

# Effective Managers Use Personnel and Resources To Get The Job Done

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The lack of firm, explicit and practical management foundations for many of the nation's federal, state and local environmental health programs has been obvious in recent years. This weakness has been pinpointed and noticeable during the "age of the environment" which began in the late 1960's and will no doubt continue far into the future. There is no longer any doubt that the environment must and will be managed. The question is, how, and by whom? Traditionally trained and experienced environmental health people have often not exhibited the management knowledge and capability to cope with or show leadership regarding new public and political pressures, organizational trends, expanded program methodology, legislative demands and mandates, broadened program scope and evolving program goals. Environmental health leaders have frequently been viewed as negative obstructionists rather than constructive leaders and have exhibited territorial defense mechanisms instead of creating, promoting, and justifying effective program and organizational concepts to meet the public clamor for a quality environment.

Let's bury the notion that managers in the public sector are inferior to those in the private sector, although many people have that impression. The management inadequacies and bureaucratic bunglings are just as great in private industry, business, professional associations and voluntary groups as in government, but they are not as visible. Government will respond to modern management techniques, although perhaps not as fast as private enterprise. Governmental managers have additional hurdles and points of endorsement or approval in order to change within the democratic process.

Being a competent professional manager does not depend on mastering a particular technical system, but is based on understanding and systematically applying the work of management in the areas of planning, organizing, leading and controlling. This is perhaps one of the most important and critical concepts to master. Most managers have become so after being successful technicians and being selected because of their proficiency as technicians. This system of promotion to management may not be the best but is common. Those managers who continue to ply their technical skills and continue to act as specialists instead of

developing skills in terms of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling may never master the management arts, even though they are managers, and thus may be a detriment to their agency, programs, objectives, personnel and the public.

A simple definition of management is "getting things done through other people." The manager who attempts to carry out every function or review every detail of his organization's function may find that he cannot see the forest for the trees and, in fact, does not have time to be a manager.

Managers should be willing to create, innovate, and propose new organizations or methods where they are needed instead of being slaves to tradition and routine. Many managers become so intent on defending tradition and their own territory that they do not have time or talents to plan and promote necessary changes.

Managers must make every effort to recruit and retain the best talent available even if it means recruiting personnel better qualified than the top manager. I have frequently observed a management fear of such. well qualified personnel.

Managers must delegate freely and effectively in order to have time to carry out the most important management functions. This also prevents the manager from becoming a bottleneck and improves the functions, value and morale of subordinates.

Decision making may well be the most important management function, but decisions must be made on the basis of the best facts available at the time. Some managers are so concerned about doing the right thing that they do nothing - they simply study the problem to death. Frequently there is more than one good answer to a problem and he must make the decision in order for his organization to get on with the job.

Considering all reasonable alternatives leading to resolving perceived problems sometimes appears to be a lost art. Alternatives in problem solving vary from doing nothing, through studying fresh and unusual approaches, to getting locked into single-solution alternatives which lead to a pre-selected method of trying to solve problems.

Frequently we find that all reasonable alternatives have not been considered and that, in fact, we have by-passed the opportunity to consider all viable alternatives because single-solution decisions have already been made by those with vested interests who stand to profit the most from it rather than providing the greatest good for the greatest number of people over the longest period of time.

Examples include being allowed to vote on a flood control project rather than considering other alternative solutions to the problem, such as different types of land use, retarding population growth, developing recreational areas in the flood path, or channeling growth into more dense residential developments. Another example is being forced to endorse a specific freeway location instead of rational consideration of other alternatives such as no freeway, changing land-use patterns, retarding population growth, or rapid mass transportation. Still another is the energy situation in which we are repeatedly led past the level of realistically considering the development of energy sources other than those desired by the fossil fuel industry, so we continually lose the opportunity to develop solar or other more viable energy sources. "

Developing mature, productive, effective, knowledgeable employees and associates makes the manager look good. Give credit where credit is due and utilize the principal that each employee should know more about his specific responsibilities than you do. Otherwise the organization is a failure.

The duties of every level of management and each employee should be specific and reasonably distinct. A manager's duties and responsibilities are not the sum total of those of his staff. A serious managerial and organizational problem exists when more than one person in an organization is perceived to have the same responsibilities in whole or part.

I visualize a director's function as insuring that his agency functions properly through creating the necessary organizational structure; defining the organization's goals and mission; identifying problems and setting priorities; recommending necessary programs and activities; balancing budgetary needs; assessing manpower problems; insuring public information; being accessible to and communicating with staff; and delegating effectively. A manager should not be a specialist or be involved in work detail. He should arbitrate staff differences and promote staff morale. He insures coordination with other groups, evaluates programs, personnel and organization, and works through select national groups in order to affect national policy and legislation. He maintains sufficient flexibility to be responsive to requests and delegated tasks from higher authorities.

Goals (ultimate desired conditions) are essential since they provide a constant sense of program direction. A mission is an agreed upon statement concerning the constituency which the agency should be serving. An environmental problem is a reasonably discrete environmental

factor which has an undesirable impact on man's health, safety, comfort or well being. Environmental problems should not be confused with programs, which are rational groupings of activities or methods designed to solve one or more problems. Tools and resources are manpower, budgets, legislation, equipment, and facilities necessary to carry out programs. Finally, objectives relate to a specified amount of change toward a goal within a given time frame.

Perhaps governmental agencies have failed to identify and utilize a full spectrum of program methods when developing programs. Inspecting, sampling, surveillance, analyses, enforcement, hearings, consultation, training, design, research, demonstrations, education, financial and social incentives undoubtedly comprise an incomplete list of useful program methods. Even these, however, have not been fully defined or attempted by most governmental agencies. There is a terrific challenge in really identifying, developing and demonstrating the effectiveness of various program methods instead of continuing the customary and comfortable.

Innovative ideas in terms of program development are not always best accomplished by program personnel, as they tend to defend current efforts and patterns. But on the other hand, outside groups have not been overly successful either. In practice, programs are typically developed on a rather intuitive, irrational, and shortsighted basis by so-called experts with tunnel vision at various levels of government. With regard to manpower, in many cases, professionals are not being utilized effectively or in consonance with their talents and professional levels. The problem of effectively utilizing and addressing manpower to program needs deserves all of our continuing attention in an effort to solve problems most effectively and get the most out of our budget dollars.