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Leading the Organization

All organizations require effective managers who can inspire staff, set general directions, and be accountable for the organization's achievements. Because good staff management is so crucial, it is important to identify those special qualities that characterize an effective leader. Be aware, however, that no simple formula exists for the "perfect" manager in either profit or nonprofit organizations.

A managing partner of a leading management consulting firm, McKinsey and Co., observes that, in his work with more than 50 chief executive officers (CEOs), he has not found an "ideal" manager. The visionary leader may be poor at implementing plans; the superb implementer may have difficulty in setting directions for the organization; the stickler for getting results may have poor interpersonal skills.¹ Indeed, effective managers can come in all sizes and shapes: extroverted or shy, personable or aloof, colorless or charismatic, self-centered or altruistic, and highly logical or intuitive. The only thing these managers have in common is the ability to get things done.²

Furthermore, some would argue that a distinction should be made between a leader and a manager.³ According to this view, a *leader* is an innovator, has a long-range perspective, challenges the status quo, and "does the right thing." By contrast, a *manager* "does things right," maintains the status quo, has a short-range perspective, and focuses on structures and systems. The thesis of this chapter is that effective managers must provide both visionary leadership and day-to-day administrative direction.

To gain a better understanding of the manager's role, this chapter probes the following issues: (a) What are the dynamic interactions among managers, staff, and situations? (b) What flaws can limit management effectiveness? (c) What special competencies do effective managers need to make their organizations more productive? (d) What attributes contribute to leadership? and (e) How can you diagnose your own leadership style?

CHS 1-5

Dynamic Interaction: Managers, Staff, and Situations

In any organization, a dynamic interplay exists among management orientation, staff behaviors and attitudes, and situational factors.⁴

Leadership Styles

Depending on their personal predisposition, managers will reflect different leadership orientations. Some managers prefer *directive leadership*, feeling that they must assume personal responsibility for making major decisions and then act as a taskmaster to get things done. Although they may occasionally ask questions or allow limited dialogue, there is no doubt that the decision is essentially and primarily theirs. They prefer to "take charge." They see themselves functioning as an orchestra conductor, calling on staff to harmoniously achieve a desired result.

Other managers choose *participative leadership*, in which they present ideas and invite feedback from staff. They want to retain final decision-making authority, but they also want their employees to suggest alternative solutions.

Still others prefer *delegative leadership*. These managers derive considerable satisfaction from giving decision-making responsibilities to their staff. If they participate in the decision-making process, they are comfortable in assuming no more authority than other members of the group.

Managers have their own predisposition toward one or more of these three orientations. Which is best for effective management? It all depends on the nature of the staff and the external and internal situations.

Factors Operating Within Staff

Managerial leadership (directive, participative, or delegative) can be greatly influenced by the way staff respond to organizational tasks and decision making. For example, if employees are intelligent, educated, and experienced; if they are motivated to make decisions; if they identify with organizational goals; if they can manage unstructured work situations; if they have the self-confidence and self-reliance to work independently; and if they are truly invested in their work, then a manager would more likely delegate responsibilities and decision making to them.

If, however, staff are inexperienced, feel reluctant to take on additional responsibilities, require structured and unambiguous assignments, or resist making decisions, then a more directive management style may be required.⁵ This kind of staff presents a challenge to managers who value staff participation in decision making.

Situational Factors

Certain outside factors may perpetuate certain attitudes around managerial behavior. In times of pressure and crisis, the organization's size and structure. An agency with official authority and autonomous decision-making power.

The problems and the nature of the problem is complex and requires a variety of experiences, then a participative style requires the expertise of staff in more supportive functions.

Time pressure is a factor that may lead to a more immediately a decision by other employees. Age and experience. Handling housing needs in a crisis situation making involving few staff members.

To be effective, managers should use a directive approach more often because of the nature of the problem. Where a crisis exists, a participative budget or personnel decision-making style is appropriate. Staff are self-motivated and need to meet performance standards and deadlines. Working within a participative style are allowed the freedom to make decisions. This style works best when staff are willing to take on responsibility and do not feel excluded if the manager makes a decision.

Participative leadership works best when staff are motivated, and they value their input. They build strong emotional commitment and provide continuous positive feedback. Effective managers do not use a participative style if it is poor because this style is not in the direction, this style by itself is not sufficient.

Managers need to understand the skills of the staff. For example, they might ask a staff member to take on a task in advance that all recommendations are made. The final decision will be made by the manager, but the staff's thinking and input are valued.

Situational Factors

Certain outside forces can affect managerial style. The organization itself may perpetuate certain values, work habits, traditions, and expectations around managerial behavior. Some organizations, for example, operate under pressure and crisis, thereby requiring directive management. Moreover, an organization's size and structure can influence the choice of leadership styles. An agency with offices in different locations, for example, will tend toward autonomous decision making because of its decentralized operations.

The problems an organization deals with may affect leadership style. If a problem is complex and requires staff with different types of knowledge and experiences, then a participative leadership style is appropriate. If a problem requires the expertise of only the leader, however, then staff may be involved in more supportive functions.

Time pressure is another key ingredient affecting leadership style. The more immediately a decision must be made, the more difficult it is to involve other employees. Agencies operating under emergency conditions (e.g., handling housing needs in the aftermath of a flood) require expedited decision making involving fewer staff.

To be effective, managers must exercise flexible leadership.⁶ At times, a directive approach may be more appropriate than a delegative or participative one because of organizational context or the nature of the situation. Where a crisis exists, where staff have become complacent, or where difficult budget or personnel decisions must be made, a "take charge" (directive) leadership style is appropriate. A delegative style works best when staff are highly self-motivated and need little direction. The leader sets the pace for high performance standards and then expects staff to carry out assignments competently. Working within a framework developed by the leader, staff members are allowed the freedom to innovate, experiment, and take calculated risks. This style works best with employees who want to develop professionally and are willing to take on challenging assignments. Some professional staff may feel excluded if the manager does not consult them about the overall plan.

Participative leaders emphasize relationships. They value staff as individuals, and they value workplace satisfaction and harmony. These leaders build strong emotional ties, foster loyalty, create a sense of belonging, provide continuous positive feedback, and build staff morale. At the same time, effective managers do not give praise indiscriminately when performance is poor because this can invite mediocrity. In situations where staff need direction, this style by itself is not sufficient.

Managers need to combine approaches based on circumstances and the skills of the staff. For example, in setting up a phone system, a manager might ask a staff committee to recommend a system. By alerting staff in advance that all recommendations will be seriously considered but that the final decision will be made by management, the manager conveys respect for the staff's thinking and at the same time establishes boundaries—reflecting

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both a delegative and a directive approach. Unless the manager is clear about the staff role, confusion and dissatisfaction might occur.

Leadership styles need not remain constant and can change as staff change. For example, at the beginning of a project the manager may need to be more direct, but as staff become more familiar with their tasks and more competent in performing them, the manager can delegate and take a less active role in providing guidance. Hence there is a certain ebb and flow in the management style, as managers become more active or less directive, based on the needs of the staff.⁷

Although flexible leadership is generally desirable, certain leadership styles are realistically more responsive to the needs of a highly trained professional staff and more conducive to productivity in human service organizations. Today's professional staff expects organizational managers to be participative, and staff want to be consulted and exert influence, especially on those areas that have a direct impact on their own work. Most want the manager to hear and consider their ideas. Indeed, leadership and a sense of accountability and empowerment in most human service organizations, as in most corporations, are being pushed down and distributed throughout the organization. In effect, everyone in the organization can have opportunities for exerting leadership.⁸

Flawed Leadership Styles

As human beings, leaders are not perfect; they do have flaws—some more than others. Do any of the following managerial profiles seem familiar?

The Oblivious Manager. For oblivious managers the best leadership is no leadership. They assume people always know what they should be doing, and these leaders are passive with regard to giving directions or creating a vision for the organization. Follow-through and monitoring are not part of their management framework. Although well intentioned, their lack of urgency and follow-through results in plans that either drift or become unraveled. They feel so self-defeated through years of bureaucratic frustration that they define success merely as avoidance of failure. As a consequence of their lackadaisical attitudes, they seldom encourage staff to excel, and their low expectations result in limited staff performance. These managers think that ignoring problems makes them go away. They are usually unaware of pending crises until, regrettably, the world crashes down upon them. Their passivity is reflected in the often-used expression, "Whatever you want to do is fine with me." They typically abdicate responsibility for making tough decisions.⁹

The Misleader. The problem with misleading managers is that they convey mixed or even incorrect messages. For example, they ask employees to make a decision about the most effective budget cuts and, on hearing their opinions, announce that the final decision will be made by the board of trustees.

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What they meant to ask for were suggestions that would be subject to review. They use a participative style, although being directive is more appropriate for the situation.¹⁰ On the other hand, situations calling for more participation from staff are responded to with “the boss knows best.” The staff never knows what to expect or how the manager will react. After making a number of these misleading requests, these managers can expect little input from their employees.

The Put-Downer. Managers who humiliate employees by belittling their abilities can expect little or no investment from staff. This style creates a backlash of resentment that harms staff attitudes and performance. One manager, for example, calls his social service staff “brain dead” because he thinks they are not working as hard as they should; the response is not a commitment to work harder but a protest in the form of t-shirts that read “Staff of the Living Dead.” Typically, these managers are not as obvious; their pervasive deprecation is more subtle, conveying in many small ways that they believe staff are incompetent.

The Micromanager. Managers can become so invested in the work of staff that they commit the error of over involvement. They fail to allow responsible people the freedom and autonomy to do their jobs. These managers constantly check on staff performance and attitudes because of their own insecurities. They take the role of monitor to its extreme by constantly checking on staff’s whereabouts, reading all correspondence that emanates from their departments, and obsessively checking staff’s opinion of them. As a consequence, staff do not have the opportunity to grow, develop skills and experience, or learn from their own mistakes. These managers may not believe that their staff have potential, and gain great satisfaction from delving into details better left to others.

The Arrogant Manager. Arrogant managers display the hubris of exaggerated pride, super self-confidence, and consummate self-importance.¹¹ Disregarding staff contributions, they think that positive results are due only to their own special performances. When they proclaim an idea for a project, they believe staff will automatically understand it and assent.¹² These managers do not take the time to clarify, discuss, and work through concerns. They later wonder why their requests, regulations, and policies are not carried out with enthusiasm. They never admit mistakes, even to themselves; consequently, they easily become victims of their own fallibilities. Because of a blinding sense of self-importance, they make miscalculations that may be catastrophic to the organization.

The Narcissist. Some managers manipulate people to achieve personal ambitions; staff become instruments for the manager’s self-gratification. Their work and projects they carry out are not primarily for the good of the organization but for self-aggrandizement. They constantly connive to advance their own position of power, and they excessively control the organization’s process to

achieve predetermined personal goals. Narcissists are also egocentric, believing that employees are pawns used to fulfill personal goals.¹³ Even when they use a participative leadership approach, they still strive to control the outcome. Staff go through the motions of making a decision but know that their own security in the organization depends on bending to the will of their manager. Narcissists promote themselves so much that those who have actually done the real work soon lose their commitment. Narcissists may even represent staff ideas as their own to curry favor with superiors.

The Loner. By keeping their office doors closed most of the day and seldom having contact with employees, loner managers are usually seen as aloof and unapproachable. Loners rarely consult with staff because they do not want to be bothered with delays or objections that may lead to modifications of their original ideas. They feel like supplicants when asking for colleagues' support.¹⁴ Through this self-imposed isolation, they contribute to the low morale in the organization because staff eventually feel ignored and abandoned.

The Charmer. The primary purpose of charmer managers is gaining personal acceptance from staff. To them, popularity is far more important than substantial achievements, and their charm is a cover-up for not getting things done. Although well liked by staff because of the limited demands these managers make, they ultimately are ineffectual.

These leadership flaws are exaggerations, and few managers manifest these caricatures in their pure form. Any one of us, however, may lapse into some of these behaviors. Being mindful of these possibilities can minimize their destructive impact on an organization's productivity.

Leadership Competencies

It is not enough for managers to be constantly aware of possible flaws in personal behavior that could detract from their leadership effectiveness. They must also discern how their strengths can heighten the organization's performance. Previously, it was noted that leadership style should be matched to the needs of the organization and the situation. Assuming that this match exists, there are certain traits and competencies that are of value to managing human service organizations. Effective managers evidence an outstanding ability to get things done. The following are some thumbnail sketches based on the lives of exemplary leaders.

Waulina T. heads a suburban children's residential treatment center. Several years ago she decided that her agency must aggressively confront inner city problems even though the agency is located 12 miles away from downtown. She has worked hard to establish drug treatment programs in the city's school system. Her successful efforts to make her organization more relevant have earned her both great respect and an infusion of funds for her agency.

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Tom L. has expanded a program of health care for homeless people to include a variety of services: drug treatment, a winter housing program, and a facility for mentally disabled women. In addition, he has organized the business and political leadership of the community to create adequate low-income housing.

Ambler M. directs a special organization designed to combat crime in the community. He saw that gangs were a growing concern and led school officials, police, and parents to help them address gang-related issues more appropriately.

Rothina D. infused a moribund organization with a new spirit when she became its director. Established to obtain jobs for public assistance recipients, the organization had not been able to convince the corporate community to accept its trainees until she developed an outstanding training and orientation program. She conveys high expectations to her staff and imbues them with sensitivity to the needs of the trainees.

Smitty C. heads the local YMCA. He sees his most important managerial role as helping staff develop their potential. He has initiated a number of staff training programs, encourages staff to follow through on their ideas, and emphasizes the importance of staff ownership of successful programs.

Jeraldine H. is the head of a large staff unit within a mammoth bureaucracy. Her paramount concern is to help staff feel invested in their work. She meets regularly with her supervisory personnel, and they in turn meet with their staff to develop a greater sense of unity and dedication toward their work. As a consequence of these meetings and a series of staff appreciation sessions, staff are beginning to rededicate themselves. Many of them are staying after 5:00 P.M. or working weekends to complete assignments. Work teams are developing innovative ideas for dealing with emergencies. Staff enthusiasm about their work has increased because Jeraldine conveys daily how important their contributions are to the community.

What do these effective managers have in common? What follows are those competencies they share that enable their organizations to perform at a highly productive level.

Articulating a Future Orientation

Effective managers are constantly seeking out trends—possible changes in demographics, funding, or political alignments—and determining how these trends might influence their organization. They formulate a vision of the future either within their own mind or by mobilizing the organization to think strategically (see Chapter 2). They encourage everyone who should be involved—staff, boards of trustees, or even public officials—to focus their attention on issues leaders consider significant.¹⁵ Sometimes, their view of the future is influenced by a profound desire to improve performance.

Competent leaders are never fully satisfied. Even when staff are performing well and their units or the organization as a whole are accomplishing their

goals, effective managers continually ask, "How can we improve? How can we do things better?" Of course, they enjoy and appreciate achievements, but they have a need to reassess the status quo. They are intolerant of complacency that comes from previous successes, and as they meet one objective they press on to another. In short, effective managers are continuously working to help their organizations grow and change to meet new situations and to focus their members on the most significant issues.¹⁶ Ambler M. had the foresight and the understanding that gangs were using the school building walls, mailboxes, and even their school artwork to communicate gang messages. He convinced his organization to make reducing gang activity a priority long before other community youth organizations realized the need for it. As a result of his vision, his organization now has a unique niche and is looked to as the expert source on gangs by juvenile court judges, school administrators, and political leaders.

Waulina T. is continually thinking about the future of the organization. She says,

My ultimate purpose is to leave the organization in better shape than when I became its director. That is what my predecessor did, and that is the position I hope my successor takes as well. I am always dreaming up projects for the following year. Right now I'm planning for a new building on our campus that will house adolescents referred by juvenile court. It may take four years to build, but we've got to begin to plan now.

Being a Social Entrepreneur

Social entrepreneurs are organizational leaders who are driven to pursue programs they consider vital to meeting needs, and feel a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies they serve. They are innovative, bold, action-oriented, resourceful, and value-creating change agents. Leaders develop a vision of how to achieve their goals and are determined to make their vision work.¹⁷

Effective managers persist in accomplishing goals even in the face of setbacks. They take risks, knowing that failures may occur, and they learn from their mistakes.¹⁸ They assume that if something does not work, they will try something else until they ultimately succeed. This perseverance and tenacity in the face of obstacles and adversity is what sets effective managers apart from their less intrepid counterparts. The leader who can articulate a vision, however inspiring and relevant, but who cannot implement it is only a prophet.¹⁹ Effective managers proclaim, "Damn it! We're going to make this thing work one way or another!" As high achievers, human service entrepreneurs obtain satisfaction from successfully completing challenging tasks, obtaining standards of excellence, and developing better ways of doing

things.²⁰ By commitment, determination, persistence, and the likelihood that they are doing and a project is right.²¹ They do not mainly see achieving significant

Rothina D. can be seen as someone who was to create an organization for public assistance recipients. She obtained commitment from her organization workers and employees. She built a state and local office that has produced excellent dividends for

Rothina doesn't give up when she works to help children in the sun-drenched downtown office but she doesn't let them impede their ability to run a program customized to the possibility of failure. She makes them succeed.

As another example, she perseveres through time and effort to meet the needs that cannot be met in her department was until the winter months when she moved to another building and state mental health services for mentally ill homeless people to achieve what other

Effective managers seek ways to make a difference when things happen.

Treating Staff W

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things.²⁰ By committing to a project wholeheartedly—based on conviction, determination, persistence, and confidence—social entrepreneurs increase the likelihood that their projects will succeed. They believe deeply in what they are doing and are skilled at convincing everyone around them that the project is right.²¹ Unlike the business entrepreneur, the social entrepreneur does not mainly seek the reward of financial gain but rather the joy of achieving significant results.

Rothina D. can be considered a human service entrepreneur. Her quest was to create an organization that would help unemployed persons and public assistance recipients become self-reliant through employment. To do this, she obtained commitments from more than 350 companies by assuring them her organization would provide reliable, competent, and highly motivated employees. She built a program and accomplished this goal by convincing state and local officials that their investment in her program would produce excellent dividends for the community.

Rothina doesn't go by the book. If state regulations are not supportive, then she works to change them. If her trainees need a place for their children in the summer, she establishes a summer camp program in a downtown office building. If her participants have legal problems that impede their ability to stay on the job, she establishes a legal assistance program customized to their needs. All of these programs entail risks and the possibility of failure, but her commitment and entrepreneurial drive make them succeed.

As another example, Tom L.'s work with the homeless requires him to persevere time and time again. Homeless people have profound problems and needs that cannot be met through usual channels. When the welfare department was unable to give homeless people temporary shelter in the winter months because of security problems, he aggressively pursued another building and obtained help from the sheriff's department. When the state mental health department denied funding for a program to house mentally ill homeless women, he obtained a federal grant. He has the drive to achieve what others might consider impossible.

Effective managers, then, are passionate entrepreneurs who continually seek ways to make a contribution. They thrive on the challenge of making things happen.

Treating Staff With Dignity

Effective managers minimize the use of command language and maximize the language of persuasion and request. They understand that they cannot coerce staff to excel; true motivation must come from within.²² They create a climate in which staff feel so positive about how they are being treated that they willingly perform at their best. These managers show concern and treat staff with respect, not as "service delivery units." Jeraldine H. remarks,

I care about my staff. We are like one big family, and I encourage them to work together whenever possible. I show respect for them and they reciprocate. When I can manage to do so, I attend weddings and funerals of the families of my staff. But even as I strive to promote positive relationships, I maintain a degree of objectivity because ours must be a professional, not a personal, relationship.

Thus, effective managers truly care about their employees; they convey empathy and compassion to help foster a supportive work environment.

Communicating Significant Messages

Effective managers are able to articulate concepts, ideas, and philosophies in such a way that staff understand both intellectually and emotionally how they are involved. These messages are clear and uncomplicated; they speak to the heart as well as to the mind. Managers help staff see the relationship between what they are doing and the mission of the organization—how they are a part of the whole.²³ These managers work to shape ambiguous ideas into operational programs with clear guidelines, thereby providing structure and clarity. Without patronizing their staff, effective managers clarify what the work is intended to achieve, why it needs to be done in a particular manner, and what constitutes successful performance. One of their major messages is that everyone must work together to achieve the organization's goals.²⁴ Effective managers allocate significant time and effort to developing a network of cooperative relationships among the people they feel are needed to satisfy their agendas.²⁵

Moreover, effective managers communicate with—not just to—staff by listening to and incorporating their ideas and concerns. Listening is an essential but undervalued managerial skill. Given that many managers have achieved their positions because of their ability to express their ideas, they often do not realize that communication is a two-way process. The difference between mediocre managers and outstanding ones is the ability to tune in to what staff are thinking and feeling. This includes the manager's ability to listen to criticism without becoming unduly defensive when mistakes are brought to his or her attention. Jeraldine H. reflects this attitude in this statement: "Like everyone else, I'm fallible and can make mistakes. But with staff input, I am confident we can get our efforts back on course." She knows that she plays a vital role in linking the organization's communications. Good communicators, therefore, have the ability to give and receive messages effectively.

Engendering Trust

Effective managers have a deep sense of integrity. They are honest with themselves and are aware of both their strengths and their limitations. Staff respect and trust effective managers who take steps either to address their

own limitations or values their leader. They know they can count on their leader to promise only what they can deliver.

The trust that is built upon a give-and-take relationship is not without a degree of doubt.²⁸ But they both can also build a relationship of mutual respect. The challenge is the essence of the matter.

Whether as a result of tendencies, effective managers know that, as role models, they can earn their mistakes and thereby earning the trust of their staff.

Effective managers know that, as role models, their actions are far from perfect. They make requests that discuss their good ideas, and they acknowledge their mistakes.²⁹ Because the organization is under scrutiny, staff are dedicated. They are

Jeraldine H. expresses of them,

They know I would have the interest of the client in mind when they raise questions. I give constructive criticism and we feel a genuine connection.

Effective managers do not automatically but manage to

Inspiring Top-Levels

By establishing high standards and infuse in their staff a sense of productive working atmosphere, they do their best.

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own limitations or to find ways to compensate for them.²⁶ Staff know what values their leaders are committed to, what positions they stand for, and know they can count on these managers. Competent managers are careful to promise only what they can deliver, and they expect others to do the same.²⁷

The trust that effective managers earn is not based on blind faith. It is built upon a give-and-take interaction, which might sometimes include some degree of doubt.²⁸ The manager and staff feel committed to each other, but they both can also raise questions and challenge issues while maintaining mutual respect. Maintaining this balance of respect and willingness to challenge is the essence of the implicit trust between the manager and staff.

Whether as a result of staff interaction or through their own introspective tendencies, effective managers are continuously conducting self-appraisals: “Could I have handled the situation differently?” They want to learn from their mistakes and can candidly admit they have made an error in judgment, thereby earning the respect of staff.

Effective managers with a strong sense of integrity lead by example. They know that, as role models, they set the pace for the rest of the organization. Their actions are far more significant than words. Effective managers honor requests that discussions be held confidential, give credit to employees for their good ideas, and use professional discretion in communicating employee mistakes.²⁹ Because managers are visible, their commitment to the tasks of the organization and their degree of investment in the staff are continually under scrutiny. Staff view effective managers as genuine and sincerely dedicated. They are the ultimate exemplars of their organizations.

Jeraldine H. exemplifies a leader who has earned the trust of her staff. She says of them,

They know I would not ask them to do any task that wasn't in the best interest of the clients. When I meet with staff I try to be open-minded when they raise questions concerning programs I propose because their constructive criticisms improve the original idea. What's great is that we feel a genuine respect for each other.

Effective managers are well aware, therefore, that trust does not come automatically but must be earned over time and in many ways.

Inspiring Top-Level Performance

By establishing high, but achievable, expectations, successful managers infuse in their staff a standard of excellence.³⁰ They create a positive and productive working atmosphere within which staff are stimulated to perform their best.

Even as managers expect high performance, at the same time, they are realistic. They attempt to stretch people, not overwhelm them.³¹ The words that best describe this kind of leadership are *elevating*, *uplifting*, and

cheerleading. Their optimism, confidence, and can-do demeanor mobilize staff to take on the toughest challenges. They lead best by their personal example.

Effective managers convey a mind-set that staff members are "winners" by creating continuous opportunities for successful experiences, thereby instilling in them the confidence to seek even higher levels of achievement.³² They allow their staff to make their own decisions whenever possible and strive to get things done through cooperation.³³ Staff respond positively to managers who delegate their authority, make their subordinates feel powerful and capable, and foster their creative abilities to do their job.³⁴ Encouraging people to assume greater responsibility is challenging, but the effective manager instills confidence in his or her staff by providing them with successful experiences in which they can take risks and even make mistakes.³⁵ As facilitators, these managers work to remove obstacles that interfere with the staff's success. They continually ask, "What can we do to help you do your job better?" and "What can we accomplish as a team?"³⁶

Waulina T. expresses this idea of empowering staff when she states,

I am a servant-leader, for I try to be responsive to what staff want me to do to help them do their jobs better. I am at my best when I can take the time to be involved with my staff, to hear them out, to figure out ways to give them the resources to do their job better. They are closer to their situation and problems than I am, and so a good part of my job is to help them fulfill their professional responsibilities.

Smitty C. inspires his staff with these comments: "We have a tough assignment to complete in seven days, and I know that you are up to the task. If we all pitch in, we can produce a document that we can all be proud of." Also, when the quality product is completed, he says, "I am proud of the fantastic job all of you have done. I am glad that you are the kind of group I can count on."

Waulina T. places the same emphasis on facilitating staff investment and growth with this observation:

As a manager, it is important that I not become too possessive of the organization. The staff must feel a deep sense of pride in their work and a sense of ownership in the organization. Whatever credit comes to me is based on the commitment and performance of my staff. If I help them grow, we all benefit.

More than 2,500 years ago, Lao Tzu, a Chinese Taoist philosopher, observed:

A leader is best
When people barely know that he exists,
Not so good when people obey and acclaim him,

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 accomplish as a team?"³⁶
 f when she states,

Worst when they despise him.
 "Fail to honor people, they fail to honor you";
 But of a good leader, who talks little,
 When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,
 They will say, "We did this ourselves."³⁷

Thus organizational administrators continually seek to harmonize their various strengths. As managers, they work to bring order and consistency to complex organizations. As leaders, they challenge the status quo and work to meet new demands.³⁸ They strive to achieve their visions and simultaneously facilitate the staff's input in the direction-setting process. They are oriented to accomplishing tasks and are sensitive to the needs of their staff. They set their sights on the future while making certain to give proper attention to everyday details. They are both conveyers of messages and consummate listeners. They engender trust by respecting their staff and treating them with dignity. This blend of vision, sensitivity, and high moral purpose results in inspiring leadership.

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Attributes Contributing to Leadership

Research is beginning to emerge that effective leaders have certain attributes that enhance their ability to lead people. These attributes, referred to as *emotional intelligence*, are identified as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.³⁹

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Self-awareness. Emotionally intelligent people are keenly aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and desires. Those with a strong self-awareness are able to be honest with both themselves and others. They are aware of how their feelings affect them, other people, and their job performance. Self-aware people know when to ask for help, are willing to admit their mistakes, and at the same time are confident about what they can do. By sharing their imperfections, they underscore their authenticity.⁴⁰

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Self-regulation. Operating in the midst of ambiguity and change, a self-regulated person is able to control impulses, suspend judgment, and seek out information before making decisions. These people are comfortable with ambiguity and open to change. They tend to be reflective and thoughtful.

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Motivation. Highly motivated people want to achieve results because it is exciting and fun for its own sake. They desire to challenge the status quo rather than opt for power or money. They are energetic and persistent and generally optimistic even though they may fail sometimes. Even those who have a high degree of self-awareness of their limitations will work to stretch themselves. People who are high achievers are committed to the organization. They set high goals for both themselves and for their employees.

e Taoist philosopher,

Empathy. Considering the staff's feelings is part of an effective manager's decision process. If staff are feeling anxious or angry, an empathetic manager can acknowledge these feelings. As a leader of a team, the effective manager recognizes that various members may have different emotional reactions, alliances, and even clashes of opinions. A leader must recognize and understand these different perspectives.

Social Skills. Effective managers focus on developing relationships with others. Being friendly allows managers to persuade people to fulfill organizational goals. By developing a positive rapport, being interested in employees as people, and building bonds, they help people deal with day-to-day frustrations. No leader can truly hope to function in isolation. The leader's job is to get work done through other people; social skills are the grease that makes this possible.

Thus effective managers have a high level of emotional intelligence, which is required to carry out their jobs.

Diagnosing Your Leadership Style

Awareness of how you function as a leader within your organization is critical to being effective.⁴¹ The more insight you have into how you react in various situations, the more you can ensure a proper match between behavior and organizational contingencies. This chapter has described several key elements that can be used to diagnose your leadership behavior: (a) leadership styles, (b) influences over staff, (c) flaws and limitations, (d) competencies and strengths, and (e) emotional intelligence. To heighten your understanding of your own leadership role, consider the following questions:

1. What is my predominant style (directive, participative, or delegative) of leadership? Are there clear benefits from using this style? Are there negative side effects? Thinking back to particular instances, have I matched the right style with the situation at hand? In the future, should I consider testing other styles?

2. Of the possible managerial limitations or flaws, do I see myself manifesting any of them in my own leadership behavior? If so, should I make efforts to modify my attitudes or behavior to increase my effectiveness? Are there times when some of these limitations may actually be useful and necessary?

3. In the review of leadership competencies, which ones do I exhibit? Is it within my capacity to strive for others? If so, can I find some safe ways to test out an underdeveloped competency? If not, can I find others who can complement my strengths?

4. Which of the emotional intelligence attributes do I consider to be well developed? Which attributes do I need to develop further?

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The exploration of these questions, either by thinking about them on your own or by obtaining feedback from others whom you trust, can be useful in considering ways to develop further as an effective manager.

Questions for Discussion

Note: You will see that in this list of questions for discussion, as well as the questions in subsequent chapters, reference is made to "your organization." This could refer to your current organization (if you are a graduate intern or an employed professional) or to another one with which you are familiar.

1. What qualities of leadership do you see in your organization?
2. What leadership flaws are manifested in your organization?
3. In your organization, what do you consider to be the most important leadership competencies?
4. What elements of emotional intelligence do you see operating among managerial staff in your organization?
5. In your organization, what has management done that was effective or ineffective?
6. How would you describe your own leadership style? Which ideas discussed in this chapter would you like to give more attention to further develop your own leadership qualities?

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2

Strategic Planning

Embracing Change

Human service organizations operate in a continually changing and even turbulent environment. The needs of clients change over time, funding patterns shift, staff come and go, and the attention of community leaders and the media move to different social issues. Social issues that momentarily capture the community's attention, such as homelessness, substance abuse, or teen pregnancy, can be replaced by other "social fads." Because of the inevitable and constant nature of change, both internal and external, effective human service managers must be prepared not only to cope with it, but also to initiate and embrace it.

Not all change is necessarily good, nor is all resistance to change necessarily inappropriate. Abrupt or too much change at once, the wrong kind of change, or change from one activity to another without clear purpose can create problems, be disorienting, and even threaten the organization's survival. Maintaining the status quo can keep an organization from being in constant flux.

Strategic planning describes the process of addressing change. It develops goals, accompanied by a set of actions to help achieve those goals.¹ Emerging from the organization's key stakeholders (board of directors, staff, clients or their families, and other constituencies considered important to the organization), it is a shared vision for the future. It is also a roadmap for achieving that vision, given known realities and facts.² Usually organizations conduct their strategic planning every three to five years. Many see this timeline as imperative so they can reenergize themselves. Certain circumstances, however, may prompt more frequent planning, including a significant change in organizational leadership, a financial crisis, new opportunities, or new mandates from public officials.

Strategic planning produces a product—the strategic plan—that is the result of a process in which key stakeholders fully engage. The product is a written plan that the organization can use as a blueprint for guiding future directions. Equally important is the process of engaging key stakeholders, because this builds commitment and teamwork among board and staff and better assures follow-through on the plan's anticipated results. It also helps participants reach a consensus on fundamental issues that require ongoing,

concentrated attention to their organization to innovative changes.³ may unintentionally c its core mission. The l changes without the l

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concentrated attention. Through strategic planning, stakeholders stimulate their organization to move beyond doing business as usual, by considering innovative changes.³ In the absence of strategic planning, the organization may unintentionally drift into new services or programs that are tangential to its core mission. The following are some examples of organizations that made changes without the benefit of a strategic plan:

An organization established to advocate for women's issues shifts its focus over time to providing needed services—counseling, day care, and job referral. Its original reason for being, advocating on behalf of women, becomes increasingly difficult to sustain and is eventually discontinued as the organization gradually shifts to a service emphasis—to the dismay of the organization's founders, who think the organization's original priorities have been distorted.

A service agency shifts its attention from providing free or low-cost counseling in the inner city to offering employee assistance programs for those who can pay a fee. Initially, funds increase, but two years later, its primary funding source drastically cuts its support because the organization has abandoned its original focus.

Finally, consider the example of a health coalition that provides direct services to women with small children. In its quest to obtain additional money, it modifies its focus from direct service to collecting and analyzing health data—causing a schism among staff that support clinical care and those that value public health-related activities.

These examples describe organizations that altered their basic purposes—from advocacy to service, from serving inner-city residents to serving fee-paying employees, and from emphasis on health services to health data analysis. These changes are not inherently good or bad. They reflect responses to immediate situations, but they did not occur purposefully within the context of a strategic plan and with the active involvement of the organizations' stakeholders. Only when an organization gives a focused, long-term view to selected issues can it be said to be involved in strategic planning.

The previous examples describe how an organization can unknowingly drift into carrying out activities that may not be related to its primary reason for being. As Peter Drucker, a well-regarded organizational consultant, has proposed,

Only when a nonprofit's key performance areas are defined can it really set goals. Only then can the nonprofit ask, "Are we doing what we are supposed to be doing? Is it still the right activity? Does it still serve a need?" And above all, "Do we still produce results that are sufficiently outstanding, sufficiently different for us to justify putting our talents to use in that area?" Then you can ask, "Are we still in the right areas? Should we change? Should we abandon?"⁴

Planning

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The value of asking these fundamental questions is that they help an organization assess its current status so it can control its future. Probing these issues helps the organization gain greater mastery over inevitable internal and external changes. Hence an organization will be in a better position to determine where it is, where it wants to go, and how it wants to get there.

Two circumstances invite a strategic review. The first involves a threat to the organization. Funding cutbacks, legislation that is detrimental to the organization, competition from another human service organization that could lure clients away are the kinds of crises that compel a response. Business cannot go on as usual when the organization faces major difficulties; it must react to the crisis or face serious consequences. It is interesting to note that the Chinese symbol for *crisis* is a combination of two words: *danger* and *opportunity*. Crisis can galvanize a reactive response, stimulating the organization to reassess its strategic directions so that the danger may be turned into an opportunity for positive change.

The second circumstance is more subtle, and on the surface might not seem to prompt strategic planning. When everything is going *right*—when the organization is strong, when funding is ample, when clients are being well served, when staff and volunteers are feeling positive about the organization—introspection might seem unwarranted. It is at just such a time, however, that effective managers must discern whether there are dark clouds on the horizon in the form of staff and volunteer leader complacency, potential competition for funds, or possible change in community interest. Strategic planning disciplines managers to assess the organization and its environment even when things are going well.

If the normal pattern of the organization is to provide services without questioning whether they can be improved, there is little stimulus for change. A thought-provoking aphorism states: "If you always think what you've always thought, and you always do what you've always done, then you'll always get what you've always gotten." By proactively searching for new ways to improve programs or processes that develop staff, you invite the organization to reach higher levels of productivity. To counter *entropy*, the inevitable tendency of organizations to wind down, it is imperative that organizations use the strategic planning process to reenergize and reinvent themselves. You want to be able to slough off yesterday's less productive and less relevant programs and procedures, thus freeing staff and other resources to meet emerging needs and to better fulfill the organization's mission.⁵

For example, suppose your organization has been providing an adolescent counseling service for many years, but you now find that demand is waning, though not enough to discontinue the counseling program altogether. The situation is not yet at a crisis level, but it could be in a year or two. Your assessment of teenagers shows that they do want the opportunity to talk with someone, though in a more informal setting than is now provided by the agency. You decide to change your point of contact from in-office interviews to an unconventional new approach—crafts and sports facilities. Your

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willingness to restructure the program propels you to seek other ways to be responsive to adolescents.

Some organizations will even adopt the policy of *organized abandonment*. Every service, program, and client category is open to question. The organization asks, "If we were not already doing this, and based on the information we now have, would we be doing the same things?" Asking this question invites the organization to make changes.⁶ Abandoning things that no longer work pushes the organization to constantly improve.⁷ The organization develops the attitude of innovating to improve the quality of services. For example, an organization dealing with substance abuse clients would constantly be looking for successful interventions, and this organization would be willing to abandon interventions that do not produce results.

Hence by forecasting its future, setting goals, and considering emerging opportunities and threats, an organization can concentrate on its most critical problems and choices. Through strategic planning, it can engage key organizational members in communicating and reaching a consensus on significant decisions about their organization's future.⁸

There are barriers, however, that can impede effective strategic planning. The process may consume time and money that could be spent on more immediately compelling projects. Smoldering problems may surface that must be handled. Board and staff who rely on intuitive or "gut" feelings to determine how to operate may question a time-consuming, systematic planning approach. They may resist the sometimes difficult introspection of examining how their efforts contribute to—or detract from—the organization's mission. Also, organizations facing an immediate crisis (e.g., a severe decline in funding) may have to devote significant energies to the urgent current situation before taking time to think long term. If there is a lack of devotion to carrying out the plans, then strategic planning can only lead to frustration. Finally, if major decision makers lack the conviction to follow through or tend to arrive at poor decisions based on faulty assumptions or hastily completed processes, then strategic planning may result in more harm than good.

These limitations should serve as reminders that although strategic planning can be a powerful tool, it is not foolproof. Even so, effective managers must embark on strategic planning to improve performance, stimulate thinking about the future, encourage teamwork, handle organizational issues, and provide a sense of renewal. It thus positions the organization to respond to new opportunities, create a competitive advantage, and take action to reverse decline or to expand programs.⁹

Developing the Strategic Plan

Every organization must develop a strategic plan that is compatible with its own interests, strengths, and limitations. What works for one organization will not necessarily work for another. The format that follows has been used by several planning consultants and can be flexibly used by most organizations.¹⁰

Getting Organized

Before embarking on the strategic planning process, consider the following important points. First, effective managers are aware that although the trustees of their organizations must be involved in strategic planning, they must also engage staff to instill a sense of ownership of the eventual plan. Everyone must share a conviction that the hard work and time involved will be productive for the organization. Second, be realistic about the required time investment. Planning will require many hours from staff and volunteers. Anticipate the amount of time involved in meetings and the preparatory and follow-up work required between them. It is desirable to set aside one full day, or at a minimum part of a day, to give concentrated time to strategic plan formulation. Third, consider the broad participation of staff from all levels of the organization, along with board members, funders, government officials, and others involved with the organization, to avoid possible schisms. At a minimum, a committee should consist of key staff representatives (from major departments or the union) and leaders of the governing body of the organization (see Chapter 20). In addition, other participants could include clients (or family members) and respected leaders and representatives from collateral organizations. Persons from outside the organization could be asked for their ideas by participating directly in the process, contributing to focus group discussions, or answering survey questions. Finally, establish ground rules of participation that emphasize that decisions are made by consensus, unless otherwise agreed, and that even as differences are aired, members are to be respectful of each other.

The reason for emphasizing participation is that the process is as important as the resulting plan. Working together helps educate members inside and outside the organization, builds commitment, and mobilizes participants to take action.¹¹ Otherwise you risk creating a lifeless document, the result of ritual behavior, rather than a call to action.

Conducting an Analysis

In a nonprofit organization, a board member typically chairs the strategic planning committee, with significant input from staff. In public sector agencies, the director or a selected staff member usually takes leadership responsibility. Some organizations rely on an outside professional facilitator to provide neutrality to the process, keep the group focused on tasks, and be sensitive to group processes and interactions.¹² Using a neutral third party has merit in that it assures that all stakeholders have an equal voice without one or more engaged in dual roles of participant and facilitator.

To get everyone thinking as a team, it is important to lay a proper foundation. Provide the group with a common understanding of the organization's past, its current operations, and its values. Also, review the services of the organization, its staffing pattern, its current and projected financial situation,

and other salient facts and economic data to determine how the service programs, clients. A good analysis reveals fundamental questions, weaknesses (challenges), and organizational life cycle.

Developing a Mission Statement

The purpose of a mission statement is to define the organization's purpose and the need it serves. A mission statement is a statement of purpose without which the organization lacks legitimacy, and need to be lofty and inspiring, and easily remembered.

The mission statement should not be changed frequently, including staff, board members. For example, an agency that states it will serve the public despite funding cutbacks. The agency decides to alter its mission.

In addition to describing the organization's purpose, the mission statement should offer a vision of the future, and their goals.

Our mission is to provide effective mental health services to people of all ages, including those with severe mental illness.

Our mission is to provide developmental disabilities services to people with developmental disabilities, and to assist them in achieving their potential.

Your mission statement is being developed in the boardroom, in the presence of business cards, a list of program or policy options, and a list of questions to our mission? Sit under consideration,

and other salient facts. In addition, gather relevant demographic, political, and economic data on the service area. Conduct a competitive analysis to determine how the organization compares with its peer organizations on service programs, clients served, service accessibility, reputation, and costs.¹³ A good analysis requires a review of your mission statement; focusing on fundamental questions; conducting a resource audit; examining strengths, weaknesses (challenges), opportunities, and threats; and considering the organizational life cycle.

Developing a Mission Statement

The purpose of a human service organization is to meet a need; addressing that need is the mission of the organization. The mission provides a sense of purpose without which the organization would lose its direction, support, legitimacy, and needed resources.¹⁴ A good mission statement should be lofty and inspiring, yet concise and capable of being easily understood and remembered.

The mission statement is the most enduring part of an organization. It should not be changed without extensive involvement of key stakeholders, including staff, board, key donors, and community representatives. For example, an agency offering substance abuse services may have a mission that states it will serve everyone who comes for help. Faced with severe public funding cutbacks and an inability to fundraise in the private sector, the agency decides to alter its mission and restrict whom it will serve.

In addition to describing their fundamental purpose, some human service organizations describe what services they will provide, to whom they will be offered, and their geographic area. The following are examples:

Our mission is to ensure that appropriate, timely, accessible, and effective mental health and substance abuse services are available to people of all ages. Highest priority is to be given to adults and children with severe mental health disabilities who live or work in our geographic area.

Our mission is to assist individuals with mental retardation and developmental disabilities in choosing and achieving a life of increasing capability such that they can live, learn, work, and play in the community, and to assist and support their families in achieving this objective.

Your mission statement should be visible in key areas—on the wall of the boardroom, in the reception room, in the annual report, on the flipside of business cards, and in the newsletter. In staff meetings, when a new program or policy is under consideration, ask, “Does this proposal relate to our mission?” Similarly, at board meetings when several proposals are under consideration, choose those more likely to further the organization’s

mission.¹⁵ The mission establishes boundaries for organizational activity and guards against the tendency to chase unrelated opportunities or thoughtlessly diversify, thus siphoning resources from the organization's *raison d'être* (reason for being).¹⁶

Asking Fundamental Questions

Although organizations differ in relation to their mission, funding, and style of operating, all must grapple with four fundamental questions as part of the strategic planning process.

What business are we in? Most organizations provide several services and serve multiple populations. How the organization defines these services determines which services and clients it emphasizes. A child welfare agency, for example, could define its basic purpose as ensuring the well-being of children under its care or it could define its focus as keeping families intact. The former might involve long-term foster care; the latter, intensive family counseling.

What business should we be in now? The organization may have been formed 10 or 20 years ago with a mission to serve a particular target population, but now it serves different populations with different needs. Some staff or board members may mistakenly believe that the organization continues to provide services for those it no longer serves. One of the values of strategic planning is that it forces members to ask the question, "If our organization did not currently exist, would it be created to meet the needs we are now trying to meet?"

What business do we want to be in a few years down the road? As a strategic planning exercise, it is useful to imagine what the organization might be in three to five years. Are there new clients to be served or can the organization be prepared to serve current clients better in the future? Is there new legislation in the offing that could provide needed funding? To give shape to this "crystal ball" thinking, the strategic planning group may want to capture its ideas about the future in a *vision statement*. The group would project how clients, services, staff, funding, and other aspects of the organization might be the same or different in the future.¹⁷

In considering this vision statement, you could improve on what the organization is doing now, or you could change direction entirely. For example, your agency currently offers recreational activities and limited workshop experiences to the mentally and physically disabled. You could shift to advocating for legislation that helps disabled persons function better in the community. The vision statement would include adding job developers and group home staff so disabled persons might function more independently. Thus the vision statement encourages strategic planners to think about what the organization can become if it were to perform at its optimum. The vision is a dream that may never be realized, but the pursuit is reason enough to try.¹⁸

In visioning your human services of connotes a certain re tinguishes one organ establishing their br develop their brand- the quest for positio however, agencies s must also be basec conditions as a resul

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Conducting a Resource Situational Analysis

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In visioning your future, examine the particular niche you will fill in the human services of the future. In the business world, the term *branding* connotes a certain reputation of the enterprise. A strong brand uniquely distinguishes one organization from another. Business enterprises work hard at establishing their brand. Similarly, human service agencies must strive to develop their brand—their reputation for unique and excellent services. In the quest for positioning themselves to meet the needs of the community, however, agencies should not rely solely on their good cause. Positioning must also be based on delivering results—changing lives and changing conditions as a result of the organization's effort.¹⁹

What will happen if we continue doing business in the same way? Continuing in the same direction could have negative consequences in a changing world. For example, with regard to your day care program you find that, because of a change in the law, teen mothers are returning to school. Not facing this reality could mean that in a few years your program, which is not affiliated with schools, could be greatly diminished, replaced by competitors who are willing to set up their day care programs in schools. By exploring the continuation of even those programs that are going well for the moment, you consider potential consequences. The strategic planning process therefore requires you to intensely examine not only the organization's current relevance, but also whether you need to make changes that will better position the organization for the future.²⁰

Conducting a Resource Audit and Situational Analysis: the SWOT (SCOT) Process

The resource audit is an inventory of the organization's existing and available resources needed to achieve its mission. As part of its review, the strategic planning committee would do the following:

1. Review programs and services to determine whether each one can be justified in relation to the organization's mission.
2. Examine the structure at every level of the organization, including job descriptions, staff responsibilities, and formal processes.
3. Determine the organization's management of staff and funding.
4. Identify significant community trends and issues that might impinge on the organization's functioning.
5. Carefully examine the extent to which other organizations are duplicating services or competing for funding or clients.

Major organizational trends and their implications would be identified in this analysis. For example, it may be determined that proposed programs may

require staff with different expertise and experience; the findings could have long-term implications for upgrading or hiring staff.

Include in the analysis a situational analysis of internal (organizational) and external (environmental) factors. The acronym SWOT is intended to convey that, for the internal analysis, you review *strengths* and *weaknesses* and, for the external analysis, *opportunities* and *threats*. (Some organizations prefer the acronym SCOT, the C standing for *challenges*.)

In examining your organization's internal strengths, you would obviously want to continue doing the activities you do well. You would ask, "What are our staff and volunteers best able to do, and how can we build on these assets?" Examining internal weaknesses requires candid discussions about where things are falling short or, in the case of programs, what needs are beginning to wind down. Are staff not as prepared as they should be for doing their jobs? Is your organization encountering severe financial constraints? Are you losing clients because the program is no longer relevant, or for other reasons? Focusing on weaknesses or constraints directs new energies or redirects efforts to make needed changes.

A dilemma that organizations face is whether (and to what extent) they should divert resources from their strong areas to strengthen their weaknesses.²¹ Suppose, for example, that a mental health organization's primary strength is in providing mental health counseling, but it has a weak job-finding unit. Should it divert its mental health resources to devote staff to finding jobs? Or should it eliminate the job finding unit and rely instead on other community organizations whose primary function is to find jobs?

Of course, internal weaknesses can be caused by external realities. For example, in a public agency, the lack of statutory authority and funding to carry out needed programs may limit the ability to serve some clients, even though they need the agency's services. Conversely, the legal requirement to process every client who walks into a public agency may limit the desired quality of service. These constraints suggest that focusing only on internal improvements may not be sufficient to improve services. By being aware of these external constraints, the strategic planning group can begin to consider ways to mitigate them. Instead of concentrating only on improving staff performance, for example, attention would be given to changing regulations or the law itself.

The term *scanning the environment* means looking at both *opportunities* and *threats*. Scanning involves selectively reviewing relevant economic, technological, social, and political trends that now or in the future could affect your organization. A change in local public administration, reduced federal funding, expansion of women in the work force, and many other factors can have a powerful impact on the directions of the organization. Some organizations prefer to conduct the scanning process prior to preparing the mission statement because the scan may influence the organization's essential emphasis. As an alternative, the strategic planning group can develop a tentative mission position and be prepared to modify it if the scanning process reveals insights.

Scanning the environment is no easy task. Thousands of dollars can be spent on perceptions. Most organizations have limited resources and so may

have to rely on public Census or published groups, local universities,

In addition, the major assumptions of the organization. An agency must address key realities as the

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have to rely on published secondary data sources, such as the United States Census or published studies and planning reports sponsored by advocacy groups, local universities, the United Way, or a local planning council.

In addition, the strategic planning group could compile its own list of major assumptions or *key realities* that could have an impact on the organization. An agency that serves adolescents, for example, might identify such key realities as the following:

1. Teen pregnancy, already at a high rate, will continue.
2. AIDS among heterosexual adolescents will reach epidemic proportions.
3. Teen unemployment is likely to decline for those who graduate from high school but increase for those who do not.
4. The school dropout rate will continue to increase unless steps can be taken at the elementary school level to keep students from failing.

These and other key realities would be based in part on quantitative data and in part on the general knowledge of professionals or community experts that are often referred to as "key informants." These perspectives should be considered to help determine the future focus of the organization.

Opportunities can be manifested in various ways. A possible new funding source, such as the United Way announcing a special grants program for children, may create new opportunities. A recently recognized community problem, such as a drastic reduction in welfare grants, severe overcrowding in detention home facilities, a tragic domestic homicide, or an increase in the high dropout rate, may offer opportunities for new services and special funding. In the human service field, community crises sometimes provide opportunities.

External threats or constraints can be obvious or subtle. A reduction in funding can obviously affect the effectiveness of programs and even whether the organization continues to exist. Subtle threats are often difficult to discern. For example, another organization beefs up its staff to compete for your clients or opens a satellite office in your service area, or a formerly successful camping program begins to lose participants because of the growing availability of other recreation options. Loss of funds, competition from other organizations, or declining community interest are ever-present threats that may—or may not—require special attention, depending on how events unfold. These threats could prove to be either bogus or genuine.

In the strategic planning process, consider specifying anticipated opportunities and threats, and assess whether your organization has the capacity to deal with them. Further, the staff must determine whether they have the requisite resources—time, funding, expertise, and experience—to address future needs. If not, are they prepared to do what is required to strengthen their capability, including new skill training, organizational restructuring, and possible reassignment of roles and responsibilities? A candid assessment of capabilities affects the planning process.

Examining Critical Issues

To keep the strategic planning process from becoming a perfunctory ritual in which participants go through superficial motions, you must focus on critical issues. Concentrating on critical issues is especially useful for those organizations seeking to update a current strategic plan in response to new developments.²² You need to ponder what significant problems, what burning issues, cry out for resolution. If you are primarily concerned with how to attract clients to the organization, for example, you may need to focus your strategic planning on various ways to reach them. If your burning issue is poor staff morale, then you concentrate on how to improve it. If future funding is a concern, this becomes your focus of attention. Thus, a critical issue is an unsolved present or emerging problem requiring resolution because of its potential impact on the organization.

Critical issues become *strategic* when they (1) involve high stakes, such as dealing with new funding opportunities or serious decline in client attendance; (2) require intensive attention that cannot be left to routine planning, such as taking the initiative to form an association with other agencies; (3) cut across various operating units of the organization, such as developing a new service that involves the marketing, accounting, and program staff working together; and (4) delineate where the organization should be going.²³

Suppose the critical issue at hand is how well the agency's services are designed to meet client needs. The following are examples of the kinds of questions the strategic planning group would consider in planning programs.²⁴

1. What changing community needs are of special interest to the organization?
2. Should our program be improved by expanding our services (e.g., housing services for our mentally disabled clients)?
3. Should we phase out certain services or programs that are declining or are incompatible with other services?
4. Should our basic funding pattern be modified, diversified, or more focused?
5. Should we make major modifications in the organization by (a) replacing some staff with others having different skills, or (b) retraining staff to perform their functions differently?
6. Should we contract with others to provide services we currently offer?

These illustrate the kind of critical issues and questions that could be raised, depending on the organization's focus of interest. An essential part of the strategic plan is for each organization to identify its unique critical issues. Sometimes issues can seem mundane, though they are of critical importance,

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such as installing a new computer networking system or building a relationship with collateral organizations.²⁵ Identifying critical issues concentrates attention on areas that are either currently or potentially of greatest concern.

Because every organization has finite resources, it is not likely that more than a few critical issues can be addressed at any one time. Priority decisions must be based on the organization's ability to have an impact, its assessment of resource demands, and on the impact of not addressing the issue.²⁶ Attempting to be everything for everyone guarantees organizational ineffectiveness.²⁷ In determining whether an issue or program is highest priority, an organization must first and foremost ask, "How will this help us achieve our mission?" In the process it may determine not to work on some desirable programs or important issues because it cannot do everything simultaneously. Once you have selected a few critical issues, formulate actions appropriate for each. Then pinpoint accountability for follow-up and prepare a timetable.

These action plans are the blueprint for the staff to use to fulfill the strategic plan and for the board to use to monitor progress. Suppose the strategic planning committee of a family counseling agency is concerned about meeting the needs of its clients. Figure 2.1 shows how it might formulate a critical issue. The strategic planning process should take place over a period of several months rather than in a one- or two-day retreat, so that governing board members and staff have an opportunity to do the necessary homework of gathering facts and preparing action plans. Based on information and facts, the strategic planning committee can determine what the organization should do over the next few years to resolve critical issues.

Drafting the Strategic Plan

From your planning group, select one or two members to draft a strategic plan based upon the critical issues identified. The draft plan would likely include the following elements:

- Mission statement (revised if necessary)
- Vision of the organization in three to five years
- Goals to be accomplished in three to five years
- Internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats (or internal and external key realities)
- Critical issues
- Actions for each critical issue
- Accountability and timetable for each critical issue

By incorporating implementation actions in the strategic plan, you ensure that the planning process leads to results.

In the process of drafting the plan, certain unanswered questions may emerge that require further deliberations. The value of calling the initial plan a "draft" is that it can be reviewed by a variety of constituents—clients, staff, funders, community leaders—to ensure that all elements of the plan properly fit and that

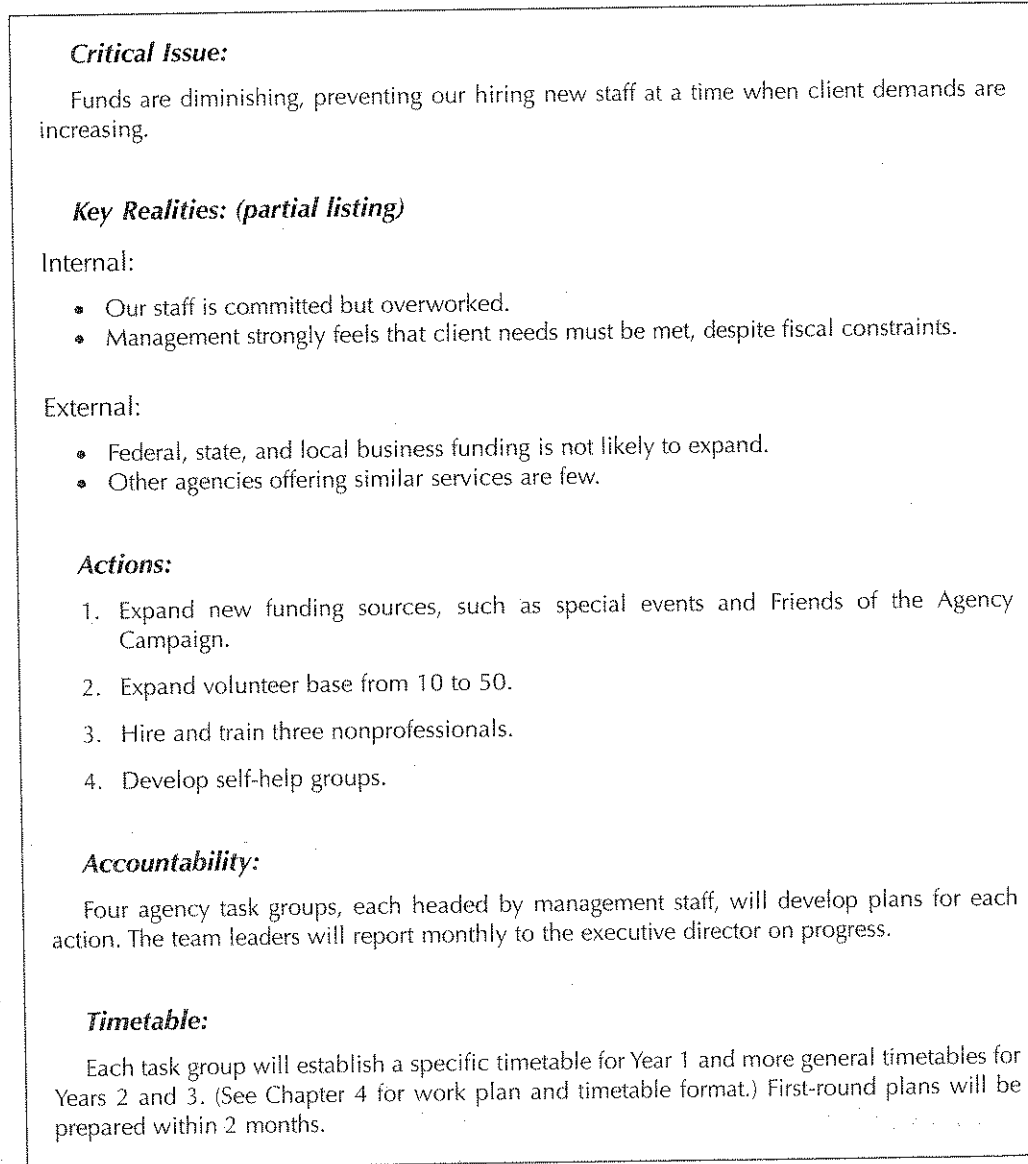


Figure 2.1 Strategic Planning Format

it is workable. Special attention should be paid to possible flaws or negative consequences. The final result should be a sound and viable plan acceptable to the major decision makers of the organization, including the executive director, the board of trustees or relevant public officials, and key staff.

Transforming plans into action requires that tactics be considered and assignments be made and monitored. (See Chapter 4 for implementing action plans.) A good feedback system must be in place to ensure that programs are kept on track.

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Dynamic Planning

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Some organizations may become complacent after the strategic planning document is prepared because of overemphasis on preparing the plan at the expense of making needed changes and following through.²⁸ So much energy and effort may have gone into preparing the strategic plan that participants assume they have created a master plan that will guide them indefinitely. To counter this tendency toward complacency, the organization must develop an ongoing review process—at least annually—that tracks achievement of goals by identifying performance indicators focused on accomplishments.²⁹ The key to eventually being able to evaluate progress is to answer the question, “Did the organization achieve what it set out to accomplish?”

Dynamic Planning

To avoid ending up with an inflexible strategic plan, a counterpoint approach is sometimes proposed. This approach may be referred to as *dynamic planning*, meaning that strategies become clear over time and are based on modest attempts to deal with changing circumstances. Because of the heightened pace of change, strategies gradually emerge to deal with new situations. The emphasis is on bottom-up learning—encouraging staff to try new approaches and then see what happens. This impromptu decision-making process is continuously sensitive to change resulting from opportunities or setbacks. When changes occur (e.g., new technologies, legislation, or funding alterations), managers may find it beneficial to review mission statements, reformulate goals and objectives, and redraft action plans in an ongoing process. In contrast to a comprehensive plan that may attempt to accomplish too much in too little time, dynamic planning continually tests ideas, obtains feedback, and incrementally reshapes plans.³⁰

For example, an opportunity may arise that allows the organization to implement services to an underserved population. This opportunity may, in turn, require reorienting the mission statement to encompass new programs and target populations. Thus dynamic planning helps the organization deal with political, social, and economic realities and also helps ensure that risks involved in embarking on new directions can realistically be undertaken.

Fundamental to dynamic planning is *opportunistic thinking*. Managers continually ask, “What new opportunities can we grasp?” This is part of a never-ending search for new possibilities. Risk taking is built into a trial-and-error process in which failure is always a realistic possibility.

In Chapter 1, effective managers were described as having a vision of where they want to take their organizations. In reality, through a dynamic strategic planning process, *smaller visions* frequently emerge. These are modest-scale ideas that, if worthwhile, develop into ambitious undertakings. Not all of these emerging ideas necessarily emanate from managerial staff.³¹ Consider this example:

A counselor expressed concern that she could not address the psychological needs of her clients because they were so deeply concerned about keeping their children fed. Moved by the plight of her clients, the counselor asked her director to allocate space for agency volunteers to bring in bags of food. From this small beginning emerged a greatly expanded food bank, which now provides supplementary food for public assistance recipients seen by the agency.

To respond to today's ever-changing environment, managers must encourage their staff to acquire adaptive solutions and take responsibility for problematic situations. No longer can agencies rely only on leaders who have a vision and require staff to mechanically follow them. Dynamic planning thus requires the work and commitment of everyone in the organization, not just those in the managerial role.³² Effective managers are aware that staff develop ideas that may provide exciting new opportunities for the organization. All staff must be encouraged to develop keen insights about the possibilities of innovative interventions to meet changing needs.³³

Dynamic planning fosters an ability to seize the moment of opportunity, take corrective action, and reformulate plans. It prevents premature commitment to a rigid solution that may not allow the organization to be responsive to unpredictable events. If one thinks of a plan as a road map to a destination, there may be detours along the way that need to be considered and to which one needs to adjust.³⁴ The key elements of dynamic planning are flexibility and experimentation.

Effective managers recognize the importance of the dynamic process. A meaningful strategic plan, therefore, combines a comprehensive approach and a dynamic planning process that sensitizes the organization to changing circumstances. Strategic planning provides a general course—a direction with specific action steps focused on critical issues identified by participants at a particular point in time. However, as new events precipitate unforeseen changes (e.g., new agency competitors, shifts in funding, and client requests for new services), adjustments may be made to the very mission of the organization.

Incorporating dynamic planning into the strategic planning process can periodically affirm your current services or convince you to embark on new directions based upon contingent events. Through strategic planning, you try to anticipate the future of your organization, even when you know the future is uncertain. If an organization has taken two or three months to formulate a three- to five-year strategic plan, it may wish to conduct an annual *dynamic* review to determine whether modifications are necessary. The organization may also assign various strategies to staff and/or board members to follow through and monitor their development on an ongoing basis. The imperative in today's changing world is to continually seek relevance in relation to the needs of the consumer and the community. Being able to read the shifting political and market winds makes it possible to navigate a turbulent environment.³⁵

In summary, strategic planning focuses attention on both the process and the content of ideas. But the planning process by itself is insufficient.

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Without a plan of action even excellent ideas can easily end up as reports on a shelf.³⁶ By engaging significant constituencies (staff, board members, public officials, funders, clients, and representatives from other organizations) in the process, a common vision and direction emerges. Bringing various units of the organization together fosters a commitment to cooperate in implementing the plan. The planning process itself encourages various parts of the organization to mesh their efforts.

During strategic planning, the organization takes stock to determine how best to position itself to deal with its uncertain future. The process disciplines the organization to make tough decisions about priorities, because not everything it wants to do will be possible with the resources available. Strategic planning clarifies what must be pruned to take advantage of new growth opportunities.³⁷ It helps establish the boundaries of what the organization will do—and what it will not do. Through strategic planning, the organization also determines what special needs must be addressed to develop a plan that is comprehensive and capable of being modified in the ever-changing human service environment.

Summary of a Strategic Planning Process

1. Determine why you want to develop a plan for your organization's future. What benefits do you see from embarking on an intensive process? Do these clearly outweigh possible disadvantages?
2. Ensure that the organization's leadership is committed to the process.
3. Form a strategic planning group.
4. Analyze your situation, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
5. Develop a vision of what the organization could be like.
6. Prepare (or revise) a tentative mission statement, which may be altered later in the strategic planning process.
7. Identify, after obtaining considerable input, the most critical issues facing the organization.
8. Prepare action plans containing three- to five-year goals, implementation activities for the first year, and names of those accountable for follow-through.
9. Draft a plan that is reviewed by a planning group, staff, board, and selected persons outside the organization.
10. Implement the plan with the intent of modifying it as circumstances change.
11. Update the plan annually, and at least every five years conduct another in-depth analysis.

Questions for Discussion

1. What are examples of strengths and weaknesses/opportunities or threats related to your organization?
2. What are the key elements in your organization's mission statement? Can you and most of your agency colleagues recite your organization's mission? Is your organization's mission statement clear, compelling, inspirational, and concise? How does your organization communicate your mission to its various stakeholders?
3. What changes, if any, should be considered for your agency's mission statement?
4. What is the status of your organization's strategic plan?
5. How does your strategic plan reflect the underlying assumptions regarding the organization and its purpose?
6. What are the major priorities identified in your strategic plan?
7. Does your organization have a vision statement reflecting what the organization will be like and what it will be able to accomplish in the future? If your organization does have a vision statement, what modifications, if any, would you suggest? If your organization does not currently have a vision statement, how would you formulate such a statement?
8. You are an organization that provides socializing experiences for older persons who live in public housing. Recently the public housing authority has offered you a considerable amount of funding to include single, disabled adults who reside in public housing and who could benefit from your agency's services. Your mission statement focuses on senior citizens. What should you do?
9. Suppose your organization has been developing part-time jobs for high risk teenagers still in high school. In the past you have provided counseling and tutoring to students who have been involved in substance abuse as well as those who are performing sufficiently well in school to be likely to go on to college. Because of recent funding cutbacks, you must reduce the number of students in your program. You are now faced with the difficult decision of choosing which students you will serve—and which ones you will not—in order to be responsive to the companies that are committed to hiring these students. How would you determine priorities for which students you would serve in the program?

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3 Designing and Developing Consumer-Oriented Programs

The purpose of this chapter is to identify ways to design and develop programs that are both effective and responsive to client needs. Two different perspectives, when combined, provide managers with a conceptual framework for formulating program design: (1) the *logic planning model* is designed to plan for, achieve, and demonstrate program effectiveness with clients; (2) the *marketing planning model* provides a framework for responding to service consumers' wants and needs.

Designing a Logic Planning Model

Using Social Systems Analysis

In a *logic planning model*, a human service organization's various service delivery elements are related to each other to produce intended results. Social systems analysis is a useful analytical framework for understanding how various parts within organizations effectively interact. This planning model shows the logical relationship between the objectives to be achieved and the resources and activities that are involved in achieving them. Human service organizations can best be understood by breaking them into elements related to *inputs, throughputs, outputs, and outcomes*.¹

Inputs are of two kinds: *client inputs* are people who need services to improve their conditions and achieve their objectives; *resource inputs* represent the elements (e.g., staff, funding, facilities, and equipment) in the human service system that combine to help clients change themselves from persons with problems and needs into persons whose problems have been resolved.

Throughputs (usually referred to as activities) are those interventions or processes that the agency provides for clients. The number of service units or interventions that they actually receive (e.g., counseling interviews or educational sessions) is referred to as *outputs*. The positive change that occurs as a result of the intervention is the *outcome*. In human service organizations,

throughputs might include counseling, job training, day care, information referral, and housing services. To accomplish throughput, organizations identify and implement a variety of activities to enable clients to accomplish their objectives. These could include, for example, assessing clients, conducting transactions between staff and clients, negotiating with internal and external service providers, providing direct services, and altering the client or the environment in some significant way.²

To more clearly show the range of activities available during this throughput process, it is useful to design a client flowchart that tracks clients from beginning to end. The term *pathway* is sometimes used to describe this sequence of structured contacts with clients as they move through the service delivery system. Pathways can be either a single route or multiple routes. Different clients in the same organization might follow different pathways and, of course, different organizations vary in the way clients move through their systems.

The value of a client flowchart is that it depicts various pathways clients can take into, through, and out of an agency. It identifies various points along the process where crucial decisions have to be made, where activities need to be monitored for feedback, and where different alternatives might need to be considered. Symbols used to describe client pathways are shown in Figure 3.1.

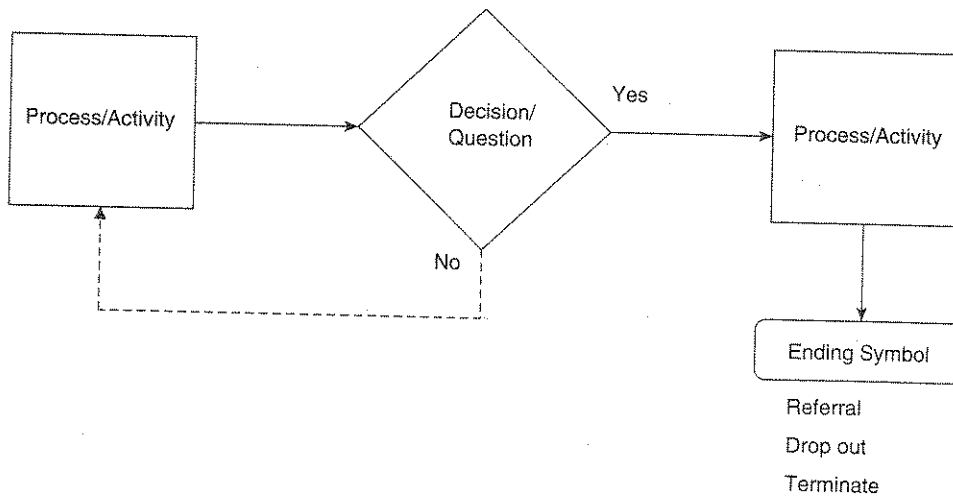


Figure 3.1 Client Pathway Symbols

- An arrow connects another process, question, or ending symbol.
- Dotted arrows reflect returning to a previous step.

- Three methods
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 2. the client could
 3. the agency could

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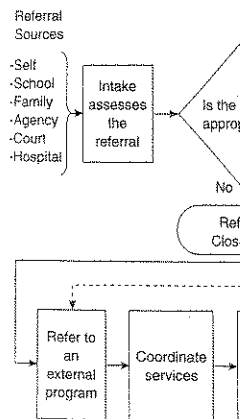


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- Three methods for closing a case are
 1. the agency could make a referral to another agency;
 2. the client could voluntarily discontinue because the problem is solved;
 3. the agency could terminate the client.

Review of a Generic Client Flowchart Model

Figure 3.2, a Generic Client Flowchart, depicts a client moving through an agency that provides mental health counseling and that can also arrange for such outside services as housing, employment, or day care. Note that the client can be referred to the agency from several sources, such as self-referral, a family member, or the local school. During intake, staff determine whether the client is eligible for the service and meets appropriate requirements (e.g., income level, geographic location, and motivation for service). If the client

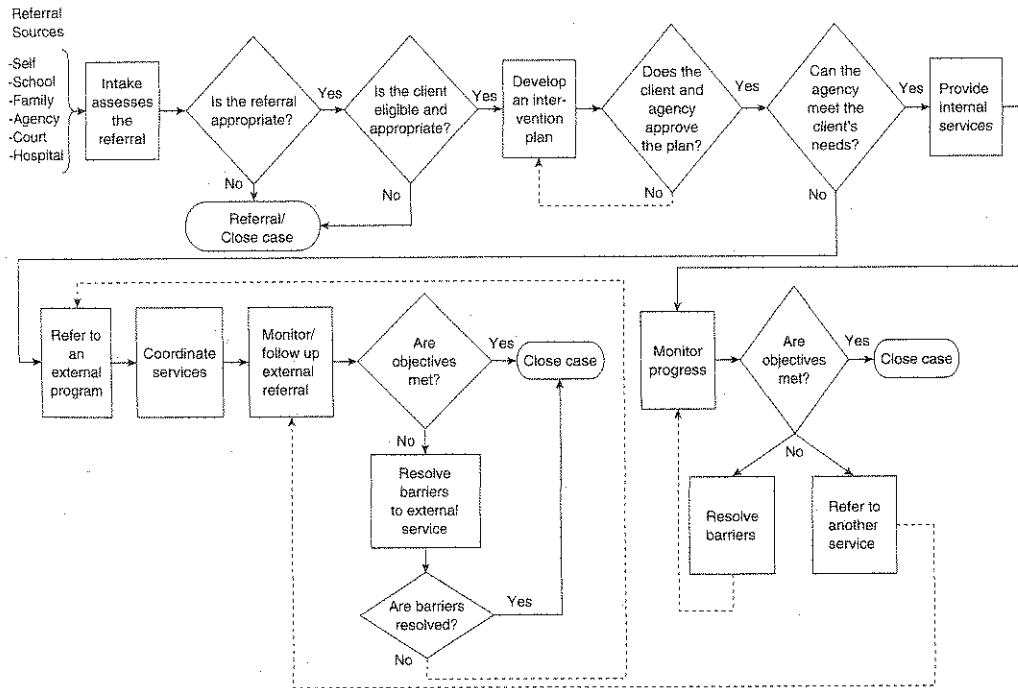
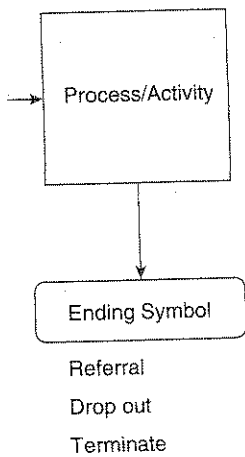


Figure 3.2 Generic Client Flowchart Model

is ineligible, the agency ends the contact with the client and, if appropriate, makes a referral elsewhere.

If the client continues, an intervention plan involving the achievement of specific objectives is mutually agreed upon between the agency and the client. Subsequently, the agency provides the agreed upon service(s). If the



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objectives are achieved, then the agency terminates the client as a successful case. During this process, the agency works to identify and remove barriers, either within the client or in the environment, that impede service delivery. For example, a client may be poorly motivated to work on his substance abuse problem, or he may be in a social environment that stimulates his drinking. Before treatment can proceed, the barriers that prevent him from working on his problems need to be addressed.

This generic flow chart reveals several instances of clients being at yes/no decision points that may involve their leaving the agency, returning to a previous process, or being referred to an outside agency. Client pathways should make these decision points clear, because they focus attention on those instances where clients' needs may require new or different ways of delivering services. In developing client pathways, be especially mindful of possible dropout points.

If Agency A determines that the client would benefit from Agency B's services, then a referral would be made, and Agency A may (or may not) monitor the delivery of services and the achievement of objectives. If barriers were encountered in Agency B, Agency A could pursue alternate referrals—or this could be the responsibility of Agency B. In examining client pathways through a particular service system or agency, consider the following questions:³

- Can there be multiple entry points?
- Is there only one or are there multiple pathways through the system?
- After going through intake, if the client is referred to a specialist, must the client return to a central point before going on to a second specialist or can the first specialist make a direct referral?
- Can a client go directly to a specialist, thus bypassing a central intake?
- How permeable are the agency's boundaries to admitting people (e.g., eligibility requirements, waiting lists, and bureaucratic "red tape")?
- What alternative pathways are open to clients if their conditions change or their objectives are not met?
- If certain objectives are met, but others are not, what does the agency do?
- Can clients who prematurely discontinue be recycled back into the agency's program at a later point?
- Does the agency attempt to re-engage and critically examine the reasons why clients drop out?
- Are those clients who need to be referred to outside agencies being assisted, and does staff follow up to determine whether the services were, in fact, provided and objectives achieved?
- Have proper forms (intake, screening and assessment, eligibility, admissions, case planning, evaluation, and termination) been developed to engage and track client progress through the service system?

The value of these questions is that they provide an analytic framework for viewing how clients are being treated as they are processed through the service delivery system.

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Outputs are the direct products of program activities and usually measure volume of work accomplished.⁴ The focus of an output performance measure is on the service. There are three types of output (units of service) performance measures:⁵ (1) a material unit, such as one home-delivered meal; (2) an episode unit, such as one interview; and (3) a time unit, such as one hour for a home health aid program. An agency aggregates these performance measures across all clients receiving services, producing monthly or annual reports. The following are examples of output performance measurements:

- Number of counseling sessions
- Number of educational materials distributed
- Number of meals provided
- Number of community meetings held
- Number of clients completing a program
- Number of seniors completing prescribed, short-term treatment plans
- Number of children completing preschool education

In these examples, output units are shown as both units of service provided and units of service completed. Although most organizations are able to document their service units, by themselves these units are an insufficient measure of accomplishments. For that, *outcome measures* must be considered.

Outcome measures are defined as a measurable change in a client's life achieved between entry and exit of a program. The resulting accomplishments are attributable, at least partially, to a human service program.⁶ In the absence of formal research, we can never be completely certain that the outcomes were the result of agency intervention. The fact that students are functioning at a higher grade level, or that people are able to get jobs, or recidivism rates are reduced may or may not be due to program interventions. Nevertheless, agencies can claim that client outcomes can be at least partially attributable to the service interventions. The following are examples of outcome measures:⁷

1. Service data
 - Job placements
 - Reduction in number of clients with arrests 90 days after completing treatment
 - Decline in child abuse
 - Performance at or above grade level
 - Discontinuance of drug use
 - Adults completing treatment reporting they are abstinent
 - Participants who receive a General Education Diploma (GED)
 - Participants retained in employment after one year
 - Homeless persons obtaining housing
 - Reduction in confirmed cases of abuse or neglect
 - Children placed with adoptive families within 180 days of the receipt of referral

2. Standards for measuring outcomes:
 - Preschool behavior rating scale
 - Parent attitude survey
 - Knowledge scales and aptitude tests

These scales document how people have changed after they have been involved in an intervention process.

3. Level of functioning scales that measure outcomes:
 - Rating of mentally ill on decision making and interpersonal interaction
 - Rating mentally disabled on daily living and communication
4. Client self-reported satisfaction as a measure of outcomes:
 - Satisfaction among clients who were treated or who were provided with services
 - In day care, percent of parents reporting their placement is safe, healthy, and nurturing
 - In a homemaker services program, consumers who feel that they have improved their functioning
 - In a nutrition program, consumers who feel that the meals program is an important source of nutritious meals

Note: Although client satisfaction can be useful, human service managers need to be cautious about overusing this scale as a substitute for more objective scales of outcomes.⁸

Establishing Initial, Intermediate, and Long-term Outcomes

For most clients, there is usually not one desired outcome, but rather a hierarchy of logically related benefits to be obtained from a program. This hierarchy is generally related to the length of time over which benefits can occur. *Initial outcomes* are the first benefits clients experience and are the ones most closely related to a program's outputs. These initial outcomes are immediate changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, or skills, and they are necessary steps toward ultimate desired ends. In a school dropout prevention program, for example, an initial outcome would be students' active participation in a tutoring program and greater participation in school activities. In a job training program, an initial outcome would be learning a word processing skill or developing a better attitude about supervisors. Initial outcomes measure changes in program participants while they are still in the program.

Intermediate outcomes link the program's initial outcomes to long-term change in behavior that results from participants' new knowledge, attitudes, or skills. In a job training program, an intermediate outcome would be placement on a job. In a school dropout program, an intermediate objective would be

regular attendance in school. Objectives reflect participation in school shortly thereafter (e.g.,

Long-term outcomes are as improved parenting at follow-up time.⁹ These outcomes two years or more after the initial gains were sustained. If a person continued to be

The reason to make clients make at the end of the program sustained. Welfare recipients participating in the program, but they may not have increased their knowledge after they leave the program. The program may or may not have focused on whether the focus

In addition to content, managers must also determine the effect, that is, how program results. This relationship influences and benefits.

If the program can provide recipients (input), at the program (output), then interviews (initial outcomes) are more likely to find intermediate outcomes. A program is likely to become final

By articulating these conditions for achieving desired outcomes is not in fact achieved, which the program is based on after the job interview. If you have jobs, then you need to improve interviewing skills is the result. To illustrate the relationship between outcomes, consider a program designed to enable welfare

Long-term outcome: completing the program

regular attendance in school and passing to the next grade level. Intermediate objectives reflect participants' accomplishments at the end of the program or shortly thereafter (e.g., within three months of terminating the program).

Long-term outcomes are those changes in the client's quality of life (such as improved parenting or job stabilization) that are measured at a designated follow-up time.⁹ These measurements can occur six months, one year, or even two years or more after the completion of the program to determine whether the initial gains were sustained. It would measure, for example, whether the person continued to be employed 12 months after completing training.

The reason to make this distinction is to acknowledge that achievements clients make at the end of the program may or may not be meaningfully sustained. Welfare recipients may be placed on jobs at the end of a training program, but they may not be employed 12 months later. Similarly, adolescents participating in a teen pregnancy prevention program may have increased their knowledge about using contraceptives, but their behavior may or may not have changed and they may become pregnant six months after they leave the program. Thus, the definition of *success* will vary depending on whether the focus is on initial, intermediate, or long-term outcomes.

In addition to considering the timeframe in determining outcomes, managers must also demonstrate the logical relationship between cause and effect, that is, how program interventions logically impact intended program results. This relationship can be thought of as an "If A, then B" chain of influences and benefits.¹⁰ Consider the following:

If the program can provide job training skills (throughput) for welfare recipients (input), and if clients complete the twelve-week training program (output), **then** they will be able to have more effective job interviews (initial outcome). **If** they have better job interviews, **then** they are more likely to find jobs that match their abilities and interests (intermediate outcome). And if they find suitable jobs, **then** they are more likely to become financially self-sufficient (long-term outcome).

By articulating these "if-then" statements, you make clear the assumptions for achieving desired outcomes. Subsequently, if that desired outcome is not in fact achieved, you may need to re-examine the assumptions upon which the program is based and consider making revisions. For example, if after the job interviewing training is completed people still do not obtain jobs, then you need to re-examine whether a program based on providing interviewing skills is the most appropriate means of achieving this objective.

To illustrate the relationship of inputs, throughputs (activities), outputs, and outcomes, consider how an employment training program would be designed to enable welfare recipients to obtain jobs:

Long-term outcome: Participants remain on the job 12 months after completing the program.

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Intermediate outcome: Participants are successfully placed in jobs.

Initial outcome: Participants learn how to conduct a job interview; they develop skills.

Outputs: Participants regularly attend 12 weeks of intensive training.

Throughput: Program provides classes on grooming, job interviewing, and word processing.

Inputs: Department of Human Services identifies participants for the program. Agency provides instructors, manuals, and other teaching tools.

Evaluating Outcomes

The logic planning model provides a way for both managers and outside funders to evaluate the extent to which the organization achieves its intended impact. By using measurement indicators attached to objectives, it is possible to determine the effectiveness of the organization. For example, you would indicate the percent of foster children projected to be placed in permanent families (their own or others) within one year. It is then easy to evaluate whether this was or was not achieved at the predicted, quantifiable level. Your decision about the level of expected achievement is based on your professional judgment and experience. Outcome projections are your best assessment of what will result from your intervention. For each expected outcome, you would determine how you would know that the outcome was achieved by providing quantitative indicators. This is how an agency providing transitional shelter for homeless families and children could evaluate itself in a given time period (e.g., one year).

Outcome 1: Families achieve residential stability.

Indicator 1: 90% of families pay their rent on time.

Indicator 2: 86% of families pay their utilities on time.

Outcome 2: Adults and families obtain job skills, education, and/or stable employment.

Indicator 1: 88% of adult participants are employed full time.

Indicator 2: 85% of adults are enrolled in GED classes, job training, or college.

Outcome 3: Families achieve greater self-determination.

Indicator 1: 72% of adult participants attend post-treatment care group and maintain sobriety.

Indicator 2: 90% of families complete their individual case plans.

At the end of the program period, the agency provides a report comparing the projected outcomes with actual outcomes in an evaluation review.

Ideally, before the discrepancies emerge, management would have designed the program more carefully so that the interventions being implemented would be more realistic?"

In summary, the logic planning model is a starting point in developing a program or target. You ask yourself, "How do we then work backward to the target? This approach is more realistic and encourages more effective action planning as follows:¹¹

- What program objectives?
- What program objectives?
- What new program objectives?
- How will we measure progress?

Determining the

As previously discussed, programs based on *marketing planning* are more effective service delivery systems because they meet those needs of the target audience and work at the target audience's niche and works at the target audience's niche.

After completing the logic planning model, management has assessed its place in the market—its niche—and whether to modify the program. The manager conducts a market analysis, offering similar servi

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Ideally, before the end of the program period, if there are significant discrepancies emerging between projected and actual outcomes, agency management would have been asking, "What resources are necessary to make the program more successful? Should we alter our client input? Should our interventions be modified? Should the number of units be increased or decreased? Do we need to modify our outcome measures to make them more realistic?"

In summary, the logic planning model helps managers critically examine how inputs, throughputs, outputs, and outcomes are connected. The starting point in developing a logic planning model is with the desired end state or target. You ask the question, "What do we want to accomplish?" and then work backwards to figure out what needs to be done to achieve the target. This approach opens up the possibility of challenging the status quo and encourages "out of the box" thinking that could lead to more effective action planning. The kinds of questions that lead to action planning are as follows:¹¹

- What program elements are critical to achieving what we want to accomplish?
- What program interventions need to be modified to achieve our objectives?
- What new program components should be considered to meet our objectives?
- How will we define success at initial, intermediate, and long-term intervals?

Designing a Marketing Planning Model

Determining the Consumer Service Market

As previously discussed, the logic planning model designs and measures programs based on their having an impact on service consumers. The *marketing planning model* provides a different perspective on developing effective service delivery programs. This approach focuses on determining what consumers of services (the market) want and then how the agency can meet those needs. A market-driven organization is one that understands its niche and works at how it can best meet the needs of its consumers.

After completing or revising its strategic plan (see Chapter 2), an organization has assessed its unique skills and competencies and can determine its niche—its place in the community for meeting an unmet need or responding to an opportunity for a new service that is within its mission. To better assess whether to modify an existing service or embark on a new one, an effective manager conducts a *competition analysis* to review whether other agencies are offering similar services or different services to the same clients. A neighborhood

center, for example, offers recreation services to seniors and determines that seniors in nearby public housing do not make use of the center's programs. Although the local YMCA provides services for youth in public housing, it does not offer social and recreation programs for seniors. Based on a marketing analysis, the manager concludes that a need exists and that other agencies are not meeting it. The neighborhood center proceeds to develop a recreation program for seniors in public housing.

A focus on consumers of service (also conventionally referred to as *clients*) is at the heart of the market-driven approach. To convey this emphasis on meeting consumer needs, some organizations equate *service consumer* with *customer*, but this is an inaccurate application of terms. In private sector transactions, customers both pay for and receive the service. Private sellers of the service strive to preserve an ongoing relationship so that the customer will continue to buy their services. The word "customer" also implies that people have a choice to go somewhere else if they do not feel they are getting something of value in the transaction.

In the human services field, the person or entity paying for the service is usually not the consumer of the service (except in those few instances where clients pay full fee). Because many organizations experience more demand for their service than what their resources will allow, because dissatisfied clients who leave the agency can be replaced by someone else on a waiting list, and because funding limitations force agencies to reduce services, agency staff may tend to treat their consumers with less care and consideration. The term *customer* is used as a metaphorical expression to convey the importance of treating people with care and dignity. One should be cautious, however, about applying too literally the language of business in designing human service programs. Asking staff, for example, to refer to their homeless clients, or adolescent delinquents, or substance abusing service consumers as "customers" could feel awkward and insincere.

Offering the Consumer Outstanding Service

Because human service consumers rarely pay the full cost of service, some organizations may not feel the same obligation to respond to their needs as if they were full-paying customers. Human service organizations, however, must emphasize the primacy of the client. This sign was hung in the administrative offices of a public housing authority:

We believe that our clients are not an interruption of our work; they are the very purpose of it. We are not doing them a favor by serving them; they are doing us a favor by giving us an opportunity to do so.

Even when a human service organization's staff believes that their clients are their reason for being, a number of factors can inhibit this from being

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their core purpose. If program funding is received from a third party, consumers may not have a direct way to express their concerns because they are not paying for the service. If consumers are considered fungible—that is, if there are so many people waiting to be served that dissatisfied ones can easily be replaced by others—then there may be little or no impetus to deal with client discontent. If too great an emphasis is placed on administrative or staff convenience, then meeting the needs of consumers becomes secondary. If the delivery of services involves more than one organization or more than one unit within an organization, their competitive, territorial attitudes can result in consumer services becoming fragmented and overly burdened with bureaucratic procedures.

The antidote for these inhibitive factors is a value commitment to—even an obsession with—meeting consumer needs. Effective managers must clarify to employees that this is fundamental. Organizations must develop a good feedback system and a method for reminding staff of the primacy of consumers. One major way to obtain feedback is through periodic, formal client satisfaction surveys. Just as hotels and car repair shops ask their customers regularly for suggestions on how to improve their services, human service organizations could benefit from such formal surveys of their constituents. Some organizations use a feedback device titled "Give Us a Grade," in which consumers are asked to answer questions or provide a rating regarding whether their expectations were met, how they were treated, and their level of satisfaction with the quality of care they received. Encouraging comment cards and letters—both positive and negative—helps staff understand how their services are perceived.

Some organizations even have management staff pretend they are consumers. They may call or visit an office where they are unrecognized to see firsthand how their concerns are handled. This is a common practice in retail stores that arrange for management, staff, or outside "professional shoppers" to experience what it is like to be treated as a customer. The purpose is not to evaluate specific individuals as much as it is to determine how responsive the system is to consumer needs. Experiencing the organization as a consumer can reveal discrepancies between how things should work and what actually takes place.

The message being promoted throughout the organization is that everyone serves clients directly or indirectly. If employees are not involved in direct service, they ought to be facilitating the work of those who are. This means that everyone in the organization has a client to serve: supervisors facilitate the work of their staff, accountants provide needed information to management, and support staff assist staff who work with clients. Consistency between rhetoric and action is vital if employees are to believe and accept that the organization sincerely cares about its consumers.

Many obvious clues indicate whether an organization is *consumer friendly*. Telephone calls are promptly answered. Staff parking is not any more convenient than client parking. The reception or waiting room is inviting, and the

receptionist conveys a warm welcome to visitors. Intake and service staff genuinely convey positive acceptance and go the extra distance to be helpful to clients. Appointments are promptly kept; apologies are given if clients have to wait. Clients and volunteers are treated as genuine partners by engaging them in meaningful activities that assist the agency. They may, for example, be asked to serve on advisory committees, or on the board itself, to make suggestions to improve agency services.

These are small efforts, perhaps, but they project the organization's fundamental emphasis on the dignity and importance of the consumer. And they do not occur by happenstance. The culture of caring permeates the entire organization as it continually reinforces this primary value in new policies, staff meetings, annual reports, training programs, and documents describing particular programs. Effective managers do not tolerate denigrating comments about clients or coworkers. Through special training and supervision, staff learn how to treat clients with respect and dignity even when having to cope with hostility and complaints. By frequently stressing its commitment to caring and proving that commitment time and again, the organization develops a reputation for being responsive to the needs of the people it serves.

Three rules can be applied to good consumer service.¹² First, *the consumer is not always right, but the consumer is always the consumer, and therefore it is crucial to fix the problem.* Although consumers can be mistaken at times, their perspective is extremely important. Managers must infuse in their organizations an attitude of understanding and of trying to respond to consumers' perceived needs. For example, you have designed a program to provide substance abuse counseling, but a number of your clients express concern about the lack of adequate housing. Certainly they must deal with their substance abuse, but you also need to consider ways within the agency or through referral to respond to their housing needs.

Second, *consumers have crises, and it is therefore important to address their problems immediately.* From the perspective of the consumer, the problems need to be addressed with a sense of urgency. Programs need to be prepared to offer a compassionate response to what consumers feel is a crisis. Some agencies use this approach by providing *wrap-around services*—a range of services provided on a 24-hour basis, especially for adolescents who are likely to get into difficulty at times other than regular office hours.

Third, *seek total consumer satisfaction.* Never assume that clients, even those who evidence strengths and competencies, can automatically connect their problems to your solutions. Asking, listening, and responding are at the heart of providing outstanding consumer service. Solving consumer problems means that you need to understand their perspectives. Incredibly good consumer service starts with having insightful empathy for clients' problems and needs. Recognize, too, that though consumers come with their own strengths, they also are sometimes powerless and need an advocate to help them negotiate various community institutions for resources to sustain a decent quality of life.

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Seeking Consumer Feedback

To understand better the special needs of their clients and also the interests of outside funders and public officials, agencies seek feedback to guide them in program development. To better understand consumer needs, organizations conduct focus group sessions, ask for consumer reactions through formal and informal surveys, and elicit client complaints.

Focus groups are useful ways to generate ideas about consumer needs and reactions to programs.¹³ It is often a good idea to convene focus groups of similar consumers (e.g., separate meetings for Latinos or African-American consumers, or of teenagers and adults) because their perspectives may be influenced by cultural and other unique characteristics. Usually a focus group consists of eight to ten consumers and is guided by a facilitator who asks such open-ended questions as, "What appeals to you about the program? What aspects of the program turn you off? Who do you think would benefit from the program? How often should the program be offered? What would persuade you to try this program?" Responses to these questions can provide helpful directions for future programs.

Frequently, agencies survey current consumers about how they benefited from the service and what changes they would recommend. In conducting the survey, keep questions brief and focused, and be clear about what the specific value will be of each question. Surveys take time, financial commitment, and a degree of expertise. Have qualified researchers review questionnaires so as to avoid bias and potential distortion of results.¹⁴ Consumers would rank services on the basis of accessibility, appropriateness of service, acceptability, recommendation of further service, and overall satisfaction.

A more open-ended approach is to use the Internet so that people can describe what they like if they are current consumers or what services they would like if they were to use your program in the future. Provide an easily accessible part of the Web site for people to request more information or for making suggestions about your services. Also, make sure that someone responds on a daily basis. A word of caution: do not over-rely on the Internet to obtain feedback on your services. Not all of your consumers can access the Internet, and be mindful that overusing Internet surveys can be perceived as pestering.

Everyone in the organization can be involved in a marketing effort to ascertain how consumers feel about their services and about the agency. The receptionist and intake worker can ask consumers how they learned about the organization. Board members and volunteers can ask people what they have heard about the organization. Feedback then needs to be channeled to staff who can respond. For example, if someone complains about the facility's physical appearance, that information has to be passed on to the maintenance staff. Continuous soliciting of opinions about the kind, quality, and level of service your organization provides shows that your staff care.¹⁵

To convey to consumers that they have basic rights, many human service agencies publicly post these rights at the agency or include them in intake

handouts given to consumers. For example, consumers are informed that they have the right to obtain courteous and fair treatment and be treated with dignity, and information they give is confidential. Any state laws that limit confidentiality are explained. They also have an opportunity to communicate their concerns and obtain resolution of them. Some organizations create consumer relations teams whose job is to answer questions, resolve problems, and ensure that all clients receive prompt, courteous, and professional service. Clients have access to a conciliation procedure that invites them first to talk with the staff, then a supervisor, and then a customer relations specialist (also known as an ombudsman or a client advocate) who can meet with staff and clients in a conciliation process before they are carried to other county or state hearing levels. Consumers know that they can file an appeal without fear of repercussions, including interference, coercion, or loss of services.

Based on the feedback from its present and potential consumers, organizational managers are better prepared to consider both the services your agency could offer and your possible target markets.¹⁶ Four fundamental questions could be explored:

1. How can we expand our existing services to our current customers?
Example: A job training program contracts with the county commissioners to expand job training services to clients who live outside the central city.
2. How can we develop new services for current consumer segments?
Example: Your program is designed to provide counseling and support for high-risk students who are in danger of dropping out of school. The teenagers seem resistant to talking directly about their problems, so you design a program where they can work on creative art projects while permitting informal discussions of issues that concern them.
3. How can we find new consumer segments for current services?
Example: A neighborhood mental health counseling center contracts to develop a residential facility to house mentally ill women for whom they can provide ongoing counseling.
4. How can we develop new consumers and new service programs?
Example: A family service agency contracts to develop a substance abuse prevention program in the elementary schools.

Being Responsive to External Markets

Effective managers rely on market planning as they consider the role of stakeholders—those who have a keen interest in the organization, though they do not receive direct service benefits. Stakeholders can be trustees, volunteers, family members, fund donors, service advocates, referral sources,

elected officials, and com effectiveness and efficienc

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Three elements comprise the external market: referral sources, policymakers and administrators, and funders. Human service organizations need all three to survive. Referral sources, such as the courts, city or county department of human services, and nonprofit agencies, send consumers to agencies. Policymakers and administrators, such as elected and appointed officials, United Way leadership, and accreditation and credentialing professionals control resources and enact regulations that influence how your organization functions. Funders—federated campaigns (e.g., United Way, United Black Fund), foundations, insurance companies, individual donors, faith-based drives—provide needed resources. You need to be constantly tuned in to these external markets so you can then better serve your consumers. Trying to be responsive to these diverse external markets can be daunting. Effective managers must constantly strive to satisfy different and sometimes incompatible decision makers. The consumer, for example, may need extensive counseling service, but the insurance companies involved in managed care can restrict the number of interview sessions. Having multiple constituents presents an ongoing balancing act for most managers.

Effective managers are sometimes confronted with the dilemma of choosing between the organization's mission and what the market wants and needs. If you start with the premise that the market is always right, but that it may not be right for you or your organization, you have a choice not to meet the market's needs—as difficult a choice as this may be. So a good starting point in assessing whether to consider a new service project or major expansion is to determine the following:¹⁷

- Does the project support our mission?
- Does it support or conflict with our organizational values?
- Does it support our strategic plan, goals, and objectives?
- Does it result in net income or net loss? If it is a loss, can we afford it?
- Is this something we can do well?
- Is there evidence of user need and interest?
- Is there commitment to devote time and resources to the project?
- Does the organization have the capacity to carry out the project?

The point, then, is that you need to move with the external markets when you can, but you must be careful about being so opportunistic in your quest for new programs or new funds that you allow the organization to drift from its mission. Be wary of *mission drift*, for it can create confusion among the organization's key stakeholders and ultimately make the organization vulnerable. Sticking to the mission helps the organization resist chasing ideas and losing the organization's core reason for existing for the sake of money.¹⁸ It may be difficult not to go after new sources of revenue, but this may be the best long-term decision for the organization.

It is crucial, however, that you tune in to what your external market determines and whether, in keeping with your mission, you need to provide a new program or redesign an existing one. When confronted with a situation in which consumers are not responding to your program, or public officials seem not to have an interest, or referring organizations are not making expected referrals, effective managers explore various avenues to determine what factors are preventing people from using their services. This is referred to as *strategic marketing* or as a *marketing audit*¹⁹—special efforts designed to uncover information that can help you create or refashion your service program.

This is what a faith-based organization did to be responsive to its external markets in designing services: Catholic Charities Services Corporation (CCSC) of the Cleveland Diocese was a collection of 24 separate agencies that were held together in a loose federation. Because services were poorly coordinated and highly fragmented, the parent organization decided to integrate services in the eight counties in which it operated. To determine ways to improve its services, CCSC embarked upon a strategic marketing program in which the directors went outside the security and certainty of their own buildings to consider a broad range of services. They needed to shift from thinking that they intuitively knew what was needed to actually finding out what human needs existed and devising ways to meet those needs.

In addition to conducting interviews with service recipients, the management staff interviewed leaders of the private sector, such as United Way, and public sector administrative staff responsible for planning, developing, and purchasing services. For example, managers learned that county commissioners were desperately looking for ways to keep foster children under their care in their communities rather than send them to other counties for residential treatment. This awareness eventually led to specially designed community-based services for foster children.

Through strategic marketing, managers made adjustments to current services. For example, adolescents involved in domestic violence were being detained unduly in the juvenile detention home for long periods without any meaningful plan. CCSC contracted with local juvenile courts to work out a joint custody program with the teens and their parents. Being responsive to the requirements of the public agency has become central to the CCSC service design. Sometimes this involved working out ways to directly communicate with the public agency should problems occur. Probations officers, for example, were to be informed immediately if a youngster missed more than one day of counseling or if there were any other departures from behavioral expectations.

The consequence of the strategic marketing endeavor was to identify, from the public sector's perspective, what populations were underserved because they cut across several different categories: juvenile offenders who are also substance abusers, disabled persons who also required employment opportunities, and substance abusing mothers who wanted their children

returned to them. The problems encouraged meeting multiple need was made available as case manager identical treatment an abusing mothers.

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returned to them. This comprehensive approach to people with multiple problems encouraged CCSC to develop combinations of services geared to meeting multiple needs of their clients. Hence chemical dependency counseling was made available to delinquent juveniles, employment counseling as well as case management was provided for persons with disabilities, and residential treatment and eventually job training were available for substance abusing mothers.

To carry out the strategic marketing, staff received cross training so that they could work with a variety of clients. Staff could function both as specialists and as generalists. In addition, CCSC developed a capacity to subcontract with other programs that were not under the sponsorship of CCSC. For example, two of its agencies contracted with other neighborhood-based agencies to provide after school programs. As a result of strategic marketing, CCSC staff shifted from being *service presenters* to becoming *service responders*. By being more responsive to the community needs, CCSC developed 111 new services totaling \$8,000,000 in new revenues. This required a change in attitude from "what we have to offer to what the community needs."²⁰

Summary of Elements of Good Design

By incorporating elements from both the *logic planning model* and the *marketing planning model*, effective managers can prepare a service delivery system that would include the following:

1. *Services are consumer oriented.* Staff have the authority to carry out meeting client needs or can refer clients elsewhere. Client pathways are clearly understood. If clients need to receive multiple services, the organization provides for this. Whether within the agency or outside, all staff working on a case interact with each other through the computer network, teleconferencing, or joint meetings.
2. *The design clearly spells out outputs and, more importantly, the outcomes to be achieved.* Special emphasis is given to demonstrating impacts at the conclusion of the program and, where feasible, at least six months or one year following termination.
3. *The design makes explicit assumptions and maintains a logical sequence of results if certain conditions are met.* This takes the form of a series of "if A, then B" events. For example, if clients were to attend a minimum of 10 substance abuse group sessions, and if they could test negatively for substance abuse for 10 weeks, and if they could become gainfully employed in a job paying at least 10% above the minimum wage, then they would be drug free for one year following completion of the program.
4. *The program is designed with a marketing perspective, with special emphasis on being responsive to consumer needs.* That is, the emphasis is on

providing outstanding consumer service, including meeting total needs, where possible.

5. *New programs fit the organization's mission and are feasible based on available or potential agency resources.*

6. *The organization has good feedback mechanisms in the form of focus groups, formal and informal surveys, and client complaint procedures.*

7. *The organization considers the needs of external markets including, for example, the needs of public officials and funders.* It would determine how best to balance the needs of the external markets with those of the consumers it is dedicated to serving.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does (could) your organization identify needs and opportunities for new services?
2. In what ways could your organization use market analysis to deliver better services?
3. A meeting has been called of representatives of United Way, the local mental health board, the developmental disabilities board, the county human services department, the local health department, the local substance abuse board, and the public schools. The intent is to explore whether to create a centralized intake system in several neighborhoods involving these organizations to serve multi-need families. What are the pros and cons of setting up a centralized office?
4. Your agency provides counseling services to mentally ill persons who are able to function in the community but who also need jobs. What are the pros and cons of (a) offering job counseling and job finding through your agency, or (b) arranging to refer clients to another organization that is in the business of job development? If you decide to work with the employment organization, what would you need to consider to make the program work for the benefit of your clients?
5. Develop a flowchart of clients going through your organization. Where are the dropout points likely to occur? What steps, if any, should your organization take to deter dropouts? At what critical points should the service consumers' experience be assessed?
6. How would you describe participants in your program? Are there any trends suggesting changes in the demographics of participants in the last few years?
7. Does your organization currently evaluate its programs in relation to its proposed outcomes?

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4

Implementing Action Plans

This chapter provides a framework and guiding principles for getting things done. Good strategic planning can easily go nowhere unless effective managers are astute about how to execute their plans. The best laid decisions can go astray unless managers develop a well-thought-out plan of action. Working with staff, effective managers establish annual objectives that contribute to the overall strategic plan. They involve staff in the decision-making process because by doing so they ensure proper implementation of plans. They anticipate that staff may be resistant to change, and they develop contingency plans to deal with possible unforeseen events.

In addition, effective managers consider small-scale pilot projects as effective means for implementing plans. To ensure that plans are carried out well, they develop mechanisms for handling details. Finally, effective managers monitor the implementation process to determine whether corrective actions must be taken to keep their plans on track.

Setting Objectives

To properly carry out plans, effective managers work with staff to establish objectives. In some organizations, the terms *goals* and *objectives* are used interchangeably, but it is useful to distinguish between the two.¹ Typically, goals represent long-term endeavors, sometimes as long as three to five years, and may even be timeless. Examples of these goal statements would be "improving access to health care services for low-income persons" or "reducing racism in our community." A goal statement containing a time horizon might be "increasing the financial resources of the organization by 30% within four years."

Objectives represent relevant, attainable, measurable, and time-limited ends to be achieved. They are relevant because they fit within the general mission and goals of the organization and because they relate to problems

Implementing Action Plans

identified by the organization and realized. They are measurable, concrete, and usually time-limited (usually within a specified period of time); this time frame is usually within a specified period of time.

Kinds of Objectives

Organizations typically have three kinds of objectives. As discussed in the previous chapter, objectives are achieved as a result of the organization's investment. The following are examples:

- To place 20 children in foster care
- To secure jobs for 100 people
- To increase the number of parents from 40 to 60

In writing impact objectives, the following guidelines should be followed:

1. Use an action verb—*to reduce*, *to increase*, *to improve*, *to decrease*, *to expand*, *to contract*, *to reduce*, *to increase*, *to improve*, *to decrease*, *to expand*, *to contract*.
2. State only one result. Two results may cause confusion about the objective. For instance, "to reduce the number of children in foster care by 20 for each of the following years" should be stated as "to reduce the number of children in foster care by 20 for each of the following years."
3. Make objective measurable. For example, "to reduce the number of children in foster care by 20" allows you to reduce the number of children in foster care by 20. Such unreasonably vague objectives are called into question.

Service objectives are objectives that describe the services rendered. Such objectives are measurable. Examples:

- To serve 300 children
- To conduct 680 interviews
- To provide 171 hours of training
- To interview 200 people

identified by the organization. They are attainable because they can be realized. They are measurable because achievement is based upon tangible, concrete, and usually quantifiable results. They are time limited (usually a year); this time frame helps the organization demonstrate concrete results within a specified period.

Kinds of Objectives

Organizations typically develop *impact*, *service*, *operational*, and *product* objectives. As discussed in Chapter 3, *impact objectives* specify outcomes to be achieved as a result of program activities. They detail the return expected on the organization's investment of time, personnel, and resources. The following are examples:

- To place 20 children in adoptive homes in one year
- To secure jobs for 35 juvenile delinquents in 5 months
- To increase the number of foster children reunited with their natural parents from 40 to 50 by June 30

In writing impact objective statements, consider the following criteria:

1. Use an action verb that describes an observable change in a condition—to *reduce*, *improve*, *strengthen*, *enhance*.
2. State only one specific result per objective. An objective that states two results may require two different implementations and could cause confusion about which of the two objectives was achieved. For instance, "to reduce the recidivism rate by 10% and obtain employment for 20 former delinquents" is a statement of two objectives and each should be stated separately.
3. Make objective statements realistic. Do not decide to decrease recidivism rates by 50% if staff and financial resources would at most likely allow you to reduce recidivism by 25%. On the other hand, do not set such unreasonably low objectives that the organization's credibility is called into question.

Service objectives are the organization's tally of activities provided or services rendered. Sometimes these are referred to as *activity* or *process* objectives. Examples include the following:

- To serve 300 clients in the program year
- To conduct 680 interviews
- To provide 17 neighborhood assemblies
- To interview 20 children needing foster homes

Implementing Action Plans

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Operational objectives convey the intent to improve the general operation of the organization. Examples include the following:

- To sponsor 4 in-service training workshops for 40 staff
- To obtain a pilot project grant of \$10,000 within 6 months
- To increase the number of volunteers by 150
- To reduce staff turnover from 20% to 10% annually

Operational objectives are essential to enhance the way an organization functions. They are a means to the end for which the organization was established. By providing in-service training, for example, an organization improves the way it serves its target populations.

Product objectives are designed to provide a tangible outcome to benefit a target population or a community. Sometimes these are referred to as *deliverables*. The following are examples of product objectives:

- To obtain passage of House Bill 41
- To develop a neighborhood family support system
- To review and critique a specific piece of legislation
- To open four schools in the evening for recreation
- To provide a media effort on teen pregnancy prevention
- To establish a weekly clinic
- To sponsor a community conference or a forum
- To coordinate a communitywide campaign on mental health
- To mobilize community support for Medigap legislation

Formatting Goals and Objectives

Which of these four types of objectives should an organization emphasize? The answer depends on the goals of the organization and its primary work efforts. Within the organization, different units may need to emphasize different types of objectives. For example, a unit dealing with clients likely uses service or activity objectives, as well as impact objectives; an administrative or planning unit likely develops product or operational objectives.

For most human service organizations, demonstrating and achieving impact objectives is of crucial importance. It is not enough for an organization to proclaim how well its processes are working and ignore whether it is having an impact on those it was established to serve. Because impact objectives emphasize measured outcomes, they should be the focal point for most service organizations. Agencies are in business to achieve results, which means they must demonstrate the impact they are having on clients. The following illustrates the relationship between an impact objective and other objectives that contribute to it:

Goal: To improve the quality of life for foster children
Impact objective: To reduce the number of foster children in the system by 10% within 12 months
Service objective: To increase the number of foster families by 150
Product objective: To develop a foster family support system
Operational objective: To conduct an in-service training workshop for 40 staff

The advantage of the use of interim objectives is that they provide a means to an end. In itself successful if it results in the achievement of the end goal. The interim objectives are designed to provide a tangible outcome to benefit the target population or a community. Sometimes these are referred to as deliverables. The following are examples of product objectives:

In establishing objectives, it is important to define the risk, target, and impact. For example, the target population is the number of foster children who are waiting for foster homes. The impact population is the number of foster children who are waiting for foster homes. For example, of the 70



Figure 4.1 Risk, Target, and Impact

Cautions About Objectives

Because managers in human service organizations are often in a hurry to establish objectives, they should have certain caveats in mind. Although objectives are important, they have certain limitations. Consider the following:

Goal: To improve foster care services

Impact objective: To decrease the number of children waiting each month for a foster home from an average of 150–170 to an average of 100–120

Service objective: To conduct a recruitment campaign that will increase the pool of prospective foster parents from 10 to 60

Product objective: To produce a training manual

Operational objectives: To hire two additional recruitment staff
To conduct an in-house training program on foster care

The advantage of this format is that it makes quite clear that the achievement of an interim activity or operating objective is not an end in itself but a means to an end. In the above example, the organization can only consider itself successful if it reduces the number of children waiting for foster homes. The interim objectives of conducting a recruitment campaign and convincing commissioners to hire additional staff, even if successful, are means to accomplishing the primary or impact objective of reducing the number of children waiting for foster homes.²

In establishing objectives for serving clients, the organization should clarify risk, target, and impact populations. The risk population is the total group in need of help. For example, in a certain community, there may be 800 ex-offenders who could potentially benefit from an employment service. A target population is the group toward which the program is focused. For example, only 70 out of 800 are employable and therefore qualify for services. The impact population is the group that actually benefits from the program. For example, of the 70 served, only 45 may actually find jobs (see Figure 4.1).

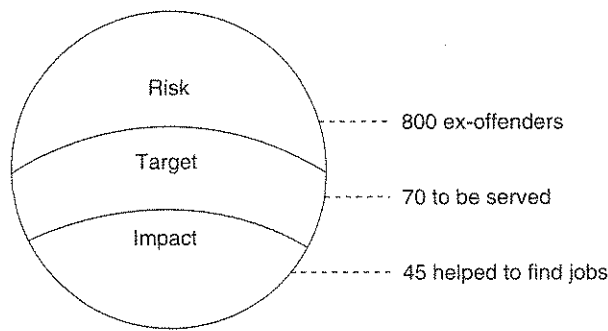


Figure 4.1 Risk, Target, and Impact Populations

Cautions About Objectives

Because managers in human service organizations are likely to be engaged in establishing objectives, it is important that these be developed with certain caveats in mind. Although a powerful tool, objective setting does have its limitations. Consider these cautions.

First, not all objectives lend themselves to quantifiable measurement. For example, counseling programs are more difficult to quantify than employment or housing programs, where results are more easily measured. Although human service organizations are under tremendous pressure to show measurable results, the quest to measure results, especially in prevention programs, is still underdeveloped. Be careful, however, not to select only those objectives that are measurable. Perhaps the most important things your organization does cannot be quantified.

Second, objectives should not conflict with each other. For example, the objective statement "to improve the recording of staff accomplishments" may actually reduce the effectiveness of the agency's services as staff devote more time to documenting services than to carrying them out. Achieving the objective "to reduce organizational costs" may result in serving fewer people, because part of the cost reduction may limit public information about the organization. Always be mindful of possible undesirable ramifications.

Third, because objectives may be in conflict with each other, and because overemphasis on one objective may have a detrimental effect on the achievement of others, managers must continually seek a proper balance and a way of integrating the organization's various objectives. There is always the danger that each unit in an organization may independently go about setting and achieving its own objectives, unmindful of its impact on the objectives of other units. For example, in striving to achieve the objective of making the organization better known in the community, the public information unit may be making such extensive demands on staff to handle speaking engagements that less time is available to achieve the objective of increasing client services.

Fourth, setting objectives requires everyone in the organization, including the board of trustees, management, and frontline staff, to be responsible for their work. Constituents of all parts of the organization should understand how they are contributing to the objectives and hence to achieving the organization's mission. This is risky, because when objectives are not achieved, there is a tendency to blame those who let the organization down. Insight that leads to further improvement in service delivery, not blame, must be the outgrowth of heightened accountability.

Finally, objectives should be designed to stretch, but not break, staff. The value of objectives is that they stimulate staff to extend themselves to reach a predetermined target. If the target is set too high and is virtually unachievable, the result will be a highly frustrated and even disgruntled staff. If set too low, objectives lose their potency to foster staff investment and productivity. Hence effective managers devote considerable thought to the objective-setting process.

Anticipating Unintended Consequences

Human service organizations experience unintended consequences either because members do not sufficiently do their homework, or because situations

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arise that nobody could have predicted. Obviously you can do little about unforeseen events, but with a little extra effort and disciplined thinking you can identify potential trouble spots.

Preparation is essential before taking action. Painters do not just start painting; they devote as much as 80% of their total time to preparing a job before ever making their first brush stroke. Similarly, it is important to think through in detail ahead of time what will happen as a result of a decision before you embark on it. Regrettably, many efforts fail because not enough time is spent making sure that those who will implement a decision are prepared to do so.³

Consider this example: In a juvenile court, a decision is made to provide intensive probation for delinquents who evidence high-risk behavior, such as repeated felony offenses. To carry out intensive probation, 10% of the probation officers are given a small caseload of clients to see frequently. The decision appears to be a good one because their clients begin to manifest a low rate of recidivism. A by-product, however, is that the remaining probation officers have to take on even larger caseloads, with unintended results of lower staff morale and less time available to work with clients, who then evidence an increase in recidivism. Had the focus of attention not been entirely upon the new program, perhaps the potential negative consequence of the decision could have been prevented.

In the medical field, the word *iatrogenic* is defined as an inadvertent, medically induced illness. No such word exists in the human service field, but there are certainly many instances where a particular decision, although beneficial in many ways, can produce negative side effects. Just as penicillin, prescribed to cure pneumonia, may cause patients who are allergic to it to go into shock, so too can specially created social programs have negative side effects. Subjecting unemployed persons to a job training program with no possibility of employment, placing clients in jobs without providing adequate day care, releasing mentally disabled patients in the absence of proper community supports, or incarcerating juveniles with no provision for rehabilitation are among many examples of plans that can produce negative results because managers did not adequately anticipate the negative consequences of the intervention.

Indeed, it is a common occurrence in agencies that well-intentioned interventions may negate the benefits of the intervention. Organizations, like individuals, tend to produce unintended compensatory responses when new efforts are tried.⁴ A person stops smoking only to gain weight. An over-protective mother creates in her child the inability to resolve his or her own problems. At the organizational level, an agency that expands its volunteer activities may inadvertently reduce staff initiative. An overzealous manager who works to ensure that no mistakes are made reduces the ability of staff to grow and learn from experience.

Thus certain actions may possibly lead to a detrimental condition that is as bad as, or even worse than, the original problem. Carefully weigh whether implementing a particular course of action may be worse than the problem it is intended to solve.

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Managing Change

Tipping Point Leadership

The theory of *tipping points*, which has its roots in epidemiology, is based on the idea that when the beliefs and energies of a critical mass of people are engaged in an organization, conversion to a new idea will spread like an epidemic, bringing about fundamental change quickly. To counter the natural inertia that exists in organizations, agency managers must be able to tip the scales from resistance to enthusiastic commitment. They can do so by making a strong case for change, concentrating resources on what really matters, and mobilizing the commitment of the organization's key players.⁵

A first step is getting staff to directly experience an issue or problem. For example, it is not enough for counselors in a school system to learn intellectually about the lives of their students. They need to be encouraged to make home visits so they can see firsthand what their students' lives are like. Providing a reality check is crucial to getting people to change their perceptions and engage in the issue.

A second step is to consider reallocating resources for an effective impact. For example, in a neighborhood center a decision is made to shift some staff from working with adults to concentrating on neighborhood gangs. The emphasis is on better targeting limited resources.

To motivate those in the organization that might be indecisive or resistant to change, a third step would be to identify *key influencers*, that is, people inside or outside the organization who have the ability to persuade others or who have access to resources. Depending on the organization, these influencers could be a union organizer, a long time employee who is a relative of a local city council member, or a wealthy volunteer. By bringing these influencers on board, they can become engaged in stimulating a change in the mood and sentiment. Hence, effective managers consider carefully what must be done to influence change.

Initiating and Implementing Pilot Projects

Managers often must maintain current programs and services and, at the same time, develop innovative programs. The effective manager must determine how to generate projects without creating such great resistance and conflict that they are doomed before being tested or fully implemented. One way to deal with this is to create ad hoc temporary staff teams to work on pilot projects. The teams can try out new ideas and work out any project glitches before the projects are diffused through the rest of the organization. Often new ideas do not work out right the first time. Problems invariably occur that nobody even considered.⁶ Through pilot projects, staff develop flexibility to experiment with new ventures. If the pilots fail, they can be

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aborted without serious consequence to the rest of the organization; if they succeed, they can be expanded.⁷

When staff embark on a small-scale, manageable undertaking, when they are committed to the task, and when they operate within a climate that favors innovation, pilot projects are more likely to succeed.⁸ The pilot project must be conceived with a reasonable chance for success. By having a clear beginning and end, by having focus, and by achieving modest and measurable improvements, the pilot project team is spurred on to continue their efforts and, later, to spread the word about their success.

A project that focuses on achievable, short-term, and urgently needed results has the best chance of success. A task group can be quickly assembled to focus on problems requiring immediate and urgent resolution. Staff are assigned based on their expertise, experience, or other strengths. Their focus of attention should be on developing a breakthrough that can have great implications for the rest of the organization. They must strive for success in a few weeks (not months), be eager to tackle the challenge, and concentrate on achieving results with available resources.⁹

Pilot projects can involve a variety of efforts: reformulating the information flow of the organization, experimenting with new services, or developing new procedures. Whatever the project, its small-scale nature allows staff to try out ideas, be creative, and determine under what conditions the project works. By approaching the project on an incremental, trial-and-error basis, the organization avoids the possibility of a large-scale failure. If something does not work, the team can make corrections before implementing the project on a larger scale.¹⁰

All of us have had the experience in our personal lives of establishing achievable goals and, having achieved them, developing the confidence and the capacity to strive for more ambitious goals. This could apply to losing weight, managing finances better, or striving for a higher academic degree. Success builds on success. This is also true with organizations. When staff succeed with several phases of a pilot program they become more confident to tackle more challenging tasks. To achieve ultimate success, the original design of the pilot program may need to be revised as staff discover new and better ways to achieve their goals.¹¹

Sometimes a crisis can lead to the creation of a pilot project that mobilizes special effort and attention. Staff are brought together with the expectation that they will be motivated to generate high energy and investment. The sense of urgency demands that the project receive the highest priority because an immediate resolution is required. Crisis projects could include (a) expanding outreach efforts to bring in more clients or face the consequence of immediate reduced funding, (b) improving safety procedures after a staff member was mugged leaving work, or (c) increasing client job placements by 20% in response to political pressures. Labeling the project a "crisis" focuses needed attention and rallies everyone to find a solution to a pressing problem. There is a danger, however, that must be noted: short-term

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successes from crisis management may become so intoxicating that they prevent the organization from adopting a long-range, strategic approach to resolving problems. Therefore be wary of overusing crisis management and having it become a way of life.

Unfortunately, even successful pilot projects may not spread throughout the organization. A project can collapse because of insufficient efforts to institutionalize it or because current policies and practices are not in harmony with it.¹² For example, a specially designed support program for school dropouts conducted outside of the schools may not be absorbed into the system because of such incompatible values and practices as the inability to give special attention to at-risk students or resistance to modifying the curriculum. In addition, some pilot projects tend to attract extra resources and highly motivated staff that are not available on an ongoing basis.

It is one thing to initiate change by engaging a small number of staff in a pilot project and dealing with their initial resistance; it is quite another to spread the change throughout the organization, to make it stick so that it becomes a permanent part of the way the organization operates. If the groundwork has been laid well, staff will be receptive to the change. Also if they have been involved in diagnosing needed improvements, and if they do not feel that change has been foisted upon them, staff are much more likely to accept the change. The key, then, is not to overmanage the change process, not to convey from on high, but to engage staff from all levels of the organization in thinking through and implementing the change.¹³

The same approach used in implementing a pilot project needs to be considered in expanding it throughout the organization. Other units need the opportunity to develop their own approaches to the change and to make suggestions that will mend possible flaws from their particular perspectives. The entire organization needs to feel the same excitement that occurred in creating the pilot project. Sometimes it is even better to let each unit "reinvent the wheel," that is, to discover its own way of implementing programs.¹⁴ Those who were involved in the pilot project can be assigned to work with other units so they can seed the new ideas and spread their enthusiasm throughout the organization.

In addition, diffusing change throughout the organization requires continuous reinforcement and feedback. Frequent interaction needs to occur between management and staff. This ongoing interest and investment is communicated both formally and through the grapevine.¹⁵

Sometimes, for the change to take root, the organization must establish a parallel or alternative structure to carry out the new program while preserving the original one.¹⁶ Suppose, for example, that the organization wants to reach out to a new clientele, such as an ethnic group that previously has not used the services of the organization. Instead of replacing the current outreach and intake services, the organization could establish a special unit to supplement the regular client access process. The new unit would link with the organization's basic services and still develop its own special style,

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To ensure expansion an enthusiastic, committed *intrapreneur* has that one person who services of the enterprise concept of a *social intrapreneur* a successful project

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Handling Resistance

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To ensure expansion of a project, effective managers identify and select an enthusiastic, committed staff member to champion the assignment.¹⁷ The term *intrapreneur* has been coined in the business world to reflect the idea that one person should be held accountable for developing products and services of the enterprise.¹⁸ Human service organizations can adopt this same concept of a *social intrapreneur* or champion who zealously works to spread a successful project throughout the organization.¹⁹

Successful pilot projects can also be expanded through just-in-time training programs for staff. The purpose of the training is not to provide general information lectures but to offer specific skills training through role-playing or simulations for those who must learn new behavior patterns.²⁰ Frequently, the training is provided in a series of sessions over time so that staff can practice their new skills and share problems they are having in implementing the change.

As an effective manager, you should help staff invest in the new project by describing how services can be improved and, if appropriate, how the staff themselves can benefit. Then, too, in selling a new project or procedure, be careful not to disparage current methods, because to do so may discourage those who feel positively about the current mode of operation. Finally, allow time for people to adjust to the change. People have gotten comfortable with the status quo; they will need time to develop new attitudes and new patterns of behavior.²¹

In summary, initiating and expanding pilot projects in an organization requires an interesting balancing act. On the one hand, top management must be committed to change, for it is they who communicate the organization's values and set the implementation process in motion. On the other hand, expansion of the project must have the support of, and a sense of ownership by, those involved in implementing it. Both management and staff must be involved in the process of change in such a way that all staff feel dedicated to following through and implementing it.²² The challenge, then, is to work at finding the right balance so that everyone feels a common commitment.

Handling Resistance to Change

Resistance to change in an organization alerts managers that a problem may exist. Even if staff are involved in the planning process, some may be reluctant to accept decisions that require them to change. The more fundamental and extensive the change, the greater the possibility that staff will lose something of value, such as stature, power, or employment. Moreover, if they misunderstand or misperceive change, they are likely to be resistant. A decision, for example, to allow staff to have flexible hours can cause them

to become angry if they interpret it to mean they may be required to work weekends. Even positive and well-intentioned decisions for change can invite negative reactions if they are not fully explained.

Resistance is also likely to emerge because of differing perspectives of work demands. What management sees as a positive alteration in procedures may be considered by staff to be uprooting their current tasks and to be an intrusion into their work style. For example, a new administrative request for additional client information may be quite useful in documenting the need for expanded services. To management this makes sense, but to staff this request may be one more imposition on what they believe is an already overloaded schedule. If it is not possible to reprioritize their responsibilities, then management should at least acknowledge the new burden placed on staff.

In making a major decision, therefore, anticipate possible resistance so you can respond appropriately. Staff, for example, might feel ill-equipped to handle new data analysis responsibilities, and they may need special training before the decision is implemented. If the decision requires the development of different relationships or reassignment to new settings, then build in special support efforts to ease the transition. If the change will cause staff to lose status, then renewed efforts at building self-esteem, such as special recognition ceremonies, may be necessary.²³

Before implementing change, ask: "How are staff likely to perceive the change, and how can we communicate our understanding of their situation during the change process?" In tuning in to staff concerns, it is important to identify who is complaining. Certain staff typically want to vent their concerns, in which case it is important to provide a sympathetic ear. There may, however, be appropriate and immediate cause for staff concern, requiring a special response.

In periods of austerity, when human service organizations are under severe budgetary constraints, tremendous demands are likely to be made on staff to "do more with less." Staff are being laid off, and the remaining staff are asked to assume more responsibilities, including conducting more billable interview hours and writing reports. In times of fiscal pressures, managers must step up their interactions with staff, provide them with more training, and help them reorient their priorities. It is also a time to express understanding for the new demands that staff experience, while simultaneously conveying that they have to meet production expectations.

Staff may certainly resist if they do not understand the purpose of the change. They must understand the rationale for the change and have confidence that the proposal is well thought out and that problems will be addressed. Staff need to know what will happen, who will do it, when it will take place, and how it will happen.²⁴ Be up front with them about any difficulties they are likely to encounter. A request to modify reporting procedures, for example, will receive more acceptance if staff understand that decision makers will be able to use the information to identify aggregate needs for funders.

The degree of commitment in the change. A new approach of the organization counseling approach, if the curriculum is resulting in dissatisfaction staff may be motivated when the forces of change. Even when resistance exert their influence things is not possible.

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Assessing Risk

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The degree of organizational investment of time, energy, and personal commitment in the status quo will affect the extent to which staff may resist change. A new approach to treatment may be difficult to implement because much of the organization's funding and staff training have gone into current counseling approaches. Staff have a stake in preserving their investment. Of course, if the current mode of operation is not achieving positive results or is resulting in dissatisfaction on the part of clients or funding bodies, then staff may be more amenable to proposed changes. Effective managers spot when the forces pushing for change are stronger than those resisting change. Even when resistance is strong, however, effective managers are prepared to exert their influence based on the conviction that the current way of doing things is not producing sufficient results.

Sometimes it is wise *not* to implement a plan because staff strongly oppose it. Effective managers tune in to why staff are challenging the change. There is, to be sure, a certain timing to decisions, and the wisest course when in a quandary may be to delay until a more appropriate time. To use a football analogy, you would "punt." If staff are resisting a plan, there may be good reasons to delay implementation procedures. Rather than force a premature decision on them, allow enough time to pass so that new information surfaces or different circumstances arise that could soften their resistance.

Perhaps when you encounter strong resistance, instead of fighting it, you need to draw upon its energy source. In the sport of judo, you learn to use the strength of your opponent by taking advantage of a proper leverage point. In organizations you can ask complainers to come up with their own suggestions. Their negative energy can be turned into positive suggestions as they become partners in resolving the problem.

Assessing Risk Factors in New Projects

In the business world, before purchasers buy a business, they first examine in detail the performance and financial structure of the proposed deal. This is called conducting "due diligence." The same concept can apply to undertaking human service projects to determine the degree of exposure to risk and assessing the potential for success. Consider the following risk factors:²⁵

- *Staff skills* include whether the staff have the proper skills to undertake the new project, how well the team works together, and their readiness to take on the new challenge.
- *The culture of the organization* fosters a high level of commitment to undertake projects designed to improve service to clients.
- *The feasibility of the project* is based on whether the conditions (e.g., funding, staff, skills, client needs) exist that would permit it to replicate a project that has been successful elsewhere.

- *Level of capitalization* includes both basic start-up funds and the ability to continue funding beyond the initial period.
- *Changes in the marketplace or in public policy* involve assessing shifts in clients' use of services or in the availability of funding through changes in legislation.
- *The risk of mission drift* can be of central concern for the organization that goes after funding regardless of whether the new project fits within the organization's mission. The organization must be mindful that the new project does not redirect the organization away from its central purpose.

Conducting a risk analysis may temper the initial enthusiasm for a project that the organization is contemplating. It is far better, however, to be aware of the downside risks before embarking on a program, than to discover them after the program is underway.

Contingency Planning

Effective managers assume that certain events can get in the way of implementing plans as originally conceived. Contingency planning imagines the unlikely. By thinking of the range of possibilities in advance, you may be able to gain mastery over them should they occur.

Suppose, for example, you are experiencing an influx of new clients needing service. Staff are already overtaxed. To meet your obligations, you have applied for additional funding and a decision is pending. Among your contingency plans could be the following:

Plan A: If you receive less funding than hoped for, you could consider hiring paraprofessionals working under close supervision.

Plan B: If the funding request is rejected, you could determine the reasons and be prepared to reapply.

Plan C: If expanded funding continues to be unavailable from this one source, you could consider an aggressive fundraising campaign.

Plan D: If, after reapplying, you are again rejected, you could consider either cutting staff or reducing salaries.

Plan E: If no funding is available, you could restrict the number of clients and redirect unserved persons to other agencies.

Plan F: If new funding is not possible, you could consider an innovative way of working with clients that achieves results at lower costs, such as group counseling sessions or telephone conferences.

As can be seen from this illustration, contingency planning helps managers develop a discipline for walking through a situation to prepare for possible

events that could hinder the implementation of contingency plans. Managers should fully give attention to these possibilities.

Before you embark on a project, ask: What political leadership will be required? What staff or resource commitments are needed? What ground? Which organizational structure? Sometimes a colleague's objective critique of the plan is initially explosive situations.

Decisions that delay implementation because they give rise to problems. The reality is that just as you identify problems are anticipated, you focus attention on solving them before they become crises.

Contingency planning anticipates an opponent's moves and prepares an offensive. You cannot afford to lose sight of the need for contingency planning requires you to anticipate every move. Unlike a chess player who resides in an "opponent's mind," you must have adequate staff training and resources to be on guard for unexpected developments.

Effective managers anticipate "what-if" scenarios. For example, you would anticipate "What if it rains on the day of the event?" to answer inquiries about contingencies. If you do, you will have taken necessary precautions.²⁶

Thus contingency planning is done before they occur; it is anticipated, and under supervision, you respond to unexpected developments. However, the key, however, is that you anticipate risks by anticipating contingencies.

Attention to detail in contingency planning anticipates specific contingencies and the likelihood that plans will be disrupted.

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events that could have an impact on the organization. In fact, a special form of contingency planning is called "fail-safe" analysis, in which you purposefully give attention to those possibilities that could cause your plan to fail.

Before you embark on your program, search for potential mine fields: What political leader or board member or staff could torpedo the idea? What staff or resource constraints could keep the program from getting off the ground? Which organizations must cooperate if the program is to succeed? Sometimes a colleague outside of the organization can be asked to give an objective critique or even serve as the "devil's advocate" to ferret out potentially explosive situations.

Decisions that do not allow for the possibility of glitches are dangerous ones because they give managers the false sense that nothing can go wrong. The reality is that plans have a low probability of succeeding unless major problems are anticipated and addressed. Fail-safe contingency planning focuses attention on possible problem areas and gets you to think about solving them before they occur.

Contingency planning is like a game of chess. You have to anticipate your opponent's moves and consider protecting your flank, even as you take the offensive. You cannot be so concentrated on moving ahead with your plans that you lose sight of where you might be vulnerable. As in chess, contingency planning requires your constant assessment of the potential consequences of every move. Unlike a game of chess, the forces that can unravel a plan may not reside in an "opponent" but in more amorphous forces, such as the lack of adequate staff training. The point of the chess metaphor is to encourage you to be on guard for unexpected possibilities even as you are moving forward.

Effective managers encourage contingency planning by stimulating "what if ..." scenarios or questions. In a foster home recruitment drive, for example, you would ask, "What if recruitment materials don't come on time? What if it rains on the day of the promotional event? What if staff are unable to answer inquiries?" Of course, these things may not happen, but if they do, you will have thought about them in advance and taken the proper precautions.²⁶

Thus contingency planning helps to anticipate and thus prevent problems before they occur; it is proactive. Obviously, not all events can be anticipated, and under some circumstances, you want to have the flexibility to respond to unexpected opportunities. The advantage of proactive planning, however, is that you can minimize or neutralize the possibility of downside risks by anticipating how you will deal with them.

Working Out the Details of a Plan

Attention to detail is a prerequisite for implementing a successful project. By anticipating specific outcomes as much as possible, you increase the likelihood that plans will be carried out properly. Even so, planning involves

some degree of speculation; therefore, be prepared to revise even the most well-thought-out plans.²⁷

To systematically structure the implementation phase, it is useful to think of major activities and specific tasks. Major activities can be completed within a specified time period and include the following elements:

- Those essential for achieving an objective
- Those that result in one identifiable product, such as a report, a meeting, or completion of a major assignment
- Those that occur either in sequence or simultaneously with other activities

Tasks are specific jobs required to accomplish a major activity. Feeding into a major activity, tasks are usually achievable over a few days or weeks by specified individuals or units of the organization. Although spelling out tasks can sometimes be time-consuming and tedious, the process more readily ensures completing major activities and implementing proper actions. Moreover, effective managers use the opportunity of programming the work plan to determine whether adequate resources are available to properly complete the job or whether resources should be redeployed from low- to high-priority endeavors. If there later appears to be a lack of progress in achieving a major activity, managers can more readily pinpoint the specific problem that led to the breakdown.

Implementing Task Assignments

Two approaches can be considered in specifying tasks: (a) reverse-order planning and (b) forward-sequence planning.²⁸

Reverse Order Planning. In reverse-order planning, the organization begins with the final result to be achieved and identifies the tasks that feed into activities by reviewing the question, "What must we do just before reaching our final result, and then what needs to be done before that, and before that, and so forth?" until the beginning point is reached. For example, in organizing a staff speakers' bureau, the process of reverse order might include the following tasks:

- Promote speaking engagements (last task)
- Train speakers (fourth task)
- Prepare speakers' kits (third task)
- Recruit volunteer speakers (second task)
- Plan training sessions (first task)

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Forward Sequence Planning. In forward-sequence planning, the organization begins with what it considers to be the appropriate first set of tasks and then asks, "What should we do next, and what after that, and so forth?" until reaching the end result.

Whether an organization uses the reverse-order or forward-sequence planning approach, it is important to consider what preparation will be necessary to complete each task. In reality, an organization would combine reverse-order with forward-sequence planning. That is, the planning group would consider by what date they want to achieve a particular result and then review all the tasks they need to complete prior to that deadline. If the predominate approach is reverse-order planning, planners would employ forward-sequence planning (and vice versa) to double-check that no task has been omitted.

Timeline Chart. The implementation process requires that controls and reporting procedures be developed to determine the rate of progress compared with the original implementation schedule. The process pinpoints responsibility and identifies reporting dates. By establishing accountability for tasks within a time period, you develop a warning system that alerts you when you are not on schedule.

A timeline chart (sometimes referred to as a *Gantt chart*) is useful for implementing decisions and projects because it provides a visual overview of what needs to be done, who needs to do it, and within what specific time frame it should be accomplished.²⁹

A timeline illustrates how various tasks should be subsumed under major activities in a comprehensible, easy-to-construct format. The chart clarifies the beginning and ending points projected for each task and shows at a glance what efforts must be made within a specific time period. For example, in Figure 4.2, certain major tasks in the public relations activity must be underway in July and August. The chart also pinpoints accountability by designating the person responsible and, if appropriate, members of the team. By referring to a timeline chart, you can determine on a continuous basis whether you are on schedule and reaching anticipated milestones.

By June, for example, were you able to formulate a plan? By September are public relations materials completed? By October are staff prepared? These milestones allow you to determine whether you are on course. If not, then you would modify your efforts to get back on course or consider making *go/no-go* decisions about whether to proceed with the project.³⁰

The timeline chart also provides a visual sense of the efforts that must be undertaken in sequence and focuses attention on when organizational resources need to be expended. In the chart (Figure 4.2), it appears that the summer months will be demanding on certain staff. If this is normally a heavy vacation period, then seeing the demands of the project during June, July, and August may require adjustments in the schedule.

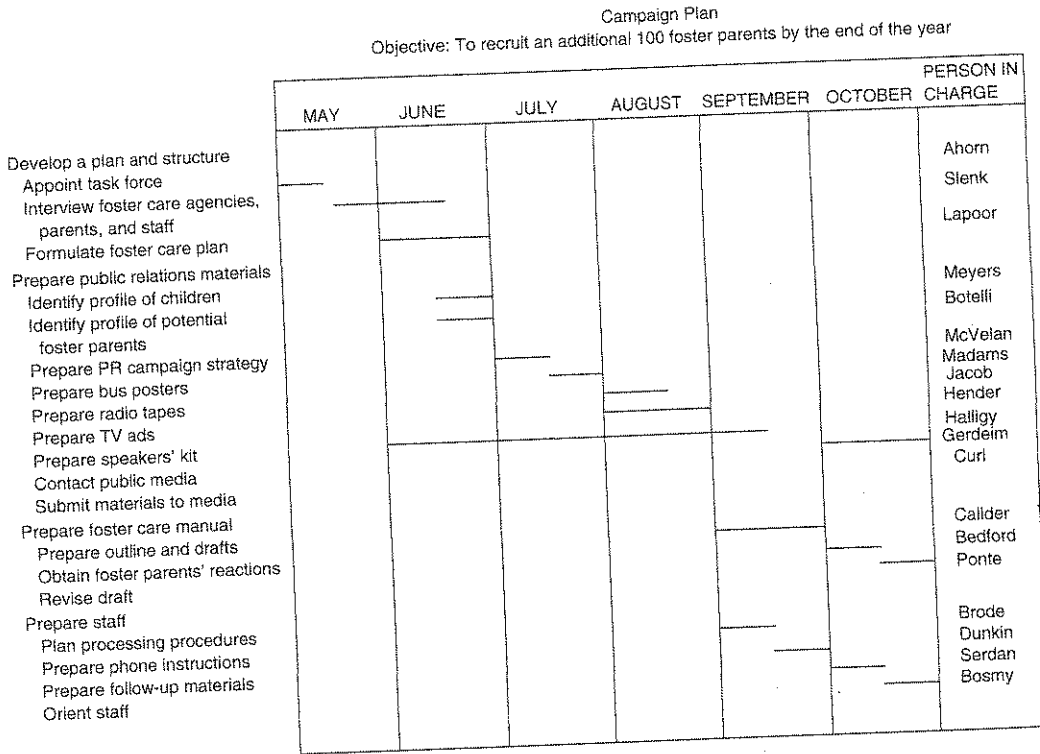


Figure 4.2 Timeline Chart

Questions for Discussion

1. Create a hypothetical agency (e.g., working with high-risk adolescents or mentally challenged adults, or socialization for seniors). What would you determine to be the:
 - Mission statement?
 - Goals?
 - Objectives?
 - Programs?
2. How would you distinguish the risk, target, and impact populations in connection with your organization?
3. What examples can you give of impact, service, product, and operational objectives?
4. Suppose you were creating an agency that provides counseling services to substance abusing mothers who agree to discontinue drugs in order to keep their children from being taken from them. Create a goal statement and three objective statements related to the goal.

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5. Consider developing plans for placing mentally ill persons in the job market. What kinds of problems could you anticipate and what contingency planning could you develop?
6. Suppose you were asked to implement a foster grandparents program. After identifying a dozen tasks, how would you organize them under activity categories and prepare a 12-week timeline?
7. Consider a past or potential project. What major activities and tasks could be prepared in a timeline chart?
8. What projects have been (or could be) implemented in your organization?

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Once an organization has defined its mission and strategy (tactics). Much of the work involves identifying problems and making decisions. These decisions are often qualitative, and multifaceted. Hence the process of problem solving requires their resolutions made through careful analysis and judgment. Hence the process of problem solving requires keen judgment, intuition, and creativity. Although there are many ways to approach this, it is useful to consider a summary of the process summarized in Figure 5.1.

The term *analysis* denotes the process of breaking down a problem into its constituent parts. Problem analysis thus involves identifying the key elements or segments. Good problem analysis involves making statements as “staff meetings” or “poor communication” to describe the nature of the problem. It also involves identifying the relationships between goals and objectives, determining the best possible, determining the best perspectives, and identifying the best solutions.

Identifying and Examining the Problem

A problem can be defined as an existing condition and a desired state. Managers can use to identify and examine the problem.

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Problem Solving

Once an organization has determined its strategic plan, which includes its mission and goals, it can concentrate on daily administration (tactics). Much of this day-to-day management is focused on solving problems and making decisions. Often problems are complex, ambiguous, cumulative, and multifaceted. Sometimes their causes cannot be fully known and their resolutions may require the involvement of many different participants. Hence the problem-solving process requires an effective manager's keen judgment, intuition, and an understanding of the dynamics of a situation. Although there are no cookbook solutions, no simple formulas, it is useful to consider a series of steps to guide the problem-solving process, as summarized in Figure 5.1.

Step 1: Analyzing the Problem

The term *analysis* denotes separating a whole into its component parts. Problem analysis thus entails breaking generalized concerns into delineated segments. Good problem solving requires moving beyond such generalized statements as “staff morale is low,” or “absenteeism is too high,” or “there is poor communication between departments” to achieve greater clarity about the nature of the problem. It involves identifying and examining discrepancies between goals and actual results, specifying the problem as clearly as possible, determining the boundaries of the problem, clarifying different perspectives, and identifying insidious problems.

Identifying and Examining Discrepancies

A problem can be defined as a felt need or a discrepancy between an existing condition and one that is desired.¹ One of the major approaches managers can use to identify organizational problems is to determine

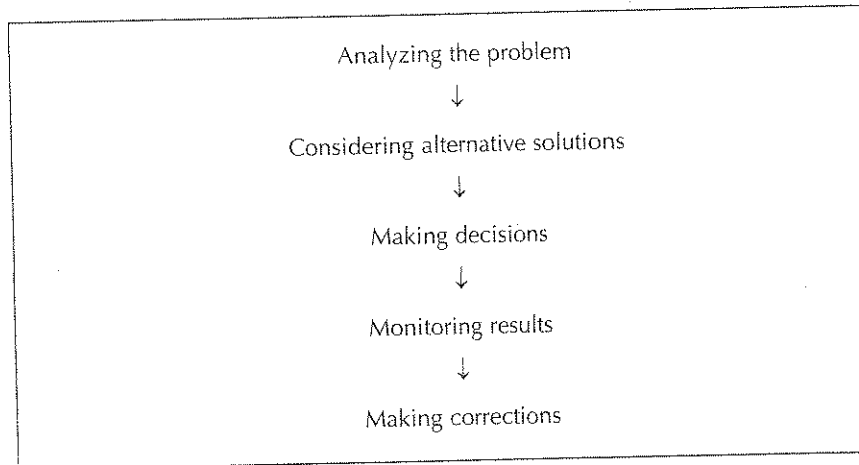


Figure 5.1 Steps to Guide the Problem-Solving Process

whether a situation or circumstance is preventing the organization from achieving its mission. Always focus on this first; otherwise, you may become trapped in a flurry of activities and problem-solving endeavors that may, in the long run, detract from your fundamental purpose. Effective managers give concentrated attention to those issues and problems that primarily affect the organization's mission and goals. Look for discrepancies between what the organization must achieve and what actually occurs.

Establishing measurable objectives and then determining later whether they have been achieved alerts managers to whether a problem exists. For example, in an adult training workshop for the disabled, if your objective of having 80% of clients function independently within one year is not met, you know a problem exists that must be addressed. Similarly, a problem becomes obvious, for example, when a unit of the organization does not meet its predetermined objective of contacting 125 clients in a given month. The fact that the unit is reaching only 85 clients should signal concern because of the gap between the predetermined benchmark and actual performance.

Specifying the Problem

Even if concrete objectives have not been established, staff or management may feel a vague sense of uneasiness. Something is wrong, but, at least initially, there is a lack of clarity about what the problem is. Someone might ask, for example, "Why aren't we serving more clients?" A general consensus might be that more clients could be served, but ambiguity exists about whether "the problem" is fewer clients in general or fewer clients from a particular geographic area or income level. Does "the problem" reside in the clients—something operating within them or their situation? Do they have

difficulty in coming to a decision or have their perceptions distorted. By taking the time to think through the problem, you can avoid premature and impulsive decisions. Remember the old adage: *shoot, aim.*

To analyze a general problem, first determine when the problem occurred. Furthermore, strive to identify the cause of the problem. If, for example, you are trying to determine whether the problem is a morale issue, or limited resources, or limited

Trying to identify the cause of the problem, reality, a cause-effect analysis can be helpful. You could analyze, for example, whether the problem is caused by feelings of isolation that is built on poor communication. If communication occurs, the cause-effect analysis can be an oversight. If the problem is attempted to diagnose the problem, you can get feedback that your "solution" may concentrate on another problem.

In analyzing a problem, you can use examples or critical incidents. If the problem is vague, by providing examples, you begin to get a clearer picture of the problem. By determining the nature of the problem, you can

Determining the Best Solution

By defining the problem, you can determine what it is—and what it is not. This is a good procedure. By providing a precise understanding of the problem, you have a statement of the problem. The danger of not putting the problem in precise terms is that the problem remains vague and ambiguous.

In your problem-solving state, you can define the problem-solving process. For example, the question, "How can we improve attendance?" precisely what is meant by the word "attendance"—mean by *absenteeism*—is not clear. It could mean attendance, or unexcused absence, or unexcused absence.

Typically, problem definition is a process of cloaking the real problem.

difficulty in coming to the agency because of changes in public transportation, or have their perceptions changed about their safety in coming to the agency? By taking the time to obtain facts in any problem situation, you can avoid premature and impulsive solutions, or what is captured in the phrase *ready, shoot, aim*.

To analyze a generalized problem more specifically, be clear about exactly when the problem occurs, who is affected by it, and where it takes place. Furthermore, strive to understand the causes and underlying conditions of the problem. If, for example, you note that absenteeism among staff has increased, determine whether the problem is pervasive, and therefore indicative of a morale issue, or limited to a few staff, requiring disciplinary considerations.

Trying to identify the cause of a problem can be exceedingly difficult. In reality, a cause-effect chain of relationships can exist for any problem. One could analyze, for example, that absenteeism is caused by low morale, which is caused by feelings of being ignored, which in turn is caused by an organization that is built on an authoritarian structure in which little two-way communication occurs. To isolate one simple cause contributing to one single effect can be an oversimplification. You may not know until after you have attempted to diagnose a problem, formulated a response to it, and obtained feedback that your "solution" is not working. You then may need to concentrate on another possible solution.

In analyzing problems, an inductive approach of identifying concrete examples or critical incidents can be useful, especially if the nature of the problem is vague. By pinpointing under what specific situations the problem occurs, you begin to get a handle on it. You move from specific incidents to determining the nature of the problem.

Determining the Boundaries of the Problem

By defining the problem, you set boundaries around it; you determine what it is—and what it is not. Preparing a written problem statement is a good procedure. By putting your thoughts in writing, you develop more precise understanding of the problem and discipline your thinking. In addition, you have a statement that you can refer back to and revise if necessary. The danger of not putting your problem in writing is that your thoughts may remain vague and amorphous and hinder the problem-solving process.

In your problem statement, define key terms so that those also engaged in the problem-solving process have a common frame of reference. The simple question, "How can we reduce staff absenteeism?" requires defining precisely what is meant by the term *reduce*—from what to what—and what we mean by *absenteeism*—as it refers, for example, to sick leave, conference attendance, or unexcused absences.

Typically, problem descriptions tend to be narrowed too quickly, thereby cloaking the real problem. In conducting a problem analysis, determine

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whether a particular manifest problem is an exception or whether it reflects a larger issue. Does a particular problem reflect an idiosyncratic situation or a more general pattern? If it is unique, then pragmatic, expedient approaches may be used. If it is a general problem, then more fundamental change may be required. To treat a general situation as if it were a series of unique events can be a serious miscalculation.²

If you defined the problem, for example, as "staff are taking too many sick leave days," you limit your exploratory process and may not consider whether organizational policies may in fact be the real problem. "How can we deal with excessive absenteeism?" may be a better way to formulate the issue. In defining a problem, your goal should be to clarify what will be included in the problem's parameters and to decide, at least for the time being, what will *not* be part of your initial exploration. Determining the problem's boundaries moves it from an unfocused and ambiguous concern to a more targeted focus of attention.

In any process of formulating a problem, however, be aware that you may need to redefine it, depending on your focus. The reason for defining the boundaries of a problem and devoting so much time to its analysis is that by doing so you determine the nature of potential solutions. If you see the problem as absenteeism among many staff, that will lead you down one path. If you have narrowed it to unexcused absences on the part of a small number of staff who are unenthused by their work, that will lead you down another. Before you consider any solution, you will want to be quite certain that you have analyzed the problem properly.

Clarifying Different Perspectives

In any discussion, participants invariably come to the table with their own perspectives. There is an old fable of six blind men touching different parts of an elephant. Each one senses the elephant in a different way based on the part he touches. So too with problem analysis—people will sense a problem based on their individual experience with it.³ Imagine this kind of group discussion on why an agency is not achieving its objective of reaching its predetermined quota of clients per month:

- Employee A: "The problem is that I schedule appointments, but my clients continually cancel, and so I have time on my hands."
- Employee B: "The problem is that clients do not find it easy to get to our agency from where they live. Public transportation has deteriorated, and unless clients have a car, they are not able to keep their appointments."
- Supervisor: "The problem is that clients cannot schedule appointments when we're open. When I have followed up with people

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who have missed appointments, they tell me that if we
 were open evenings and weekends, they would find it
 easier to leave their children with someone."

Administrator: "The problem is that too many staff seem to be absent on
 Mondays or Fridays and this is affecting our client count.
 It would be higher if staff were more available on those
 days."

Each one has a different perspective of *the problem*, and therefore each
 has an approach about how it should be analyzed and eventually addressed.
 If, for example, Employee B's perspective is correct, then one solution may
 be to design ways to deliver services to clients outside the agency building.
 If, however, the focus turns to the administrator's perspective, then reducing
 staff absences becomes a priority. Because perspective is so influential in
 determining both problems and their solutions, it is crucial that the various
 perspectives be articulated as explicitly as possible. This should be done by
 asking participants to freely convey their different perspectives in an open
 discussion. As consensus on the problem develops, those with different views
 will decide whether or not to accept the problem as it is eventually defined.⁴

In all organizations, various individuals and groups are likely to have
 vested interests—that is, issues they consider vital to their own functioning.
 These vested interests certainly influence their perspectives. Managers, for
 example, are likely to focus on efficiency problems, whereas these may be of
 little concern to employees. Fringe benefits are likely to be of special concern
 to employees, whereas meeting legal requirements will be of paramount concern
 to management. Because of these different perspectives, it is always
 desirable in formulating the problem to ask, "Who owns which part of the
 problem?" The ownership of the problem greatly influences who wants to
 do something about it, that is, who owns the potential solution.

Identifying Insidious Problems

Sometimes problems lurk beneath the surface, accumulating and being
 ignored over time until finally they explode. We can use several analogies to
 describe this phenomenon: small waves forming in the distance, culminating in
 a tidal wave that capsizes the boat; or a small leak in the roof going undetected
 for many years, finally resulting in its collapse; or a symptomless cancer doing
 its damage to the body. These insidious problems are similar in that they seem
 too small to require attention, but unless detected early, they can cause great
 damage. In organizations insidious problems can also occur, as when, for
 example, staff who are treated like machines eventually find a way to com-
 municate their grievances through strikes or disinvestment in their work.

Occasionally, a manifest problem identified initially may be a symptom
 of a much larger latent problem. The high rate of absenteeism involving a

significant segment of the staff may, on further investigation, reflect a sense that staff feel exploited because they are not receiving their desired share of vacation days compared with the staff of other organizations. They may be using sick leave as a way of compensating for their feelings of exploitation. If this is so, then the more fundamental problem is how to deal with these feelings. Sometimes, too, it is the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back; that is, something appears small and insignificant but inexplicably causes an outburst of negative feeling. Only on review might one be able to trace the series of earlier episodes that contributed to what appears to be an inappropriate reaction. Had the problem been identified while it was minor, the later, more damaging crisis might have been avoided. Clearly, "small" problems should be handled immediately.

Step 2: Considering Alternative Solutions

In any attempt to address a problem, it is important to develop and then critique alternative solutions. It is essential to realize that any action we take, any decision we make, is only one possibility out of a multitude of options.⁵ This concept is especially useful for those managers who are prone to think their decision is the only pathway to a solution. In the event that one of the paths leads us astray, we have others on which to fall back. Considering alternatives also sharpens our thinking for the approach we finally select. Frequently, it is the second or third or tenth idea that can help solve the problem, not the first. In examining how to solve a problem, the following precepts can serve as a guide.

Developing Criteria

Problem-solving criteria should be established as *benchmarks* against which to compare alternatives. They should encompass the organization's limits and expectations and likely vary according to the problem under consideration. For example, with regard to a problem of staff going outside the building for lunch and thus taking extended lunch hours, the "solution" of in-house lunch arrangements might have to meet the following criteria: (a) annual cost to organization under \$1,000, (b) tasty and well-prepared food, (c) cost to staff limited to the hourly rate of the lowest-paid employee, and (d) effective pest and insect control in new lunch area. The decision to use a lunch truck may emerge after comparing various alternatives.

Making Ideas Concrete

As you consider various possibilities, think in concrete, future-oriented terms by asking the question, "Suppose we were to select a particular

approach, what would the future, you discuss proposed ideas to see if a food service idea differs from workstatic and from workstatic consider the demands to walk through the limitations prior to r

Making abstract considering alternatives served, you determine how the information is being too abstractly in period of time. Walk path through your system it is like to linger in the professionals who sense how the organization how the operations are may be in a better position decisions.

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approach, what would we expect one year from now?" By anticipating the future, you discipline your thinking to walk through one or more of the proposed ideas to see how they would play out in reality. Recall the in-house food service idea discussed above. Actually visualize the flow of traffic to and from workstations; imagine staff using the lunch area in the wintertime; consider the demands that would be made on your facility. By taking time to walk through the idea, you gain an appreciation of its possibilities and limitations prior to making a decision.

Making abstract ideas or plans concrete is especially important in considering alternatives for serving clients. By visualizing how clients would be served, you determine how they would be routed through your system and how the information flow should occur. One of the best antidotes to thinking too abstractly in the decision process is to go on the firing line for a period of time. Walk in the same door that your clients do and follow their path through your system. Sit where they sit for a while to get a feel for what it is like to linger in the waiting room. Hear their conversations and observe the professionals who serve them. Call the office as if you were a client to sense how the organization responds. Get out in the field and actually see how the operations are working. Through this kind of direct experience, you may be in a better position to judge the value of your current and proposed decisions.

Considering Trade-Offs

Every plan, however good, probably has inherent limitations. In your zeal to convince others of the efficacy of one approach over another, you may tend to overlook limitations or negative consequences. To combat these blind spots, build into your thinking the concept of trade-offs to identify the disadvantages as well as advantages of any course of action. For example, your plan to reach out to clients by sending staff to their homes can greatly improve contacts with those who formerly did not come in for interviews. But this plan may reduce the total number of clients served in a given period. The concept of trade-offs means accepting that every benefit has a cost. Considering alternatives is a matter of weighing whether the advantages or disadvantages of one are greater than those of other options. This probing injects a greater degree of reality into the problem-solving process and forces you to look at the downside of even a good idea before you make a final determination.

The word *satisficing* means there may be no one best solution to a given problem. The word was coined to convey the idea of finding solutions that both satisfy and suffice. Furthermore, it suggests that the search for an ideal but unattainable solution should be discontinued if a reasonable one—perhaps having some inherent limitations—can be found.⁶

The concept of *satisficing* decisions can help the effective manager make imperfect decisions in an imperfect world. An old axiom, "The ideal is the

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enemy of the good," conveys that waiting to arrive at a perfect solution may prevent us from considering other worthwhile ideas. We can accept the reality that even good decisions have their inherent limitations and therefore not be immobilized into thinking we have to make decisions that will have to satisfy everyone. For example, a decision to shift staffing to serve a selected group of clients means that others will receive less service. Moreover, if we know our decisions are satisficing, we can experiment with courses of action that, if they do not work out, can be abandoned and replaced by other alternatives under consideration.⁷ Agonizing over alternatives can result in indecision, which can be worse than making a less than perfect decision.⁸ In short, satisficing decisions help us to overcome paralysis by analysis.

Of course, in making satisficing decisions, effective managers should not be blinded to the possibility that a proposed plan may not fully or adequately solve a problem. Some decisions will provide only interim or ameliorative relief. Because of resource limitations or other constraints, they may not entirely correct or prevent problems.⁹ Managers must live with this reality; by recognizing the temporary nature of the intervention, they can be prepared to seek more substantive solutions.

Step 3: Making Decisions

If problem solving encompasses formulating a problem statement and examining potential alternatives, then decision making is the process of choosing among alternatives and implementing an approach to deal with the problem. Perhaps this distinction between problem solving and decision making is artificial. If there is any value in the demarcation between them, it is that the former implies a probing phase; the latter, an action phase. Clearly, one flows into the other.

Making Risk-Taking Decisions Prudently

Most decisions involve some degree of risk because their impact cannot fully be appreciated until they are actually implemented and because no one can predict the future with complete accuracy. Given that uncertainty is inherent in risk-taking decisions, the possibility of failure always exists. The following questions can help minimize risk:

1. *Does your decision increase something of value?* Ask whether the service you are thinking of adding is available elsewhere in the community and therefore not needed. If it already exists, can you do it better and with fewer resources? If so, then the decision may be to go forward; if not, then the idea may need to be abandoned.

2. *Is the decision and at the low level decisions should be made where the most important is confidence-building? Staff can then make the best decisions.¹⁰*
3. *Can the decision be made out, it can be made. For example, the staff from the management are most likely to be the period of tireless diligent facilitator—best—or who allows staff to make the best decisions.*
4. *Are the potential consequences of such a decision affected by the situation. Should the decision be made because superintending to accommodate to alleviate tension? Results are not undone. In situations against its own interest it may therefore be appropriate.*
5. *Can commitment to the decision allow making the decision. This avoids the situation where it can succeed in the care program for your community before deterring the decision.*
6. *Are you prepared to take the next step in the decision-making process? Implementing a good intention into action.¹¹*

perfect solution may not exist. Managers can accept the reality of the situation and therefore not insist on a solution that will have to be imposed; to serve a selected group of people. Moreover, if we evaluate different courses of action based on the alternatives offered by other alternatives, the decision can result in an imperfect decision.⁸ In such a situation, by analysis, managers should not insist on a solution that is not fully or adequately defined. If the alternatives are not clearly defined or ameliorative alternatives are not available, they may not be able to deal with this reality; by the time a decision can be prepared to

make a statement and examine the decision-making process of choosing an alternative to deal with the problem. In such a situation, the decision-making process is often flawed, and it is that the decision is often flawed. Clearly, one flows

and because their impact cannot be predicted and because no one can be certain that uncertainty is always present. The

time? Ask whether the decision is available elsewhere in the organization. If a decision already exists, can you do anything? The decision may be to be abandoned.

2. *Is the decision of such minimal consequence that it can be made quickly and at the lowest echelon possible within the organization?* Lightweight decisions should be made quickly so that staff can move on to more important issues. The effective manager helps staff take on small-scale, confidence-building decisions and allows them to make small mistakes. Staff can then grow in their capacity to deal with more significant decisions.¹⁰
3. *Can the decision be considered an experiment so that, if it works out, it can be developed and refined, but if not, it can be aborted?* For example, the organization makes a decision to provide services away from the main office, but you are not certain which locations clients are most likely to use even after you have conducted surveys. For a period of time, you might try using libraries, shopping malls, or religious facilities. After trying out different places, staff learn which are best—or whether none of them is suitable. The experimental approach allows staff to be open-minded before making a final decision.
4. *Are the potential negative consequences of a decision so great that such a decision should not be made?* Suppose productivity is being affected by interpersonal rivalry between two units in the organization. Should there be a major reorganization of staff and activities because supervisors are feuding with each other? A painful reorganization to accommodate a rivalry between two units may or may not relieve tensions. Once the reorganization has taken place, even if the results are much less than desired, the decision cannot easily be undone. In sum, you must weigh the benefits of a particular decision against its costs. Indeed, the costs may outweigh advantages and may therefore serve as a deterrent to making what seems like a more appropriate decision.
5. *Can commitments be made on an incremental basis?* By staging your commitments, you keep your options open as long as possible and allow making smaller, incremental investments over a long time frame. This avoids rushing into a process before you are certain whether or not it can succeed. Suppose, for example, you consider adding a day care program for 40 children to meet the needs of working mothers in your community. You would start off with, say, 10 to 15 children before determining whether to expand.
6. *Are you prepared to carry out the decision?* The most time-consuming step in the decision-making process is not making the decision, but implementing it. Unless a decision “degenerates into work” it is only a good intention. A good decision must be capable of being transformed into action.¹¹

7. *Do you have a workable exit strategy in the event that the organization is exposed to intolerable risks?* It is useful to develop go/no-go points in the course of developing a project. An exit strategy allows you to assess your risk exposure and cut your losses. This requires being prepared to walk away from a previously desired project even after you have invested considerable resources.¹²

Risk taking could have both minor and major consequences. Some decisions can be reversed; that is, if something goes wrong you can shift to another course of action without the organization or the clients suffering. These are risks that you can afford to take. Some risks, however, have great significance, financially or otherwise, and the action may not be reversible; the consequences could be felt for years to come. These are the decisions you must weigh most heavily. In your analysis, therefore, ask whether the downside risks are such that the organization could withstand them if things went wrong. When making high-risk decisions, effective managers seek input from trusted colleagues both inside and outside the organization to gain objectivity and differing perspectives.

Being Boldly Tentative

If this statement sounds contradictory, it is because decision makers must be both courageous and flexible with their decisions. To be bold means to go forward with plans that do not necessarily please everyone but are nevertheless viewed as proper after all positive and negative aspects of the decision have been considered. Compromises and half measures will not do. Being tentative, however, means having an outlook that is experimental and trying out ideas on a provisional or temporary basis to see if they will truly work.

Suppose, for example, you want to mount a program that requires three full-time staff members to organize and work with the residents of the community. You determine that without these outreach staff you are not likely to fully engage the residents, which could negatively affect the overall program. You might decide that one staff member instead of the required three would result in frustration and a sense of failure. Your decision would therefore be based either on embarking on the program with the appropriate staff or on delaying implementation until the proper staff are available. Resist the temptation to make an administrative decision that, in your estimation, is eventually bound to fail. It is better not to have started than to arouse expectations, leading to more frustration.

To be sure, some decisions are inherently difficult. Cutting unproductive programs or removing inefficient but likeable staff can produce painful reactions, but to have staff linger and drain resources may be a worse alternative. In this context, "biting the bullet" has special meaning. During the Civil War, when anesthesia was often in short supply, wounded soldiers

either had to undergo surgery or they were spreading through the air. Biting the bullet was a way to "bite the bullet" and endure the pain. It is an even more catastrophic assessment that the organization requires both intellectual and emotional courage.

Because of the fast pace of change, when complete information about the future is unavailable, you must take calculated risks and learn to recognize these failures.

There is something about decisions that are subject to major consequences, and the effects of a decision, in particular, prior to making a final decision, try things out, and then implement it. These decisions can be translated to a small scale to "work out" a bold venture.

Involving Staff in

An ancient Chinese proverb says, "Involve me, I will obey; do not involve me, I will rebel." Involving staff in decisions that affect their lives shows respect and understanding but also leads to better outcomes.

When staff are empowered, their self-esteem and confidence are increased and they are more committed to the organization. Staff have a say in decisions that affect their jobs in particular. In short, when staff are involved in the implementation process, the implementation is more successful because of authentic communication.¹³

Every effective manager involves staff and sees problems from their perspective. When faced with the high-stakes issue, the manager wrestles with the issue.

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either had to undergo amputation or lose their lives to the gangrene that was spreading through their limbs. During the surgical procedure, biting a bullet was a way to endure this painful experience. Hence, symbolically, "biting the bullet" has come to mean making a painful choice to avoid an even more catastrophic consequence. Your decision to act is based on your assessment that the benefits outweigh the costs and risks. Your decision requires both intellectual judgment and courage.

Because of the fast pace of change, managers are forced to make decisions when complete information is not available or when there is uncertainty about the future. Under these circumstances, managers and staff still need to take calculated risks that may result in failure. The best approach is to recognize these failures, respond promptly, and move forward.

There is something to be said for making tentative or preliminary decisions that are subject to modification. Because any alternative can have negative consequences, and because it is often impossible to anticipate the negative effects of a decision, it is useful to allow time for modifications and challenges prior to making a final selection. This requires a willingness to experiment, to try things out, and to allow staff and clients to react to an idea before fully implementing it. There is an aphorism, "The map is not the territory," which can be translated to mean that a plan, however well thought out, may not fully encompass the reality that it intends to reflect. Trying out ideas on a small scale to "work out the bugs" may be necessary before embarking on a bold venture.

Involving Staff in Decision Making

An ancient Chinese proverb states, "Tell me, I forget; show me, I remember; involve me, I understand." Involving staff in organizational problems or decisions that affect them and their performance not only enhances their understanding but also engages them so they become invested in a positive outcome.

When staff are empowered to participate in making decisions, their sense of self-esteem and competence becomes linked to accomplishments. When they are involved and have a stake in their work, they tend to feel enthusiastic about and committed to it. Effective managers recognize that when staff have a say in decisions affecting the work environment in general and their jobs in particular, the result is greater job involvement and satisfaction.¹³ In short, when staff have been part of the problem-solving process, the implementation process will flow quite naturally. Shared decisions work because of authentic collaboration.¹⁴

Every effective manager has had the experience of turning problems over to staff and seeing positive results emerge. For example, one manager concerned with the high rate of absenteeism asked the employee committee to wrestle with the issue. They came up with the idea of rewarding staff who had

fewer than three absences a year with an extra day's vacation. The overall agency record improved by 10%. As another example, managers in one agency who were concerned that clients were missing scheduled appointments formed a task force of outreach staff to explore possible solutions. After many discussions, the staff concluded that the agency should borrow a vehicle to transport clients three mornings a week from a nearby agency that needed its minivan only in the afternoons. Staff also agreed to be available on a rotating basis two nights each week to see clients who found it difficult to make day appointments.

Genuine staff engagement can exact a price from both management and employees. Supervisors may feel that traditional prerogatives are being undermined and that greater staff involvement in decision making dilutes their authority. Effective managers accept the trade-off of diminished control for increased staff involvement because employee ideas are needed to improve the quality, service, productivity, and efficiency of the organization.¹⁵ Another concern is that staff may have to invest considerable time in meetings that take them away from their regular assignments. In the long run, however, time invested in the process of work improvement can increase staff's ownership in the organization and commitment to be more productively engaged in their jobs. Japanese business managers have long been aware that the participatory decision-making process takes more time, but once decisions are made, implementation proceeds quickly because those who would carry out the decision have already been consulted.¹⁶ In the United States, both profit and nonprofit organizations are relying increasingly on task forces for engaging staff and implementing plans.

The director of a \$100 million organization whose mission is to improve the lives of those who are mentally challenged and have developmental disabilities has written this about the importance of staff involvement:

Based on my years of experience, the single most important element in the success of any organization is gaining, maintaining, and enhancing the investment of the participants in the accomplishment of the mission, goals, and objectives of the organization. I have learned through often bitter experience that simply "being in charge" is no guarantee of success. What I have found to be most effective in gaining improvements in effectiveness and efficiency is placing a greater share of the burden of responsibility for success upon the individual members of the organization.

The only way I know to accomplish this is to encourage people to "use their noodles" effectively by not presuming that either I or some other person in charge will have the right solution. In this way, everyone's hands are on the oars, so to speak, and our job as managers is to help guide the process by presenting enough valid information and support so that staff will raise pertinent questions and propose valid ideas. Of course, what one discovers along the way is that this requires

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a rather high level of knowledge and intelligence among the members, so it is necessary to be much more selective in the appointment of staff.

What typically happens if the process works right is that the atmosphere created or "culture" is one of responsibility to each other, to the mission of the organization, and to the public. Malingerers typically do not last very long in such an environment.¹⁷

Watching Out for Decision-Making Pitfalls

Making tough decisions is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges managers face. To improve their decision-making processes, managers should be aware of these flaws that may lead them astray: (1) clinging to the familiar, (2) overly justifying past decisions, (3) only seeking confirming evidence to support your case, and (4) framing issues poorly.¹⁸

Clinging to the Familiar. Managers, like most people, tend to base decisions on past information. For example, in estimating the number of clients to be served in the coming year, you may be unduly influenced by the number that you served the previous year, even though circumstances might have changed. Relying on old information may not necessarily be conducive to dealing with current realities. Therefore it is important to be open-minded in seeking information and opinions from a variety of sources to push your mind in fresh directions.

This flaw is also related to holding on to the status quo for decision making. It is safer to rely on the familiar than to take responsibility for trying something new that may be subject to criticism. In most organizations, particularly large bureaucratic ones, people are more likely to be sanctioned for doing something than for doing nothing. Omission is safer than commission. The consequence of standing still as the world moves forward is the cost of lost opportunities. Maintaining the status quo may be the best choice, but you do not want to choose it just because it is comfortable.

Defending Past Decisions. This flaw is based on making a choice and justifying it even when it is no longer valid. For example, you may have hired an employee and provided extensive training only to realize belatedly that you should not have hired that person in the first place. Making an investment of time and money in the incompetent employee is irrecoverable, but rather than dismiss the individual, you choose to live with your mistake. If you dismiss the poor performer, you may feel you will be perceived as having poor judgment. It may seem better to retain the employee, even though this decision compounds your earlier, faulty decision.

To deal with this mistake, it is helpful to accept that even the wisest of us makes errors in judgment. Develop the kind of organizational climate that allows people to acknowledge their mistakes and then move on. Identify

situations that are not working out. Accept that decisions made earlier, based on the information then at hand, may now require a reassessment.

Seeking Confirming Evidence. Because managers all have biases, they may tend to seek out “facts” that confirm their point of view, while avoiding data that contradicts it. The tendency is then to decide on a course of action and be convinced the position is right, based on information that supports it, while ignoring data that may challenge it. The remedy is to develop a mindset of seeking out data from a variety of sources and to encourage counter arguments. For many managers, the idea of playing out “On the one hand . . . On the other hand . . .” may cause them to feel an uncomfortable degree of ambiguity before making a final decision. This honest exploration, however, sharpens one’s thinking.

To understand better the tendency toward biased decision making, it is useful to distinguish two broad approaches involved in decision making: *advocacy* and *inquiry*.¹⁹ When managers take an advocacy perspective, they view decision making as a contest. They are passionate about their preferred solution, strive to persuade others, and downplay their weaknesses. They present data selectively and withhold relevant, conflicting information. They are out to make a compelling case, not to seek a balanced view.

By contrast, inquiry-focused managers seek a variety of options and remain open to alternative possibilities. The goal is not to persuade others to adopt a given point of view, but rather to come to an agreement on the best course of action. They rigorously question proposals and assumptions so intellectual sparring may be intense. Through intense exploration, disagreements are based on reason and not predeveloped biases.

The Flaw of Too Narrowly Framing the Question. A poorly framed issue can greatly affect decision making. If you ask the question, “How can we improve transportation for our clients so that they can arrive for their appointments?” you invite discussions around transportation. If, however, you frame the issue as, “How can we make our services more accessible to our clients?” you open up a series of possibilities, including the hours that your agency is open, the possibility of using your van to go where your clients are, and even the idea of decentralizing services. To avoid adverse effects of improperly framing the problem, consider reframing it in different ways. Examine, especially at the end of your reframing process, whether you might have come to a different solution if you reframed the question. When others on your staff make recommendations, explore whether the issue should be framed differently.

These common flaws in decision making reveal that perceptions and biases can influence choices. Being aware of these tendencies can result in your being reflective about your assumptions and disciplining your thinking so as to reduce errors in judgment.

The decision-making process can be flawed. The results of their decisions may not be what you may find that you intended. Staff can make mistakes. Successes will inevitably go wrong. Current reality can be different from what you intended.

As discussed in the previous section, you have objectives. These should be realistic. Make sure that their success is measurable. Compare intended results with actual results.

To ensure accountability, set standards for monitoring progress with respect to desired performance indicators. Make sure that the objective is being achieved.

This is no easy task. The outcomes of service delivery are often difficult to measure. Data analysis is often difficult. The extent to which the relationship through the progress made is often formidable. Demand for services is often high. Results are often one of the major factors in the success of the organization.

Recognizing the common flaws in performance measures, agree on a set of performance measures. Among these options:

1. Increasing the number of clients served.

Example: The number of clients served.

Example: Reducing the number of drug addicts.

Example: The number of clients who maintain independence.

2. Satisfaction of clients.

Example: The number of clients who are satisfied.

3. Improvement in the quality of services.

Example: Reducing the number of complaints.

Example: Shortening the wait time for services.

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Step 4: Monitoring Results

The decision-making process is not complete until managers and staff review the results of their efforts. In the course of carrying out activities and tasks, you may find that some actions can result in partial or even complete failures. Staff can make mistakes, errors in judgment can occur, and something will inevitably go wrong. Monitoring results is the best way to assess how current reality compares with plans made earlier.

As discussed in Chapter 4, monitoring results should be based on written objectives. These should be quantifiable or measurable in some clear way so that their success or failure can be reviewed. This helps the organization compare intended results with actual outcomes.

To ensure accountability for results, organizations must determine standards for monitoring and controlling activities. As discussed in Chapter 3 with respect to designing programs, for every objective there should be a performance indicator that clearly demonstrates the extent to which the objective is being achieved.

This is no easy matter for many human service organizations because the outcomes of services are variable and do not easily lend themselves to quantifiable data analysis. It is difficult enough to determine in some quantifiable way the extent to which, for instance, a couple has improved their marital relationship through counseling; trying to aggregate in some reasonable format the progress made by the 220 couples seen in the course of a year is indeed formidable. Demands for increased accountability, however, make evaluation of results one of the major challenges human service organizations must address.

Recognizing the tremendous challenge involved in developing performance measures, agencies nevertheless have options for monitoring services. Among these options are the following:

1. Increasing the number of program participants

Example: The number of persons who remain employed for six months

Example: Reduction in the rate of recidivism among previously convicted drug addicts

Example: The number of elderly persons in a nutrition program who maintain independent living

2. Satisfaction of program participants

Example: The number of consumers who rate the counseling service as satisfactory

3. Improvement in service efficiency

Example: Reduced waiting time

Example: Shorter response time for emergency requests

Effective monitoring requires good input of information and proper packaging for decision makers. With computer software, reports can now be quickly generated to reveal deviations from targets. In this way, client information audits can reveal discrepancies between predetermined objectives and actual performance in much the same way that budget analyses are conducted to reveal variances in financial projections.

For information to be useful in the monitoring process, it must be timely and relevant. The information must be significant both for reporting to external funders and policymakers and for internal decision making. Reports must be user-friendly and not so complicated that staff are overwhelmed by them. Such information should not only be useful for analyzing the impact of services, as discussed above, but also for conducting analyses of the activities and work of the organization's units. A good information system should be able to answer questions like these:

- Are the activities of the unit contributing to the accomplishment of objectives?
- Are costs for conducting the work excessive in relation to meeting objectives?
- Are services provided in a timely manner?
- Is the level of service improving or declining?
- Are staffing levels appropriate for accomplishing objectives?

Work Quality

Through explicit policies and procedures, managers must devise ways to help staff become better oriented and more sensitive to work quality. Standards need to be established; if these are not met, a corrective response becomes necessary.

Quality control can determine that information errors on client eligibility have risen above a certain threshold, and this discovery could trigger specific responses, such as training or improved supervision. By establishing standards and developing mechanisms to measure them, the organization conveys that it means business about improving the quality of the work it does. The creation of a quality assurance committee can provide structure for implementing and evaluating quality standards.²⁰

The following are some guiding concepts that should be considered in enhancing quality control:

- Timeliness:* How quickly can clients be seen after a request is made?
- Correctness:* How error-free is staff documentation?
- Competence:* How qualified are the staff?
- Reliability:* Does the agency deliver what it promises?
- Accountability:* Is the work properly reviewed? Are problems addressed?

Problem Solving

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concerns?

Flexibility: Does

The purpose of monitoring is to provide corrective action to get back on course—self-correction is one of the ways the organization is able to achieve its objectives:

- Given the nature of the problem, were the objectives realistic?
- Was the cost of the corrective action reasonable?
- Even though the problem remains essential, does solving the problem have other benefits?
- Has reaching the objectives had other consequences?

If the organization could be asked:

- Were adequate resources available?
- Were objectives clearly defined?
- Was the timetable realistic?
- Given the time available, did the organization achieve its objectives?

The review of successful programs can serve as a springboard for future development. If the review is done under less than ideal conditions, the review may not be as effective as others not at all. They may not have been aware that a discrepancy existed because of inadequate resources. They may not have been able to settle on a second- or third-

Service demeanor: How pleasantly and courteously are clients treated?

Accessibility: How responsive is the organization to requests?

Handling complaints: To what extent does the organization react to client concerns?

Flexibility: Does the organization modify its services to meet special needs?

Step 5: Making Corrections

The purpose of monitoring is to identify performance deviations so that corrective action can be taken.²¹ The value of identifying deviations from predetermined standards is to stimulate staff to think about how they could get back on course—or to revise the objectives so that they are more realistic. Self-correction is only possible if, as a result of the self-assessment process, the organization is prepared to ask hard questions. If the organization *does* achieve its objectives, the following questions could be asked:

- Given the nature of the problem and the resources that were available, were the objectives set too low?
- Was the cost worth the accomplishment?
- Even though you achieved the objectives, does the basic problem remain essentially unchanged?
- Does solving this particular problem create other problems?
- Has reaching these particular goals interfered with the achievement of other objectives; if so, do the balances have to be redressed?

If the organization *does not* achieve its objectives, the following questions could be asked:

- Were adequate resources (staff and funding) available to do the job?
- Were objectives set unreasonably high?
- Was the timetable appropriate?
- Given the time and financial constraints and other demands, should the organization redirect its energies to other broad problem areas?

The review of success, partial success, or failure of objectives provides a springboard for future decision making. Because organizations generally operate under less than ideal conditions, they may achieve some objectives partially and others not at all. Through the monitoring process, staff may become keenly aware that a discrepancy exists between their aspirations and actual outcomes. They may not have been able to select the optimum solution for a given problem because of inadequate resources, political constraints, time pressures, or finances. Not being able to provide the optimum solution, they may have to settle on a second- or third-best approach. Confronted with this reality, staff

can either despair and do nothing, or they can use the opportunity to determine what changes need to be made in the problem-solving process.

This dynamic quality of decision making is evident, paradoxically, even if you succeed. Solving one problem sometimes creates or uncovers another. Suppose, for example, that, to encourage staff to develop more initiative and independence, you send them to special training programs. As a result, they are more prone to challenge supervisors and the organization's policies. This newly created problem may require supervisors to be trained in dealing with staff who raise provocative issues that challenge conventional ways of doing things. Thus the resolution of one problem may raise other issues that then must be dealt with, suggesting that the decision-making process is never ending. Obviously, this does not apply in all instances, but it may help to explain why one can never fully relax in terms of the affairs of an organization.

In summary, the problem-solving process is dynamic and subject to continuous revision. It involves analyzing problems, establishing objectives, developing alternatives through both rational and creative approaches, and designing and implementing action plans. Monitoring and assessing results promotes a review of whether to make changes at any point in the process. Perhaps the problems need to be redefined because their objectives are set too low and are unchallenging, or because they are set too high and are too difficult to achieve. It is possible that achieving the objectives did not solve the problem and that better targeting is needed. Perhaps you need to consider a different strategy that reflects changing circumstances. Finally, the activities and tasks you choose may require alteration if it becomes obvious that they are insufficient and will not achieve your desired objectives. It is through this continuous review and revision that an organization can take necessary corrective actions.

The willingness to base decisions on a critical review of changing circumstances is at the core of the problem-solving process. This attitude reflects a planning style that is open to constantly changing conditions, flexible in adapting to new needs, and capable of making modifications based on new situations.²² By accompanying a built-in review with flexibility, an organization can avoid adhering to an approach that goes nowhere. It embraces the complex and kaleidoscopic nature of the real world in which everything is in constant flux. The problem-solving process is never ending and ever challenging.

Questions for Discussion

1. What might be an insidious problem in your organization?
2. Suppose you were considering three options for expanding programs for adolescent mentally challenged offenders: (a) develop group homes, (b) expand an institutional facility, or (c) provide in-home counseling. What are the criteria that could assist you in making a decision?

3. Suppose after you have made your decision, what are the things you should do to ensure that your decision is implemented? What are the criteria that could assist you in making a decision?
4. Develop a plan for expanding your agency. As a result, they are more prone to challenge supervisors and the organization's policies. This newly created problem may require supervisors to be trained in dealing with staff who raise provocative issues that challenge conventional ways of doing things. Thus the resolution of one problem may raise other issues that then must be dealt with, suggesting that the decision-making process is never ending. Obviously, this does not apply in all instances, but it may help to explain why one can never fully relax in terms of the affairs of an organization.
5. How might you use the opportunity to determine what changes need to be made in the problem-solving process?

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3. Suppose after applying the criteria, you decided on one of the options. What are the trade-offs involved in your decision? Would you consider your decision to be a *satisficing* one?
4. Develop a problem statement related to a population served by your agency. As an exercise, how would you redefine the problem more broadly or more narrowly?
5. How might a problem statement be defined by different stakeholders—administration, middle managers, staff, clients, board members, public officials—connected with your organization?

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Incl

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

In this part you will learn

- ❖ Diagnose a time problem
- ❖ Make the best use of time
- ❖ Establish priorities
- ❖ Avoid time-wasting activities
- ❖ Combat procrastination
- ❖ Recruit and match the right people
- ❖ Conduct a nondiscriminatory hiring process
- ❖ Relate organizational goals to individual performance
- ❖ Respond appropriately to organizational change
- ❖ Take corrective action
- ❖ Terminate employees