceed to determine whether (1) we need to readjust our direction to attain the target or (2) conditions have changed such that the target should be adjusted. In any case, the effort expended in planning is never wasted.

We have all undoubtedly heard the expression, "If we fail to plan, we plan to fail." This is largely true. Without planning, even that which does get done suffers to an extent because it has consumed more time and effort than necessary, and without the direction established through planning, the pursuit of any particular result can be an expensive journey into chaos.

Classifications of Plans

Strategic plans are plans made for achieving long-range goals and living up to the expectations expressed in statements of mission and values. Without strategic planning, few visions are realized.

Tactical plans translate broad strategies into specific objectives and action plans.

Organizational plans begin with a table of organization. They include position descriptions, staffing, and channels of communication.

Physical plans concern topography (for example, the site of a building, the layout of an office, or the location of diagnostic and therapeutic equipment).

Functional plans are plans concerned with the workings of major functional units such as a nursing service, clinical laboratory, human resources department, financial or clinical services, and others.

Operational plans address systems, work processes, procedures, quality control, safety, and other supportive activities.

Financial plans address the inflow and outflow of money, profit and loss, budgets, cost and profit centers, charges, and salaries.

Career planning, time management, and daily work planning are also vital forms of planning. Daily work planning, the simplest, most elementary

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form of planning in the working world, frequently proves to be the form of planning most immediately beneficial to the individual supervisor.

Key Elements of Planning

The essential elements of planning are vision, mission, goals, objectives, strategy, and action.

Vision

A vision is an image without great detail. It acts as a flag around which the troops will rally.

—M. Hammer and J. Champy²

Vision statements and mission statements deal with purpose and alignment at an organizational level. Without these, the energy of an organization can become scattered rather than focused. Leaders create a vision around which people rally, and managers marshal the resources to pursue that vision. Vision provides a premise that leaders commit to and dramatize to others. A vision statement should not read like a financial report or a concise statement of purpose. Rather, an effective vision statement must tap peoples' emotions; it must conjure up a compelling positive vision that fires people up. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., provided perhaps the best and simplest example of a vision statement with his "I have a dream" speech.

An organization's vision statement should be clear, exciting, and should leave broad latitude for the pursuit of new opportunities. The vision of top management must be broad enough that the vision of the lower echelons of the organization fits within it.³

One segment of an organization's vision can be aimed at the consumer (for example, "Our vision is to have a fully staffed, high-quality, committed workforce that is efficient and effective in providing the highest quality service in our community"). Another portion can be directed at employees:

We envision an organization staffed by dedicated, enthusiastic, customer-oriented people who act as partners. Our people readily adapt to change, seek continuous technical improvements, and exhibit a caring attitude. Our organization is preferred by most patients and admitting physicians. It is the darling of third-party payers and is a local preferred employer.

An organization's vision must be sustained through action consistent with the elements of the vision. Next, a vision is translated into an organizational

mission that is then expressed in a mission statement. Goals are enunciated, strategy is developed, and action plans are constructed.

Mission

Mission statements proclaim the purpose of an organization or department, literally stating why this entity exists. Like visions, mission statements should serve to define the organization and inspire its employees. Too many supposed mission statements are vague, platitudinous, and quickly forgotten; most of them cannot pass the “snicker test” (the informal test that ought to be well understood by anyone who has ever reacted to a vague or hollow statement or motto as “corny” or “silly”). Too many organizations work hard to develop vision and mission statements, then let them become just framed pieces of paper decorating a wall.

An effective mission statement must be expressed clearly in a single, brief paragraph and in language that everyone can understand. When workers participate actively in the formulation of mission statements, they understand why the organization exists and what their work is all about. This understanding greatly increases the chances that they will do their best to make the virtual visions come to life.

Some mission statements include the vision plus goals and strategy. They answer the key questions of why (“Why does this organization or department exist?”), what (“What is our goal?”), and how (“How will we achieve our goal?”). What follows is a departmental mission statement appropriate for a small hospital unit. Note that it begins with a goal, adds objectives, and concludes with a strategy:

We seek a service that surpasses the expectations of our clinician customers. We will improve the quality of reported results, shorten turnaround time, reduce costs, and promote a spirit of cooperation between our staff, our customers, vendors, and associates in other departments. To accomplish this we will meet weekly to analyze service needs, investigate complaints and suggestions, and explore new methods or equipment. We will make recommendations to management, monitor progress, and evaluate results.

Before accepting a mission statement, those responsible for managing the department or unit must ensure that it answers four critical questions:

1. Do you know where you want to be 5 years from now?
2. Is the mission clearly and definitively expressed in a single paragraph?
3. Is the statement expressed in language that a 10th grader can understand?
4. Will the mission be believable to everyone in the organization?

36 | Chapter 3: Basic Management Functions*Goals and Objectives*

Leaders share their visions and involve their associates in setting goals and objectives. Goals are characterized by specific ends or conclusions, whereas mission statements are generally open-ended. Many employees prefer activities leading to specific conclusions; for example, they usually prefer to work on projects rather than perform routine work because projects have clear destinations. All riders on a train know when they have arrived at the station. A significant number of retirees die shortly after retiring because mentally their goal—the end of employment—has been reached and they have never developed a clear mission for dealing with the future.

Targets become more specific when goals are subdivided into objectives. Objectives are milestones to be passed on the journey toward reaching a goal. Objectives should be realistic, understandable, measurable, behavioral, achievable, and specific. An objective such as “reduce inventory costs” is not sufficiently specific. Instead, use “reduce inventory costs by 10% within 12 months”; any appropriate objective should relate to *what* is to be done, *how much* is to be done, and by *when* it should be done.

Assign priorities to objectives and set target dates. Objectives should always be expressed in writing to provide a permanent record and to keep them foremost in the minds of employees. Although there should always be some degree of challenge—employees are motivated by achieving difficult but not impossible tasks—objectives must be attainable. If a plan holds little chance of success, it will frustrate rather than motivate. Here are some examples of over-inflated objectives:

- Within 12 months, a repeat survey of employee morale will show an increase in the average employee satisfaction rating from the current level 3 to level 2.
- By the end of the next quarter, we will provide point-of-care testing for all patients in the north wing.

Following are examples of objectives for a more comprehensive goal relating to customer satisfaction. Note that although these are open-ended, all are valid as ongoing objectives for this hypothetical organizational unit:

- Hire employees who are client oriented, technically or professionally competent, and likely to remain onboard.
- Provide an orientation and training program that stresses client satisfaction.
- Anticipate changes in customers’ needs or expectations, and continually monitor customer satisfaction.

- Encourage all employees to participate in the planning and execution of new or improved services and in solving customer problems.
- Provide an intensive continuing education program that stresses client satisfaction.

Strategy

Successful organizations build on their existing strengths and eliminate their weaknesses or render them irrelevant. They constantly search for innovative ways to please their customers. The moves they make to please their customers, to position themselves relative to their markets, to adapt to the changing environment, and to address their relationships to their competition are all reflections of their strategy. Keys to success in the pursuit of an organizational strategy include:

- Vision, mission, goals, objectives, and action plans
- Committed and visible support of top management
- Effective and efficient systems, processes, and procedures
- Quality tools and techniques
- Sufficient time to carry out plans
- Empowered, caring, competent employees

Action Plans

Action plans are typically composed of five steps:

Step 1. Identify the Problem or Need

To identify and understand the problem or need, answer the following questions:

- Why is there a need for change? What is wrong with the present service or system?
- What are our strengths and weaknesses and those of our competitors?
- What are the potential gains, losses, or risks of a change?
- Who will be affected?
- What will it cost?
- What is likely to happen if no action is taken?

Step 2. Obtain and Analyze Data

Select a method of collecting information and build a databank. Be thorough when you collect information. Become familiar with statistical analysis and the use of charts, electronic data interchange, electronic mail, and

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workflow automation. Document current deficiencies and opportunities for improvement.

Step 3. Determine the Best Action

Appropriate action plans should answer the following questions:

- What is to be done?
- Why must it be done?
- When should it be started and when should it be completed?
- Who is to do it?
- Where is the action to take place?
- How should it be done?

Step 4. Carry Out the Plan

It is essential that a plan be doable, understandable, comprehensive, cost-effective, approved, and periodically reviewed. Complex plans should always include an executive summary describing how the proposal affects the mission statement and service quality and operating costs. Also to be added is your assessment of how you believe clients and employees will react to the changes wrought by the plan. The implementation process includes:

- Identifying resources (for example, people, supplies, equipment, facilities, time, and funds)
- Preparing checklists of important tasks to be performed
- Assigning tasks, authority, and responsibility
- Preparing work schedules
- Providing necessary training
- As necessary, formulating new policies, systems, and procedures

Sequencing and Scheduling of Tasks. Use Gantt charts, flowcharts, and flow diagrams or other logic diagrams to document tasks and analyze the times required for the work processes. On a chart, chronologically list the tasks to be done on one side opposite the appropriate calendar periods.

Preparing a Budget. Estimate all costs associated with each task. Build in some slack for inflation or other unanticipated costs. Prepare a cost spreadsheet with tasks listed vertically and cost factors (for example, labor, supplies) listed horizontally and totaled at the right of each line.

Establishing Priorities. Priorities are a vital part of any plan. To avoid frustration, be flexible; that is, remain prepared to modify your priority list as circumstances change. Unexpected interruptions are the rule rather than the exception.

Step 5. Monitor the Process, Report Progress, and Make Adjustments

Formal control is planned control consisting of data gathering, analysis, and documentation. Informal control consists of day-by-day observations and impromptu meetings with other participants. Informal controls are more proactive than formal controls. Periodic status reports should be required for large projects.

Monitoring progress usually necessitates tying up some loose ends. These may involve changes in plans, reassignment of tasks, removal of barriers, or requests for additional resources. In all instances, the earlier a problem can be identified, the easier it is to correct.

ORGANIZING

Organizing is the process of gearing up to implement decisions that result from the planning process; in other words, it is the establishment of the structure in which the work gets done. Organizing involves delineating tasks and establishing a framework of authority and responsibility for the people who will perform these tasks; that is, building the aforementioned structure. It further involves analyzing the workload, distributing it among employees, and coordinating the activities so that work proceeds smoothly.

Supervisors perform organizing functions using the authority assigned to their positions in the organizational hierarchy, or “table of organization” or “organizational chart” as it is sometimes described. Essential organizing tools include policies, procedures, work rules, position descriptions, and the all-important activities of assigning and delegating.

Values

Corporate Values

In value statements most employers express what they regard as evidence of loyalty, expected behavior, or ethical practice. Organizational cultures encompass and reflect the values that guide an organization in its daily activities; that is, the sum total of all the ways people are expected to act in pursuing the goals and objectives of the organization. As work moves across departmental boundaries—for example, the flow of patients moving from admitting to a nursing unit, to radiology and back—inevitable differences in values affect what is done and how and when things are done.

When corporations overall or individual supervisors or other members of management violate their own values, employees become cynical.

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They remember what they have been told, and they talk of past promises that have been broken. They use such descriptors as “unfair” or “double-talk,” accusing management of “talking the talk” but not “walking the walk.”

Personal Values

What we as individuals consider ethical or unethical depends on our personal value systems, those fundamental concepts and motives in which we believe. Personal values concern what is important regarding work, for example, challenges, tasks, recognition, creativity, and authority. These values encompass relationships, personal finances, living and recreational activities, hobbies, and entertainment. Other values may include ambition and the desire for fame or the wish to have one’s own enterprise. Attitudes continually reflect the core beliefs and values of individuals. Attitudes can change when beliefs and values change, but that happens neither easily nor often.

Authority

Authority possessed by an individual in the organizational hierarchy is formal power that is delegated; that is, passed on down the hierarchy to the point at which it is to be applied. Supervisors require authority to fulfill their responsibilities. It is axiomatic that people should not be given responsibilities without sufficient authority to completely fulfill those responsibilities and thus get the job done. Although authority is the power that makes a management job a reality, it can be relatively weak in its application. To be effectively applied, authority must be supplemented by other conditions or characteristics as follows:

- Expertise; for example, licensure, certification, knowledge, skill, or experience
- Credibility, as in being trusted and respected
- Leadership skill, whether natural or acquired
- Persuasiveness or charisma
- Influence, sometimes as determined by whom one knows or is connected with

Ideally, the extent of a supervisor’s authority is expressed in the position description. Some of the more important activities over which supervisors possess variable amounts of authority fall into three categories: personnel

administration, fiscal administration, and procedures. Personnel administration includes:

- Selecting, orienting, and training new employees
- Assigning or delegating to subordinates
- Scheduling and approving overtime
- Coaching, counseling, and disciplining employees

The tasks of fiscal administration include:

- Selecting supplies or equipment or approving such purchases
- Selecting vendors and establishing inventory levels

The third category, procedures, involves:

- Selecting or modifying methods or processes
- Formulating departmental policies and rules and enforcing them
- Participating in administrative activities (for example, quality management, safety, and education)

Unity of Command

The principle of unity of command originally meant that each employee reported to one and only one superior. However, matrix management arrangements, split-reporting relationships, and other complex organizational patterns have altered that concept. Presently, unity of command simply means that for each task that must be done, the employee who performs it is directly accountable to someone. From the first-line supervisor's viewpoint, unity of command ordinarily represents a normal working arrangement under which every task that must be done is assigned to someone, and each person responsible for performing a specific task is accountable to the supervisor. This means that never, at any time, should there be cause for the department's employees to wonder: whose job is this?

Span of Control

In simplest terms, span of control refers to the number of employees who report to a single leader. In practical terms, it is a reckoning of how many employees a single supervisor can effectively manage, how many the supervisor can keep track of and still provide the necessary supervisory attention.

Factors such as computers and autonomous work teams have led top management to expand spans of control and strip away layers of management. Organizational flattening, which often accompanies reengineering,

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reorganizing, or other restructuring efforts, can also reduce management layers and force more responsibility down to lower management levels. The result is that many supervisors are increasingly likely to find themselves directing greater numbers of people. Staff reductions, which have sometimes had the effect of replacing highly qualified personnel with workers of lesser overall qualifications, have placed additional burdens on overworked supervisors. This condition is compounded by the fact that most of today's supervisors are left with fewer fellow supervisors from whom to solicit advice and support.

A supervisor's effective span of control depends on numerous factors, including the skill level of the employees, employee mobility, and the variability of the department's work, so it is not possible to supply a magic number representing an ideal span of control. However, when the number of people who report to a supervisor is too low, the supervisor, having too little to do at times, often micromanages, much to the discomfort of the employees. When the number of people reporting to a supervisor is too great, there is the danger of problems and needs going unaddressed and the likelihood that some employees will not receive the supervisory attention they require.

Staffing

The staffing process starts with human resource planning, recruitment, personnel selection, and orientation of new employees. It continues with training, career development, control, and the appraisal of performance. It sometimes leads to promotion, transfer, demotion, or separation.

It is essential to avoid staffing with people who are clearly over-qualified; these people will not remain long, so personnel costs and turnover can be excessive. Under-qualified job candidates may or may not represent good investments; some may make it, and some may fail. The key factor is whether they can be trained without excessive cost or loss of time. These individuals, when trained, are less likely to be bored with routine tasks, and their turnover rate is generally lower than that of overly qualified people.

Personnel availability and morale are enhanced when you can adjust work hours to suit your employees. More than half of all healthcare workers are female, and many prefer work hours that allow them to meet family responsibilities. Part-time employment, flextime, and job-sharing opportunities can be powerful incentives. The use of these staffing strategies also helps provide the needed flexibility for jobs that experience peaks and troughs of activity.

Assigning

Assigning and delegating have one thing in common: If they are not done, the supervisor is left to do all the work, a clearly unrealistic situation. Assigned tasks are those described in position descriptions. These are activities ordinarily performed by employees in each particular job classification, and the employees have limited choice in their specific assignments. A delegated task, on the other hand, involves transfer of authority, with accompanying responsibility, from supervisor to employee. It is often voluntary. Delegation is addressed in depth elsewhere in this text.

A composite list of the qualifications of all your department's employees is like all the pieces in a set of Tinkertoys® in that all the pieces (qualifications) are not always used; in fact, some pieces may be missing. Your task is to match the expertise and available work hours to the requirements of the department.

Supervisors who maintain an inventory chart of the skills of their employees find such charts helpful in assigning backup services. They also use this information when designing educational and cross-training programs.

Supervisors make the specific assignments and ensure that these assignments are carried out. To do this effectively, supervisors must know:

- What must be done
- What equipment and supplies are needed
- What authority the supervisor has
- What quality and productivity requirements must be met
- What the cost constraints are
- Where each task is to be performed
- Where supplies and service supports are found
- Where to obtain help
- Who does what
- When the work must be done (deadlines, turnaround time, etc.)
- When changes must be made
- How the work is to be performed (method or procedure)
- How well, how quickly, and how economically the work must be done
- Why the work must be done (how an employee's work fits into the big picture)

It is also necessary for the supervisor to make an honest effort to match each assignment with an individual's ability. The supervisor must:

- Ensure that the employee to be assigned has time available in which to accomplish the work. Overloading an employee, even inadvertently, is unfair to the individual and it creates the risk of the employee's failure to do justice to the task.

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- Provide all necessary training. It is never appropriate to hand a task to an individual and let that person learn by trial and error.
- Explain each assignment without overloading the explanation with trivial details. Ask the employee to repeat the instructions or perform the work under observation to ensure he or she understands.
- Provide complicated orders in writing, perhaps in procedural form.
- Alert the assignee to potential pitfalls, barriers, or constraints, and let the person know how, when, and where to report problems or ask for help.
- Whenever possible, make holistic assignments; that is, assign a complete task to an individual rather than breaking it up. For example, many nurses prefer being responsible for all the nursing care of an individual patient rather than providing only part of that care, such as passing medications.

The Informal Organization

Every organization has beneath its visible surface a network that constitutes another arrangement of interrelationships not represented on any organizational chart. This is the informal organization, which at times is perhaps even more powerful simply because of its lack of visibility. This informal organization even has its own communication system; we refer to it as “the grapevine.”

There are, of course, labor unions, which are certainly visible and have their share of power and influence partially inside but also outside of the formal organization. In addition, the informal organization includes persons or groups that have no formal power but are able to intimidate or ostracize workers and, at times, even unofficially negotiate with management. Within formal work groups there are cliques in which people gravitate toward informal leaders based on expertise, personality, persuasiveness, charisma, or physical power. Sometimes informal leaders and union leaders possess more power than the organization’s formal leaders. When members of these informal groups are frustrated or are led to feel disloyal, they may sabotage equipment, block workflow, start malicious rumors, or even inflict physical harm.

Supervisors must be aware of informal networks. An astute supervisor can often tap into the grapevine and use it to advantage. The grapevine can carry correct information when formal means cannot be trusted or when formal means are not fast enough to squelch rumors by circulating the truth. The supervisor who is well tuned to the grapevine is often in a position to learn what is really going on at the employee level. For all of the

frustration it can create, the grapevine nevertheless has two extremely helpful attributes: speed and depth of penetration. It often carries information faster than most official means, and it reaches people who would never bother to read a memo or a newsletter or bulletin board notice.

The astute supervisor also identifies the informal leaders and makes a special effort to get along with them. These informal leaders sometimes turn out to be strong candidates for promotion to supervisory positions and likely employees to handle important delegated tasks.

COORDINATING

Coordinating is the process of synchronizing activities and participants so that they function smoothly with each other. When coordination fails, conflict and confusion run rampant. Proactive coordinating involves activities intended to anticipate and prevent problems. Reactive coordinating consists of regulatory activities aimed at the maintenance of existing structural and functional arrangements and corrective activities that rectify errors after they have occurred.

The more steps and the more gatekeepers involved in a workflow process, the greater the need for coordination. Joint projects and services that require interdepartmental cooperation also demand active coordination. Breakdowns in coordination are largely a result of faulty communication, personality conflicts, turf battles, and job design problems. Other causes include training deficiencies, flawed physical arrangements, conflicts of authority, and lack of appropriate policies or procedures.

Workflow coordination is easier when every employee interaction is regarded as a customer service engagement with a provider and a service user (client or customer). Recipients are encouraged to provide positive or negative feedback to the providers and make suggestions for improving such interactions.

Coordinating Requires Persuasive Ability

The definition of management can be expanded to include not only getting things done through people but also getting things done *with* people. “With people” signifies the importance of influencing persons who are neither bosses nor subordinates. These relationships are lateral, or collegial, rather than hierarchical. As organizations grow more complex and more highly specialized, supervisors are likely to spend less time with superiors and subordinates and more time with their peers. Peer groups include

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internal and external customers, vendors, and other outside providers, as well as employees who precede or follow them in workflows.

Most managers and supervisors are involved in both intradepartmental and interdepartmental coordination. The inability to function effectively and efficiently as a coordinator in such relationships can impair careers.

Tools of Coordination

Committees

A major purpose of committees is to increase coordination, but many committees are costly, time consuming, and often ineffective. The strength of committee action comes through a synthesis of divergent viewpoints.⁴

Coordinators

As interdepartmental coordination becomes more important, new coordinating and facilitating roles may be established. Coordinators play an important role in quality management, employee safety, risk management, customer service, staff training, and cost containment.

Improved Interdepartmental Coordination

To achieve improved interdepartmental coordination, and with it improvements in communication and cooperation, keep in mind the following points:

- Make all service requests clear and direct. Whenever possible, make the requests directly to the person or persons who provide the service.
- Anticipate negative responses to requests and problems, and be ready to respond positively.
- When a request is initially made, secure agreement on the date or time by which the necessary action will be taken.
- Always follow up a verbal request with the same in written form; a verbal request can be forgotten or ignored, but any request is less likely to fall by the wayside if documented.
- Listen to the problems of employees and do your best to empathize.
- Seek collaborative (win-win) solutions whenever possible, but be prepared to compromise when necessary.
- Treat others as partners or collaborators; let them know this is “ours” rather than “mine.”

- Always place teamwork above competition.
- Be patient and reasonable, never demanding or critical.
- Avoid becoming upset and avoid upsetting the other person; anger only hinders the cooperative process.
- Eliminate all kidding and sarcasm from your repertoire. You never know when innocent kidding could be taken to heart. Also, sarcasm is never found among the legitimate tools of communication.
- Always strive to know your staff and your colleagues better and to improve your understanding of their work.
- Always express sincere appreciation for the efforts of others. Honest appreciation of work well done is one of the surest ways of ensuring that future work is well done.

CONTROLLING

The simplest and perhaps the most appropriate definition of controlling is follow-up and correction. Controlling is an essential activity because the environment in which all supervisors work is in a constant state of change. What applies today may well not be valid tomorrow; the conditions that prevail when a project is started or a decision is made do not necessarily remain static. For an undertaking that is planned to extend over several weeks, for example, we can rest assured that a number of changes potentially having some effect on the project's outcome will occur and that some of these, if not addressed, could conceivably derail the undertaking.

We must keep in mind that planning is by its very nature an uncertain process. Whether a chief executive officer planning on what the organization will be doing 5 years from now or a first-line supervisor planning what to do tomorrow morning, planning remains a person's best estimate of what the future will hold. Because we never know the future for sure until it becomes the present, we can never know for certain whether our plans will be realized exactly as planned. Thus controlling and monitoring what occurs as a plan unfolds or monitoring the implementation of a decision and making new decisions or adjustments as needed, is always necessary for remaining on track toward the desired results.

Follow-up on implementation has traditionally been the weakest part of the decision-making process, and it is likely also the weakest part of the implementation of any plan. Lack of follow-up is often the primary reason for errors large or small occurring during implementation of any decision. Because the environment is in a constant state of change, it is usually necessary to make adjustments to any decision or plan to ensure success.

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It will seem at times—and rightly so—that the supervisor works much of the time in a continuing cycle of deciding, coordinating, and controlling. These actions constitute the essence of getting things done.

JUST FOUR?

The preceding paragraphs introduced and discussed four processes identified as “basic management functions.” You need not look far in management literature to discover lists of five, six, or even seven “basic” management functions. Why the differences? The differences in how supposed basic management activities are identified are essentially artificial, mere conveniences to assist our recognition and understanding of the things that managers do. Thus, we find the often-cited breakdown “planning, organizing, *directing*, coordinating and controlling” and the sometimes cited “planning, organizing, *leading*, coordinating, and controlling.” There are some approaches that include *staffing* as a separately designated function; while some breakdowns—including the one presented in this chapter—include *staffing* activities as part of organizing. As to the absence of *directing* or *leading* in the present breakdown, it is suggested that directing and leading are largely overlapping terms that can either or both refer to the application of all of the other basic management activities; that is, one cannot plan, organize, coordinate, or control without directing or leading. Thus, directing or leading is essentially by definition part of everything a manager does.

Think About It

Conditions change, circumstances change, the environment is forever in a state of flux, so oftentimes plans are themselves not particularly useful. However, the planning *process* is invaluable. And since plans are rarely realized exactly as planned, to a considerable extent the typical supervisory job is a nearly constant exercise in coordinating and controlling.

Questions for Review and Discussion

1. If we believe that planning is so important, why, knowing this, do we so often rush directly into doing without pausing to plan?
2. What do we stand to gain from applying planning principles to supposedly routine activities?

3. What are two significant reasons why a particular objective or target may not be attained as planned?
4. What are the principal characteristics of planning that apparently cause many to bypass it altogether?
5. What kinds of plans are of most concern to the working supervisor? Why?
6. What are the primary differences between mission and vision?
7. What are the three essential components of an appropriate objective?
8. Describe fully the relationship between planning and organizing.
9. As a supervisor, why is it important for you to be fully knowledgeable of the precise limits of your authority?
10. Explain how the controlling function does or does not relate significantly to the planning function.
11. Why is it necessary for an organization to have a formal code of ethics? Shouldn't sound personal values be sufficient?
12. Which, if any, of the functions of planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling are more the concerns of higher management than of the first-line supervisor? Why might this be so?
13. How would you handle a situation in which the supervisor of another department approaches you with a strong complaint about one of your employees?
14. Why is it stressed that effective coordination requires persuasive ability?
15. As a supervisor, what would be your response when seriously incorrect information reaches you by way of the grapevine?

Essay Question: Authority and Responsibility

In essay form, describe in detail the appropriate relationship between authority and responsibility in the processes of assignment and delegation. Concerning authority and responsibility, explain why only one of these can actually be fully assigned or delegated. In doing so, comment on the relationship between authority and responsibility under three possible sets of conditions: authority exceeds responsibility, responsibility exceeds authority, and authority and responsibility are equal.

Case: And Here We Go Once More

The position of business manager at Smalltown Hospital has been a hot seat, with incumbents changing frequently. When the position was vacated last May,

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the four senior employees in the department were interviewed. All were told that because they were at the top of grade and the compensation structure for new supervisors had not yet caught up with that of other positions, the position would involve just a miniscule increase in pay, an increment one could readily consider insultingly small. All four refused the position, and all were given the impression that they were not really considered qualified just yet but that they might be considered for supervision again at a later date.

That same month a new business manager was hired from the outside, and the four senior employees were instructed to show their new boss in detail how things worked in the department. Over the following several months the business manager's boss, the finance director, told all four senior employees that they had "come along very well" and would be considered for the manager's position should it again become vacant.

In October of that same year the new manager resigned. However, none of the four senior employees got the job; the process was repeated, and again a new manager was hired from the outside.

Instructions

1. You are advised upfront to avoid allowing the most blatant errors and transgressions revealed in the preceding case study to lead you to focus exclusively on the inappropriate management behavior. Rather, we are concerned here with operational planning. Viewing the department and its needs from the perspective of the finance director, describe how this shoot-from-the-hip manager, with appropriate forethought, could have properly planned for the department's supervisory transition.
2. Also, summarize what you believe to be the inappropriate consequences of the finance director's failure to plan.

Case: Looking for the Limits of Authority

When you accepted the position as supervisor of a housekeeping team, your manager, June Arnold, the assistant director of building services, told you that you would not find a great deal of decision-making guidance written out in policy and procedure form. As June put it, "Common sense is the overriding policy." However, June cautioned you about the need to see her concerning matters involving employee discipline because the organization was presently sensitive to union organizing overtures in the service areas.

Early in your 3rd week on the job there was an occurrence that seemed to call for routine disciplinary action. Remembering June's precaution, you tried to see her several times over a period of 3 days. Being unable to get to her and getting no response to the messages you left, you went ahead and took action rather than risk credibility through procrastination. When you were finally able to see June and explain what you had done, she said, "No big deal. Common sense, like I said."

Some weeks later a similar situation arose. Again you could not get to June, and again you took what you believed to be appropriate action, but this time the problem involved an employee you later learned was a strong informal leader within a contingent of generally dissatisfied employees. The disciplinary action blew up in your face and provided the active union organizers with an issue they immediately inflated for their purposes. June was furious with you. She accused you of intentionally overstepping your authority by failing to bring such problems to her attention as instructed.

Instructions

1. Explain how you would go about trying to establish the true limits of your decision-making authority.
2. Because the limits of your authority are ultimately those limits set by your manager, the aforementioned June, develop a possible approach to getting June to help you define the limits of your authority.

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RECOMMENDED READING

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