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THE GENERIC MANAGERIAL FUNCTIONS
and
"A NORTHERN VIEW"

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The Generic Managerial Functions and "A Northern View"

This paper is not intended to deal with my entire independent study experience for this semester. Rather, it will examine the five generic functions of management, planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. These functions will then be applied to the production of "A Northern View," an NIU-produced series, aired on WREX television, the ABC affiliate in Rockford.

Managerial functions are classified for instructional purposes. In practice, the division is not always so clear and the steps certainly do not follow any rigid order. Each of the functions must involve coordination, labeled by some as ". . . the essence of managership."¹

Planning is the most basic of the managerial functions. It ". . . involves selection of enterprise and departmental objectives as well as determination of the means of reaching them." (p. 111) The other functions must revolve around the original planning.

The planning function includes many different types of plans: objectives, policies, rules, strategies, procedures, programs, and budgets. Objectives are the ends toward which all activity is focused. They are the ultimate goals of the entire organization as well as of the planning function. Policies ". . . are general statements

or understandings which guide or channel thinking and action in decision making of subordinates." (p. 117) They leave room for discretion, thus differing from rules. Rules are managerial decisions which require certain things to be done or not to be done. Strategies are general methods used to achieve the organization's objectives. Procedures establish a customary method of dealing with certain problems or activities. Programs are a combination of the above five types of plans. A major program may require derivative programs. Budgets are numerical statements of expected results.

Planning is necessary for several reasons. It gives the organization some certainty and direction. The act of planning forces an organization to deal with objectives. It increases efficiency and thus contributes to economical operation. Plans serve as a means by which to measure accomplishments, thus facilitating the controlling function.

What is termed long-range planning is not, as one might suspect, planning for the future. Rather, it is planning the impact of decisions which are being made at the present time. All short-range plans should contribute to the achievement of a relevant long-range plan.

Ideally, planning should be flexible. This is accomplished either by allowing flexibility in the original planning or by continually making new plans when changes are required.

Organizing is ". . . the establishment of an intentional structure of roles through determination and enumeration of the activities required to achieve the goals of an enterprise and each part of it, the grouping of these activities, the assignment of such groups of activities to a manager, the delegation of authority to carry them out, and provision for coordination of authority and informational relationships horizontally and vertically in the organization structure." (p. 48)

An organizational role should include: verifiable objectives (planning), a clear concept of the role's requirements, an understanding of the role's boundaries of discretion and authority, and an information source.

Organizing can be carried out through the use of a logical method. The objectives of the enterprise must be established, followed by the formulation of derivative objectives, policies, and plans. Next, the activities necessary to accomplish these must be identified, classified, and then grouped according to the human and material resources available. The necessary authority must be delegated to the head of each group. Finally, the groups must be related horizontally and vertically. The majority of new businesses are small ones, which expand and organize as the need arises. Thus, in actual practice, the logical process is often ignored.

In the organization of various persons and groups, it is important to note the distinction between line and

staff relationships. Line relationships are authoritarian in nature. A staff position is advisory.

Staffing refers to ". . .manning the organization structure to assure that an enterprise can be competently operated. In particular, staffing involves the proper and effective selection, appraisal, and development of personnel to fill the roles designed into an organizational structure." (p. 415) All managers have a responsibility for staffing. In an effort to escape this responsibility, some managers have a personnel consultant or department to deal with the task. Staffing, however, is a managerial function, and should be handled as such.

Any staffing done should ideally be planned to include future roles. In practice, however, staffing usually concentrates on satisfying immediate needs. Only then are plans made for future staffing needs. Consideration of future needs is extremely important, since proper training of personnel usually takes time.

Properly qualified personnel can result from development or from training. Development refers to progress toward learning to perform effectively. Training refers to programs devised to facilitate this learning.

Personnel can be obtained from within the organization or from open competition. The policy of promotion from within placates employees, but creates difficulties in the selection process and problems of inbreeding. Open

competition assures a higher quality of managerial competence, while not excluding the possibility of promotion from within.

The more definition given to the organizational roles, the easier is the function of staffing. The function is still a difficult one, however, as it deals with people and thus incorporates an infinite number of variables.

"Directing is the interpersonal aspect of managing by which subordinates are led to understand and contribute effectively and efficiently to the attainment of enterprise objectives." (p. 499) Effective directing requires attention to motivation, communication, and leadership.

Motivation involves inducing an employee to act in a desired manner. A manager is responsible for motivating those beneath him. This motivation is difficult due to the complex nature of man. Four factors have proven to be effective motivators: promise of recognition, avoidance of boredom, increased control over the job, and preparation for greater responsibilities.

Everyone originates and receives communication. Within an organization, the main purpose of communication is to effect change. Three principles facilitate the development of effective communication. The message must be clear and readily understood. The principle of integrity emphasizes that ". . .the purpose of managerial communications is to support understanding by individuals in their achieving and maintaining the cooperation needed to meet enterprise

goals." (p. 547) The formal communication channels should be supplemented by effective utilization of informal communications.

Leadership is ". . . defined as the art of inducing subordinates to accomplish their assignments with zeal and confidence." (p. 557) Three basic techniques of leadership are the autocratic, the democratic, and the laissez faire. The autocratic technique depends on the manager's authority and ability to command subordinates. In the democratic, or participative, method, the manager seeks and may accept the advice of subordinates. The laissez faire technique places the manager in a consultant role, nearly relinquishing his decision-making authority. In practice, managers change leadership techniques often, depending on the circumstances of the situation.

Directing deals primarily with the human factor and thus is complex and subject to great variation. It requires consideration of the needs and capabilities of each individual involved.

Controlling is the ". . . measurement of accomplishment of events against the standard of plans and the correction of deviations to assure attainment of objectives according to plans." (p. 579) The best control is that which prevents deviations by anticipating that they will occur if no change is made in the current procedure.

The basic control process is carried out by establishing standards and then measuring performance against these

standards. Deviations are then corrected. This can be accomplished by changing plans or modifying goals, by changing organization or assignment of duties, by adding additional staff members, or by better directing through fuller explanation.

In large operations, a manager cannot exercise control by observing the overall operation. Instead, he must set up critical points of control. By observing these points, the manager can determine the efficiency of his entire operation.

When a deviation is found, it can be corrected by indirect or direct control. Indirect control involves tracing the incorrect action back to the person who performed it and getting him to correct it. The direct method is to develop better managers who will skillfully apply themselves and thus eliminate undesirable results. The higher the quality of managers, the less need there is for indirect control.

The production organization for "A Northern View" is a small one and thus a rather simple one. Even within this small framework, however, the generic managerial functions have application.

The planning for the group is done by the executive producer. The main objective of the organization is to produce a quality series of programs which will favorably inform the public of the activities and programs of Northern

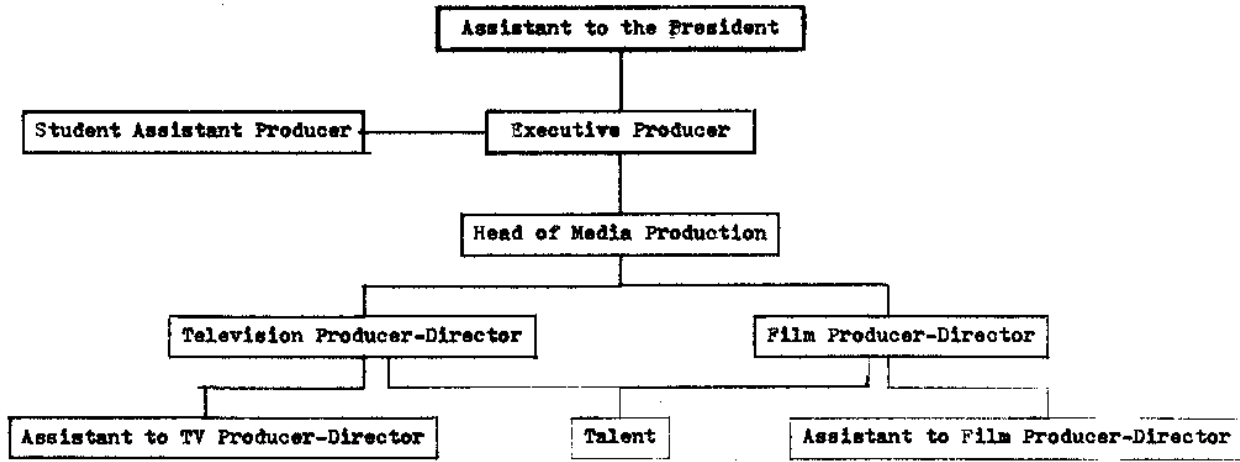
Illinois University. As a policy, the talking face is avoided as much as possible. A major rule is that no panel discussions or studio interviews be used. The procedure of using studio hosts is followed to deal with the problem of switching between segments.

The organization is that diagramed on page 8-A. It is not actually as precise as it appears on the diagram. A great deal of uncertainty exists concerning line and staff distinctions. Planning has provided verifiable objectives and because of the informality of the organization, a large amount of communication is possible. The organization falls short, however, in dealing with a clear concept of the roles, requirements, and an understanding of the roles' boundaries of discretion and authority.

Because most members of the production organization are already employed by NIU, there were few staffing decisions to be made. Only talent positions needed to be filled. This was done through talent auditions, under the principle of open competition.

The "Northern View" production organization operates on the assumption that the individuals involved already possess motivation and leadership. The directing function, then, is concerned primarily with communication. Weekly meetings are held to allow the exchange of information. The structure of the production organization is relaxed enough to provide the opportunity for informal communication

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR "A NORTHERN VIEW"



to supplement the formal channels. Members of the staff work in a very informal manner and often socialize outside of the work organization. This closeness makes it essential to consider individual needs and capabilities when directing.

The production team for "A Northern View" was formed solely for the production of that series and will disband when its six-month run comes to an end. This short life leaves little time for any direct methods of control. Logically, then, most of the controls are indirect ones.

The budget for the series is flexible to a large extent. The executive producer is required only to stay within a broad limit, and as such does not have great responsibility in control of the budget. The responsibility, rather, lies with the Assistant to the President, who has pledged to provide the needed funds within certain limits.

The major control factor in the organization is that of quality. Television operates on a tight time schedule and as a result, quality sometimes suffers. Since the main objective of the organization is to provide a quality series, this control is essential.

Regardless of an organization's size or purpose, a knowledge of the generic managerial functions is useful in analyzing and improving that organization.

NOTES

¹Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnell, Principles of Management: An Analysis of Managerial Functions, New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1972, p. 50. All further references will be to this source.

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Personal experience as Student Assistant Producer for "A Northern View," DeKalb and Rockford, Illinois, January - May, 1975.