
UNIT 3 ROLES OF MANAGERS

Objectives

After reading this unit, you should be able to understand

- the management process.
- the different roles of the managers.
- the management skills.
- the levels of management.
- the characteristics of a manager.
- How to be a good manager
- the changing role of a manager in the current context
- the changing role of a manager from managerial experience

Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Management process
- 3.3 Managerial roles
- 3.4 Management skills
- 3.5 Management levels
- 3.6 Characteristics of a good manager
- 3.7 How do managers know whether they are good or not?
- 3.8 Changing role of a manager in the current context
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3.1 INTRODUCTION

Management is a process of integrating resources and tasks towards the achievement of the stated organizational goals. It is often referred to as a process of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling. Management literature labels them as the *functions* of management. Thus it involves a process which is functional and social as well, as it deals with people in the organizational context.

3.2 MANAGEMENT PROCESS

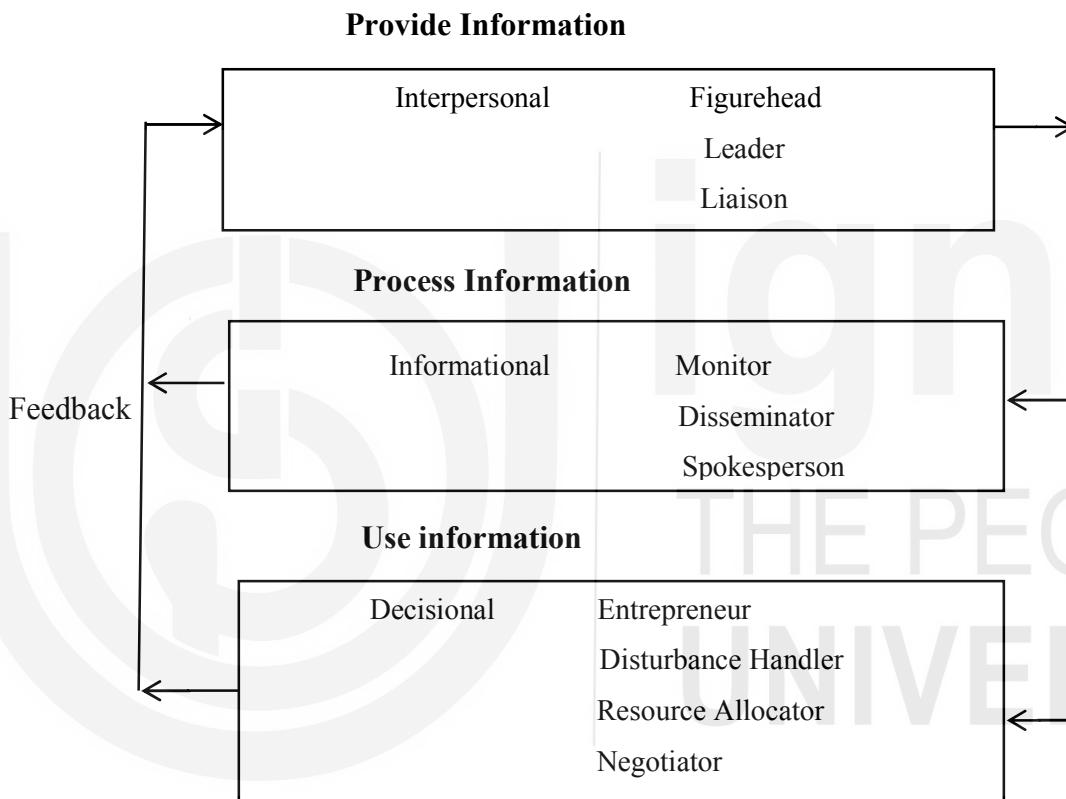
A process is a systematic way of doing things. The management process emphasizes that all managers, regardless of their particular aptitude/ skills engaged in certain interrelated activities to achieve the desired goals. Right from the evolution of management, management thinkers have defined management process in terms of the specific functions of management. Thus, it is a process which is continuous, ongoing and a systematic way of doing

things. However, the managerial role is evidenced in an organization through the strategic, tactical and operational responsibilities that the managers discharge in an organization.

3.3 MANAGERIAL ROLES

A classic study of top executives found that they spend their time in performing ten roles, which are grouped under three categories-*interpersonal, informational and decisional*. The study was conducted by Henry Mintzberg and published in *The Nature of Managerial Roles* in 1973. These roles are common to the work of all managers. (Figure-1)

Figure-1 -Managerial Roles



Interpersonal role

The three interpersonal roles provide information and are primarily concerned with interpersonal relationships. The *figurehead role* allows the manager to represent the organization in all official business. As a *symbolic head*, the manager performs a number of routine duties of a legal and social nature. As a *leader*, the top level manager represents the company legally to those outside the organization. The supervisor represents the work group to the higher management and is responsible for motivating the group along with participating in the hiring, training, and related duties as the leader. The manager uses the *liaison role* to gain favors from his subordinates and information, while the supervisor uses the same to maintain the routine flow of work. He also uses this role to create his own networks, external and internal, to maintain the relationships.

The Informational role

The informational role ensures that information is provided and that the manager has enough information to do his routine work. This role links all the managerial work together. The manager in interpersonal role is placed in a unique position to receive lots of information. Thus, the three informational roles are primarily concerned with the informational aspect of the managerial role. Receives and collects information in *monitoring role*, resulting in a thorough understanding of the organization and its internal /external environment. Since manager monitors, it is considered the focal point of internal and external information. As the *spokesperson* transmits information to the outsiders on the organizational policies, actions and decisions. Since the information is received, monitored and stored by the manager, *disseminates* both factual and analytical information, thus serving as the industry expert and the supervisor serves as the unit expert.

The Decisional role

The decisional role makes significant use of the information. The unique access to information places the manager in the center of the organizational decision making. There are *four decisional roles* that the manager performs. The manager initiates and searches for new opportunities and projects to initiate change in the organization in his *entrepreneurial role*. In the *disturbance handling role* the manager deals with the threats to the organization and takes corrective action accordingly. In the *resource allocation role*, the manager chooses where the organization will spend for its efforts. He takes an active role in providing financial and other resources to the departments/units/people including approving organizational decisions in the resource allocation front. The manager negotiates on behalf of the organization in the *negotiation role*. He engages in negotiations with the parties outside the organization as well as inside the organization and is responsible for representing the organization in major negotiations. The top management makes the decisions for the organization as a whole while the supervisor takes decision about the particular work unit.

Thus, managers play an important role in the organization and management helps in the success of any activity in the organization. All the managers irrespective of the level, perform these roles, with the only difference being the emphasis and focus. Supervisors performs these roles with a focused approach (in their units) and short term in outlook. The figure head role becomes less significant and the disturbance handling and negotiation roles increase in importance for the supervisor. Since leadership permeates all the activities, the leadership role is among the most important of all the roles across all levels of management.

3.4 MANAGEMENT SKILLS

A manager's job is complex considering the functions and the roles one has to perform. Hence, they need certain skills to perform the functions associated with their job. The key skills of a manager are:

Technical skills

Technical skills are those skills, which enable an individual to carry out specialized tasks /activities that involve a certain method or a process. Managers develop technical skills to perform the activities that are part of their daily work life. For the performance of such daily activities, a manager should possess a basic education in the related field and gain knowledge pertaining to the methods, processes and procedures which are actually used. Accountants, engineers, computer professionals fall under this category as they possess technical skills required in their specialized fields. It is difficult for any manager to ensure smooth functioning on the part of his employee without requisite technical knowledge.

Human skills

Human skills relate to those skills which facilitate better coordination among the different people in the organization. Human skills influence the managers' ability to work well with people. Since all managerial activity is people related activity, they must develop their skills to lead , motivate and communicate effectively with their group / organization. Such skills are demonstrated while interacting with subordinates, peers, stakeholders, customers, clients etc. and are important for all the levels of an organization.

Design skills

It is the ability of the manager to find out solutions to the problems of an organization from time to time. Managers use these skills when they consider the overall objectives and strategy of the organization. Their activities relating to the different units and their role with external members of the organization. The manager should be able to envisage the problem and should be sufficiently resourceful to solve them in an amicable manner. Without such skills, it becomes difficult for managers to put all the units in a single direction towards the accomplishment of the objectives. The design skills are not limited to the *troubleshooting* function but assume much more importance and includes all those activities which remove the grievances of the employees. The design skills are used with increasing frequency as a manager goes up the career ladder and assume greater responsibility in the organization.

Conceptual Skills

The manager should have the ability to view the organization as an integrated system, with its various sub-systems, connected to each other. An organization has a number of verticals which perform a variety of functions. The manager must be able to understand and relate his function with the other functions that are carried out in the organization using his conceptual skills. The thinking process that is inherent in the conceptual skill contributes to the managerial function of decision making. Management thinkers regard this skill as a critical skill for the top management, who strategize, formulate goals and objectives for the entire organization and also the middle management, who get things done and contribute to the achievement of the goals of the organization.

Analytical Skills

The analytical skills are equally important for a manager to perform his functions. Logical analysis of the problem/situation assumes importance in the context of organizational functioning. It is all the more significant in the current context in view of the knowledge and the data that is generated in the management of businesses across the world. In these days of data explosion, big data, data mining, data analytics have assumed significance. Technology has simplified the way the data can be treated and processed, but it becomes incumbent on the manager to interpret and make sense out of the data that is generated in the organizations. Analytical skills of the manager to apply logical and systematic approaches to analyze the alternatives and provide the optimal solution thus, assumes significance in the contemporary context.

Activity 1

Parents are the best managers of our house. Observe your mother or father. See for yourself which of these skills they use in their working. Write down the skills used for each activity in the order of priority. You will know the skills required in their functioning. Repeat the same in a formal organizational context.

3.5 MANAGEMENT LEVELS

In organizations which are small in size, scale and scope, the owner manages all the activities and needs no support from others. For example, a small store or a small consultancy is handled by the founder with minimal support. However, with the growth and increase in the size of the organization, it becomes difficult for a single individual to run the business. A need for a formal organization and the establishment of formal authority structures becomes a necessity. Management activities are categorized into three levels—*top, middle and lower level*. The three levels are organized along hierarchical lines so that each level could be supervised by the immediate level over and above it. The functions of each level depend on the size, scale, technology, culture prevailing in the organization. Further, the number of managerial positions at each level differ from organization to organization.

The top level management

Top level management is concerned with the organization as a whole and has interaction with the external environment. This interaction mandates that the manager works with the individuals and outside organization. They are appointed by the governing body of the organization and are usually referred to as the Chief Executive Officer, President, Chairman etc. in large organizations. They are empowered to take decisions pertaining to the organization. Besides the CEO, the board also appoints the Senior Vice-President, Vice President, Executive Director, all of whom form part of the top level management and involve in taking decisions which affect the entire organization. They work with the middle level managers in the implementation of organizational strategy and maintain overall control over organizational performance. The role of top level management is to formulate

organizational strategy and controlling resources. They are also considered the strategy architects and organizational leaders. In their leadership role, they have to create and articulate a broader corporate purpose in which people can identify and to which people enthusiastically commit.

The middle level management

Middle level managers deal with the actual operations of the organization by coordinating with various departments. They are located in the organizational hierarchy below the top level management. They are responsible for the performance of managers at lower levels and are often designated as the Director, Manager, Head of the department etc. This level is responsible for the implementation of plans and strategy developed by the top managers for the accomplishment of the organizational objectives. Most times they decide, but they also look for guidance and direction from the top management for strategy related issues. They act as a *linking pin* between the higher level management and the lower level management.

The lower level management

Termed as tactical management or frontline executives, these are the people who are responsible for the performance of employees involved in the actual day-to-day operations/ tactical activity in the organization. They are designated as supervisors in a service setting or Foreman in a manufacturing setting and are responsible to direct the employees in achieving the targets. They implement the operational plans developed by the middle managers and are responsible for taking corrective/ remedial action whenever needed. They take care of output variables like the number of units produced, labor cost, the inventory levels, quality control etc. They are directly involved in the daily operations/ activities of the organization and the role is critical in the organization. They not only take part in creating and sustaining quality concerns, innovate new methods, but with the proximity to the actual work, they are expected to initiate new activities, new methods, new processes , and new ways of getting things done.

3.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD MANAGER

Management literature also evidences the characteristics of a good manager, in addition to the skills needed for an effective manager. Organizational experience demonstrates a good number of successful managers and not so successful managers across the world. Success or otherwise is attributed to the characteristics or traits that managers demonstrate in their functioning. It is always heard in corporate circles that people leave organizations not because of the organizations but because of the managers!

When it comes to what are those traits that distinguish the good with not so good managers, literature and also experience does not provide a straight-jacketed, all-encompassing answer. A number of factors like the type, size, goals, strategy, team, location, along with a host of external factors like the

COVID-19 in the current context play a significant role in the organizational success, which impacts the managerial functioning. Successful managers, however, are characterized with the following traits.

Understand the vision and communicating it

Every organization has a vision, mission, and goals that are explicitly spelt out in their vision document. The manager must have the ability to understand it and convey the same with clarity so that he is able to orient his team towards the achievement of the goals spelt out in the strategy document.

Independent thinking and assuming responsibility

Managerial functioning revolves around decision making. Within the given context and resources, the manager must act autonomously and independently to take decisions which meet the standards of the organization. His functioning should be such that he is able to influence and empower his team, all the same assume responsibility for the results.

Knowledge

Organizational functioning involves complex procedures, rules and regulations- both external and internal, which the manager must comprehend in his functioning. Added to that, a sound knowledge of the competition, market, changes in the policy, technology, economic landscape is vital for ensuring success. Thus knowledge in terms of both the theory and practice of management assumes significance, more so, in the contemporary changing context, helping him to be in command of the goals of the organization and winning the trust of his team.

Taking the right decisions at the right time

Decisions are arrived at, after going through a long process. It is important that the manager must take the right decisions at the right time, but he should also have the ability to understand the whole process in such a way that he can contribute in the design stage, looking at the alternatives and then make the decision so that it contributes to the process. Decision making function especially taking the right decisions at the right time makes the manager successful or otherwise.

Demonstrating leadership and motivating the team

A manager is also a leader of his team. As a leader, the actions of the manager influence the actions of the team. On the one hand, his actions contribute to building his relationship with the team and command him the respect for his leadership traits. In getting things done, the manager uses this trait to influence, to inspire and motivate them towards the achievement of the goals of the organization.

Empathy

Empathy in simple terms relates to the art of knowing and understanding the feelings, needs, interests, etc of the team members and all those with whom

the manager connects in his functioning to build harmonious relationships. With the organizational expectations from the employees increasing day-by-day, it becomes very important for the manager to empathize with the team and others in the achievement of the objectives of the organization.

Conflict resolution

All organizational activity in the current context is team based and has no boundaries. It is but natural to have conflicts when a number of teams work from different locations, with different cultures driving them. Managers must have the ability to listen, understand, and comprehend the different opinions to handle the conflicts without losing balance and taking sides. Conflict resolution demands a calm, cool, objective approach from the manager to provide a solution and manage the stresses and strains of team, as well.

Emotional balance

Psychologists have earlier stressed on the intelligence quotient of the manager in the course of the managerial functioning. Research in psychology, however, put forth the importance of the emotional balance of the manager as extremely important in handling the team and the ever changing, uncertain, volatile business environment.

Activity 2

Observe or interview a manager. List the characteristics he/she possesses. Prioritize the usage in his function.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3.7 HOW DO MANAGERS KNOW WHETHER THEY ARE GOOD OR NOT?

Managers perform critical functions in an organization. Their role thus becomes significant and the way they take upon their role assumes much more importance. But how do managers know whether they are doing it right or not? Interviews with managers revealed interesting facts of what they felt about their role. The interviews revealed the following:

Manager-1

I was happy when I was promoted. I walked into my office with renewed enthusiasm, although I did not know what was in store for me in the job. I did not have any idea about the management principles to be applied and did not give any thought to the approach/method I should use in the new assignment. I went blank on everything I had on hand, when I entered office to assume my new responsibility.

Manager-2

When I was promoted, of course, it was a good news for me -after all my effort paid off and was recognized. I held my head high and walked into my office, amidst all the cheers from my peers. The thought that it is not just my work that mattered but getting things done by the team bothered me suddenly. I imagined the way my manager struggled his way through in his role. I ran out of ideas on how I can take care of the targets, set targets for the team, not to think of the other responsibilities of the position staring at me!

The managers who were promoted, to the manager's positions, revealed their utter ignorance in taking up the position of managers. The interviews speak volumes about their capability to take up the role of a manager based on their prior performance, although they demonstrated their low confidence in taking up the responsibility. These are normally the hidden feelings of most new managers irrespective of the department they belong to. The transition from their individual performance to the setting of targets, getting work done, which essentially revolved around all the functions of management, suddenly bothered them. The skills that they demonstrated earlier, based on which they were promoted, will not suffice for them in their new managerial position. Organizations would expect them to perform better as managers. Thus the role they take upon themselves, along with the skills they possess, would determine them good managers or not. In addition, the role of a manager is changing fast in the ever changing, volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous context, thus making the role of a manager much more significant in an organizational context.

Activity 3

Take the example of an organization you know. Talk to a manager who was recently promoted to a manager's position. Interview him on what his initial feelings were as a manager. Write down what you think an organization expects from a manager, as understood by the manager.

3.8 THE CHANGING ROLE OF MANAGERS IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT

It is true today that, for various reasons, along with the advances in technology and the tools at their disposal, the employees are aware of their duties and responsibilities and hence can manage their work and the intricate details embedded in it. There is not much for the manager to micro-manage. Further, the changed environment from a manufacturing paradigm to a knowledge driven service economy and the consequent transition from a top down approach to employee centered approach, calls for a changed role of a manager in the current context. There are various perspectives on the role of the manager in the modern, contemporary era. Some of them are explained in the following section.

The very definition of a manager, as one who wields power and authority, to get things done in an organizational context, gets changed in the changed context of self-managed employees and teams. Management is seen more as

a process and that the role of a manager as one whose role is to engage everyone to get things done. It must be admitted that the contemporary context demands management as much more than *getting things done* with the change in the work, work style, work design, workplace with technology support, and the employee orientation towards work. The focus thus, is seen more on *the role and style* of the manager than the *function* of management, as everyone is involved in some form of management or the other, at their levels.

It is thus, understood that the role of a manager relates to a particular application of management and not the entire management, as was done in the past. With innovation as the key driver, the knowledge driven economy with the knowledge workers, the managerial role is woven around engaging them to complete their activities, without much focus on the details of their work. Thus, a relook at the role of managers in the changed context, highlights four roles to the manager. According to McCrimmon, managers have to behave as investors, customers, coach and partners, as they share some attributes of each of the actors.

Managers as Investors

An investor tries to allocate his resources in return for the best outcomes. One of the functions of management is to allocate resources to achieve the goals and get the best return, like any other investor. A good manager is thus one, who can effectively use the given resources for optimum returns. In a knowledge based economy, the manager differs from the investor in two ways. First, the knowledge workers know their work and hence bargain on the resources they tend to get from the manager. It cannot be unilaterally decided by the manager, as can be done by the investor with the investment. Second, since teams are built by managers in organizations, they work closely with the knowledge workers, unlike the investors, who maintain a distance, after the investment is made.

Managers as Customers

Effective management is determined by the customer feedback on the products or services. In a knowledge driven context, the employees are self-targeted and self-managed, and hence, provide services to the organization and the manager, as internal customers. Since the employees know their work, they can gauge the needs of the manager, and give him services which at times, even managers can overlook. In this context, they feel empowered to not only do their work but also decide on the processes of work, thus contributing to the manager and the organization, as operators of business. Unfortunately, the knowledge workers are generally in short supply and hence, they demonstrate more power than their customers (manager) and are able to provide more advice, thus transforming the function bottom up from the earlier top down approach. The managerial role in the changed context is like any other customer waiting for the feedback from the employees.

Manager as a Coach

A Coach is normally seen in sports, guiding the players towards winning matches. Similarly a manager in the role of a coach facilitates guides and coordinates the activities of his team towards the achievement of the goals. In the contemporary organizational context, where talented resources with niche skills are scarce, a manager has to essentially manage and retain the talent. In the role of a coach, the manager has to weigh his options very carefully to retain the talent. Thus the role of a manager is seen more in coaching rather than directing the employees.

Manager as a Partner

The knowledge workers are understood more as partners in the process of management. Organizations forge partnerships with external suppliers to fulfill many of its requirements. Employees because of their knowledge, similarly act as internal suppliers of services and partner with the organization in the process of management.

Thus, the manager must understand the changed organizational context and practice the notions of leadership and management as *an investor, coach, partner and a customer* for competitive advantage.

3.9 THE CHANGING ROLE OF A MANAGER – PERSPECTIVE FROM MANAGERS

The very thought of a manager that comes to anyone's mind is that of a person, heading a project, occupying a decent office room, monitoring a team of people reporting to him. The role, for more than a century, restricted to well defined set of actions. The manager was in his comfort zone with a more or less stable profit line and with not much vagaries of the market to bother with. The market economy and the consequent management trends has brought a sea change in the role of a manager. Competition is the norm for every organization today. Therefore, organizations look for managers who can model and remodel their behaviors to suit the changing conditions. The focus thus is on the following actions of the manager for renewed role in the modern context.

Lifelong learning

The functions of a manager earlier were performed easily by the knowledge gained through the education and managerial experience overtime. The advancements in technology has, however, thrown challenges of a different order thus, making the knowledge no longer useful in the technology driven context. Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, machine learning has all transformed the world of work to such an extent that the manager is forced to focus on continuous learning himself and see that his team also gets on a continuous learning mode.

Delegation

Controlling is an essential function of management. The knowledge driven economy with knowledge workers bring in versatility to the workspace with enormous talent and niche skills. The new role of a manager demands the manager to take the team along reposing confidence in the team and delegate instead of supervising and policing in the name of control. The ultimate objective in the control function should be to bring the best out of every employee and see that they inculcate and work with confidence in the given task.

Create future leaders

Providing leadership and guiding the team is traditionally a manager's function. In the changed context, the new role of a manager demands the manager to create leaders, who can manage themselves and also their peers. In the decision making function, the manager can involve and allow employees who show promise to take informed decisions and implement them. The manager thus is able to develop leadership qualities in the team and create future leaders for the organization

Innovation is the key

Innovation is the key in the competitive scenario today. Competitive advantage presupposes quality products and services, which entail innovation and creativity among the employees. Managers must innovate and encourage the team to innovate with new ideas and take on new challenges. Innovation has been taken to such a level in today's context that it has been included as a performance parameter among the employees in so much so that repetitive tasks are no more counted and the managerial role lies in encouraging the same.

Proactive attitude

The manager today is expected to proactively interact and encourage the team to take on challenges rather than monitor the allotted tasks. The role gets enlarged where the manager would inculcate the habit of proactively initiate dialogue and discussion with the team, so as to bring out the best in the team

Out-of-box thinking and working

Organizations today expect employees, not only to do their allotted tasks, but much more than that. The role of a manager in such a context is to break the monotony of repetitive tasks by the team, and encouraging them to think differently out of box to do the same task in a different way. Instead of a role of a problem solver for the team, the manager should draw everyone into the process, allow them to solve problems, come out with solutions, implement them and learn from mistakes.

Thus, the role of a manager demands the understanding of the evolving organization and rising to the occasion so that he is able to look into the future challenges, and ready to learn and teach the team to sail through the uncertain times.

3.10 SUMMARY

Management is a practice, which is used consciously and continually in shaping organizations. The role of managers, the functions they perform, and the processes they follow assumes significance in the achievement of organizational goals. They possess skills and competencies which are critical in their day- to- day functioning. Managerial function is performed across all levels but the fact remains that management as a practice, produces contribution and consequences and the role of the manager assumes significance in this context. The managerial functions are geared towards this end. However, modern organizations are facing challenges of a different order. The role of a manager has been transformed in the ever evolving organizational context to understand the future challenges and ready to model the role accordingly.

3.11 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the role of a manager in an organization?
2. List out the skills needed for a manager?
3. What do you think are the characteristics of a manager?
4. What are the levels of management? Are the functions at each level applied in the same measure in an organization?
5. Do you think that the role of a manager is changing in the modern organizational context? Elaborate with examples.

3.12 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READINGS

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