

Eighth Edition

Supervision Today!



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Preface

Welcome to the eighth edition of *Supervision Today!* We continue to present this book in a way that our users have found useful. Many of you helped make the previous editions of this book a resounding success. In this edition, we continue that trend and make your reading experience even better.

In our quest to make this the most complete supervision text currently available, we've taken into account feedback from our readers. We continue to present a book that focuses on the basic elements of supervision—one that covers the essential and traditional concepts in effectively supervising employees; that has a strong applied, practical, and skill focus; and that is user friendly. This new edition continues to be rich in instructional aids and experiential opportunities. Let's highlight some of these elements: specifically, the basis for the content, the new features, and the “student-friendly” approach of this edition.

Foundations of the Eighth Edition

Most of us understand concepts better when we can relate them to our everyday lives. In this edition we help you build an understanding of supervising through real-life concepts, examples, and practice. We believe that when you have an opportunity to apply what you are learning—in an educational setting that encourages risk taking—you will perform more effectively on the job. Moreover, in the process you will build your supervisory skills portfolio!

We recognize that the supervisor's job continues its rate of dramatic change. Supervisors are working with a more diverse workforce in terms of race, gender, and ethnic background. Supervisors' jobs are constantly affected by technological changes, a more competitive marketplace, and corporate restructuring and workflow redesign. Despite all of these changes, supervisors still need to understand the traditional elements of directing the work of others and the specific skills required: goal setting, budgeting, scheduling, delegating, interviewing, negotiating, handling grievances, counseling employees, and evaluating employees' performance.

A good supervision text must address both traditional and contemporary issues. We believe we've done this by focusing on relevant issues and by including lots of examples and visual stimuli to make concepts come alive. The full-color design format captures visually the reality and the excitement of the supervisor's job. We've also spent years developing a writing style that has been called “lively, conversational, and interesting.” That's just another way of saying that you should be able to understand what we're saying and feel as though we're actually in front of you giving a lecture. Of course, only you can judge this text's readability. We ask you to read a few pages at random. We think you'll find the writing style both informative and lively.

What's New for the Eighth Edition?

We have been pleased with the response to the previous edition of the textbook. Reviewers and current adopters tell us that the content is solid and that the skill-building exercises work well in the classroom. For the eighth edition we have concentrated on refining the presentation and addressing the evolving roles that supervisors are asked to embrace in today's workplace. Significant additions to the eighth edition include the following:

- Sustainability in chapter 1
- Update on the importance of supervisors in chapter 1

- Motivating contingent workers in chapters 2 and 8
- Workplace diversity updates in chapters 2, 5, 8 and 1
- Supervisory issues faced by entrepreneurs in chapter 3
- Recruiting and retaining employees in an entrepreneurial environment in chapter 3
- Project structure for teams in chapter 4
- Teleworker updates in chapter 4
- Virtual and network organizations in chapter 4
- Workplace romance in chapter 5
- Adjusting controls for cultural differences in chapter 6
- Big data in decision making in chapter 7
- Design thinking in decision making in chapter 7
- Using employee recognition programs in chapter 8
- Work life and family balance updates in chapter 8
- Employee engagement in chapter 9
- Problem-solving, self-managed, cross-functional, and virtual work teams in chapter 11
- Supervising global teams in chapter 11
- Paired comparison appraisal in chapter 12

Key Features of the Eighth Edition

Before you start a journey, it's valuable to know where you're headed so you can minimize detours. The same holds true in reading a text. To make learning more efficient, we continue to include the following features.

Chapter Outcomes and Learning Objectives Each chapter opens with a list of outcomes and learning objectives that describe what you will be able to do after reading the chapter. These outcomes and learning objectives are designed to focus your attention on the major issues in each chapter. Each outcome and learning objective is a key learning element.

Key Concepts Each chapter contains a list of the key concepts addressed in the chapter. These terms represent critical comprehension areas. And through the Key Concept Crossword you can get feedback on how well you've understood the key concepts.

Responding to a Supervisory Dilemma These interesting chapter-opening stories focus on an issue regarding a topic that will be discussed in the chapter. Although they have value, these vignettes are often overlooked. To address this problem, and to focus heavily on supervisory issues, all of our opening vignettes are posed as situational dilemmas. No matter where you may work as a supervisor, at some point in your career you will be faced with a difficult issue—one that goes beyond simply following the law. These opening vignettes are designed to encourage you to think about what you may face and to begin to develop a plan of action for handling workplace dilemmas. For this edition three of the opening vignettes are new, which offers a contemporary view of workplace dilemmas.

Margin Notes Key concepts identified at the beginning of each chapter are set boldface when they first appear in the chapter. The marginal note defines the term for quick reference.

News Flash! Because of the popularity of these vignettes in previous editions, we continue to include them in this new edition. Each vignette presents an issue that highlights a distinction between traditional and contemporary supervisory roles. Each chapter contains a news flash item specific to the topics included in the chapter and two are new.

Something to Think About Supervisors make many decisions every day. Some decisions present clear-cut answers based on legal and company rules and regulations. Other resolutions may not be so obvious. You need to evaluate and think through a number of variables to develop an answer or course of action. These sections are excellent class discussion starters and are included in each chapter to focus on the presented topics.

Focus on Comprehension We continue to present our second-level headings in the form of questions. Each of these questions was carefully written to reinforce understanding of specific information. After reading a chapter (or a section), you should be able to return to these headings and answer the question. If you can't answer a question or are unsure of your response, you'll know exactly what sections you need to reread or review, or where to place more of your effort. All in all, this format provides a self-check on your reading comprehension.

Comprehension Check This is a quick “Are-you-understanding-what-you’re-reading?” feature. In each chapter there are two Comprehension Checks with objective questions (which are answered in the “Solutions” section at the end of the book beginning on page 457) that offer quick feedback on whether you’ve understood what you’ve read. If you have problems answering these questions correctly, you should reread those sections before moving on to new material in the book. Of course, not every element of the chapter’s material can be tested—nor can simply answering these questions correctly guarantee comprehension. But answering these questions correctly can indicate that you are making progress and that learning has taken place.

Thinking Critically Critical thinking is also an important outcome. Several years ago, training organizations began taking a hard look at themselves. Typically, they found that their programs needed to expand language-based skills, knowledge, and abilities across the curriculum. What outcomes did this achieve? In essence, it indicated the need for all training programs to cover the basic skill areas of communication, critical thinking, computer technology, globalization, diversity, and ethics and values.

This edition of *Supervision Today!* continues this feature to help you acquire these key skills by upgrading levels of thinking from knowledge to comprehension and, finally, to application. We convey relevant supervisory knowledge, give you an opportunity to reinforce your comprehension, and demonstrate how you can apply the concepts.

END-OF-CHAPTER FEATURES: A SKILL-FOCUSED APPROACH

Today it's not enough simply to know about supervision; you need skills to succeed in your supervisory efforts. So we've maintained our skill component in the Enhancing Understanding and Developing Your Supervisory Skills sections at the end of each chapter, which include the following features:

- Summary
- Comprehension: Review and Discussion Questions
- Key Concept Crossword
- Getting to Know Yourself
- Building a Team
- A step-by-step description of how to develop your skills in the area discussed in that chapter
- Communicating Effectively
- Thinking Critically

These features are designed to help you build analytical, diagnostic, team-building, investigative, and writing skills. We address these skill areas in several ways. For example, we include experiential exercises to develop team-building skills; cases to

build diagnostic, analytical, and decision-making skills; and suggested topical writing assignments to enhance writing skills.

Summary Just as Chapter Outcomes and Learning Objectives clarify where you are going, chapter summaries remind you where you've been. Each chapter of this book concludes with a concise summary organized around the opening chapter outcomes and learning objectives.

Comprehension: Review and Discussion Questions These questions reinforce chapter content. If you have read and understood the content of a chapter, you should be able to answer the review questions, which are drawn directly from the material in the chapter. The discussion questions, on the other hand, tend to go beyond comprehension of chapter content. They're designed to foster higher-order thinking skills. The discussion questions enable you to demonstrate that you not only know the facts in the chapter but can also use those facts to deal with more complex issues.

Key Concept Crossword Crossword puzzles using the key concepts from each chapter provide another way to reinforce comprehension on a level, and in a way, that you may enjoy. Answers are provided in the Solutions section at the end of the book beginning on page 457.

Getting to Know Yourself Before you can effectively supervise others, you must understand your current strengths as well as areas in need of development. To assist in this learning process, we encourage you to complete these self-assessments from the Prentice Hall Self-Assessment Library 3.4, which can be packaged with the textbook.

Building a Team These exercises give you an opportunity to work as a team, learning and practicing the supervisory skills introduced in the chapter. By combining your new knowledge and natural talents, you will be able to practice a supervisory activity and assess your own progress.

Chapter Topic How-To Focus This section gives step-by-step instructions on how to develop a skill directly related to a topic addressed in the chapter.

Communicating Effectively In this feature, suggested writing projects help you develop writing skills. Projects can also become presentations to reinforce verbal and presentation skills.

Thinking Critically: Case Analyses Each chapter concludes with two case studies designed to make you think critically as you make decisions regarding a supervisory issue. These cases enable you to apply your knowledge to solve problems faced by supervisors. For this edition 28 percent of the cases have been replaced and updated with new topical situations dealing with current workplace issues.

Supplemental Materials

FOR THE STUDENT

Self-Assessment Library 3.4 Self-Assessment Library (SAL) is a unique learning tool that allows students to assess their knowledge, beliefs, feelings, and actions in regard to a wide range of personal skills, abilities, and interests. SAL 3.4 contains sixty-seven research-based self-scoring exercises that generate immediate individual analysis for the student. SAL is available as a printed workbook, a CD-ROM, and by an access code, so students have a choice of how they want to complete the assessments. Contact your Pearson representative to have SAL packaged with this textbook—SAL ISBN 0-13-608376-5.

FOR THE INSTRUCTOR

At the Instructor Resource Center, www.pearsonhighered.com/irc, instructors can access a variety of print, digital, and presentation resources available with this text in downloadable format. Registration is simple and gives instructors immediate access to new titles and new editions. As a registered faculty member, you can download resource files and receive immediate access to and instructions for installing course management content on your campus server. In case you ever need assistance, our dedicated technical support team is ready to help with the media supplements that accompany this text. Visit <http://247.pearsoned.com> for answers to frequently asked questions and toll-free user support phone numbers.

The following supplements are available for download to adopting instructors:

- Instructor's Resource Manual
- Test Bank
- TestGen® Computerized Test Bank
- PowerPoint Presentation

Acknowledgments

Writing a textbook is often the work of a number of people whose names generally never appear on the cover. Yet, without their help and assistance, a project like this would never come to fruition. We'd like to recognize some special people who gave so unselfishly to making this book a reality.

We want to thank the users of previous editions and students who provided a number of suggestions for this revision. To all who provided us feedback, please know that we take your comments and suggestions seriously. We review each comment and see how it might be incorporated into the text. Unfortunately, in a few instances, although the comments and suggestions were absolutely on target, sometimes adding specific information isn't feasible. That's not to say that we discounted what you said, but we had to balance the focus of the book with the feedback given.

Finally, we'd like to add personal notes.

From Steve's corner: To my wife, Laura Ospanik. Laura continues to be a phenomenal source of ideas and support. For that I am grateful.

From Dave's corner: I want to give special thanks to my family, who give me the encouragement and support to do my job. Each of you is special to me in that you continue to bring love and warmth into my life. Terri, Mark, Meredith, Gabriella, and Natalie, thank you. You continue to make me proud to be part of your lives.

From Rob's corner: I want to thank my wife, Sheila, for encouraging and supporting me in my work on the eighth edition of *Supervision Today!* I also thank my granddaughters Kennedy, Katherine, and Caroline for demonstrating the love of learning this book is meant to inspire. I continue to be grateful for the opportunity to be part of this learning endeavor.

An Invitation

Now that we've explained the ideas behind the text, we'd like to extend an open invitation. If you'd like to give us some feedback, we encourage you to contact us.

Send your correspondence to Dave DeCenzo at E. Craig Wall, Sr. College, Coastal Carolina University, P.O. Box 269154, Conway, SC 29528-6054. Dave is also available via e-mail at ddecenzo@coastal.edu. Alternatively, you may contact Rob Wolter at spv2day@iupui.edu. Either way, we welcome your feedback!

We hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we enjoyed preparing it for you.

Steve Robbins
Dave DeCenzo
Rob Wolter

Defining Supervision and Supervisory Challenges

Part 1 introduces you to the world of work and the functions of a supervisor. Emphasis in this section is placed on supervisory roles and the skills needed to be successful in today's ever-changing work environment. Supervisory positions are also being influenced by a number of environmental factors. What these factors are and how they affect the supervisory function are discussed.

Chapter 1 ■ Supervision
Fundamentals

Chapter 2 ■ Supervision
Challenges

1

CHAPTER

Supervision Fundamentals

Key Concepts

After completing this chapter, you will be able to define these supervisory terms:

- conceptual competence
- controlling
- effectiveness
- efficiency
- employee engagement
- first-level managers
- interpersonal competence
- leading
- management
- management functions
- middle managers
- operative employees
- organization
- organizing
- planning
- political competence
- process
- skill
- supervisors
- supervisory competencies
- sustainability
- technical competence
- top management

Chapter Outcomes and Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- 1-1. Explain the difference among supervisors, middle managers, and top management.
- 1-2. Define *supervisor*.
- 1-3. Identify the four functions in the management process.
- 1-4. Explain why the supervisor's role is considered ambiguous.
- 1-5. Describe the four essential supervisory competencies.
- 1-6. Identify the elements that are necessary to be successful as a supervisor.

Acestock/Alamy



Responding to a Supervisory Dilemma



Eric Carr/Alamy

Organizations are changing, but are organizations changing their traditional structures? By and large, the answer is no, traditional organizational structures are still evident today. However, some organizations are changing the traditional organizational structure to appeal to potential employees. One such company is Google. According to *Fortune* magazine, Google ranks in the top five best places to work and has ranked so for five consecutive years.¹ What makes this organization so different from others? Why are employees flocking to organizations such as Google?

The traditional organizational pyramid has operative employees at the bottom of the triangle, supervisors above them, middle managers above supervisors, and top management above all (see Exhibit 1-1). This structure is a vertical approach to management in which the decision making is done at the top and orders are sent down to the operational employees at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy. Operative employees do not have much say in the organization's operations.

Google uses a cross-functional organizational structure combined with a unique philosophy. Their cross-functional organizational structure is more of a team approach to management and is structured horizontally. According to Google.com, they purposefully maintain "an open culture often associated with startups, in which everyone is a hands-on contributor and feels comfortable sharing ideas and opinions."² Google's benefits package also plays a major part in attracting employees. Google states that, from employee retirement funds to their free lunch and dinner program, they strive to offer customizable programs that suit the needs of each of their employees. What more could an employee want?

Which organizational structure do you think works best and why? Do you think the vertical structure works better in some cases, whereas the horizontal structure works better in others? Would you prefer a more relaxed working environment or do you prefer something more structured?

This book is about the millions of supervisors working in today's dynamic organizations and the jobs they do in helping their organizations reach their goals. This book will introduce you to the challenging activities and the rapidly changing world of supervision today!

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Explain the difference among supervisors, middle managers, and top management.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Define *supervisor*.

organization

A systematic grouping of people brought together to accomplish some specific purpose.

Organizations and Their Levels

Supervisors work in places called **organizations**. Before we identify who supervisors are and what they do, it's important to clarify what we mean by the term *organization*. An organization is a systematic grouping of people brought together to accomplish some specific purpose. Your college or university is an organization. So are supermarkets, charitable agencies, churches, neighborhood gas stations, the Indianapolis Colts football team, Nokia Corporation, the Australian Dental Association, and Cedars-Sinai Hospital. These are all organizations because each comprises specific common characteristics.

¹Fortune, "100 Best Companies to Work for," *CNN Money*, 2014, <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/best-companies> (accessed May 23, 2014).

²Google, "Our Culture," Google.com, <http://www.google.com/intl/en/about/company/facts/culture> (accessed May 23, 2014).

WHAT COMMON CHARACTERISTICS DO ALL ORGANIZATIONS HAVE?

All organizations, regardless of their size or focus, share three common characteristics. First, every organization has a purpose. The distinct purpose of an organization is typically expressed in terms of a goal or set of goals that the organization hopes to accomplish. Second, each organization is composed of people. It takes people to establish the purpose and to perform a variety of activities to make the goal a reality. Third, all organizations develop a systematic structure that defines the various roles of members and that often sets limits on members' work behaviors. This may include creating rules and regulations, giving some members supervisory responsibility over other members, forming work teams, or writing job descriptions so that organization members know their responsibilities.

Although organizations and their structures vary widely, often adapting to the environment in which the organization operates, we can show—in most traditional organizations—an organization's structure as a pyramid containing four general categories (see Exhibit 1-1).

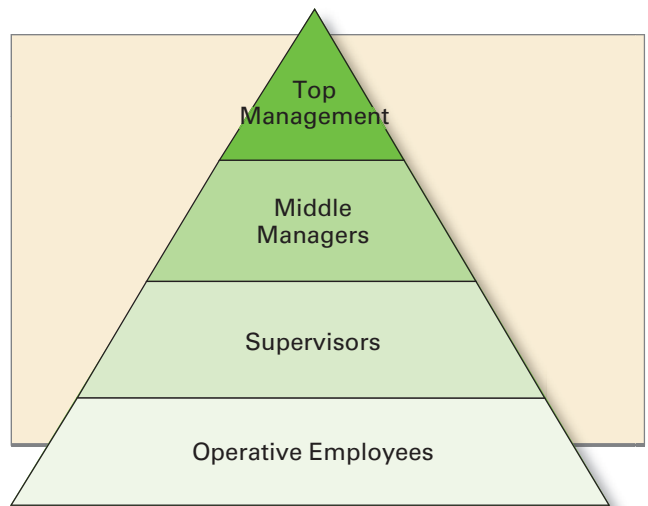


Exhibit 1-1

Levels in the traditional organizational pyramid.

WHAT ARE THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVELS?

Generally speaking, organizations can be divided into four distinct levels: operative employees, supervisors, middle managers, and top management. Let's briefly look at each level.

The base level in the pyramid is occupied by **operative employees**. These employees physically produce an organization's goods and services by working on specific tasks. The counter clerk at Burger King, the claims adjuster at Progressive Insurance, the assembly-line worker at the Toyota auto plant, and the UPS representative who delivers your packages are examples of operative employees. This category may also include many professional positions: doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers, and information technology specialists. The common feature these operative workers share is that they generally don't manage or oversee the work of any other employee.

Now turn your attention to the top two levels in Exhibit 1-1. These are traditional management positions. **Top management** is a group of people responsible for establishing the organization's overall objectives and developing the policies to achieve those objectives. Titles of typical top management positions in business firms include chair of the board, chief executive officer, president, and senior vice-president. Among nonprofit organizations, top management may have such titles as museum director, superintendent of schools, or governor of a state. **Middle managers** include all employees below the top management level who manage other managers. These individuals are responsible for establishing and meeting specific goals in their particular department or unit. Their goals, however, are not established in isolation. Instead, the objectives set by top management provide specific direction to middle managers regarding what they are expected to achieve. Ideally, if each middle manager meets their goals, the entire organization meets its objectives. Examples of job titles held by middle managers include vice-president of finance, director of sales, division manager, group manager, district manager, unit manager, or high school principal.

Let's again return to Exhibit 1-1. The only category that we haven't described is **supervisors**. Like top and middle managers, supervisors are also part of an organization's management team. What makes them unique is that they oversee the work of operative employees. Supervisors, then, are the only managers who don't manage other managers. Another way to think of supervisors is as **first-level managers**. That is, counting from the bottom of the traditional pyramid-shaped organization, supervisors represent the first level in the management hierarchy.

operative employees

Employees who physically produce an organization's goods and services by working on specific tasks.

top management

A group of people responsible for establishing an organization's overall objectives and developing the policies to achieve those objectives.

middle managers

All employees below the top management level who manage other managers and are responsible for establishing and meeting specific departmental or unit goals set by top management.

supervisors

As part of an organization's management team, supervisors oversee the work of operative employees and are the only managers who don't manage other managers. *See also* first-level managers.

first-level managers

Managers who represent the first level in the management hierarchy. *See also* supervisors.

What kinds of titles are likely to tell you that someone is a supervisor? Though names are sometimes deceiving, people with job titles such as assistant manager, department head, department chair, head coach, foreman, or team leader are typically in supervisory positions. An interesting aspect of supervisors' jobs is that they may engage in operating tasks with their employees. The counter clerk at Burger King may also be the shift supervisor. The claims supervisor at Progressive may also process claim forms. It is important to recognize that even though they perform operative tasks, supervisors are still part of management. That was made clear in 1947, when the U.S. Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act. This act specifically excluded supervisors from the definition of *employee*. Moreover, the Taft-Hartley Act stated that any person who can "hire, suspend, transfer, lay off, recall, promote, discharge, assign, reward, or discipline other employees while using independent judgment is a supervisor." Because first-level managers usually have this authority, the fact that they also engage in the same kind of work that their employees perform in no way changes their management status. In reality, they are still expected to perform the duties and responsibilities associated with the management process.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Identify the four functions in the management process.

management

The process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently, through and with other people.

process

The primary activities supervisors perform.

efficiency

Doing a task right; also refers to the relationship between inputs and outputs.

effectiveness

Doing the right task; goal attainment.

The Management Process

Just as organizations have common characteristics, so, too, do managers at all levels of the organization. Although their titles vary widely, there are several common elements to their jobs—regardless of whether the supervisor is a head nurse in the Heart Center unit of the Washington Hospital Center who oversees a staff of eleven critical-care specialists, or the chief executive officer of the 82,000-plus-member Exxon Corporation. In this section, we look at these commonalities as we discuss the management process and what managers do.

WHAT IS MANAGEMENT?

The term **management** refers to the process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently, through and with other people. Several terms of this definition warrant some discussion: *process*, *efficiently*, and *effectively*.

The term **process** in the definition of management represents the primary activities that supervisors perform. We call these the management functions. The next section describes these functions.

Efficiency means doing the task right and refers to the relationship between inputs and outputs. If you get more output for a given input, you have increased efficiency. You also increase efficiency when you get the same output with fewer resources. Because supervisors deal with input resources that are scarce—money, people, and equipment—they are concerned with efficient use of these resources. Consequently, supervisors must be concerned with minimizing resource costs.

Although minimizing resource costs is important, it isn't enough simply to be efficient. A supervisor must also be concerned with completing activities. We call this **effectiveness**. Effectiveness means doing the right task. In an organization, this translates into goal attainment. Exhibit 1-2 shows how efficiency and effectiveness are interrelated. The need for efficiency has a profound effect on the level of effectiveness. It's easier to be effective if you ignore efficiency. For instance, you

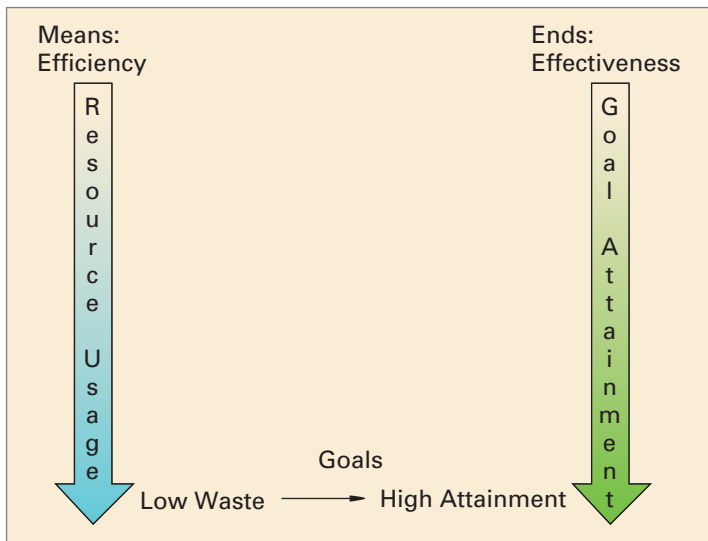


Exhibit 1-2

Efficiency versus effectiveness.

could produce more sophisticated and higher-quality products if you disregard labor and material input costs—yet that would more than likely create serious financial problems. Consequently, being a good supervisor means being concerned with both attaining goals (effectiveness) and doing so as efficiently as possible.

WHAT ARE THE FOUR MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS?

In the early part of the twentieth century, a French industrialist named Henri Fayol wrote that all managers perform five **management functions**: They plan, organize, command, coordinate, and control.³ In the mid-1950s, two professors at UCLA used the functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling as the framework for their management textbook.⁴ Most management textbooks continue to be organized around management functions, though these have generally been condensed to the basic four: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling (see Exhibit 1-3).

Because organizations exist to achieve some purpose, someone has to define that purpose and the means for its achievement. A manager is that someone. The **planning** function encompasses defining an organization's goals, establishing an overall strategy for achieving these goals and developing a comprehensive hierarchy of plans to integrate and coordinate activities. Setting goals keeps the work to be done in its proper focus and helps organizational members keep their attention on what is most important.

Managers also have to divide work into manageable components and coordinate results to achieve objectives. This is the **organizing** function. It includes determining which tasks will be done, who will do them, how the tasks will be grouped, who will report to whom, and when decisions will be made.

We know that every organization contains people and that part of a manager's job is to direct and coordinate the activities of these people. Performing this activity is referred to as the **leading** function of management. When managers motivate employees, direct the activities of others, select the most effective communication channel, or resolve conflicts among members, they're engaging in leading.

The final function managers perform is **controlling**. After the goals are set, the plans formulated, the structural arrangements determined, and the people hired, trained, and motivated, something may still go amiss. To ensure that things are going as they should, a manager must monitor the organization's performance. Actual performance must be compared with the previously set goals. If there are any significant deviations, it's the manager's responsibility to get the organization back on track. This process of monitoring, comparing, and correcting constitutes the controlling function.

management functions

Planning, organizing, leading, and controlling.

planning

Defining an organization's goals, establishing an overall strategy for achieving these goals, and developing a comprehensive hierarchy of plans to integrate and coordinate activities.

organizing

Arranging and grouping jobs, allocating resources, and assigning work so that activities can be accomplished as planned; determining which tasks are to be done, who is to do them, how the tasks are to be grouped, who reports to whom, and when decisions are to be made.

leading

Motivating employees, directing activities of others, selecting the most effective communication channel, and resolving conflicts among members.

controlling

Monitoring an organization's performance and comparing performance with previously set goals. If significant deviations exist, getting the organization back on track.

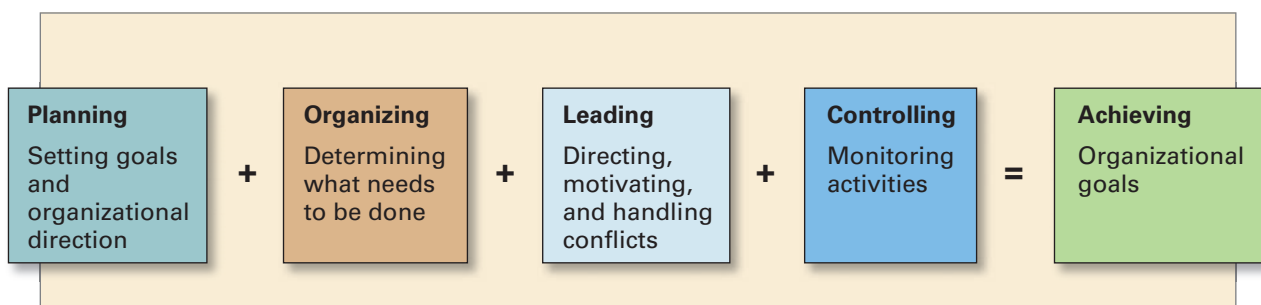


Exhibit 1-3

Management functions.

³H. Fayol, *Industrial and General Administration* (Paris: Dunod, 1916).

⁴H. Koontz and C. O'Donnell, *Principles of Management: An Analysis of Managerial Functions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955).

DO MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS DIFFER BY ORGANIZATIONAL LEVELS?

A manager's level in an organization affects how these management functions are performed. A supervisor in the sales department at Black & Decker won't do the same kind of planning as Black & Decker's president. That's because although all managers perform the four management functions, there are important differences relating to their level. Typically, top management focuses on long-term strategic planning such as determining what overall business a company should be in. Supervisors focus on short-term, tactical planning such as scheduling departmental workloads for the next month. Similarly, top management is concerned with structuring the overall organization, whereas supervisors focus on structuring the jobs of individuals and workgroups.

OBJECTIVE 1.4

Explain why the supervisor's role is considered ambiguous.

Changing Expectations of Supervisors

Seventy years ago, if you had asked a group of top executives what they thought a supervisor's job was, you would have gotten a fairly standard answer. They would describe a man (which it was likely to be back then) who forcefully made decisions, told employees what to do, closely watched over those employees to make sure they did as they were told, disciplined them when they broke the rules, and fired those that didn't "shape up." Supervisors were the bosses "on the operating floor," and their job was to keep the employees in line and get the work out.

If you ask top executives that same question today, you'll find a few who still hold to the supervisor-as-boss perspective, but you'll also hear executives describe today's supervisor using terms such as *trainer*, *adviser*, *mentor*, *facilitator*, or *coach*. In this section, we look at some of these changing expectations of supervisory managers.

WHAT ROLES DO SUPERVISORS PLAY?

The supervisor's job is unique in that it bridges the management ranks with the operating employees. No one else in the organization can make that claim. Yet because of this uniqueness, supervisors have an ambiguous role. Each of the following offers a different viewpoint of the supervisor's role:⁵

Key person: Supervisors serve as the critical communication link in the organization's chain of authority. They are like the hub of a wheel around which all operating activities revolve.

Person in the middle: Because they are "neither fish nor fowl," supervisors must interact and reconcile the opposing forces and competing expectations from higher management and workers. If unresolved, this conflicting role can create frustration and stress for supervisors.

Just another worker: Some people, particularly upper-level managers, see supervisors as "just another worker," rather than as management. This is reinforced when their decision-making authority is limited, when they're excluded from participating in upper-level decisions, and when they perform operating tasks alongside the same people they supervise.

Behavioral specialist: Consistent with the belief that one of the most important abilities needed by supervisors is strong interpersonal skills, they are looked at as behavioral specialists. To succeed in their jobs, supervisors must be able to understand the varied needs of their staff and be able to listen, motivate, and lead.

⁵Based on J. Newstrom and K. Davis, *Organizational Behavior: Human Behavior at Work*, 9th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 239.

Although each of these four role descriptions has some truth to it, each also offers a slanted view of the supervisor's job. Our point is that different people hold different perceptions of this job, which can create ambiguity and conflicts for today's supervisor.

Comprehension Check 1-1

1. All of the following except one are characteristics of all organizations. Which one is not a characteristic?
 - a. Purpose
 - b. Profit
 - c. People
 - d. Structure
2. The term *process* in the definition of management refers to
 - a. the primary activities supervisors perform on their jobs.
 - b. the transformation of raw materials into goods.
 - c. the relationship between doing a task correctly and doing the correct task.
 - d. the means of goal attainment.
3. The management function that involves monitoring activities to ensure that targets are being met is called
 - a. planning.
 - b. organizing.
 - c. leading.
 - d. controlling.
4. A key person in a supervisory role is someone who
 - a. interacts with opposing forces to reconcile differences.
 - b. serves as the critical communication link in the organization.
 - c. is just another worker.
 - d. has a strong ability to listen and understand what is being said.

ARE SUPERVISORS MORE IMPORTANT IN TODAY'S ORGANIZATIONS?

Regardless of what people think and the different role perceptions they hold, a case can be built that the supervisor's job will continue to become increasingly important and complex in the future. Why? We can provide at least three reasons.

First, organizations are implementing significant change and quality programs to cut costs and increase productivity. Examples of these programs include continuous quality improvements, the introduction of work teams, group bonus plans, flexible work hours, and accident-prevention and stress-reduction programs. These programs tend to focus on the work activities of operating employees. As a result, supervisors have become increasingly important because they typically assume responsibility for introducing and implementing these change efforts at the operations level.

Second, organizations are making extensive cutbacks in their number of employees. Boeing, General Motors, United Airlines, Motorola, IBM, and American Express are just a few of the major companies that have cut anywhere from 1,000 to 50,000 jobs. Organizations are constantly thinning their ranks among middle managers and staff-support personnel. "Lean and mean" continues to be a major theme for the best corporations. The implications of these cutbacks will be that supervisors have more people directly reporting