**It’s Manageable**

What do you think when you hear the word “management”? Do you picture some unknown person or group making random decisions that affect your life? Or, do you envision management as a game, with managers as the players and employees as the pawns? Actually, management is anything but a game. **Management** is the logical process of coordinating resources, such as money and employees, to accomplish an organization’s goals. In business (and in any organization with resources to coordinate and goals to reach), nothing would get done without management.

The people responsible for management are, of course, the managers. They decide how to use the business’s resources to make things happen. Managers make sure the work gets done, although they don’t usually do the work themselves. For example, if you are the manager of a movie theater, you don’t normally sell the popcorn or clean the restrooms. Your job is to oversee the entire operation and make sure there are enough employees on hand to perform these tasks. You hire and train the employees, handle the theater’s finances, deal with suppliers, and obtain the resources needed for the business to be successful.

Although managers don’t do the actual jobs, they need to understand the jobs to effectively manage the employees who do the work. This information helps managers to know how workers should do their jobs. It also helps them to be realistic about what workers can do. For instance, as the manager of a business, you should be able to answer questions and help employees solve problems. You should be aware of the time it takes to complete certain tasks. In the case of the movie theater, you should understand what’s involved in filling customers’ food and drink orders at the concession stand and not expect the impossible. However, you also need to set standards and encourage employees to be productive and do their best.

For more on the importance of managers’ knowing their employees’ job tasks, check out <http://blog.techquility.net/the-importance-of-knowing-your-employees-jobs/>.

**What managers do**

If managers don’t perform the actual jobs, what do they do? They are responsible for carrying out the management functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. The successful performance of these activities determines if a business will achieve its goals.

*Planning.* **Planning** involves deciding what work will be done and how it will be accomplished. First, managers identify goals. Then, they identify methods of achieving those goals and the resources required to carry out the plans. They also set dates for completing tasks and projects. As the manager of an ice-cream shop, for instance, you might set a goal of increasing sales. You might then decide to increase advertising to help achieve that goal.

Planning is important because it lays the groundwork for all of the other management functions. Organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling decisions are based on the plans the business has established. Planning also helps to prevent mistakes and prepare for potential disasters. Managers who have a plan to follow are less likely to make hasty decisions, regardless of whether they are dealing with a small problem or a major crisis.

*Organizing.* **Organizing** involves setting up the way the business’s work will be done. First, managers review the plans that they have made. After that, managers determine the jobs that need to be performed. Finally, they group those jobs into departments and establish lines of authority. Let’s say that you own a restaurant-supply company and decide that the business needs an outside sales force. You assign these employees to the sales department and appoint a sales manager who reports to the vice president of sales. This type of organizing helps to get the work done efficiently because employees know what their jobs are and who their supervisors are.

For a more in-depth look at the organizing function of management, see <https://www.boundless.com/business/management/functions-of-managers/organizing-tasks/>.

*Staffing.* **Staffing** is an important management function because staffing helps the business to find employees who know how to do the necessary work. Managers identify the types of skills that employees need to have, and they develop ways to recruit and hire the most qualified people. Staffing also involves assigning new employees to specific work areas and determining compensation for workers.

Another part of staffing involves deciding what skills will be needed in the future. Managers must consider what training the business should provide to new employees. They also must determine whether current employees need additional training and professional development so that the business can stay competitive. Finally, managers need to think about how the company can nurture the growth of potential new managers within its workforce.

*Directing.* **Directing** involves providing guidance to workers and work projects. Managers set the direction for the business and influence employees to follow in that direction. Not only do managers plan and organize the work, they guide employees in carrying out the work. Part of directing involves motivating and leading workers to accomplish the business’s goals. Managers use their skills to develop a team spirit among employees. This benefits the business because employees who work together well are often motivated to do more than those who work alone. Managers may motivate employees by rewarding them for their hard work. Employee rewards can include bonuses, pay raises, and promotions.

*Controlling.* **Controlling** involves monitoring the work effort. Managers coordinate the business’s activities to make sure that the company is performing effectively and achieving its goals. There is a strong link between planning and controlling. Planning sets the goals, and controlling checks to make sure the goals are being met. Let’s say you own a restaurant and promise to serve lunch orders within 15 minutes, or the meals are free. Your goal is prompt service. You monitor this activity to make sure you don’t lose money by giving away free lunches. The control function helps you to manage the finances of your business.

Another important part of controlling involves monitoring and measuring employees’ performance, identifying problem areas, and making corrections when necessary. To do this, managers set performance standards and evaluate employees against these standards. If managers find there are problems, they make corrections. Plus, managers try to anticipate problems before they occur and take preventive action to avoid any difficulties. Suppose that you are a sales manager who is concerned that salespeople are going to spend too much money entertaining customers compared to the amount of sales they may obtain. As a result, you might start a cost-savings program. The purpose is to address the issue of overspending before it becomes a problem for the company.

**What managers need**

To be effective, managers need certain skills. These skills fall into three main categories—technical skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills.

*Technical skills.*Although many managers don’t perform the same tasks as their employees, they still need to understand the technical aspects of the business. Managers need to be able to answer questions, give directions, and solve problems. To do this, they must understand various work processes, and they should know how to use the specialized tools required for these processes. For instance, how effective would you be as the manager of an accounting department if you didn’t have math skills? How could you manage if you knew nothing about preparing invoices or using accounting software? That does not mean that you must be an expert in each area of every job. It just means that you must have an overall knowledge of the business’s work.

*Interpersonal skills.*Interpersonal skills are extremely important at all levels of management. Managers are not alone; they must work with others to be successful. Therefore, they need to be able to communicate, interact, and build relationships. To do that, they must treat employees fairly, listen to their concerns, and understand that employees are essential for business success. And, managers must clearly communicate their ideas and expectations to employees so that the workers can be productive. Workers cannot be expected to accomplish the business’s goals if they don’t know what the goals are or understand the procedures they should follow to achieve the goals.

*Conceptual skills.*Another important skill that managers must have is the ability to see the “big picture.” Managers must be able to look at the organization as a whole and understand how its various parts are interrelated. They need to anticipate how a change in one department could impact all the others. Managers must also understand how the organization fits into its environment. In other words, they need to know how the company affects and is affected by its industry, its community, and the economy.

Managers need strong conceptual skills to think creatively and make wise decisions. They must be able to identify and define problems and opportunities for business improvement. Then, they should use whatever information is available, along with their own creativity, to generate possible options and solutions. After weighing the choices, managers must select the best method for solving the problem or grasping the opportunity. And, the chosen method should be what is best for the whole organization, not for just one department or person.

**Summary**

Management is the process of coordinating resources to accomplish an organization’s goals, and managers are the people who make things happen. Managers are responsible for the functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. To be effective, they must have technical skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills.