

# Section 1

## Introduction

Whether an owner, manager or an employee in an organisation, we all need to be effective at managing our time and resources to ensure that there is proper control.

Without control, any job or role can lead to a variety of situations which can have disastrous consequences on the organisation, on our personal lives and even on our health.

Although people may excel at some aspect of the business function, unless we can manage the resources at our disposal, the danger is that the business will suffer and the results can include:

- Lost time
- Missed deadlines
- Lost customers
- Bad production
- Poor cash flow
- Lack of motivation
- Absence
- Staff turnover
- Stress
- Bankruptcy



The list is endless but the message is clear: any business lacking in management will run out of control and eventually falter.

On the other hand, there are great benefits and rewards to be had from employing some basic management principles, not least of which are a better business, happier more productive staff, and peace of mind. Even the sole trader needs to be a good manager (perhaps especially so) because however good you may be at what you do, the business still requires managing.

## **Exercise 1**

Consider the case of Jim Smith. He is the owner of a corner shop selling newspapers, confectionery and tobacco. His shop is open six days a week and he employs three part-time staff to help with running this shop. Not a difficult task? It sounds idyllic – being your own boss, just a few staff to worry about, ordering stock once a week, and not much else to worry about. But is it?

What types of task must Jim perform in order to manage his business?


To be successful, Jim must spend a lot of his time managing if the business is to be successful. Tasks include:

<b>Planning</b>	work rotas, holiday cover, displays, stock
<b>Motivating</b>	staff to provide good service
<b>Delegating</b>	the decisions required when he is not there
<b>Time management</b>	to ensure that the business does not take all his time
<b>Staff training</b>	so that staff can operate tills and be familiar with the products and prices
<b>Marketing</b>	to increase his customers
<b>Stock control</b>	to ensure that the shop is well stocked but also that there is no wastage.
<b>Financial control</b>	to ensure there is cash to pay staff, suppliers and keep the business running.

These are just some quick examples which demonstrate the need for good management.

In the four books in this course, we will examine in turn a series of skills and techniques which can have a major impact on the smooth running of any business. These are the same whether you are running a newsagent or are a department manager in a large organisation. The only difference is that, the smaller the business, the quicker the effect of poor management can be because there are fewer people around to compensate.

There are, of course, many books, courses and journals which teach management skills, many of which are excellent. Many of these are also very detailed and often difficult to digest without devoting considerable time and effort. The emphasis in the four books in this course is on practical help on a broad range of management skills. If you wish to learn about more specific techniques, you will find a list of sources of information at the end of Book 4. However, for the time being let us start by considering what the manager's role involves.



## **Exercise 2**

Give five examples of situations in which you failed to manage effectively and the repercussions this had (or might have had).

## **Exercise 3**

Now consider five possible outcomes for your business if you become a more effective manager.

## The Manager's Role

At its simplest, the manager's role can be said to be to ensure the smooth running of a business, department or section so that the objectives are met with minimum cost and maximum efficiency. This statement sounds all very straightforward but if we examine the definition a little we can see that there are some clear clues about the nature of the role. Some of the implications of the definition are:

**Objectives:** knowing what is required and what the purpose is. This includes having a good understanding of the tasks performed and what the planned outcome is. The objectives may be purely financial or linked to production targets and service levels, but without a clear understanding of what these objectives are, how do we manage effectively?

**Minimum cost:** ensuring that whatever tasks are performed in the business or department, these are carried out within known financial constraints and organised in such a way as to minimise the cost.

**Maximum efficiency:** organising people and other resources so that there is a smooth flow of work, and a planned structure to the tasks that minimises wastage of effort. To do this we will need to be good at organising, delegating, motivating, training and using time effectively.

**Smooth running:** minimising problems and hiccups so that customers' expectations are met and staff feel that they are making a worthwhile contribution to the business.

We could go into great detail here about the role of the manager but the message is that he or she must be able to control events by organising resources effectively. The resources will include:

- People
- Information
- Finance
- Yourself

The range of skills involved will include:

- Planning
- Budgeting
- Recruiting
- Training
- Organising
- Delegating
- Leading
- Team building
- Objective setting
- Communicating
- Reviewing
- Changing
- Decision making
- Influencing

Most people enter management because they have first become proficient (and usually succeeded) at performing some task or operation. Engineers, scientists, carers, chefs, computer programmers – whatever a person's occupation, the actual task involved requires some technical or vocational skill. The manager's role, however, requires a series of skills which are generic, or not specific to one job or organisation. Consequently, becoming effective at managing needs to be considered as a separate discipline. However good you may be at your chosen occupation, managing often requires different skills and a different approach in order to be successful. That is why it is important to understand the role clearly before we look at some of the specific skills listed above.

Another way of looking at managing is to define it through being responsible and accountable. Any manager, whether self-employed or part of a bigger organisation, will be responsible for ensuring that certain tasks are fulfilled to designated standards and to pre-determined timescales. You will also be accountable to your manager, your shareholders, your fellow directors or perhaps your bank manager for ensuring that tasks are carried out, evaluated and reported.



Let's consider Jim the shopkeeper again for a moment. He is responsible to his business for the operation of the shop, the employment of staff, safety of customers, financial control and a long list of other things as well. He is also accountable to his bank manager, suppliers and any partners for reviewing the business and reporting on its success. In his case, defining the manager's role is quite straightforward – he is solely responsible and accountable for everything that goes on. In most cases however, any one manager will need to understand what they are responsible and accountable for, and the limit of their authority.

Before looking at specific management skills let's examine your role as a manager.



Defining responsibility, accountability and authority is an extremely important exercise because it helps to concentrate the mind on which managerial tasks and skills will be most important. It also completes the first crucial task of understanding the framework and limits within which we all work.

Now let's go on to examine how to manage our responsibilities by looking in turn at various elements of the process, starting with managing yourself.

## **Exercise 5**

What are your objectives as a manager in your organisation?

## **Exercise 6**

What specific tools do you have at your disposal to manage effectively?

## **Exercise 7**

Being a good manager involves a number of different skills. Which are your strongest skills, and which are your weakest?

## **Exercise 8**

How could you ensure that your weakest skills do not adversely affect your performance as a manager?



## Section 3

# Managing Yourself

For many managers, the first essential task is to learn to manage themselves. All too often, the temptation to do everything themselves is too great and the result can be chaos, stress and an imbalance between work and home life. Their own time is one of the most valuable resources at their disposal yet this is often very badly organised and not properly managed.

Test yourself. Answer the questions in Exercise 9 on the next page. Make your answers as honest as possible.

## **Exercise 9**

1. Is your working life chaotic?
2. Do you miss deadlines regularly?
3. Are you always behind, no matter how hard you work?
4. Is your day a constant stream of interruptions?
5. Are you always short of time?
6. Do you take your job home with you on a regular basis?

Most managers will answer yes to many of these questions, which is an indication that there is a need to change and practice managing themselves more.

The importance of creating time to think, and of being in control, cannot be stressed too highly. Yet, more often than not, managers are controlled by events and rarely create the opportunity to think about priorities. The result can be chaos and a business which is not under proper control. The effect on staff and family can be harmful, too. Therefore, the first job for any manager must be to take control.

This means ensuring that your time and energy are devoted to priorities which you have defined and not letting events dictate what you do. How often do managers take home a bulging briefcase because home is the only place that they can catch up on things? The answer is too many. The result is a reduction in much needed time with the family, relaxation and recreation. It often results in reduced effectiveness at work and so a vicious spiral starts which can end in greater chaos, more stress and a business which runs out of control.

The first step to avoiding this is make time to think, because often just thinking about the problems and pressures, setting priorities and organising resources can have a dramatic effect on you as a manager, on your staff and on your business.

Let's try that now. Turn to Exercise 10 on the following page.