Course Learning Outcomes for Unit I

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

9. Define the five components of management: planning, organization, staffing, directing, and control.

10. Apply managerial skills, principles, and decision-making strategies to the implementation of business best practices.

Reading Assignment

In order to access the following resource(s), click the link(s) below:


Unit Lesson

YouTube Video for Unit I

Click here to view the video for Unit I (1m 36s).

Click here to access a PDF of the video transcript.

What is management? Authors and professionals in business and professions who use management do not exactly agree. Not only have they not agreed in the 110 or so years that management ideas have been published, but also in the thousands of years management has been practiced! Most experts, however, agree
that the word management means orchestration of people, an organization, and resources to get work accomplished (Rao & Pande, 2010).

Discussion of managerial orchestration, tasks, and skills can temporarily set aside leadership considerations. Contrary to some myths, though, truly effective and constructive management entails substantive leadership abilities and effort (Rao & Pande, 2010). Certainly, there are popular (and often outdated) images of the manager as a cigar-chomping, cross, get-me-results-or-else business executive, but research shows that good managers inspire us to follow them instead of managing by intimidation.

There are various ways to look at management. Here in Unit I, we will focus on the components of planning, organization, staffing, directing, and controlling as groundwork for our subsequent units.

- **Planning** is deciding what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and who will do it to perform a specific job or achieve a certain goal (Rao & Pande, 2010). Planning follows a system, including even simple ones you keep in your head, such as for household tasks. It is based on gathered information; it lays out alternatives so the most promising can be selected as the planning decision, and it is flexible so planning can continue when inevitable issues crop up and plans must change.

- **Organization** combines people and object resources and times their application (synchronizes them) so the task will succeed as indicated in planning. Organization can be formal and firm once set (establishing departments in a business) or flexible and fast-paced (organizing a holiday party). What becomes obvious is that whoever is responsible for organizing also needs authority to organize, or the result will be frustration and stalemate for all involved.

- **Staffing** entails leadership, as do the other components, and includes managing personnel. Staffing involves assigning people to create organizational effectiveness, developing them in their roles, and appraising how they are doing. Managing people means caring for them and seeing to their welfare in a professional setting. Caring is a leadership function. Staffing may seem like nothing more than assigning a person to a duty or job, but, if performed effectively, staffing will carefully take into account that person’s desires, talents, prospects, and interpersonal “fit.”

- **Directing** (or, as it is also called, supervising) is often more visible than other management components. A manager gives instructions and guidance, watches to understand the progress and results of efforts, and remains flexible enough to shift previous directions when conditions change. Leadership is visibly exercised in directing, as the art of leadership includes how to give direction.

- **Controlling** means guiding the effort to compliance or matching previously set expectations. Controlling, like the other components, requires the manager to have the authority to control the effort and ensure the task is completed. If a manager cannot control it, then likely a higher-level managerial decision to delegate authority was ineffective (Rao & Pande, 2010).

Management is considered executive level and is usually well compensated because it is thought to be more sophisticated and complicated than most jobs. Any way you look at the parts of management, their occurrence is rarely simple. If we view them as functions or roles, then we see in actual examples that these functions or roles are being performed at the same time; if we view these components as phases, then different phases for different efforts are occurring at the same time. All managers need a combination of instruction on principles and basics, specific training, self-reflection on how they want to manage, and experience. In these eight units, we will work on the first-mentioned education piece of managerial preparation.

A good wrap-up to this overview of managerial components is the practice of decision-making strategies. A manager can make a decision suddenly or instinctively, but unless the issue being decided is simple or completely within the realm of the manager’s knowledge, rapid decisions can be ineffective and costly.

Sailors assigned to Naval Station Ingleside, Texas, work together to organize relief supplies for survivors of Hurricane Katrina at a Salvation Army drop-off point. (Antoine, 2005)
Not every decision fits into a deliberate process. Indeed, an attribute of good leadership is to know when there has been enough consideration applied and when the effort needs a decision, even an imperfect one, to proceed to success. People feel inspired when decisions are made clearly and quickly and when it seems apparent that a manager has made the decision that best fits the issue. However, managers will still need to make decisions in complicated situations or when there will be major consequences to resources or resulting events.

Scholars, successful business executives, and government officers (especially military leaders) have published certain methodologies that are useful as decision-making strategies for the manager. Most of them feature the following (with some variation):

1. Recognize what the actual problem or issue is. To do so, deliberate carefully and avoid emotions stemming from a sense of urgency or other stresses.
2. Gather relevant facts about the problem, making sure that no detail is missed.
3. Think of alternatives or choices. To be fair, consider as many possibilities as can be handled in the time available.
4. Compare alternatives fairly, avoiding bias. Assign values to advantages and disadvantages to provide a rational weighting of options.
5. Choose the best alternative for the organization you manage. Decide what to do based on that choice (Bond, 2008).

As we have explored, management involves leading, organizing, and controlling as well as familiarity with roles, functions, and components. In Unit I we considered the components of planning, organization, staffing, directing, and controlling, and we reflected on what must be done to be effective with each one. We also explored the manager as decision-maker. We have all made quick decisions, but when decisions entail costs and other consequences, we need a process that helps us make the best decision with the information available at the time. Practitioners and scholars have developed decision-making processes for managers to use, and we reviewed one typical version.

Most importantly, take away this fact: You can manage!

References


**Suggested Reading**

*In order to access the following resource(s), click the link(s) below:*

Please read Chapter 1, Section 1.5 to learn more about best practices tied to management.