

Participative Management and the Use of Teams in Libraries



Overview

The year is 1937. Mary Jones is a recent library school graduate whose first job is in a large academic library. Mary works in the cataloging department, where her orders are given to her by the department head, who receives his own orders from the library director. Each day, Mary does the work she is assigned. She has little contact with other employees outside her own department and little input into decisions that are made concerning her job. Libraries of that time are like other organizations of the same era: managed from the top down with the director making almost all decisions.¹

Flash forward to the present ...

Mary's grandson, Ben, received an MSLIS degree last year and also has gone to work in an academic library. The environment he works in as a beginning librarian is vastly different from that his grandmother encountered. He frequently works on committees and teams with people outside of his department. He expects to have some input into decision making. He spends time in meetings in which he learns about overall library issues and contributes his knowledge and efforts to many activities outside of his department.

There have been vast changes in the library workplace in the past few decades. Once top managers were expected to have all the answers; now it is widely assumed that lower-level employees are able to solve many problems effectively, and problem solving usually is pushed down to the level where there is the most expertise related to the problem. Often problems are solved by groups of employees working together.

This chapter discusses participative management and its advantages. Because management by teams is becoming increasingly popular, the chapter also provides an overview of management in a team environment. The preceding chapter on communication is very relevant because good communication is essential, but other skills are also important. The use of teams affects most aspects of management, and additional information on topics such as group decision making and the impact of teams on organizational structure can be found in previous chapters.

PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT

One decision every manager must make is how much employee participation to allow in management. As has been discussed previously, in the past most libraries and information centers were organized in a traditional hierarchical structure, and the normal management style was authoritarian. Authoritarian organizations are controlled from the top down, with upper-level managers making all essential decisions. In these types of organizations, orders are passed down from above using the chain of command, and employees are expected to carry out the tasks demanded of them. Today's directors find authoritarian leadership styles to be less effective as librarians demand increased input into decision making.

This demand for increased input has resulted in many organizations changing the way they are managed to permit employees to participate in management and decision making. Participative management has been defined as:

Both a philosophy and a method for managing human resources in an environment in which employees are respected and their contributions valued and utilized. From a philosophical standpoint, participative management centers on the belief that people at all levels of an organization can develop a genuine interest in its success and can do more than merely perform their assigned duties.²

Participative management involves employees in sharing information, making decisions, solving problems, planning projects, and evaluating results.³ Those who favor greater participation base their view on their beliefs that the rank-and-file library staff benefit from having a chance to participate in governance, that better decisions are made with staff involvement, and that such a management style leads to increased job satisfaction that results in better library service. Writers who favor less participation usually support their stand by concentrating on the inexperience of most librarians in management, the amount of time that is consumed by participation, and the inappropriateness of the participative model as a means of operating a complex service organization.

Participative management has the virtue of forcing decision making down to the level where the most relevant information can be found and where the effect of the decision will have the greatest impact. Although few libraries could be considered to operate on Rensis Likert's System 4 level (described in chapter 14), most libraries permit some employee input into decision making, and there is almost always some consultation before decisions are made.

Participative management does not mean that the management relinquishes its responsibility for the final decisions that are made; participative management should not be confused with management by consensus. As one expert wrote, "Librarians will have to accept that participatory management is no substitute for individual responsibility and leadership. There will likely always be library directors and just as likely they will be paid considerably more than the rest of the non-administrative staff ... because they are accountable for the operation of the library."⁴ Nor does participative management mean that managers involve all their employees in every decision every time, nor do all employees have the same amount of involvement in decision making. The involvement is usually based on familiarity with the decision that needs to be made.⁵

Although management theory advocates the use of participation by employees, it is sometimes difficult to implement with employees who have not had experience with it before. And, on the other hand, it is not easy for some managers to give up control and to let others contribute to decision making and problem solving. Switching to a more participative system of management requires changes on the part of both managers and employees.



Some Definitions

Participative management: A type of management characterized by the delegation of authority and power to lower level employees.

Empowerment: The process of sharing power with employees.

Today, there is a great deal of talk in organizations of all types about empowering employees. Participative management empowers employees to make decisions relating to their work. Employees who report feeling empowered make statements such as:

- My supervisor supported my idea without question.
- Financial data were shared with me.
- I was able to make a financial decision on my own.

Employees that are not empowered make statements such as:

- I had no input into a hiring decision of someone who was to report directly to me.
- I worked extremely hard on a project and my manager took full credit for it.
- The project was reassigned without my knowledge or input.
- My suggestions were never solicited; or if they were, they were ignored.
- I am treated like a mushroom and always kept in the dark.⁶

Empowered employees are given information about the decisions that need to be made as well as the power to make the decisions that give them control

over their own work. Empowering employees does not mean that they are left to work with no supervision; instead, they are given instructions about what needs to be accomplished but are given flexibility and the opportunity for some risk taking in how the goal is to be achieved.

Southwest Airlines is a well-known corporate example of a company that empowers its employees. This Dallas-based airline has had unprecedented success and a continued tradition of excellent customer service. Southwest employees work in teams without outside supervision. The employees have the authority to make decisions and do whatever it takes to ensure that the customer is satisfied. Southwest has created an organizational culture that treats both its employees and passengers with respect.⁷ Many libraries could take lessons from Southwest in how to create an organizational culture that becomes a competitive advantage.

In an attempt to empower employees, some organizations have begun a practice called open-book management. Organizations that use the open-book management provide employees with all relevant financial information about the company, including information about cost of goods, cash flow, revenue, expenses, and profit. These companies treat employees as partners because they think that if workers are given all relevant financial information they will be able to make better decisions and will take responsibility for the numbers under their control.⁸ Employees who are entrusted with financial data and the ability to understand are being empowered by their managers.

WHY EMPOWER EMPLOYEES?

Why would organizations want to involve workers in decisions that are being made? As has been mentioned previously, modern organizations face many challenges, and the traditional hierarchy often no longer performs well. Many times decisions have to be made quickly if the organization is to remain competitive. Because of the information technology revolution, libraries face a demand for greater productivity as well as increased pressure to change structures and services. Greater staff participation can help libraries meet these challenges. Empowering employees can lead to better customer service. More participative management also allows libraries to be successful in developing staff flexibility and creativity and in satisfying the increased expectations of staff members for self-realization.



What Would You Do?

Brickham University Library, the academic library at the largest public university in a midwestern state, had been long regarded as a classical bureaucratic organization. For years, the library has been structured with many layers of management, with power and information carefully controlled by the top echelons of the organization. A new director has just been hired who wants to make changes. This director believes that employees at all levels of the company need to know what is going on and need to have some participation in decision making.

Imagine that you are this new director. What changes would you make and how would you implement the changes? What type of program would you design to allow employee participation? What difficulties, if any, would you anticipate in making this change? Could you take any lessons from Southwest Airlines?

As was discussed in chapter 9, one of the reasons that modern organizations have been made flatter is so that decisions can be made by people close to the action. And modern workers, especially professionals, expect to play a part in making the decisions about matters that concern them and their work. Studies that have looked at the effect of organizational culture on performance have found that in for-profit organizations a higher degree of employee participation produces higher returns on investments and improved financial results.⁹ Similar studies carried out in libraries have shown that participation in decision making is a factor that positively affects job satisfaction. The relationship between participative management and job satisfaction in libraries has been found in studies done in the libraries of many countries, including the United States, Canada, South Africa, and Greece.¹⁰

Participative management is another manifestation of the move from the tightly structured bureaucratic organizations of the past to more modern ones that are becoming increasingly more people centered. Edward Lawler summarized the new principles of management in his book ... *From the Ground Up: Six Principles for Building the New Logic Corporation*. These principles can be seen in table 17.1.¹¹

Lawler states that the “logic” of organizations (i.e., how everything is ordered, defined, and operated) needs to move beyond those principles that are based

TABLE 17.1 New Principles of Management (adapted from Lawler’s ... *From the Ground Up: Six Principles for Building the New Logic Corporation*)

Old Principles	New Principles
Organization is a secondary source of competitive advantage	Organization can be the ultimate competitive advantage
Bureaucracy is the most effective source of control	Involvement is the most effective source of control
Top management and technical experts should add most of the value	All employees must add significant value
Hierarchical processes are the key to organizational effectiveness	Lateral processes are the key to organizational effectiveness
Organizations should be designed around functions	Organizations should be designed around products and customers
Effective managers are the key to organizational effectiveness	Effective leadership is the key to organizational effectiveness

Source: John J. Morse and Jay W. Lorsch, “Beyond Theory Y,” *Harvard Business Review* 48 (May–June 1970): 68.

upon the traditional hierarchical paradigm because those principles no longer work in today's dynamic organizations. "Unfortunately for many of those who use it, the hierarchical command-and-control approach works best only as long as work is simple and stable. As work becomes more complicated and more knowledge based, it runs into problems."¹² Lawler's argument for a more people-centered organization is based on earlier contributions by management theorists such as Douglas McGregor (see chapter 2), who said that if employees are truly involved in their work, they will figure out what should be done and do it without needing bureaucratic controls. Although bureaucracies can be efficient in stable environments because they allow lower-level employees to act quickly with a high degree of precision and conformity by the use of already programmed decisions, this type of organization prevents employees from acting on their own to meet a demand or to respond to a unique problem. Thus they often result in slow or poor decisions because the individuals who know the most about a particular area are not involved in the decision making. Lawler advocates that organizations need to adopt new principles that will distribute knowledge, information, power, and rewards more widely throughout the organization.¹³

LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

Participative management can be viewed as a continuum with top managers varying in how much they allow employees to participate in management decisions. The use of participative management ranges from those organizations in which the employees are informed about decisions that have to be made to those in which the employees actually make the decisions. One expert has proposed a hierarchical model with eight levels, ranging from least participation to most:

1. Employees need not be informed about decisions made by management unless they directly affect their work.
2. Employees are informed after decisions have been made.
3. Employees are given an opportunity to express views but management makes the decisions.
4. Employees are consulted informally before a decision is made.
5. Employees must be consulted before a decision is made.
6. Employees participate informally with management in decision making and under some collective-bargaining agreements have the right of veto over some issues.
7. Management and employees jointly make decisions.
8. Employees have the final say in all decision making.¹⁴

Examples of employee participation on each of these levels exist in libraries, with relatively fewer libraries at the extreme ends of the hierarchical model and most libraries providing employee participation in the middle range. At the lowest levels, employees are informed of decisions, perhaps before they are implemented, and are sometimes told some of the reasoning behind them. In the middle levels, librarians are involved to some extent in making decisions.

For instance, many libraries use committees or task forces to gather information and then those groups recommend what decision should be made. As was discussed in chapter 10, libraries commonly use search committees to screen candidates and to make recommendations about which individual should be hired. In these cases, the decision is not solely the committee's but the committee members play an important role in the decision-making process. In the most participative organizations, those at levels 7 and 8, employees actually make the decisions. In some libraries, teams are given such responsibilities. Organizations that use teams, especially self-managed teams, are representative of the most participative organizations. The rest of this chapter will focus on teams and their use in libraries.

TEAMS IN ORGANIZATIONS

A managerial innovation that is becoming more common in many types of organizations, including libraries, is the use of teams. These organizations are employing teams to do work that previously had been done by individuals. To use teams successfully, managers need to call upon all of the skills of leading that have been discussed thus far. Effective team management requires managers who are skilled at motivating, leading, and communicating.



What Do You Think?

Michael Jordan, the basketball legend, wrote, "One thing that I believe to the fullest is that if you think and achieve as a team, the individual accolades will take care of themselves. Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships."

This statement is obviously true about basketball, but does it also apply in the workplace? How can teams make individuals successful?

Michael Jordan, Mark Vancil, and Sandro Miller, *I Can't Accept Not Trying: Michael Jordan on the Pursuit of Excellence* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994): 24.

Although many multinational organizations are employing virtual teams—that is, teams whose members are geographically dispersed and who work together using computer technology and groupware—this chapter will focus primarily on teams working in the same physical location, because that is the type of team that is most prevalent in libraries. However, librarians who work with off-site colleagues, who are active on committees in professional associations, or who work with consortia have to function, at least part of the time, as members of virtual teams. As more libraries permit at least some workers to telecommute, that type of team likely will become more common in the future.¹⁵

The Use of Teams in Libraries

It is hard to get any exact numbers about how many libraries are actually using teams. Teams are fairly common in large academic libraries. The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) surveyed its members in 1998 and found that teams are at least being experimented with in most ARL libraries. Five respondents to the survey described their organization as "team-based"; these libraries had completely restructured and moved from the traditional departmental organization of academic libraries to an organization that used teams instead. Sixty-four percent of the respondents reported having at least one permanent team in their organization, whereas 73 percent reported having at least one project team. Of the respondents, 72 percent had used teams for less than five years, which provides some indication of the growth in the use of teams in large academic libraries. The teams in the ARL libraries were used to accomplish many functions, including bibliographic services, library services assessment, project coordination, outreach, Web development, document delivery, and digital collections management.¹⁶ A more recent study of academic medical libraries also found a growing number that use teams.¹⁷ Some academic libraries, for instance those at the University of Arizona and the University of Maryland, have been completely restructured into team-based organizations.¹⁸

Teams are common in many other types and parts of libraries. They frequently are found in technical services departments where they perform functions such as acquisitions, cataloging, and database and Web site maintenance.¹⁹ Teams also are used in many reference departments. For instance, the Ohio State University Health Sciences Library has a Reference and Information Services Team (RIST) that manages the library's reference services and oversees access, outreach, and education services. RIST has a team coordinator position that rotates among members on a semiannual basis. The team coordinator is responsible for preparing team agendas and facilitating team meetings. Some libraries are using virtual teams consisting of librarians, library technicians, and information system specialists from different library departments or institutions to span temporal and geographic barriers by communicating by e-mail and other electronic media in order to accomplish specific projects.²⁰ Even though most of the libraries that have adopted the team approach have been large academic libraries, teams are now being implemented in smaller libraries. The Teton County Library, a public library in Wyoming with a collection size of about 100,000 and 34 full-time employees, has reorganized itself into a team-based organization.²¹ All indications show that the number of libraries using the team-based approach is growing steadily.

There are also libraries that have not adopted team management but use working groups or committees as an integral part of their structure. Although, as discussed in a following section, there is a difference between true teams and other types of work groups, many of the principles related to team building and developing are applicable to committees and other types of groups used in library management.



Some Definitions

Team management: The use of teams in organizations in lieu of a traditional hierarchical management structure.

Self-directed or self-managed teams: Teams that have been given a charge by senior management relating to a specific project or ongoing process and that have almost complete discretion in deciding how to accomplish their objectives.

Project teams: Teams that are constituted for a set amount of time to work on a specific project or task. Sometimes called a task force.

Cross-functional teams: Teams that include participants from a number of departments or specializations.

Virtual teams: Teams that have members who are located in different geographic locations and rarely meet face-to-face. Team members communicate and work through electronic technologies such as the Internet and teleconferencing.

Although teams are becoming more common, library managers need to think carefully about the implications of changing to a team approach before they begin to implement the process. A manager cannot just create teams and expect them to work effectively. Instead, successful teams are built and developed. Individuals act differently when they are part of a group than when they are alone, so any manager contemplating establishing teams should become familiar with the literature concerning group behavior. Using teams often complicates the pay structure of organizations as managers have to decide whether all team members are paid the same or given the same percentage of pay increase.²² It is also sometimes difficult for managers to switch from managing in a hierarchical organization to a team-based one because it takes different skills to manage teams.

Even the use of the word *team* can produce confusion. Obviously there are many types of teams, ranging from sports teams to debating teams. Although all teams share a number of similarities, the focus in this chapter will be on work teams. A work team is a group of people who interact and coordinate their work in order to accomplish specific work goals. Teams differ from groups in many aspects. The most important of these are listed in table 17.2.

As can be seen in table 17.2, teams differ from groups in that there is greater unity of purpose and loyalty in a team. There is also a greater tendency in teams to hold one another (rather than a supervisor) mutually accountable for achieving the team's goals. Work teams typically are led in one of two ways. Some of them are self-managed or self-directed; that is, they provide their own leadership. Other teams have a leader who coordinates the team's activities. That position sometimes rotates among the members of the team. A team almost always is able to perform at a higher level than a group because its members are committed to a team goal that they are willing to put ahead of

TABLE 17.2 Differences between Teams and Groups

Teams	Groups
Share or rotate leadership roles	Have a designated leader
Share authority and responsibility	Have little sharing of authority or responsibility
Have individual and group accountability	Have individual accountability
Have members who work together to produce results	Have results that are produced by individual effort
Have collective work products	Have individual work products
Share results and rewards	Have little sharing of results and rewards
Discuss, decide, and share work	Discuss, decide, and delegate work to individuals.

Source: David I. Cleland, *Strategic Management of Teams* (New York: Wiley, 1996), 38.

their own self-interests. “Teamwork is purposeful interdependency, which has the synergistic effect of accomplishing more than the sum of the parts.”²³

Because the use of teams is becoming increasingly popular, it is likely that although some managers say that they use team management in their libraries, they merely are giving lip service to the concept of true team management. Just because you call a group a team, it does not make it one. Renaming an existing department a team without changing how the work is done will not make a department a true team. As Ruth Metz writes:

A group of people does not make a team. Naming a group a team does not make it one. A group saying that it is a team does not make it one either. For instance, a group of managers is not a team just because they call themselves a management team and meet together regularly. A work unit may call itself a team when it is actually more like an armed camp. Effective, high-performance teams have structure and operate under conditions that enable the team to perform effectively.²⁴

Implementing teams in the truest sense is a profound change for most organizations and their staffs. There is often apprehension that use of teams might result in a loss of productivity because more time would need to be spent in meetings. Some people fear that the use of teams will produce mediocre decisions or a decline in productivity. In addition, there is often a fear of loss of control. As the ARL report mentioned earlier states: “The command and control cultures that team-based cultures replace are quite persistent, and the transition to teams can be especially difficult for middle managers, who may perceive it as a loss of power and influence.”²⁵

There is evidence that the use of teams in organizations can be effective, especially if the work to be done is complex. Advocates of team management say that teams are beneficial because they increase productivity, lead to better decisions, enhance employee commitment to work, foster creativity

and innovation, increase organizational flexibility, and lead to greater customer satisfaction.

However, the use of teams has some disadvantages. It sometimes takes a group longer to achieve a goal than it would take an individual because group decision making is almost always slower than individual decision making. If teams are not carefully selected, they may have members who lack interest or motivation and do not assume their fair share of the responsibility. Social loafing is the tendency of some group members to reduce their work effort in groups and let the other team members take up the slack. This social loafing can cause tension and resentment within a group. Also, sometimes group decisions are not as good as individual decisions because team members begin to think alike and do not consider alternative solutions (sometimes called groupthink). Finally, teams sometimes make riskier decisions than an individual would because the members feel that no one individual is responsible for the decision. The group dynamics that are inevitable in any team situation can complicate the workings of the team.

Nonetheless, organizations that have moved to a team-based approach are growing in number, and it is likely that even more libraries increasingly will use teams in part or all of their organizations in the future. Teams can be effective if the organization that employs them understands the complex nature of teams and group dynamics. The next sections of this chapter will look at ways to build effective teams.

Characteristics of Effective Teams

No team that will be expected to work well together should be put together haphazardly. Instead, managers need to choose team members carefully, ensuring that the mix is right for the task that has to be accomplished. Research on teams has shown that certain characteristics are associated with successful teams. The most successful teams demonstrate:

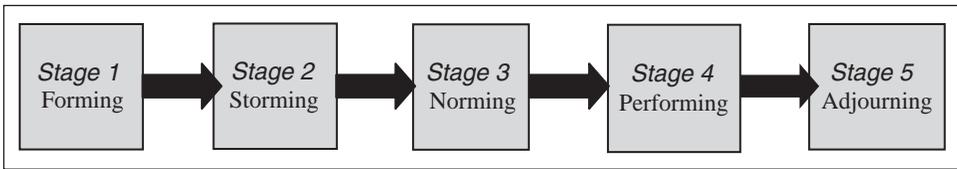
- **Relevant skills.** The members of a team have to have both the technical and the interpersonal skills needed to allow the team to be effective.
- **Mutual trust.** The participants in effective teams trust the other members of the team.
- **An appropriate size.** Although teams will vary in number of members, the most effective team size usually is considered to be from 5 to 12 members. These numbers produce a team large enough to have varying points of view but still small enough to remain workable.
- **Good communication.** The most effective teams have learned to communicate well. They convey messages that are understood, and they have learned to incorporate feedback from other team members and from management.
- **Appropriate leadership.** Effective teams have leaders to help them achieve their goals. These leaders are not necessarily managers; they can be members of the team itself, as is common in self-managed teams. The role of the manager in a team is not so much to provide direction as to serve as a coach and a facilitator.

- **Clear goals.** The most effective teams know what their goals are and how to measure progress toward those goals. This clarity of goals helps ensure the team members' commitment to the achievement of the goals.
- **Loyalty.** Effective team members display loyalty to their group. They identify with the team and are willing to work hard to help the team accomplish its goals.²⁶

Stages of Team Development

No team, no matter how carefully its members are chosen, functions at a high level of efficiency when it is first formed. People who are asked to work together for the first time have to get to know each other and learn how to work together. There is a sequence of development that most teams go through. The best-known model of how teams evolve over time is called the five-stage model.²⁷ These stages—forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning—are illustrated in figure 17.1.

Figure 17.1—Five Stages of Team Development



Source: Adapted from. Bruce W. Tuckman and Mary Ann C. Jensen. "Stages of Small Group Development Revisited," *Group and Organizational Studies* 2 (1977): 419–27.

When individuals are first placed in a team, the team begins to take shape. In organizations, people are usually placed in a team because of a work assignment. The first stage, that of forming, occurs when the team is first organized and when the definitions of its purpose, structure, and leadership begin to be decided. The second stage, usually called storming, takes place in the early stages of a team's development. The new members of the team are questioning many things, including who has control of the team and what is the team's direction. After the storming stage is finished, the norming stage begins. This is a relatively tranquil period. There is now a sense of the team's identity and purpose. The team has assimilated a common set of expectations, the norms, concerning what is expected of each team member.

One Library Team's Behavioral and Procedural Norms

The Reference Department at the University of Albany, State University of New York, is organized as a team known as RefTeam. Among other tools developed by that library team was an agreed-upon set of written

behavioral and procedural norms. The behavioral norms, which relate to acting within the group, include:

RefTeam members communicate developments relative to other team members' areas or responsibilities.

RefTeam members agree to participate and voice opinions at meetings.

RefTeam meetings are a high priority. Members unable to attend will submit information to the RefTeam leader.

RefTeam members advocate for RefTeam and RefTeam initiatives, perspectives, and projects.

RefTeam members use supportive language about RefTeam.

The procedural norms are the methods by which the team agrees to function. Among the agreed-upon procedural norms are:

Keep RefTeam meeting time restricted. Meetings should last no longer than one hour.

Focus on the agenda during RefTeam meetings.

Revisit RefTeam goals and projects on a quarterly basis.

Annually visit role of each member.

Share RefTeam decisions; inform others outside of RefTeam when appropriate.

Seek feedback from non-RefTeam members who work at the reference desk: What do you need from us?

William F. Young, "Reference Team Self-Management at the University of Albany," *Library Administration and Management* 18, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 185-91.

The performing stage exists when the team is fully functional. Team energy has gone from getting to know one another and setting the norms to accomplishing the tasks.

The last stage, adjourning, takes place in teams that have a limited time span, such as a task force. The team has completed its task and is preparing to disband. The team turns away from task performance and directs its attention to disbanding. If the team's work has gone well, there is a feeling of accomplishment. Many in the team may feel sadness and loss because of the breakup of the team and the loss of camaraderie.



What Would You Do?

The Avondale Public Library has decided to begin to use teams in most parts of its organization, and a number of new teams have just established. You have been put on one of these teams and have been working as a team member for two weeks now. You are beginning to think that working in teams is not very effective. The workplace is full of conflict. People seem to be constantly testing each other and trying to

establish control, and not much real work is being done. What is going on here? Should you be discouraged? What would you do to try to improve things?

Basic Steps in Team Building

Wise managers realize that requiring people to work together does not ensure that a team will result. Instead, a team must be nurtured and developed. Lucile Wilson has delineated the basic steps that managers should follow in setting up successful work teams.

- First, focus on competencies when assigning team members. Look for self-starters and those who take pride in their work.
- Next, establish and communicate clear team goals. Be sure to allow time for the team to invest in the goals and make them their own.
- Establish deadlines and ground rules at the first meeting. Devoting attention at the beginning of the project prevents trouble later on.
- Involve each member of the team in the project. Use individual talents. Take advantage of opportunities for the personal growth of staff members.
- Maintain a results-oriented team structure. Monitor progress to be sure everyone is on track. Frequent feedback reduces miscommunication.
- Provide a collaborative climate and share power. Managers gain, not lose, power when teams share responsibility and authority.
- Strive for consensus. Explore all sides of an issue and get agreement from the group on solutions.
- Keep the group motivated. To meet team goals and fulfill library objectives, a manager needs strong skills in motivating other members of the group.
- Build confidence. Make each team member feel important and essential.
- Build trust and respect. Although team members must earn trust and mutual respect from one another, a manager can set examples of these qualities.
- Be flexible. Both team members and leaders function better if all can adapt to needed change. If a new approach is needed, try it.
- Furnish external support and recognition. Provide recognition for group and individual accomplishments; recognize the team when it reaches major goals.²⁸

Employees who have never worked in teams cannot be expected to make an easy transition from an organizational structure in which they always have been told what to do to one in which they are responsible for their own self-management. Libraries that are considering implementing a team approach

can learn a great deal from other libraries that already have implemented this type of management system.

The Roles People Play in Teams

Teams are composed of individuals with different temperaments and skills. Teams need to have this diversity in membership to achieve success because different skills are needed at different times. As team members work together, different individuals will assume different roles within the team, dependent upon aspects of their skills and personality. Because teams usually need to accomplish a number of different types of tasks, it is important to have team members who are able to play specific roles in helping the team achieve its objectives. Researchers have done a great deal of work on the roles people play within a team setting and the relationship between these roles and the team's effectiveness.²⁹ In general, these roles fall into two broad categories. The task management roles are those that facilitate accomplishing the task that needs to be done. The team maintenance roles are focused upon the emotional well-being of the individuals in the group and on the functioning of the group itself, rather than on the task that needs to be done. Some of the major roles in each of these categories can be seen in table 17.3.

Teams need to have individuals play both types of roles. People usually play more than one role in a team, and it is very common to have people who play a variety of roles, depending on what is needed at a particular time. Most people are either stronger at the task management role functions or the more people-centered roles, although some team members may be equally skilled

TABLE 17.3 Useful Roles Played on Teams

Task Management Roles	Team Maintenance Roles
Seeking or giving information or opinions. Initiating ideas or suggesting activities.	Harmonizing to keep conflict and tension at a minimum.
Timekeeping to ensure that the task remains on schedule, that meetings cover the agenda, and that team members' time is used appropriately.	Gatekeeping to ensure that all team members have an opportunity to express their opinions.
Summarizing to help in clarifying and putting parts together. Recording and keeping notes of discussions.	Encouraging others.
Elaborating on the comments or suggestions of others. Clarifying by presenting issues or solutions, providing facts and data, and keeping team members up to date.	Bridge building or negotiating to help bring opposing views together.
Acting as devil's advocate or skeptic to avoid potential problems.	Compromising.

in both types of roles. Teams should try to avoid having members who do not contribute to the set of roles because these individuals contribute little to the success of a team.



What Do You Think?

Think of any type of group meeting that you have attended recently. Did you see people play any of the roles that are described in this section? What type of roles do you typically play in a group or team setting?

Finally, there are some roles that people adopt in groups that impede the work of the team and make it less effective than it could be. These dysfunctional roles, which hinder the work of the team, consist of behavior that is directed toward fulfilling personal rather than team needs. Some of these harmful roles are:

- Blocking other people's suggestions or contributions or the team's attempt to come to closure.
- Being overly aggressive and competitive and always pushing for one's own way.
- Putting down other team members.
- Withdrawing and not participating in the team's activities.
- Disrupting meetings by excessively interrupting, talking excessively, and holding side discussions.
- Acting like a clown and not taking anything seriously.

It is clear from this discussion of roles that all the members of a team are interdependent upon one another. The success of a team depends upon a group of individuals who need to cover a wide range of goals necessary to accomplish a task and to keep a team functioning smoothly. For this reason, teams with a great diversity of personalities and skills often perform better than more homogenous teams.



Role-Play a Situation

You are part of a newly formed cross-functional team that has been implemented to select and purchase a new integrated library system. The team brings together people from many departments of the library and includes many people that you do not know well at all. The first team meeting was last week and the second is scheduled for this morning. You have noticed (it would be hard not to) that one of the team members tends to dominate the discussion. This group member not only talks too much but refuses to let others enter the conversation. You have decided to try to put a stop to

this. What type of comment could you make to this group member at the meeting this morning to try to improve group communication?

Team Communication

A team's effectiveness to a large extent depends on communication. Obviously, the ability of team members to understand and to communicate is what enables them to work together collaboratively. All of the factors discussed previously related to improving communication are also applicable to team communication. But in addition to interteam communication, there is communication in any team-based organization that takes place between the managers and the members of the teams.

Managing teams requires different types of managerial skills including a different type of communication, and managers have to learn how to communicate in a fashion that fits this new model. Instead of being a boss, a team leader functions more like a facilitator. The manager goes from being someone who tells employees how to do things to one who facilitates the employees doing it on their own. Coaching is a term that is used often in describing the type of communication that occurs between managers and members of teams. Coaching is defined as "the purposeful and skillful effort by one individual to help another achieve specific performance goals."³⁰

If a library has self-directed work teams, coaches can be useful in a number of situations. Sometimes they are needed when goals have to be redefined or clarified, when new skills have to be acquired, or when a team is struggling and appears to have gone off track. Sometimes difficult tasks confronted by a team, such as where to allocate resources, are facilitated by a coach.³¹ Managers who are skillful coaches help their organization get the most out of teams.

The Future of Work Teams in Libraries

Some libraries that have switched to a team-based approach have been highly successful. For instance, the professional librarians at Dowling College are organized into a self-managed team, and they report that it has worked very well. The librarians there "work well together, trust each other, value their differences, mentor one another and respect each other, as well as enjoy working, laughing and having fun together."³² Many other libraries have similar success stories to report about using teams. They have found that teams produce high-quality work and that they are beneficial for the employees because "teaming people up to grapple with challenging service issues, even if the process is inefficient by some standards, gives people a place at the learning table."³³

Other libraries either have experimented with teams and abandoned them or have decided not even to explore the approach. The team-based organization provides benefits, but to implement it successfully, a library has to be willing to invest considerable time and resources in the effort. For some

libraries, the benefits that result from the team approach are not worth the cost. The decision about whether the team approach to management should be implemented will be different for each library, and the decision may change as an organization itself evolves. At the present, there are libraries that are successfully using team-based management and others that are successfully managed without the use of teams. But, in every library, there is more employee participation in management now than in the past, and this participation likely will increase as libraries continue to change in response to the demands of their users and to rapid changes in information technology.

CONTINGENCY APPROACH TO LEADING

Many varying and often contradictory perspectives on leading have been covered in the preceding chapters that have discussed this managerial function. What is clear is that neither behavioral scientists nor experts from any other discipline have been able to provide managers with a specific prescription or universal theory about the most effective way to lead. The factors that constitute this management function are complex and multidimensional, and it therefore demands great skill to perform well. Unlike early theorists in management who relied on general principles to provide the one best way, most modern management theorists are convinced that there are few across-the-board concepts that apply in all instances. The situations with which managers deal are much more complex than originally realized, and different variables require managers to adopt different approaches. Instead of advocating a universal best theory, most contemporary management experts urge managers to be flexible and to adapt to the situation at hand. These experts, if asked how a manager should act, would say, "It all depends."

Managers should not become skeptical about the diversified approaches to management being offered to them. Instead, they should realize that in the case of leading, as in most other instances, one size does not fit all. There is no quick fix or magic solution. But this does not mean that managers should not become familiar with as many of the approaches or tools as possible. All of these new methods are useful, but none of them is guaranteed to be effective in every situation. Instead, managers have to look at the organization and its goals and then adopt a management strategy that will match the overall needs of the organization, its employees, and its customers.

Nor should managers completely deride management fads as useless practices that will go away if only ignored. Reexamination of some recently dismissed fads seems to indicate that they have survived, developed a new life, and remained influential in managerial practices. For instance, although Management by Objectives (MBO) is not being followed in its pure form in many organizations, its principles can still be found in much of our current thinking about goal setting. Even though quality circles and Total Quality Management (TQM) are not as popular as they once were, current interests in continuous quality and team-based initiatives have direct links to those earlier fads.³⁴ The best parts of these fads have survived and have been recycled, albeit in a different form.

Unfortunately, for those who are looking for one right way to manage, that one right way does not exist. Good management is more complex than that.

Contingency or situational theory, already discussed briefly in chapter 2, provides managers with a way to bring all of the disparate approaches together in an approach that provides the flexibility necessary to manage modern organizations. Contingency theory recognizes that every organization is unique, existing in a unique environment with unique workers and a unique purpose. Contingency theory is used to analyze individual situations and to understand the interrelationships between the variables to help managers determine what specific managerial actions are necessary in particular situations. What is appropriate in one situation may be inappropriate in another. The best techniques can be selected only after one is aware of the particular circumstances of each case. Contingency management suggests there must be a fit between the task, the people, the organization, and the external environment. In each organization, managers must be sure that each unit develops structures, measurement schemes, and reward practices that encourage its members to focus on the appropriate set of activities.



Try This!

Think about an organization that you know fairly well. This may be either a library or another type of organization. Imagine that this organization is trying to adopt contingency theory management and has hired you as a consultant to help implement this approach. Analyze your organization in terms of the tasks it performs, the people who work there, the structure of the organization, the management style used, and the external environment in which the organization is located.

For an expanded version of this exercise, go to the organizational analysis exercise at <http://www.lu.com/management>.

Managers who wish to use the contingency approach must understand the complex and interrelated causes of behavior in an organization and then use their intelligence and creative ability to invent a new solution or to judge which existing solutions might best be used.³⁵ Library managers using this approach might decide that different sections of the library would benefit from different styles of leading. For example, a part of a technical services department that performs highly standardized, repetitive work might benefit from a more task-oriented style of management. In the same library, a more people-oriented style of management might be appropriate for the reference department.

The contingency theory can be used in functions of management other than leading. For instance, as discussed in section 3, there is no one best way for an institution to be organized. There are also no surefire approaches to planning, controlling, or managing human resources. Many variables, such as size, type of organization, and type of tasks being performed, play a role in the choice to be made. In the broadest sense, contingency theory applies to all of the managerial functions and provides managers with a comprehensive model that can be used to achieve maximum effectiveness in all managerial functions. With

the contingency approach, the performance of managerial functions is closely tied to an analysis of the total system: the organization, its subsystems, and its environment. Contingency theory offers a flexible approach that is better suited to the complexity of management than are other approaches. "The basic deficiency with earlier approaches is that they did not recognize the variability in tasks and people which produces this complexity. The strength of the contingency approach ... is that it begins to provide a way of thinking about this complexity, rather than ignoring it."³⁶ Although the contingency approach to management certainly does not provide all of the answers, it provides a way of making sense of a number of disparate approaches.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this section has dealt with the function of leading, which is the most interpersonal aspect of management. The chapters have dealt primarily with how to motivate, lead, and communicate, but other related topics such as ethics and team building have been included. The ultimate aim of leading is to allow the organization to achieve its objectives through the activities of the people employed within it. Leading means getting employees to work efficiently and to produce results that are beneficial to the organization. In short, leading is getting things done through other people for the good of the organization.

Because leading is so complex and multifaceted, managers often find it one of their most challenging and important tasks. The need for managers to excel at leading becomes more pressing as organizations grow larger, as the rate of change in the environment increases, and as demands by employees for a more rewarding work life proliferate. The next section of this book discusses ways that managers coordinate a modern organization. Finally, some of the challenges and rewards of managing in the twenty-first century will be discussed in the last chapter of this book.

NOTES

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406 Leading

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