

Course 1: Manager: definition, levels and roles

INTRODUCTION

The concepts of manager and managing are intertwined. Management refers to the process of using organizational resources to achieve organizational objectives through the functions of planning, organizing and staffing, leading, and controlling. In addition to being a process, the term management is also used as a label for a specific discipline, for the people who manage, and for a career choice.

DEFINITION

A manager is a person responsible for the work performance of group members. (Because organizations have become more democratic, the term group member or team member is now frequently used as a substitute for subordinate.) A manager has the formal authority to commit organizational resources, even if the approval of others is required.

How Are Managers Different from Nonmanagerial Employees?

Although managers work in organizations, not everyone who works in an organization is a manager. For simplicity's sake, we'll divide organizational members into two categories: nonmanagerial employees and managers. Nonmanagerial employees are people who work directly on a job or task and have no responsibility for overseeing the work of others. The employees who ring up your sale at Home Depot, make your burrito at Chipotle, or process your course registration in your college's registrar's office are all nonmanagerial employees. These nonmanagerial employees may be referred to by names such as associates, team members, contributors, or even employee partners. Managers, on the other hand, are individuals in an organization who direct and oversee the activities of other people in the organization. This distinction doesn't mean, however, that managers don't ever work directly on tasks. Some managers do have work duties not directly related to overseeing the activities of others. For example, regional sales managers for Motorola also have responsibilities in servicing some customer accounts in addition to overseeing the activities of the other sales associates in their territories

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LEVELS OF MANAGERS

Top-Level Managers

Most people who enter the field of management aspire to become top-level managers—managers at the top one or two levels in an organization. C-level manager is a recent term used to describe a top-level manager; these managers usually have the word chief in their title, such as chief operating officer. Top-level managers are empowered to make major decisions affecting the present and future of the firm. Only a top-level manager, for example, would have the authority to purchase another company, initiate a new product line, or hire hundreds of employees. Top-level managers are the people who give the organization its general direction; they decide where it is going and how it will get there. The terms executive, top-level manager, and c-level manager can be used interchangeably.

Middle-Level Managers

Middle-level managers are managers who are neither executives nor first-level supervisors, but who serve as a link between the two groups. Middle-level managers conduct most of the coordination activities within the firm, and they are responsible for implementing programs and policies formulated by top-level management. The jobs of middle-level managers vary substantially in terms of responsibility and income.

First-Level Managers

Managers who supervise operatives are referred to as first-level managers, first-line managers, or supervisors. Historically, first-level managers were promoted from production or clerical (now called staff support) positions into supervisory positions. Rarely did they have formal education beyond high school. A dramatic shift has taken place in recent years, however. Many of today's first-level managers are career school graduates and four year college graduates who are familiar with modern management techniques. The current emphasis on productivity and cost control has elevated the status of many supervisors.