

How to Master the Four Functions of Management

Author: Sifiso Dingani . May 2020

While most positions and departments within a business are tasked with specific duties based on particular knowledge, expertise, or company needs, managers can have a broader and more complex set of responsibilities. More than just specialised knowledge, management requires an ability to navigate numerous procedural, structural, and interpersonal challenges in the process of guiding one's team to the completion of various goals.

Four commonly accepted functions of management encompass these necessary skills: planning, organising, leading, and controlling.

Planning

Planning is typically where the direction of the organization is established through a variety of activities including the development of goals. As such, the planning function of management embodies various levels of decision making. One main role of a manager is creating a plan to meet company goals and objectives. This involves allocating employee resources and delegating responsibilities, as well as setting realistic timelines and standards for completion. Allowing employees to participate in making these decisions may generate additional ideas that offer valuable insights. Planning requires those in management roles to continuously check on team progress to make small adjustments when necessary, while still maintaining a clear picture of a company's larger aims and goals.

Here are the activities for planning:

- **Forecasting** – Managers should be able to predict the organisation's future outcomes based on previous events and management insight.
- **Developing objectives** – Managers should be able to set objectives for their teams as this helps to guide employees in the right direction.
- **Programming** – This allows for more efficient use of time and resources. Through programming, managers can strengthen the alignment towards the organisational business strategy, ensure better control and provide more focus towards benefits realisation.
- **Scheduling** – Managers need to be able to plan activities to achieve the company's goals and prioritise them in the time available.
- **Budgeting** – Managers need to be able to budget finances to control the income and expenditure of a business. They also need to budget in terms of time. This ensures that individual tasks are completed on time.
- **Developing procedures** – By developing procedures, managers set out a road map for their teams to follow. They ensure compliance with laws and regulations, give guidance for decision-making, and streamline internal processes.

Organising

The organizing function of management is comprised of numerous activities directly or indirectly related to the allocation of resources in ways that support the achievement of goals and plans that were developed in the planning function (Leung & Kleiner, 2004). The organisation is not just about delegating tasks efficiently and making sure employees have what they need to accomplish their tasks. Managers also need to be able to reorganize in response to new challenges. This could come into practice in the form of slightly adjusting the timeline for a project or re-allocating tasks from one team to another. It could also mean significantly altering a team's internal structure and roles in response to company growth.

Below are the functions of organising:

- **Developing an organisational structure** – This helps to guide employees by laying out the official relationships that govern the workflow of the company.
- **Delegating** - Through delegation, a manager can divide the work and allocate it to his/her subordinates. This helps in reducing his/her workload so that he/she can work on important areas such as planning and business analysis.
- **Developing relationships** – This helps to develop trust between the manager and his/her team. It helps to create and maintain a positive ambience in the workplace.

Leading

Leadership is a multi-dimensional process that includes motivation and influence of employees (Howell & Costley, 2006). Managers should be comfortable and confident commanding their team members' daily tasks as well as during periods of significant change or challenge. This involves projecting a strong sense of direction and leadership when setting goals and communicating new processes, products and services, or internal policy.

Managers need to be aware of the kind of organisation they work for as well as their departments. This will help to identify which leadership style will be more effective for the given team. Managers can choose to be transformational leaders, transactional leaders, servant leaders, autocratic leaders or bureaucratic leaders.

Here are the functions of leading:

- **Developing people** – By developing employees, managers enhance their team members' skills and upgrade their existing knowledge to perform better.
- **Selecting people** – The selection process can help ensure that the company hires competent, loyal employees who help you to reach your business goals.
- **Motivating** – Motivation as a process leads to an increase in the productivity of the employee. Managers need to motivate employees to meet their needs and create the drive to work at the best of their abilities.
- **Communicating** – Effective communication is significant for managers in aiding them to

perform the four functions of management. Communication helps managers and employees to perform their jobs and responsibilities.

- **Decision Making** – This is a pervasive function of managers that is aimed at achieving organisational goals.

Controlling

To ensure all of the above functions are working toward the success of a company, managers should consistently monitor employee performance, quality of work, and the efficiency and reliability of completed projects. Control (and quality control) in management is about making sure the ultimate goals of the business are being adequately met, as well as making any necessary changes. Control includes managerial efforts directed toward monitoring both organizational and employee performance and progress toward goals (Costa & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007).

Below are the functions of controlling:

- **Developing performance standards** – This provides employees with performance expectations for their duties. Performance management helps to boost employee engagement and productivity. Engaged employees stay longer, actively involve themselves in the workplace and produce better results.
- **Measuring performance** – Measuring employee performance is important because it gives managers the ability to properly gauge worker efficiency, identify who is working hard, determine how to properly compensate the workforce and improve productivity overall.
- **Evaluating performance** – Evaluating performance helps to provide feedback, recognize quality performance and set expectations for future job performance.
- **Correcting performance** – This refers to managers identifying what parts of the performance are lacking and providing feedback to employees on how they can improve their job performance.

How to Develop Key Management Skills

While some of the above functions of management can extend logically from experience and skills developed in entry-level positions, formal training and education may provide advantages. For instance, pursuing a business management degree can offer the opportunity to study management philosophies and best practices to help one prepare to pursue management positions following graduation.

Work to Develop Your Management Skills with an MBA

For those currently working in entry-level positions, seeking out a mentor at work and keeping an eye out for professional development opportunities can allow you to build the skills needed for management roles. Many people may also choose to return to school to pursue an MBA to help advance their business knowledge.

Sifiso Dingani is a Talent Management Consultant at Industrial Psychology Consultants (Pvt) Ltd a management and human resources consulting firm. Phone +263 4 481946-48/ 481950/ 2900276/ 2900966 or cell number +26377 551 7211 or email sifiso@ipccconsultants.com or visit our website at www.ipccconsultants.com

<https://thehumancapitalhub.com/articles/How-To-Master-The-Four-Functions-Of-Management>