

Managing Vs. Operating

It is commonly recognised that the success of every enterprise is dependent upon the objectives, policies and practices of the men and women who control and direct its affairs. In other words, every organisation's performance under such headings as

- Utilization of capital
- Services to customers
- Rewards to employees
- Relative value to the community and to the country in which it operates

This performance reflects the attitude and competence of its management.

The skills that helped you to **become** a manager may prevent you from being a **good** manager!

It is likely that you became a manager - with responsibility to get results through your people - because you excelled as an individual operator. You excelled as:

Accountant
Analyst
Assistant
Auditor
Buyer
Clerk

Doctor
Engineer
Lawyer
Planner
Programmer
Researcher

Salesman
Specialist
Teacher
Technician
Worker
Writer

In the same way when you are a manager, you may concentrate your efforts on the tasks of an operator rather than on the tasks of the manager.

Is this Managing or Operating?

2

1. Making a call with one of your people to assist him in solving a technical problem.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

2. Signing a cheque to approve a routine expenditure.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

3. Conducting the initial screening interview of a job applicant.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

4. Giving one of your experienced people your solution to a new problem without first asking for her recommendation.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

5. Giving your solution to a recurring problem that one of your new people has just asked you about.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

6. Conducting a meeting to explain to your people a new procedure.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

7. Phoning a department to request help in solving a problem that one of your people is trying to solve.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

8. Filling out a form to give one of your people a pay increase.

9. Managing ☐ Operating ☐

10. Explaining to one of your people why s/he is receiving a merit pay increase.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

11. Deciding whether to create a position.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

12. Asking one of your people what she thinks about an idea you have that will affect your people.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

13. Transferring a desirable assignment from Employee A to Employee B because Employee A did not devote the necessary effort.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

14. Reviewing regular written reports to determine your people's progress toward their objectives.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

15. Giving a regular progress report by phone to your superior.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

16. Giving a tour to an important visitor from outside of your organisation.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

17. Drafting an improved layout of facilities.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

18. Discussing with your key people the extent to which they should use staff services during the year.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

19. Deciding what your expense-budget request will be for your area of responsibility.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

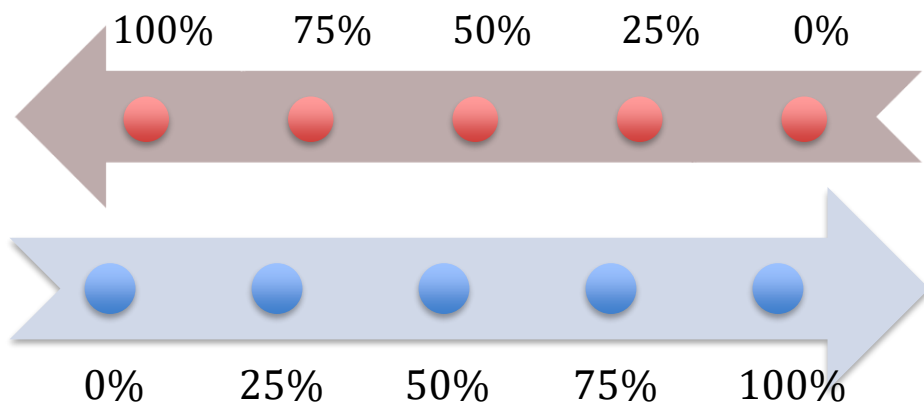
20. Attending a professional or industrial meeting to learn detailed technical developments.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

21. Giving a talk on your work activities to a local group.

Managing ☐ Operating ☐

How about you? Are you more of an operator or a manager?



Managing

There are at least five reasons why you may **operate** rather than manage. These are also reasons why you may not distinguish clearly between managing tasks and doing tasks.

1. You have excelled as an operator

Most people like to feel secure in what they are doing. They generally feel most secure when they are performing those activities which they like and which they know how to do well. If you excelled as an operator, it is perfectly natural that you would want to continue performing those operating activities which you like and know how to do well- especially if you spent enough years as an operator to have engrained habits.

The fact that many salesmen continue to operate after they become managers was brought out in a study conducted by Dr. Robert T. Davis. Among fifty-four industrial and service companies with large industrial sales forces, he found that field sales managers are more super-salesmen than they are administrators. They excel at personal selling, at troubleshooting (which is usually customer oriented), and at the mechanics of running the field office; they are weakest at developing and supervising salesmen and at analysing and planning their operations.

Look at your organisation. Don't you find that many managers - regardless of their areas of responsibility - continue performing the same operating activities that they performed before they become managers?

Ask yourself this:

Do you solve work problems for your employee or do you help them to solve their own problems?



You, like everyone else, are a product of your own background. Therefore, you are more likely to recognise those problems in the areas to which you have devoted the most time and effort. If, for example, you have devoted most of your career to the study and practice of engineering, you are more likely to recognise engineering problems than managing problems, even though you may now be a manager with responsibility to get results through

your people. You are more likely to recognise and try to solve **technical** problems than you are to recognise and try to solve **managing** problems. Your excellence at engineering may actually hurt your performance as a manager unless you study and become proficient at managing.

2. You see yourself more as a leader than a manager.

No doubt you've been exposed countless times to the idea that a manager should be a leader. But should you? It depends upon your concept of a leader.

Many managers see a leader as someone who leads and who has followers. They see a leader as someone who exudes wisdom, makes great decisions, solves direct reports' problems, out-performs direct reports, and does anything that direct reports are asked to do. They see leaders as people who are able to get their followers to have confidence in **them**.

Ask yourself this:

Is more important for your employees to have confidence in you or for your employees to have confidence in themselves?



Most managers want both results but between the two choices, I believe you'll agree that it's more important that a manager's people have confidence in themselves.

If you believe that it's more important that your people have confidence in themselves, then how important it is that you are able to lead your people - e.g., by outperforming them in the jobs they are responsible for doing? Isn't it more important that you be skilled in **managing**?

Of course you need leadership skills to plan, direct and control the efforts of your people; but there is a danger if you lead to the point where your people rely more on you than on themselves.

3. You have important operating responsibilities


Every manager must perform some operating activities. Generally because there is no one else to do them. But managers get in trouble when they

neglect their managing responsibility. This is a specific problem for the manager who has important operating responsibility. It is a special problem for you if **you** are responsible for getting results through your direct reports **and** if you are responsible for:

- Personal production in sales, engineering, or some, other area of responsibility
- Being the technical authority in your area of responsibility (The controller, for example is often expected to be an authority on general accounting, cost accounting, taxes, insurance, budgets, systems and procedures, and electronic data processing in addition to being a manager).
- Maintaining personal relationships with outside customers, suppliers or others

Ask yourself this:

Are you responsible for performing each of these operating tasks or are you responsible for ensuring your employees are performing these tasks to standards?



These are operating responsibilities because they can be performed by an individual operator, and they may even be more important to your organisation than your managing responsibility. Your effectiveness as a manager both now and in the future will suffer, however, if you slight whatever managing responsibility you have.

4. Your Previous Training May Be Confusing.

Many of today's management courses and programmes are more concerned with the functional technology of marketing, production, accounting, finance, research, engineering, personnel, labour relations, public relations or law than they are with how managers get results through their people. Other management courses and programmes centre on management tools and techniques such as computers, operations research, value analysis, PERT (Programme Evaluation and Review Technique), methods engineering, and

programmed instruction. Is it any wonder that managers have difficulty in distinguishing what managing is?

Many management books also add to the confusion. In an article on management books, **Business Week** magazine made this observation:

“Even when they include the word "management," there's no guarantee that the authors are really concerned with managing, as distinguished from finance, accounting, marketing, or any other specialised essential function of business. “

In other words, designing the product is not managing; making the product is not managing; selling the product is not managing; financing the product is not managing; and doing accounting for the product is not managing. Managing can occur in connection with any of these activities, but it does occur only when a manager is trying to get results-through his or her people.

Ask yourself this:

Is your job to be a specialist in a specific function or is your job to be a specialist in managing a group of specialists in a number of specific functions?



5. Your Boss May Be An Operator.

If your boss spends most of his or her time on operating activities, you have a poor model to emulate - assuming you wish to be an effective manager. To make matters worse, you may be expected to approach your managing job the way he or she does it.

I recall a certain division manager in a medium-sized manufacturing company. He reported to a managing director who expected him to have detailed knowledge about all the activities for which he was responsible. The result was that the division manager had great difficulty in delegating work to his people, and he felt forced to duplicate many of his people's efforts.

A study by the management-consulting firm of H.B. Mayard and Co. Inc. of how fifty presidents of successful companies spent their time showed that there was a strong tendency for a president to concentrate his attention in the functional areas where he had the most experience. But the worst example was the president who spends 57 percent of his time on clerical or routine work - clearly doing activities that could have been delegated. Apparently the president performed these activities because they made him feel productive.

If you report to a boss who is like either of the two persons I have described, you have the challenge of pleasing him or her while still practicing effective managing. As a foundation for meeting this kind of challenge you need a clear perspective about what managing is.

Ask yourself this:

Can you as a manager influence your superior's behaviour and thinking in order to achieve the organisation goals or must you always follow orders no matter what are the circumstances without expressing any ideas, opinions or concerns?