



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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The Four S Strategy

The essence of today's management thought is undoubtedly about letting managers manage. The objective is to empower the managers, and to utilize their knowledge to develop and maintain gainful associations with customers, vendors and other employees. Sound decision-making can improve organizational effectiveness considerably. Nevertheless, allocating these decision-making rights is a challenging and complex issue.

To address this issue it is essential to understand how jobs can be designed to maximize outputs. Technically, every employee should consider

- The resources he has control over to execute his job
- The measures that will be used to assess his performance
- The people he needs to interact with and influence to accomplish his assignments
- The support he can get from his peers or others

Termed as 'the spans of a job', a manager needs these factors to have the control, responsibility, power and support to guarantee high performance. These factors or settings can be monitored and altered in such a way that capable managers can maximize outputs.

Let us look at what and how these settings or spans of the job accentuate organizational returns.

The span of control

The resources that an organization provides to its manager can be in the form of people, technology or other business tools. Managers need to use the span of control at every level in order to deliver organizational value. Organizations set their span of control depending upon the nature of the business goals.

The span of accountability

All business transactions that affect the overall performance are referred to as the span of accountability. For instance, managers with a fixed budget and expenses can do little to improve performance. The scope for experimentation is negligible and the span of accountability narrows. However, a manager who has greater responsibility for market returns, consumer feedback and profits has a wider span of accountability.

The basis for setting the span of accountability is simple. Executives who seek assured compliance with rules and regulations have a narrow span of accountability compared to managers responsible for customer satisfaction and profits. Generally, the top management is given the creative freedom to experiment, unlike lower level executives who have a narrow span.

Span of control vs. span of accountability



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The span of control and the span of accountability cannot be independent of each other. Typically, one presumes the resources available determine the accountability directly. Simply put, authority matches responsibility. However, this is not necessarily true. When the span of accountability is wider than the span of control, executives often exhibit entrepreneurship.

When the goals set are high and the resources limited, employees are played against the 'entrepreneurial gap'. This gap acts as a stimulant to encourage ingenuity and entrepreneurship.

The span of influence

The network a manager uses to gather information and influence others is the span of influence. A manager with a wide span of influence interacts and influences his peers, co-workers and others.

The wider the span is, the greater the scope for thinking beyond the acknowledged. When the managers think outside the box, competencies and outputs increase directly. The more interlinked a job is, the more the interaction levels. This in turn widens the span of influence.

For instance, a manager who indirectly bears the costs incurred by others uses a wide span of influence to persuade those others in his job.

The span of support

The support and assurance a manager needs or gets to execute his tasks is the span of support. A sales-person whose job is commission based does not need much support. Individual duties and undertakings are evaluated directly. The nature of his job does not call for a wide span of support. In contrast, hotels where customer satisfaction is of prime importance cannot have a narrow span of support. A chain of hotels is highly interdependent primarily to respond to varied customer needs.

Comprehending the spans of the job is not an easy task, but it is indispensable. While it is observed that the spans of a job are more or less interdependent, they cannot be tangled haphazardly. The consequences can prove disastrous if the settings are wrong. The purpose being higher efficiency in operations the four spans of the jobs should be in accord with each other. The Four (S) (spans) can undebatably help the business win the match.