Management and Its Basic Functions

Good leadership is the act of management, and when it is applied to a corporation or any group adventure, whether military, social, or religious, it calls for more risk than prudence, more understanding than tact, more principle than expediency.
—A. M. Sullivan

Wishing consumes as much energy as planning.
—Anonymous

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- ☛ Provide a working definition of management.
- ☛ Relate the terms supervisor and manager to each other and clearly identify the supervisor as a manager.
- ☛ Introduce and define the basic management functions: planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling, and briefly examine some alternatives to this five-function breakdown.
- ☛ Establish the importance of each of the basic functions in supervisory practice.
- ☛ Describe the relative influence of each of the basic management functions on the roles of managers at all organizational levels.

SITUATION: A TOUGH DAY FOR THE NEW MANAGER

Lydia Michaels was appointed to the newly created position of assistant director of nursing service at James Memorial Hospital, a general hospital serving a suburban community. As a result of a merger with an old and underutilized hospital not far away, James Memorial is in the midst of an expansion program that will add 70 beds (replacing the other facility's 150 beds) to its present 92 beds. Mrs. Michaels, a registered nurse with 9 years of experience, most recently served as day supervisor. She became assistant director when the first 25 of the additional 70 beds were within 60 days of opening, and it became her task to determine the staffing requirements for these first new beds and ultimately the remainder of the new beds.

Mrs. Michaels developed a master staffing plan based on providing each unit with a core staff set at 90 percent of the staff required at average expected census. To compensate for instances of understaffing, she created a float pool to augment staff as needed.

One Tuesday morning the hospital received word that local flash flooding was a possibility and preparations should be made for flood-related activity. About the same time Mrs. Michaels received word that one of her key people, the head nurse of the largest medical-surgical unit, had fallen seriously ill during the night.

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From the float pool, already depleted by vacations and illness, she was able to pull one licensed practical nurse with emergency department (ED) experience. She then located two staff nurses with ED experience and told them they might be called to the ED; if this happened, they could expect to stay after their regular shift. She then made arrangements to cover their normal positions with float personnel should the move be necessary.

As for the unit without its regular head nurse, Mrs. Michaels was tempted to step into the breach herself since she had run the unit for two years and knew it well. However, she had no idea how long this coverage would be necessary, and she did not want to spread herself too thin by assuming an additional burden when she may be needed elsewhere.

After brief consideration she decided to place the unit under the temporary direction of an energetic young staff nurse, Miss Carson. She had been aware of Miss Carson's work for a number of weeks and had in fact considered using her in a charge capacity in the near future.

Local floodwaters rose, driven by heavy rain that also triggered a rash of traffic accidents. Emergency department activity stepped up considerably, and it became necessary to make Mrs. Michaels's planned changes.

That day, in a 7-hour period, the ED handled as many visits as it normally would in a peak 24-hour day, and it did so with patient waiting time no longer than usual. When she was later asked whether the hospital's disaster plan (a number of elements of which had been put into effect) appeared adequate, Mrs. Michaels was able to suggest that some procedures be strengthened in specific ways.

Situation Instructions

Keep "A Tough Day for the New Manager" in mind while proceeding through the chapter. Be prepared to associate Mrs. Michaels's actions throughout the day with the basic management functions as they are introduced.

DEFINITIONS, TITLES, AND OTHER INTANGIBLES

Management, Manage, Manager

In attempting to define a concept, especially one that is often expressed in a single word, the dictionary is as good a place as any to begin. In Webster's New 20th Century Dictionary (unabridged), "management" is defined as follows:

- the act, art, or manner of managing, or handling, controlling, directing, etc.
- skill in managing; executive ability
- the person or persons managing a business, institution, etc.

Synonyms for management include treatment, conduct, administration, government, superintendence, and control.

Note that management is defined repeatedly in terms of its root word, manage. The word manage comes from the Latin *manus,* meaning hand. We might feel we are on the right track, since this origin suggests the use of this part of the body in working or doing. However, we then discover that the original English definition of manage is *to train a horse in its paces; to cause to do the*

exercises of the manège (with *manege* defined as the paces and exercises of a trained horse).

It seems, then, that the word “manage” developed from the description of a specific kind of work. However, among the many definitions of manage include: to control or guide; to have charge of; to direct; to administer; to succeed in accomplishing; to bring about by contriving; and to get a person to do what one wishes, especially by skill, tact, or flattery. Synonyms for manage include administer, conduct, control, direct, regulate, and wield. Some of the words we might use to describe manage have appeared throughout the dictionary definitions, and except for an oddity or two we have gained little new information about manage or management—neither the words nor the concept. Unfortunately, it does little good to look up manager, since we learn only that a manager is one who conducts, directs, or manages something. However, the list of synonyms for manager is of interest because it includes: director, leader, overseer, boss, and supervisor.

Supervisor versus Manager

The preceding, somewhat roundabout path was taken to illustrate that at least in some uses the term supervisor is the same as manager. The same dictionary defines “supervisor” as: a person who supervises; a superintendent; a manager; a director. Based on proper use of the English language, then, we can say that supervisor and manager are equal in definition: a manager is a supervisor and a supervisor is a manager.

However, the idea of supervisor and manager being equal may not be agreeable to everyone. All of us have ideas of what a supervisor is and what a manager is, and all of our conceptions are not necessarily the same. Our understanding of what these terms mean—the positioning in the organization of persons who may be called managers, supervisors, directors, administrators, or whatever—is largely determined by the use of these words as titles. It is important to realize that the differences in what these terms mean to us are not absolute. Rather, we and our organizations have artificially created differences in meaning.

Differences in how we see supervisors in relation to people who run other organizational units interfere with our complete understanding of what is and is not “management.” For instance, a maintenance crew chief, when asked to consider enrolling in a management training program, said, “No. I’m not a manager—I’m just a supervisor.”

A Practical Definition

Throughout this book we will be using management to mean the effective use of resources to accomplish the goals of the organization. In simpler terms, management can be described as getting things done through people. Regardless of your title, as long as you are responsible for getting work done at least in part by directing the activities of others, you are a manager. This applies to the working chief of a three-member maintenance crew or the working supervisor of a four-person medical records department as well as to the administrator of a nursing home or the chief executive officer of a hospital. These bottom and

top levels both constitute management, just as the people directing the efforts of others at numerous intervening levels also belong to management.

Throughout this book we will speak of management in the broadest generic sense, referring to the processes applied and not to particular job titles. In this context, everyone who directs the activities of others is a manager.

Organizational Labels

Label and Level

It is easy to guess how so many different organizational labels for manager developed. It was most likely a matter of organizational convenience, initially adopted to differentiate between managers at different levels or in different roles. It could be quite confusing if all three levels in a particular hospital's business office carried the title of manager. Rather, it makes considerably more sense to identify them as, for instance, controller, business office manager, and accounts receivable supervisor.

The use of manager and its synonyms as position titles did not develop uniformly in all organizations. We are likely to find, for instance, that the health information management (HIM) departments of four different hospitals are run by a manager, supervisor, director, and coordinator, respectively. There is little overall comparability of titles from one organization to another. In one institution, a "supervisor" may be the low person on the managerial totem pole and in another may be in the middle or upper part of the hierarchy. Certainly the term manager is most sensitive to this effect in its use as a title, and it may apply anywhere in the organizational pyramid in almost any institution.

The Supervisor

It is probably fair to say that when we hear supervisor used to describe a working position we usually imagine a position in the lower part of the management structure. For this reason we will regularly use the term first-line supervisor or first-line manager to describe the lowest level of management in the organization—the lowest level at which persons manage the work of other persons. We may also refer occasionally to the second-line supervisor, meaning the second level up—the "supervisor of the supervisor."

Upper and Middle Management

As the label "top management" suggests, this describes the individuals at or near the top of the organization who are responsible for the entire organization or a major operating unit. Between top management and supervision we may find, depending on the size of the organization, a number of positions generally referred to as "middle management." Middle management may or may not include many people, depending on the size of the organization.

Organization size may render a large part of the "middle management" discussion irrelevant. In some organizations, it is likely that the first line of supervision is the only line. For instance, in a small hospital, the business office supervisor may report directly to the administrator, so there is no middle management between the top and bottom levels. In this instance, the person who

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runs the department is a supervisor, department head, or both, depending on the direction from which the position is viewed.

Line and Staff

It may be beneficial to differentiate among managers as to whether the functions they run are line or staff. A line function is one that advances the accomplishment of the work of the organization; a staff function supports the organization such that it is able to function as intended. For instance, in a hospital the departments of nursing service, radiology, laboratory, dietary, and several others are line activities. The human resources department and the payroll department are two examples of staff activities. The essential difference between line and staff activities is the difference between doing and supporting.

Relating line and staff to managerial titles, a person can be described as a manager of a line activity or a manager of a staff activity. However, whether the overall function of the department is line or staff, the manager, within the individual department, possesses line authority in the management of the department's employees. Within each function there is a line of authority that extends from the department head down to and including the first-line supervisor. For instance, in the nursing service department of a hospital, the line of authority, viewed from the top down, may be: director of nursing service, assistant director, shift supervisor, head nurse, and charge nurse. Each person at each level directs the activities of those at the next lowest level in a manner that may be felt through the entire line of authority; instructions from the director of nursing ultimately result in actions by staff nurses.

Every healthcare organization necessarily consists of persons working in both line and staff capacities. Often there is confusion about the degree of authority staff persons are to exercise, and problems sometimes arise from the three-way relationship among a line employee, a staff employee, and the staff employee's line manager.

The staff employee, whether professional, technical, advisory, or another type, may appear to be making decisions and following up on them, allocating certain kinds of resources, and even conveying instructions and direction to others. The staff employee occupied in a pure staff function sometimes appears to be the holder and exerciser of all management prerogatives except the critical one that essentially defines a manager—the authority to direct other people. We might even say that an effective staff person often looks, sounds, and acts like a manager. This frequently causes problems for some line personnel because it creates the impression that a person lacking proper authority is intruding into another's territory.

Often line managers do not know how to make fully effective use of the staff assistance available to them. Some line managers tend to view staff people as regulators or intruders rather than use them as the advisers and helpers they really are. Also, some managers behave as though they believe a request for staff assistance—or even an agreement to accept staff assistance when offered—constitutes a weakness or an admission of inadequacy. In short, the line manager who does not completely understand the role and function of staff personnel often tries to go it alone, attempting to be all things in all situations, operating without the available staff assistance.

As far as functions are concerned, the difference between line and staff, as suggested earlier, is the essential difference between doing and supporting. As far as nonmanagerial staff are concerned, line personnel do and staff personnel support. But as far as managers are concerned, managers are all line managers in the operation of their own departments and in the direction of their own employees. Their functions may be clearly definable as staff functions—like accounting, public relations, and human resources—but as managers they are by definition line personnel when operating as managers within their own departmental chains of command.

Many healthcare institutions are organized along functional lines, giving rise to another way of grouping activities for organizational purposes. We often see healthcare organizations structured along a three-way division of functions: (1) medical (nursing, radiology, laboratory, and others); (2) nonmedical (food service, housekeeping maintenance, and others); and (3) financial (business office, payroll, general accounting).

A Title as More Than a Label

We have been talking about titles of managerial positions and the various uses of such titles to differentiate levels of responsibility, but we should also consider the use of titles as "status points" or as a form of "psychic income." Not long ago most hospitals and nursing homes were run by top managers known as administrators. Now, however, we see many chief executive officers, executive directors, presidents, and similar titles; those top managers who are still titled as administrators are a vanishing breed. The functions and responsibilities of a position may have changed little if at all between the days of administrator and executive director, but the latter title may be more impressive to a larger number of people than the former title. It may sound marginally ridiculous, but differences in title do matter in terms of how some people see themselves and how other people view the positions of the title holders.

Title differences are significant only to the extent that they may affect your view of your position. Avoid falling victim to the attitude of the person who said, "I'm no manager—I'm just a supervisor." As a supervisor you are, in fact, a manager, and it is important that you see yourself as a manager and clearly consider yourself to be a member of the collective body known as management.

INTRODUCING THE BASIC MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS

There are several kinds of activities that all managers pursue in fulfilling their responsibilities. For our purposes, we will break these into five groups, which we will refer to as the basic management functions: (1) planning, (2) organizing, (3) directing, (4) coordinating, and (5) controlling. This five-way breakdown is not original within this work; rather, it has served for years as a reasonable, if somewhat general, description of what managers do.

In the management literature you may encounter other lists of functions that contain four, five, or even more entries and use labels different from those applied here. One different, widely utilized breakdown is found in the work of

Theo Haimann, who refers to the basic management functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling.[1] The same five-function breakdown appears in a number of other sources, including Charles Housley and Nancy Nichols writing in *The Health Care Supervisor*.[2] Still another more recent source, *Principles of Health Care Management* by Seth B. Goldsmith, describes a seven-function breakdown: planning, organizing, staffing, directing, controlling, coordinating, and representing.[3] The seventh, representing, described as the process of being a spokesperson for the department, organization, or industry on the outside, is not often encountered as a separately enumerated function.

An interesting four-function breakdown appears in a study guide published in 1985.[4] This division of the management functions at first seems to be only a partial listing of the functions already presented: planning, organizing, directing, and controlling. In this approach, however, directing is subdivided into two categories identified as directing: goals and directing, and motivation.

Other delineations of the management functions to be found in the management literature include planning, organizing, leading, and controlling; planning, organizing, staffing, motivating, and controlling; and other variations. Even as early as 1916 Henri Fayol, the French industrialist and early management theorist, was basing much of his management approach on the simple four-function breakdown of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling.[5]

It is important to appreciate that none of these lists of functions represents someone's belief that a particular listing is the absolutely correct delineation of management functions while the others are lacking. Certainly the various lists of management functions are more similar than dissimilar. As evident in the examples cited above, nearly all such lists specifically cite planning, organizing, and controlling, and all such lists begin with planning.

The differences among the lists are simply matters of semantics and matters of how one views some of the elements of management. What is directing in one approach may be leading in another; what is organizing and staffing in one approach may simply be organizing in another; what belongs under both coordinating and controlling in one approach (such as the one used in this chapter) may all be encompassed by controlling in another.

Why all of these differences? Are there not clearly definable management functions that can be kept separate? The truth is that we cannot clearly differentiate among a number of separately defined management functions in a manner that covers all circumstances. In speaking of management we are speaking of a broad pursuit made up of many overlapping and interwoven activities. The overall management process occurs along a continuum; the management process is cyclic. All of the business of "defining" management functions is simply a convenience that allows us to examine portions of the management cycle in a way that emphasizes certain kinds of activities.

Regardless of the labels applied, however, it is the concepts that are important. It will be helpful to your understanding of management responsibilities to develop an appreciation of the kinds of activities managers pursue for certain purposes. Later in this chapter we will consider how the emphasis on certain of these basic functions differs according to your position or level in the management structure. Specifically, we will suggest that a manager's organizational

position has much to do in determining which management functions are likely to, and perhaps should, consume most of the manager's time and effort.

MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS IN BRIEF

Planning is the process of determining what should be done, why it should be done, where it should best be done, by whom it should be done, when it should be done, and how it should be done.

Organizing is the process of structuring the framework within which things get done and determining how best to commit available resources to serve the organization's purposes and carry out its plans. Consideration of organizing essentially includes what is often referred to as staffing in certain other discussions of the management functions.

Directing is assigning specific resources or focusing certain efforts to accomplish specific tasks as required. Simply stated, directing is running an organizational unit on a day-to-day basis. Directing may be considered to include a great deal of leading, yet leading is woven throughout most of the other functions as well. Directing may also be considered to include motivating and all it implies in getting things done through the unit's employees, yet motivating is certainly a consideration throughout the other functions as well.

Coordinating consists of integrating activities and balancing tasks so that appropriate actions take place within the proper physical and temporal relationships. Coordinating does not appear by name in a number of other delineations of the management functions, yet in all cases it is directly implied in descriptions of the tasks managers perform.

Controlling is follow-up and correction, looking at what actually happened and making adjustments to encourage outcomes to conform to expected or required results. It is controlling that best illustrates the cyclic nature of management and the inseparability of the basic management functions. By its very nature controlling requires directing, coordinating, organizing, and (re)planning, which is itself simply planning, since that activity is also a cyclic process.

PLANNING

We are planning any time we look ahead at what we might be doing sometime in the future. The "future" may be months or years ahead or it may be only minutes away. Whenever we try to look ahead and predetermine a possible action for a time that has not yet arrived, we are planning. Planning often involves policy-making, objective setting, and developing strategies for reaching the organization's objectives.

Planning can be high level and far reaching, as when executive management and the board of trustees of an institution develop a long-range plan calling for growth and expansion or other major changes. Much planning, however, as it concerns most working managers, is short term and oriented toward near-future applications.

As the development of a 5-year plan for a hospital is an example of planning, so the development of a department's 1-year budget is a representative planning task. Likewise, if you spend half a day developing the work schedule for

your department's employees for the coming month, you are actively involved in planning. Even if you simply pause at the end of the day to order your thoughts, sort out the notes on your desk, and jot down a list of items you need to take care of in the morning, you are engaged in planning.

We should recognize, of course, that the future, even when second-guessed minutes before the fact, does not always come to pass as envisioned. Generally, the further into the future we are projecting, the less accurate our planning is likely to be. It stands to reason that we never attain full knowledge of the future until the future becomes the present, so we are always looking ahead with less than perfect information.

An Imperfect Process

The imperfect nature of planning suggests that plans should be flexible, intended to be changed and updated as the time to which they apply comes closer. If you have done any personnel scheduling, for instance, perhaps you will appreciate the necessity to revise your schedule as you move into and through the period to which it applies.

Although more will be said later about how much planning a supervisor's job might involve, at this point we can suggest that you should keep your planning reasonable in terms of how much you do and how long it takes. Planning is essential to effective managerial performance, but it is possible to fall into the habit of "overplanning." Indeed, some people spend so much time planning that they rarely have time to do anything.

Although much supervisory planning need not be formal or time consuming, it nevertheless pays to be sufficiently thorough and organized to commit your plans to writing. Often the simple act of putting your thoughts on paper will serve to crystallize your ideas and help you decide on the essentials.

The Plan Is Not the Objective

We are all aware of what happens to "the best laid plans of mice and men." Since our plans, especially those that look more than a few days into the future, seem rarely to generate results exactly as planned, we might reasonably ask, "Why plan at all?"

In defense of planning, we cannot overstress the importance of having well-defined targets at which to aim. Granted we are often going to miss targets because conditions change between the time the plans are generated and the future arrives and because of weaknesses in the planning process itself. When we have a target, however, even when we miss it we have learned something. We at least know by how much we missed the mark and perhaps in what direction we were off, and with that information we can assess both our planning processes and our work practices.

Consider a simple analogy in shooting an arrow toward a target. If the target is simply a blank circle, this whole target is our mark, and as long as we strike anywhere in the circle we really do not know much about where we hit relative to where we wanted to hit. However, when we add a bull's-eye and several target rings, we then have a clearer idea of how much we need to adjust our shots to come closer to where we would like to be.

Keep in mind, however, that when plans are not realized it could be for any of several reasons. It is possible that surrounding conditions have changed and what was once a good plan is no longer valid in the light of new conditions. It is also possible that the plan was inadequate to begin with. Also, there is always the possibility that the plan was well conceived and fully adequate but failed to work because the implementation effort fell short of what was needed. In any case, whether or not our plans work out well we have always learned something from the experience. It has often been said that plans themselves are not particularly worthwhile, but that the planning process is invaluable. Indeed, what is truly valuable is the cyclic process of examining needs, setting objectives, making plans to reach those objectives, implementing the plans, and following up on the total effort.

Plans should never be regarded as cast in concrete. We sometimes tend to try bending reality to fit the plan so as to arrive at the results we projected. It is true that a certain amount of this kind of effort is called for with some kinds of plans. Departmental budgets, for instance, should be considered as relatively important targets to be met. However, a plan is first and foremost a guide to action—it is not in itself a predestined action.

As a first-line supervisor you may not feel there is a great deal of planning required of you. This may be generally true, but you will find that every management position, even one in the lowest levels of management, requires some planning. A certain amount of planning is necessary to help you run your job properly, and if you do not run your job to at least some extent there is a good chance that your job will run you.

ORGANIZING

Sometimes it may seem that organizing, much like planning, is not a particular concern of the first-line supervisor. It is true that much organizing has to do with departmentalization, the process of grouping various activities into separate units to carry out the work of the organization. Much of this takes place at high levels in the organization and may not occur very often. However, as a first-line supervisor you engage in acts of organizing similar to departmentalization whenever you make decisions concerning which people within your department are going to handle certain tasks. Whenever you become involved in making decisions concerning division of labor or separation of skills, you are organizing.

Unity of Command

One basic principle of organizing with which you should be familiar is unity of command. Unity of command requires you to provide assurance, for all the activities within your responsibility, that in all instances specific employees are responsible for certain specific results on a one-to-one basis. That is, it is inappropriate to assign task responsibilities in such a way that your employees have room for doubt concerning who is ultimately responsible for any given task. Likewise, unity of command suggests that no function within your responsibility should be allowed to "drift" without belonging to some specific person.

Span of Control

Another important concept within organizing—and one over which the individual supervisor has little influence—is span of control. An individual manager can effectively supervise only a certain number of workers, with this number roughly determined by the manager's knowledge and experience, the amount and nature of the manager's nonsupervisory work, the amount of supervision required by the employees, the variability of the employees' tasks, the overall complexity of the activity, and the physical area over which the employees are distributed. For instance, the working supervisor of a five-member health information management department (where all five employees work within the same room) has every opportunity for complete control. The supervisor probably knows all the jobs fairly well, and visual and auditory control of the entire department is relatively easy. On the other hand, a working supervisor in a five-member maintenance department has a limited span of control. This department's employees do many different things and usually do most of their work beyond the supervisor's visual and auditory control. Of the two supervisor's just described, one can readily control five employees but the other may have great difficulty controlling five employees. A supervisor can oversee and control more people who do similar work in the same physical area than people who perform variable work scattered over a considerable area.

Delegation

The most important aspect of organizing to the first-line supervisor is the function known as delegation. Delegation, the process of assuring that the proper people have the responsibility and authority for performing specific tasks, is of sufficient importance to the supervisor to warrant a chapter of its own (see Chapter 5).

DIRECTING

Directing consists largely of assigning responsibilities on a day-to-day basis, letting employees know what has to be done and how and by when it is to be done. It is the making of all the little but important decisions so necessary in the operation of the department; it is, in fact, the process of steering the department. Although we may occasionally get tired of "team" analogies in management, the example of the football quarterback is nevertheless appropriate to directing. The quarterback knows the plays and the strategy as a result of prolonged planning sessions; yet when the quarterback goes onto the field, the exact conditions that will be encountered are unknown. It is only when the quarterback sees what happens on the field that the quarterback can call on what has been learned and respond to the conditions of the moment. It is in this way that the supervisor must behave, making the day-to-day and sometimes hour-to-hour decisions necessary in running the departmental team.

Since much of directing consists of giving advice or conveying instructions, directing is, in a mechanical sense, present along with most of the other management functions. That is, giving an order is a directing activity, so it is really not possible to convey any kind of decision without directing.

Under directing you might logically place an entire library of references about management activities. The foregoing quarterback example should make clear, for instance, that people who are most successful at directing are also successful at leading. We can direct without leading by simply giving orders; we can fill leadership positions (although perhaps not very well) without being true leaders. However, directing is more successful when we can truly lead.

Motivation is also related to leading in this consideration of directing. Related in turn to motivation and leadership is all of the advice pertinent that can be given to anyone in a position of authority over other persons in an organizational unit. Directing in some way touches on essentially every function, process, or technique ever brought into play in getting things done through people.

COORDINATING

It has been suggested that coordinating—the blending of activities and timing of events—might legitimately be considered a part of the directing function. We are considering it separately, if only briefly, out of recognition of its importance to the supervisor.

A dinner of five magnificent courses will not be particularly successful if the courses are scattered over two or three hours, the dessert comes second, and the entree arrives last. Likewise, an essential part of many work activities is not the simple fact of their performance but rather when they are performed relative to other activities. Thus we approach a potentially large number of tasks that involve coordination with other tasks.

In healthcare activities it is always essential that employees, facilities, supplies, and services all be combined in the right relationship to each other for the benefit of the patient. Throughout the department, and certainly between and among the departments of a healthcare organization, it is necessary for activities to be coordinated. It makes little sense to place a full breakfast before a patient who is soon to be given tests requiring fasting, just as it makes little sense to place a patient who is scheduled for an X-ray in the corridor four hours before the department is ready to receive the patient. Effective coordination is one of the keys to supervisory effectiveness.

CONTROLLING

Plans rarely come to realization exactly as intended, so many moment-to-moment changes are required in pursuit of departmental objectives. In the controlling function we evaluate progress against objectives and make adjustments or new decisions as we go along. The terms most descriptive of controlling are follow-up and action. We take note of how things are going as compared with how they should be going and make new decisions and provide new direction to effect corrective action.

Controlling is often the most neglected of the basic management functions, especially in terms of the strength of follow-up on implementation of earlier decisions. The problems of limited or nonexistent follow-up will be examined

further during the consideration of delegation and, later, of supervisory decision making.

THE MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS IN ACTION

Returning to "A Tough Day for the New Manager," there are a number of observations that can be made about Mrs. Michaels's hectic Tuesday relative to the basic management functions.

In preparing to bring the new beds into service, Lydia Michaels was actively involved in both planning and organizing in determining what needed to be done for the expansion and in establishing projected staff levels and how the additional staff would be phased in as needs grew. Her master staffing plan activity was primarily organizing, but this role included planning in that she determined how they might compensate for staff shortages with a float pool.

When Mrs. Michaels pulls from her float pool and locates additional nurses with emergency department experience, she is engaged in both controlling—literally, follow-up and correction—and coordinating. It should be immediately evident that neither coordinating nor controlling can be accomplished without directing as well. By not personally stepping into the vacancy created by the absence of the large unit's head nurse, she avoided a working trap of sorts and kept herself available for continued coordinating and controlling, which were highly likely to be necessary given the day's circumstances.

More controlling, as well as directing, occurred in placing young Miss Carson in the acting head nurse role. And directing was in the forefront when Lydia Michaels implemented the emergency staffing alternative she had planned for earlier.

Lydia Michaels also engaged in a form of controlling when she suggested strengthening the hospital's disaster plan. What was learned from one disaster situation could then enhance the hospital's ability to better cope with future disasters.

Controlling, described above as follow-up and correction, ordinarily leads to more planning, sometimes more organizing and coordinating, and always more directing. This illustrates the frequently cyclic nature of the management functions; it also suggests that usually two or more basic functions are experienced together. Only sometimes, as in long-range strategic planning, for example, do any of the basic management functions occur in isolation from the others.

EMPHASIS

The basic management functions of planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling were presented in a given order for an important reason.

Generally, the first elements of this list occupy, or should occupy, a proportionately larger amount of the time of people in the upper levels of management. We said "should" because top managers and middle managers are frequently prone to continue behaving in the manner of first-line supervisors; that is, they spend significant amounts of time dealing with day-to-day operating problems when they should be leaving most such problems to the lower management levels.

Indeed, managers at all levels in all organizations are frequently prone to "crisis management," expending most of their time and effort in reacting to present events and conditions rather than looking ahead.

Because of the nature of departmental supervision, the first-line supervisor will concentrate more on activities toward the bottom of the list of basic management functions. It is the lower echelons of management who are rightly more concerned with the problems of the moment. Those at the top of the organization should be more concerned with where the organization is going relative to its long-range goals and should be considering courses of action required to support those goals.

However, planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling are all part of every manager's job. In a large healthcare organization, top management may spend 70 percent or 80 percent of the time involved in broad-based planning and organizing. In the same organization, except for the regular practice of delegation (a part of organizing), the first-line supervisor may spend 80 percent or 90 percent of the time on a combination of directing, coordinating, and controlling (**Figure 4–1**).

How you may see your approach to the basic management functions will be largely influenced by the approach you have taken to the job since you have been supervisor. Much of what you do has been determined by the concept of management you held before you became a supervisor, and by whether or not you received any solid orientation to supervision.

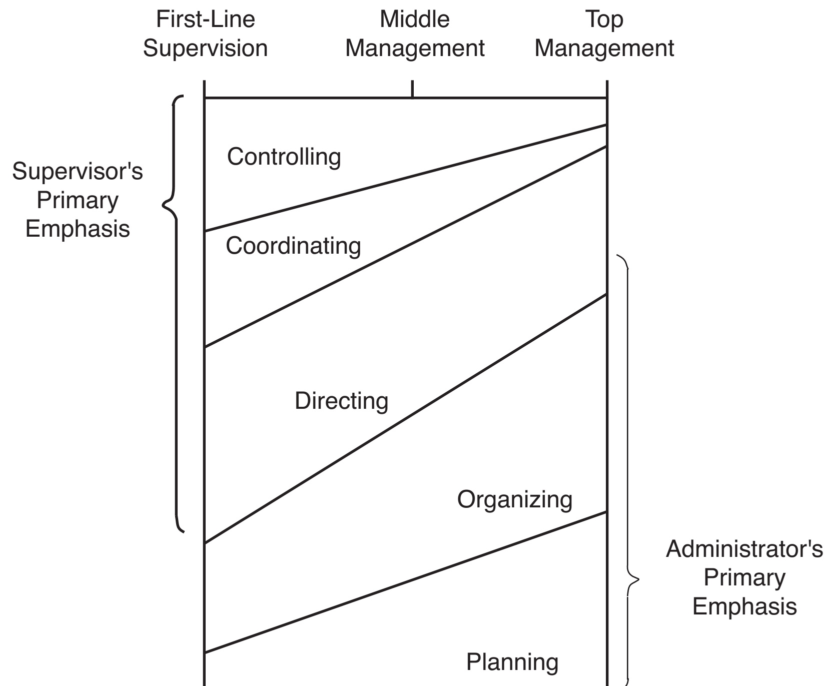

Figure 4–1 Typical Shift in Emphasis on Basic Management Functions from Lowest to Highest Levels of Management

PROCESSES VERSUS PEOPLE

In discussing the basic management functions we necessarily focus on a number of practices that are often described as management processes. In doing so we run the risk of creating an impression that management is strongly process oriented. We might be tempted to believe that to be successful in management we need to learn a number of processes and then apply the appropriate processes to circumstances as they arise.

It is indeed true that planning and organizing are processes. Controlling, delegating, and leading (to name some fairly broad functions) are processes, too, as are controlling absenteeism, scheduling, and interviewing (to name some more narrowly delineated functions). And we could name dozens of other so-called functions or techniques that are processes.

With all of this seeming emphasis on functions and processes, it is appropriate to remind ourselves that the central focus of management is people. We might spend a great deal of time learning management processes—most management education is in fact heavily weighted toward process—and never become successful supervisors. In the long run, success at any level of management will depend on one's ability to work with people.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

1. Describe the fundamental differences between line and staff.
2. Provide an example of the use of the word manager as a generic term and an example of its use as a specific organizational title.
3. Considering how the terms supervisor and manager may be perceived, which would you rather be called and why?
4. As simply as you can properly express it, what is the single defining characteristic of planning?
5. Which of the basic management functions gets the most of the supervisor's attention? Why?
6. What are the primary characteristics of the basic management function of controlling?
7. Why is it claimed that the management functions of planning and organizing consume—or at least should consume—more of top management's time than of the first-line supervisor's time?
8. Some variations on the basic management functions name "leading" as one of the functions. Where do you place "leading" within "planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling" and why does it belong there?
9. Define and describe "delegation" within the context of the basic management function of organizing.
10. Although everyone will concede the importance of planning, why is it that planning is often ignored by some supervisors?

CASE: BALANCING THE FUNCTIONS

Betty Wilson was administrative manager of the department of radiology. She was an outstanding example of someone who had come up through the ranks; Betty had been chief technician, a special procedures technician, a technician assigned to routine procedures, and years earlier a student in the hospital's school of radiologic technology.

Because of her broad knowledge gained through experience and additional academic study in matters of radiation safety, as administrative manager she found herself called on more and more to substitute for the hospital's radiation safety officer and to fill in as a special procedures technician when that area was short staffed. More frequently, however, she found herself resisting these technical-work intrusions on her management role, doing so until it became clear that Dr. Arnold, the medical chief of the department, disapproved of her behavior.

One day her manager, the hospital's associate administrator, asked, "What's wrong between you and Dr. Arnold? He claims that you're no longer willing to help out in special procedures, and that the radiation safety committee has just about fallen apart because you wouldn't take the chair and see that things got done. Is your work piling up to where you've got too much to do?"

Betty shook her head. "No, my workload is under control. I know that radiation safety needs help because of Susan's off-and-on health problems, and the turnover in special procedures is killing us because those people are so hard to find in this area just now. What I think the problem really is—I seem to be in a dual role that I'm not comfortable with."

"Meaning what?"

"Meaning that I don't really know if I'm a manager or a technical staff member or neither or both. I know special procedures and radiation safety fairly well, but it doesn't take a manager to serve as radiation safety officer, and if I let it do so, radiation safety alone could take up more than half of my time."

Betty continued, "And I always thought I was a good special procedures tech, but times change and it's been a long time since I did that day in and day out. More than half the equipment there has changed since I worked there full time. One of the last times I was in there at Dr. Arnold's direction, one of the techs—actually the only full-time special procedures tech we have—said he'd rather not have my help because coaching me along would slow him down and he could do it faster without me. Yet Dr. Arnold seems to regard me first and foremost as an extra pair of hands to be put wherever there's staff work to be done."

After a moment Betty concluded, "I've always believed that the basic job of a manager was to get things done through people, and I've tried to practice that ever since I entered management. I guess I really don't know if I'm supposed to be a real manager or just another employee, and I'm afraid that doing all of this technical work is somehow making me less of a manager."

Exercise Questions:

1. How is Betty functioning in both line and staff capacities?
2. Do you agree that Betty's performance of technical work as described could be making her "less of a manager," as she fears? Explain your answer.
3. Describe one set of circumstances under which Betty's involvement in the technical tasks described would be fully appropriate.

NOTES

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