

Influencing people

16

Key concepts and terms

- *Added value*
- *Business case*
- *Change agent*
- *Culture change*
- *Facilitating*
- *Organizational capability*
- *Organizational effectiveness*
- *Return on investment*

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- What supervisors do
- How to provide direction
- How to motivate people
- How to delegate
- How to persuade and make a business case
- Chairing meetings
- Facilitating and coordinating discussion

Introduction

Managers in their capacity as leaders are in the business of influencing people. As Stodgill (1950: 3) pointed out, leadership is an 'influencing process aimed at goal achievement'. HR specialists are particularly involved in

influencing senior management, line managers and employees generally in order to persuade them to accept their advice or proposals. Influencing, as considered in this chapter, is associated with the supervision of people and providing direction. It involves the processes of motivation, delegation and persuasion, chairing meetings and facilitating discussion.

Effective supervision – providing direction

Effective supervision is the process of ensuring that the work gets done. It means influencing and as necessary directing people. In the language used by John Adair (1973), supervisors or team leaders are concerned with meeting the needs of the task. They define the task, provide direction – making it clear what the group and its individual members are expected to do and what results are to be achieved, and supervise the work to ensure that it is done as required. To do this the supervisor has to answer the following questions:

- What results have to be achieved, why and by when?
- What needs to be done to achieve those results?
- What are the priorities?
- What resources (people, money and equipment) are needed and where can they be obtained?
- How do I ensure that the team members are motivated?
- How do I ensure that the team members work well together?
- What problems do we face?
- To what extent are these problems straightforward?
- How are we going to overcome the difficult problems?
- Is there a crisis situation?
- What has to be done now to deal with the crisis?
- What pressures are likely to be exerted to get results?

Effective supervisors will provide clear answers to these questions, which will guide their actions and the behaviour of the group. But in motivating people and generating engagement and cooperation, they will have to focus on developing and applying their influencing skills as considered below.

How to motivate people

If you want to motivate your people more effectively, the first thing you should do is understand the basic principles of leadership and motivation as described in Chapters 1 and 10 of this book. Against this background

the following are a further 10 steps you can take to achieve higher levels of motivation:

- Exercise authentic leadership as described in Chapter 1.
- Get to know individual team members to understand what is likely to motivate them.
- Set and agree demanding but achievable goals.
- Provide feedback on performance.
- Create expectations that certain behaviours and outputs will produce worthwhile rewards when people succeed.
- Design jobs which enable people to feel a sense of accomplishment, to express and use their abilities and to exercise their own decision-making powers.
- Provide appropriate financial incentives and rewards for achievement (pay for performance).
- Provide appropriate non-financial rewards such as recognition and praise for work well done.
- Select and train team leaders who will exercise effective leadership and have the required motivating skills.
- Give people guidance and training which will develop the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to improve their performance.

Delegating

You can't do everything yourself, so you have to delegate. It is one of the most important things you do. At first sight delegation looks simple. Just tell people what you want them to do and then let them get on with it. But there is more to it than that. It is not easy. It requires courage, patience and skill. And it is an aspect of your work in which you have more freedom of choice than in any other of your activities. What you choose to delegate, to whom and how, is almost entirely at your discretion.

What is delegation?

Delegation is not the same as handing out work. There are some things that your team members do that go with the territory. They are part of their normal duties and all you have to do is to define what those duties are and allocate work accordingly.

Delegation is different. It takes place when you deliberately give someone the authority to carry out a piece of work which you could have decided to keep and carry out yourself. Bear in mind that what you are doing is allocating authority to carry out a task and make the decisions this involves. You are still accountable for the results achieved. It is sometimes said that

you cannot delegate responsibility but this is misleading if responsibility is defined, as it usually is, as what people are expected to do – their work, their tasks and their duties. What you cannot do is delegate accountability. In the last analysis you as the manager or team leader always carry the can. What managers have to do is to ensure that people have the authority to carry out their responsibilities. A traffic warden without the power to issue tickets would have to be exceptionally persuasive to have any chance of dealing with parking offences.

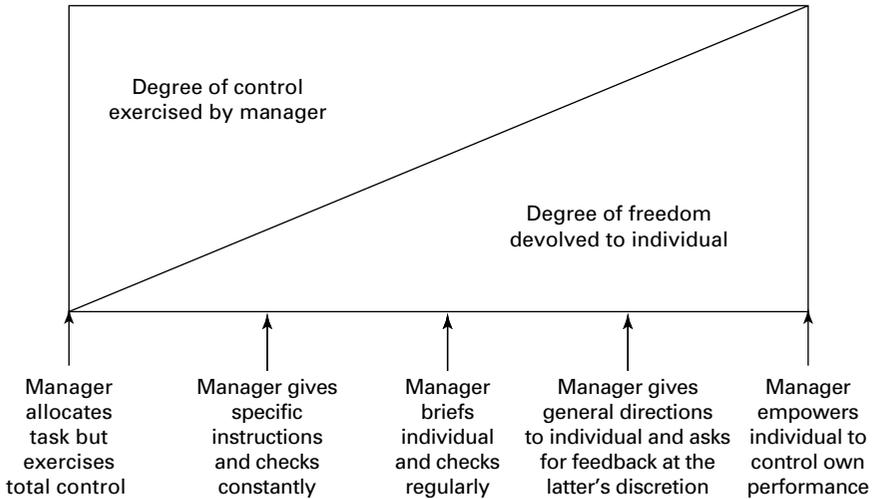
What are the advantages of delegation?

The advantages of delegation are that:

- It enables you to focus on the things that really matter in your job – those aspects which require your personal experience, skill and knowledge.
- It relieves you of less critical and routine tasks.
- It frees you from being immersed in detail.
- It extends your capacity to manage.
- It reduces delay in decision making – as long as authority is delegated close to the scene of action.
- It allows decisions to be taken at the level where the details are known.
- It empowers and motivates your staff by extending their responsibilities and authority and providing them with greater autonomy.
- It develops the knowledge and skills of your staff and increases their capacity to exercise judgement and make decisions.

What are the difficulties of delegation?

The advantages of delegation are compelling, but there are difficulties. The main problem is that delegation often involves risk. You cannot be absolutely sure that the person to whom you have delegated something will carry out the work as you would wish. The temptation therefore is to over-supervise, breathe down people's necks and interfere. This inhibits their authority, makes them nervous and resentful and destroys their confidence, thus dissipating any advantages the original act of delegation might have had. Another difficulty is that many managers are reluctant to delegate because they cannot let go – they want to keep on top of everything. They really think they know best and cannot trust anyone else to do it as well, never mind better. Finally, some managers are reluctant to delegate simply because they enjoy what they are doing and cannot bear the possibility of giving it away to anyone else.

FIGURE 16.1 The sequence of delegation

Approaches to delegation

To a degree, overcoming these difficulties is a matter of simply being aware of them and appreciating that if there are any disadvantages, these are outweighed by the advantages. But approaches to delegation such as those discussed below help. You need to understand the process of delegation, when to delegate, what to delegate, how to choose people to whom you want to delegate, how to give out the work and how to monitor performance.

The sequence of delegation

Delegation is a sequential process which starts from the point when total control is exercised (no freedom of action for the individual to whom work has been allocated) to full devolution (the individual is completely empowered to carry out the work). This sequence is illustrated in Figure 16.1.

When to delegate

You should delegate when you:

- have more work than you can carry out yourself;
- cannot allow sufficient time for your priority tasks;
- want to develop a member of your team;
- believe that it will increase someone's engagement with their job;
- think that the job can be done adequately by the individual or the team to whom you delegate.

What to delegate

The tasks you delegate are the routine and repetitive tasks which you cannot reasonably be expected to do yourself – as long as you use the time you have won productively. You are not just ridding yourself of the difficult, tedious or unrewarding tasks. Neither are you trying simply to win for yourself an easier life. In some ways delegation will make your life more difficult, but also more rewarding.

You can delegate specialist tasks to those who have the skills and know-how to do them. You cannot be expected to do it all yourself. Neither can you be expected to know it all yourself.

You can sometimes delegate tasks which are designed to stretch and develop the individual you ask to carry them out.

Giving out the work

When you delegate you should ensure that the individuals or team concerned understand:

- why the work needs to be done;
- what they are expected to do;
- the date by which they are expected to do it;
- the end results they are expected to achieve;
- the authority they have to make decisions;
- the problems they must refer back;
- the progress or completion reports they should submit;
- any guidance and support that will be available to them.

You have to consider how much guidance will be required on how the work should be done. You don't want to give directions in such laborious detail that you run the risk of stifling initiative. Neither do you want to infuriate people by explaining everything needlessly. As long as you are reasonably certain that they will do the job to your satisfaction without embarrassing you or seriously upsetting people, exceeding the budget or breaking the law, let them get on with it.

Persuading people

HR professionals are very much in the business of influencing thinking and decision making on the part of others. They must know about persuading people and case presentation.

Persuading people

A manager's job is 60 per cent getting it right and 40 per cent putting it across. Managers spend a lot of time persuading other people to accept their

ideas and suggestions. Persuasion is just another word for selling. You may feel that good ideas should sell themselves, but life is not like that. People resist change and anything new is usually treated with suspicion. Here are 10 rules for effective persuasion:

- Define your objective and get the facts. If you are persuading someone to agree to a proposal, first decide what you want to achieve and why. Assemble all the facts you need to support your case. Eliminate emotional arguments so that you and others can judge the proposition on the facts alone.
- Define the problem. If there is a problem to resolve and you are trying to persuade someone to accept your views on what should be done about it, first decide whether the problem is a misunderstanding (a failure to understand each other accurately) or a true disagreement (a failure to agree even when both parties understand one another). It is not necessarily possible to resolve a true disagreement by understanding each other better. People generally believe that an argument is a battle to understand who is correct. More often, it is a battle to decide who is more stubborn.
- Find out what the other party wants. The key to all persuasion is to see your proposition from the other person's point of view. Find out how they look at things. Establish what they need and want.
- Accentuate the benefits. Present your case in a way that highlights the benefits to the other party or at least reduces any objections or fears.
- Predict the other person's response. Everything we say should be focused on that likely response. Anticipate objections by asking yourself how the other party might react negatively to your proposition and thinking up ways of responding to them.
- Create the person's next move. It is not a question of deciding what we want to do but what we want the other person to do.
- Convince people by reference to their own perceptions. People decide on what to do on the basis of their own perceptions, not yours.
- Prepare a simple and attractive proposition. Make it as straightforward as possible. Present the case 'sunny side up', emphasizing its benefits. Break the problem into manageable pieces and deal with them one step at a time.
- Make the other person a party to your ideas. Get them to contribute. Find some common ground so that you can start with agreement. Don't try to defeat them in an argument – you will only antagonize them.
- Clinch and take action. Choose the right moment to clinch the proposal – don't prolong the discussion and risk losing it. But follow up promptly.

Case presentation

Persuasion frequently means presenting a case. You will often have to make out a case for what you think should be done. You have to persuade people to believe in your views and accept your recommendations. To do this, you must have a clear idea of what you want, and you have to show that you believe in it yourself. Above all, the effectiveness of your presentation will depend upon the care with which you have prepared it.

Thorough preparation is vital. You must think through not only what should be done and why, but also how people will react. Only then can you decide how to make your case: stressing the benefits without underestimating the costs, and anticipating objections. The steps you should take are:

- Show that your proposal is based on a thorough analysis of the facts and that the alternatives were properly evaluated before the conclusion was reached. If you have made assumptions, you must demonstrate that these are reasonable on the basis of relevant experience and justifiable projections, which allow for the unexpected. Bear in mind that a proposal is only as strong as its weakest assumption.
- Spell out the benefits – to the company and the individuals to whom the case is being made. Wherever possible, express benefits in financial terms. Abstract benefits, such as customer satisfaction or workers' morale, are difficult to sell. But don't produce 'funny numbers' – financial justification which will not stand up to examination.
- Reveal costs. Don't try to disguise them in any way. And be realistic. Your proposition will be destroyed if anyone can show that you have underestimated the costs.
- Remember, senior management decision makers want to know in precise terms what they will get for their money. Most are likely to be cautious, being unwilling and often unable to take much risk. For this reason, it can be difficult to make a case for experiments or pilot schemes unless the decision maker can see what the benefits and the ultimate bill will be.

Making a business case

You may be asked specifically to produce a business case. This will set out the reasons why a proposed course of action will benefit the business, how it will provide that benefit and how much it will cost. A business case is a particular form of persuasion and all the points made above apply to its preparation and presentation. But there are some special features about business cases as described below.

A business case is typically made either in added value terms (ie the income generated by the proposal will significantly exceed the cost of

implementing it), or on the basis of the return on investment (ie the cost of the investment, say in training, is justified by the financial returns in such areas as increased productivity). Clearly, a business case is more convincing when it is accompanied by realistic projections of added value or return on investment. The case for capital expenditure can be made by an analysis of the cash flows associated with the investment and appraisals of the benefits that are likely to arise from them. The object is to demonstrate that in return for paying out a given amount of cash today, a larger amount will be received over a period of time. A number of investment appraisal techniques are available, such as payback, the accounting rate of return, discounted cash flow and net present value.

A business case will be enhanced if:

- data is available on the impact the proposal is likely to make on key areas of the organization's operations, eg customer service levels, quality, shareholder value, productivity, income generation, innovation, skills development, talent management;
- it can be shown that the proposal will increase the business's competitive edge, for example enlarging the skill base or multi-skilling to ensure that it can achieve competitive advantage through innovation and/or reducing time to market;
- there is proof that the innovation has already worked well within the organization (perhaps as a pilot scheme) or represents 'good practice' which is likely to be transferable to the organization;
- it can be implemented without too much trouble, for example not taking up a lot of managers' time or not meeting with strong opposition from line managers, employees or trade unions (it is as well to check the likely reaction before launching a proposal);
- it will add to the reputation of the company by showing that it is a 'world class' organization, ie what it does is as good as, if not better than, the world leaders in the sector in which the business operates (a promise that publicity will be achieved through articles in professional journals, press releases and conference presentations, will help);
- it will enhance the 'employer brand' of the company by making it a 'best place to work';
- the proposal is brief, to the point and well argued – it should take no more than five minutes to present orally and should be summarized in writing on the proverbial one side of one sheet of paper (supplementary details can be included in appendices).

Making the business case is obviously easier where management is preconditioned to agree to the proposition. For example, it is not hard to convince top managers that performance-related pay is a good thing – they may well be receiving bonus payments themselves and believe, rightly or wrongly, that because it motivates them it will motivate everyone else. Talent management

is another process where top management needs little persuasion that things need to be done to enhance and preserve the talent flow, although they will have to be convinced that in practice, innovations will achieve that aim. Performance management may be slightly more difficult because it is hard to demonstrate that it can produce measurable improvements in performance, but senior managers are predisposed towards an approach which at least promises to improve the level of performance.

The toughest area for justification in added value terms can be expenditure on learning and development programmes. This is where a return on investment (ROI) approach is desirable. The business case for learning and development should demonstrate how learning, training and development programmes will meet business needs. Kearns and Miller (1997) go as far as to claim that: 'If a business objective cannot be cited as a basis for designing training and development, then no training and development should be offered.'

Chairing meetings

Most managers, including those in HR, will find themselves required to chair a meeting from time to time, and meetings provide major arenas for exerting influence. The success or failure of a meeting largely depends on the effectiveness with which it is chaired. If you are chairing a meeting, this is what you must do.

Prepare for the meeting

Before the meeting starts, ensure that it has proper terms of reference and that the members are briefed on what to expect and what they should be prepared to contribute. Plan the agenda to ensure that all the issues will be dealt with in a logical order. Prepare and issue briefing papers which will structure the meeting and spell out the background, thus saving time going into detail or reviewing purely factual information during the meeting.

Conduct the meeting

Start by clearly defining the objective of the meeting, setting a timescale which you intend to keep.

Go through each item of the agenda in turn, ensuring that a firm conclusion is reached and recorded.

Initiate the discussion on each item by setting the scene very briefly and asking for contributions – ask for answers to specific questions (which you should have prepared in advance) or you may refer the matter first to a member of the meeting who can make the best initial contribution (ideally, you should have briefed that individual in advance).

Invite contributions from other members of the meeting, taking care not to allow anyone to dominate the discussions.

Bring people back to order if they drift from the point.

If there is too much talk, remind members that they are there to make progress.

Encourage the expression of different points of view and avoid crushing anyone too obviously if they have not made a sensible comment.

Allow disagreement between members of the meeting but step in smartly if the atmosphere becomes too contentious.

Chip in with questions or brief comments from time to time, but do not dominate the discussion.

At appropriate moments during the meeting, summarize the discussion, express views on where the meeting has got to and outline your perception of the interim or final decision that has been made. Then check that the meeting agrees, amending the conclusion as necessary, and ensuring that the decision is recorded exactly as made.

Summarize what has been achieved at the end of the meeting, indicating who has to do what by when.

If a further meeting is needed, agree the purpose of the meeting and what has to be done by those present before it takes place.

Facilitating and coordinating discussions

More frequently than chairing meetings, HR specialists will be involved in facilitating and coordinating discussions.

Facilitating

Facilitating is the process of helping a group reach conclusions in the shape of ideas and solutions. Facilitators do not exist to ‘chair’ the meeting in the sense of controlling the discussion and pressurizing the group to agree to a course of action. The group is there to make up its own mind and the facilitator helps it to do so. The help is provided by asking questions which encourage the group members to think for themselves. These can be challenging and probing questions but the facilitator does not provide the answers – that is the role of the group. Neither do facilitators allow their own opinions to intrude – they are there to help the group marshal its opinions, not to enforce their own ideas. However, by using questioning techniques carefully, facilitators can ensure that the group does thoroughly discuss and analyse the issues and reaches conclusions by consensus rather than allowing anyone to dominate the process.

Facilitators ensure that everyone has their say and that they are listened to. They step in quickly to defuse unproductive arguments. They see that the group defines and understands its objectives and any methodology they might use. They summarize from time to time the progress made in achieving the objectives without bringing their own views to bear. Facilitators are there to ensure that the group makes progress and does not get stuck in fruitless or disruptive argument. But they encourage the group rather than drive it forward.

The aim of the facilitator is to guide the group's thinking. The facilitator may, therefore, be more concerned with shaping attitudes than convincing people about what to do or imparting new knowledge. The facilitator has unobtrusively to stimulate people to talk, guide the discussion along pre-determined lines (there must be a plan and an ultimate objective), and provide interim summaries and a final summary.

Coordinating discussions

Coordinating discussions is a matter of getting active participation and then ensuring that the discussion informs people of the issues related to the subject and leads to a conclusion which satisfies the participants. The following techniques can be used to get active participation and coordinate the process:

- Ask for contributions by direct questions.
- Use open-ended questions which will stimulate thought.
- Check understanding; make sure that everyone is following the argument.
- Encourage participation by providing support rather than criticism.
- Prevent domination by individual members of the group by bringing in other people and asking cross-reference questions.
- Avoid dominating the group yourself. The leader's job is to guide the discussion, maintain control and summarize from time to time. If necessary, 'reflect' opinions expressed by individuals back to the group to make sure they find the answer for themselves. The leader is there to help the group reach a conclusion, not to do it for them.
- Maintain control – ensure that the discussion is progressing along the right lines towards a firm conclusion.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Effective supervision

Effective supervision is the process of directing people to ensure that they get the work done.

Supervisors define the task, provide direction – making it clear what the group and its individual members are expected to do and what results are to be achieved – and ensure that the work is done as required.

Motivating people

Exercise visionary and inspiring leadership, establish what is likely to motivate team members, set demanding but achievable goals and provide feedback, clarify potential rewards, design jobs that will motivate, and provide financial and non-financial rewards.

Delegation

Delegation takes place when you deliberately give someone the authority to carry out a piece of work which you could have decided to keep and carry out yourself.

Leading change

Leading change involves initiating and managing culture change (the process of changing the organization's culture in the shape of its values, norms and beliefs) and the introduction of new structures, systems, working practices and people management processes.

Facilitating change

Facilitating change is the process of making change happen.

Influencing people

HR professionals are often involved in influencing thinking and decision making on the part of others. They must know about persuading people and case presentation.

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Most managers, including those in HR, will find themselves required to chair a meeting. The success or failure of a meeting largely depends on the effectiveness with which it is chaired.

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Questions

- 1 What is effective supervision?
- 2 What are the main steps you should take to motivate people?
- 3 What is delegation?
- 4 What are the advantages of delegation?
- 5 When should you delegate?
- 6 How should you delegate?
- 7 What are the most important rules for effective persuasion?
- 8 What are the key steps required for effective case presentation?
- 9 How should a business case be made?
- 10 What steps should you take before chairing a meeting?
- 11 What are the most important actions required to chair a meeting successfully?
- 12 What is facilitating?
- 13 How should facilitation be carried out?
- 14 How should discussions be coordinated?