

THE FUNCTIONS OF MANAGEMENT

“... the functions of management -- planning, organising, staffing, directing, controlling ...”

Kunz & MacDonald, *Principles of Management*.

1. Planning is the most basic of all management functions since it involves selection from alternative courses of action ...

“The Manager,” said the Assistant Manager, “is not pleased. In fact he’s very displeased.”

The Engineer frowned a little nervously. “Not, I hope, with my department?”

The Assistant Manager shook his head. “No, nothing like that. It’s a matter related to disposal in Area D. He took it into his head to visit the area—you know how he likes to see his programs in action—and they laid on a special demonstration. A hundred units. There was some ... unpleasantness.”

“Unpleasantness?”

“Unfortunately several units—females and juveniles—were handled clumsily. There was delay. The Manager was ... more than displeased ... distressed, distraught even. An unexpected reaction, but still ...”

“And what,” asked the Engineer, “has this to do with me?”

“The Manager has directed that we develop an alternative method for handling females and juveniles. A method that will reduce the ... psychological impact. You understand?”

“Of course.” The Engineer nodded vigorously. “The humanitarian aspects ... most important. From both points of view ...”

“You have a week,” said the Assistant Manager. “Beyond that time no delay will be tolerated.”

When the Assistant Manager had gone the Engineer called in his assistants and they went to work.

“Effectiveness and economy,” said the Engineer. He looked blandly round the room. “Those are the criteria. And all your suggestions have failed, in one respect or another, to meet those criteria.”

His assistants looked crestfallen.

“However,” said the Engineer a little smugly, “there is one very simple solution. It requires a minimum of time and expense, and has the added benefit of utilising existing equipment. Only slight modifications will be required.”

The assistants brightened considerably as they listened to his exposition. There was credit to be gained, even if only by association.

The Engineer himself supervised the modifications to the test unit, and after a successful trial wrote a memo to the Assistant Manager advising him that a solution to the problem had been found.

2. . . . *the primary task of organising must involve the grouping of activities necessary to accomplish goals and plans, the assignment of these activities to appropriate departments, and the provision for authority delegation and co-ordination . . .*

"We can," the Assistant Manager told the Manager, "divide the operation into three distinct phases: segregation; transport and activation; disposal. The first phase will present no problems—the subjects are conditioned to such procedures. We will quote, if necessary, reasons of health, hygiene, administrative expediency. In regard to the second phase, arrangements are well in train. Vehicles are presently being modified by two leading manufacturers and the first twenty five will be available within two days. Externally they will appear no different from all our other closed personnel transport vans. Activation will be carried out by the operator of each vehicle in line with technical instructions developed by the Engineer. The third phase, disposal, will be undertaken by the vehicle crews. I think that covers everything . . ."

"I want no mistakes," said the Manager grimly. "I was . . . embarrassed . . . at the demonstration. It mustn't happen again . . ."

The Assistant Manager flinched a little, aware of potential retributions, implicit but none the less frightening, in case of failure. "I assure you," he said, "that there will be no slip-ups. We've had a number of trial runs, and the machinery is foolproof. The Engineer and I have spent the morning drafting Standard Procedural Instructions. They will be promulgated as soon as final selection of personnel is made . . ."

3. *Every enterprise should be vitally concerned about the quality of its managers. These are the men who provide the only guarantee that its objectives will be achieved . . .*

"And that," said the Manager, "brings us to the point. Just what are we going to do about the selection of suitable personnel? It's not the kind of job you can trust to just anyone."

"I think we have a unit," said the Assistant Manager, "presently largely unemployed, which may be ideal."

The Manager raised his eyebrows. "And which is that?"

"The Eastern Section of the Special Action Group. Now that the new project has been stabilised their former duties are largely being carried out by permanent units."

The Manager nodded slowly. "Of course . . . an excellent idea. Have the movement orders drawn up, I'll sign them today. We'll start mobilising them for transport to Area D immediately . . ." He thought for a moment. "Keep the Engineer advised. Use him in a staff capacity for this operation."

Allow him complete access to all aspects. And," he looked hard at the Assistant Manager, "listen to what he has to say . . ."

4. *To direct subordinates, a manager must motivate, communicate, and lead . . .*

"I've just come back from Area D," said the Engineer. "It was terrible, terrible . . ."

The Assistant Manager frowned. "What was it? The machinery? Malfunctions?"

"No, no," said the Engineer. "The machinery worked perfectly . . . so simple . . ." He shook his head. "Terrible, terrible, a great ordeal for our men . . ."

"What happened? Get on with it . . ." The Assistant Manager was impatient and more than a little worried.

"Well," said the Engineer, "as you know, the engine exhaust gases are conducted directly into the rear of the closed vans. Everything sealed hermetically. Our tests indicated that after activation—starting the motor—the operation was fully effective within fifteen minutes. During that time the vans were driven over suitable roads at normal speeds. The subjects simply dozed off . . . quite peacefully . . ."

"What went wrong?"

"Ah," said the Engineer, "it was the human factor. Under field conditions . . . impatience, nerves, that kind of thing. The drivers tried to get it over as quickly as possible. They drove as fast as they could, keeping the throttle fully open. The result," and he winced, "was suffocation . . . so unpleasant . . ."

The Assistant Manager seemed puzzled. "But what difference . . .?"

"Think," said the Engineer, "of our men unloading at the disposal point . . . the results of suffocation . . . the disorder, the rictus, the distorted faces, the excretions, the smell . . . Our men began to complain of violent headaches after each unloading detail."

"Perhaps," suggested the Assistant Manager, "a higher proportion of unmarried men in the details?"

The Engineer shook his head. "No, no, it seems to make no difference. In any case, the problem is solved."

"How?"

"An intensive program of re-indoctrination, re-reinforcement of the proper procedures, some slight adjustment to the mechanical systems to compensate for driver impatience. Now," said the Engineer, "all is well . . . the subjects fall peacefully asleep, the unfortunate and disturbing manifestations are no longer present, the men's headaches have disappeared." He smiled at the Assistant Manager. "Everything is going according to plan now. I'm sure the Manager will be satisfied . . ."

5. . . . control is the measurement and correction of the performance of subordinates in order to make sure that enterprise objectives and plans to attain them are accomplished . . .

"Scrap it," said the Manager. He looked much fitter after a week's holiday in the mountains.

"Scrap it?" The Assistant Manager, with some difficulty, prevented himself from gaping. "But it's running perfectly . . . like clockwork . . . one or two bugs had to be ironed out . . . but now . . ."

"Scrap it."

"But . . . I'm sure . . . if you would care for a demonstration?"

The Manager was brusque. "I haven't time to go back to Area D."

"But the program — what's wrong with it?"

"Ineffective . . . too slow . . . we've targets to meet, and this operation slows us down unnecessarily. The vans can handle only fifteen or twenty units at a time. Our target for next month in area D is over five thousand units a day. The vans just can't keep up . . ."

"But what do we do? About the females and juveniles?"

"Revert to the previous system. Back to the pits . . ." The Manager opened a file. The discussion was over. But he glanced up as the Assistant Manager was leaving. "Give the Engineer a rocket," he said. "And put him on one of the furnace teams. That's about his limit . . ."

SPRING, 1942: THE UKRAINE.

Sand Creek, Smyrna, Treblinka, Dresden, Hiroshima, My Lai . . .

The principles of management have universal application . . .