

No job is more vital to
our society than that
of the manager

[Business](#), [Career](#)



The word manager has just about as many interpretations as there are managers, so does the word society. The scope of this discussion could be as wide as the interpretations and so; twice endless. This paper, however, seeks to establish two factors it sees as main components of the quote; (1) that the role of manager is one implicit of manmade groups and (2) that the function of a manager is vital for progress and therefor society. Human behavior

Looking at various known forms of societies, we generally find examples of some of its members having more power than others.

Researchers, tracing as far back in history as they possibly can, have found status hierarchies in groups of people (Robbins, Bergman, Stagg & Coulter, 2001, p. 523). In the Tiv society in Nigeria Maurice Godelier found that " it is a structure [..] of graded familial priorities in the control of wealth and force, in claim to others' services, in access to divine power, and in material styles of life, such that, if all the people were kinsmen and members of society, still some are more members than others" (1977, p. 84)

The perceived status of certain group members gives rise to leaders and the power to influence the remaining group members. The power enables them to decide, amongst other things, how the group will work and function to attain their goals. The group members accept this power partly because they realize that the sacrifice of some autonomy may help the group attaining their goals and so benefit them as individuals (Ford, 1991). The group members put their trust in their leader to do a job, to perform a set of tasks and honor their sacrifice (lib.).

People with the power to rule in groups would, according to Mintzberg, have to assume the same roles as a manager: " foremen, factory supervisors, staff managers [...] even street gang leaders [performs roles generic for managers]" (HarvardBusiness Review, 1990, p. 164). He states that there is little or no difference between the structural behavior of managers on different levels, hence people with the status of leaders in groups may be called managers. According to Bartol et al., however, ascertaining that managers take on certain roles is not enough to adequately describe a managers job (1998, p. 15):

There is a need to consider why a manager is engaging in the different roles. The why, is identified by Robbins et al. , as the more classical, functional approach, consisting of planning, organizing, leading and controlling (2001, p14). The function of managers This classical approach was originally devised by a French managing director of a coal-mining firm called Fayol (Robbins et al. , 2001).

He separated the practice of management from the other business functions and boiled it down to the four universal set of functions: Planning To set a goal usually means that plans has to be worked out to find various ways of attaining the set goal. The plans has to take into account both theenvironmentin which it operates and the internal qualities of the organization, and the two factors have to correspond with each other; no company operates in a vacuum, nor does its surroundings remain unaffected by the actions of an organization (Harvard Business Review, 1964, p. 62).

" The only thing certain about it [the future] is that it will be different from, rather than a continuation of, today" (Ibid. p. 62) P. F. Drucker continues, however, by saying " it can be shaped by purposeful action". He holds that while the great philosophical idea might have had more profound effects on our society, a very small percentage of philosophical ideas make it as far as to change the direction of society. " And while each business idea is much more limited, larger proportions of them are effective" (Ibid.).

Take the Sony Walkman for instance, when the idea first was presented within Sony, the market department tried to stop it. They did not think people would walk around with earphones on their heads, the chief executive pushed it through nonetheless. It is alleged that the cost of giving free samples to the trendiest people in Tokyo to roller-skate round the city wearing the Walkman, was \$5, 000, and the rest, as they say, is history (Foden, 1991).

Although good business ideas effectively have changed the face of society, the " number of events -10% to 20% at most - account for 90% of all results whereas the great majority of events account for 10% or less than the events" (Harvard Business Review, 1963, p. 54). This means that most managers have to be reactive rather than proactive in terms of their environment and are forced to change the internal plans to accommodate the changing and unpredictable market.

The manager becomes " the 'nerve center' of his unit and only he has the full and current information to make the set of decisions that determines the

units strategy" (Minkes, 1987). Mintzberg holds that planning is an ongoing process in the mind of the manager (Harvard Business Review, 1990), and it may have to be: Drucker observes in Harvard Business Review (1963) that "the bulk of the time, work, attention and money first goes to " problems" rather than opportunities".

The CEO of Airfreight Express (AFX), in London, Philip Bowels, had to wrestle with problems concerning the repairs and maintenance of his planes when he found that the work performed on his planes was not satisfactory. The sloppy work posed a very real threat not only to his company, but to human life as planes with faults have a tendency to crash (Time Magazine p. 56, August 13, 2001). It is not very likely that his plans for the company included sloppy work by the maintenance company. His plans had to be changed to deal with the problem, post haste.

Organizing The way a problem is handled is usually decided by the nature of the problem, but the way a company identifies and responds to trouble is often determined by the its structure. In a group of people plans should be understood fully by everyone to be fulfilled to the planners contentment (Bartol et al. 1998, p. 367). Similarly problems arising in the course of putting the plans to life, will be identified earlier when there are more people with enough information to identify them (Ibid.).

In Brazil, a company called Semco SA has taken organizing, or rather the lack of organizing, to an extreme by completely removing its structure. The traditional hierarchy is replaced with a democratic form of organizing the

workers. Positions are elected upon for periods of 6 months and anyone may lose their job at any time given a consensus in the work force. Projects may be proposed by anyone and are approved by the workers by the same process as managers are hired and fired (Killian, Perez & Shiel, 1998).

The increased amount of autonomy given to each worker has given rise to a great understanding of how the organization works and therefore produced an organization of experts capable of seeing the meaning and reasons behind managerial decisions. This understanding both enables the workers to give their work meaning and to complete work in such a way that the it is aligned with the overall plans, and subsequently goals, of the company (Ibid.). The way a business is organized can actually have as weighty effect on its environment as the groundbreaking business idea.

" The rise of discount stores in the USA in the late 1940's with the application of an idea developed by Sears, Roebuck and Co. " (Harvard Business Review, p. 62, 1964) the idea was to use samples of each appliance on the store floor for demonstration reasons only and delivering the items purchased by customers directly from the warehouse. This restructuring realized savings in costs by 20% and so they were able to cut their retail price by the same percentage (Ibid.)