

Manage - Lead - Administer

An Analysis of the Management Functions

Roy C. Kern

“What’s My Line” and “The Name’s the Same” are apparently big business on the TV screen, but they seem rather inappropriate and confusing in the business office. The efforts of some men in responsible executive positions to put a name on the tasks they perform, prompts one to cock an ear and furrow a brow. In my experience, these men in business have been confusing each other by their use of the terms, managing, leading and administering. My own observing and listening has probably exceeded my reading related to these general areas. There are writers and speakers who come quite close to delineating the more precise differences, but with hardly any consistency.

For instance, a professor in describing the objectives of one corporation’s management development programs says in a leading personnel publica-

tion: “To help department heads to become more effective *administrators* by counseling them in *management skills* . . .” Is this really what we are trying to do? One might better expect to make more effective administrators by broadening their knowledge of administrative techniques, and to help managers to better manage by making them more proficient in management skills. When a man is described as a good administrator, I somehow surmise that he is a poor manager. And when one is referred to as a poor manager, the implication is strong that he is just a lousy leader. Rarely, it seems, do we find a sound administrator who can lead effectively. With the usual feelings of futility, we turn to the dictionary for help in defining our terms, and we discover the following from a rather random sampling:

From Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 1963:

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Administer: To superintend the execution, use or conduct of; performance of executive duties; to manage affairs.

Administration: The act or process of administering; performance of executive duties: MANAGEMENT

Manage: Handle, control; to make and keep submissive; to alter by manipulation; to succeed in accomplishing; contrive; to direct or carry on business affairs.

Management: The act or art of managing; capacity for managing executive skill.

Lead: To guide on a way especially by going in advance; to direct on a course or in a direction; to tend toward a definite result, etc.

Leadership: Guide, conduct; a person who has commanding authority or influences; a person that leads, etc.

What verbal underbrush! These tangled definitions that decline to define no longer take many of us by surprise. To dip into a dictionary, other than to verify spelling, is to pursue a mirage of meaning. The "definitions" themselves run the gamut from arid to verdant but refuse to zero in on the point of significance. The resulting impression is that words such as "manage," "lead," "administer" are not so much terms to be defined as concepts to be described and properly differentiated. It may even be downright detrimental to permit this trinity of words to float willy-nilly in the business atmosphere because they are too important to our day-to-day communications and plans.

An Art or Science?

By way of further confusing what may well be a real issue, there are many discussions heard, overheard and entered into as to whether managing is an art or a science. Such discussions appear to lack clarity or sense because the terms lack precision. How does

managing differ from leading or administration or, often overlooked, research?⁹ It would seem one way to cope with the question would be to consciously separate the major functions of a business enterprise, a department, or even a particular position of authority within the corporation into these separate parts. This approach would result in a four dimensional view of the operations and would take into account both the specific tasks to be performed and the diverse and complex interrelationships of the executive position. It further emphasizes that what is actually there is a managing-leading-administering-researching function. Do not overlook the hyphens.

Now if we ask, "What is managing as compared to the other three functions?" we might more sensibly conclude: *Managing* is mostly a science; *leading* is largely an art and *administering* is essentially a matter of technicalities. *Researching*, on the other hand, means basically what we think it means: searching again and again into every facet of our effort to discover what has really been going on in the hope of improving methods, products, services, and people relationships.

Pausing for a little longer look at the function which seems most in need of delineation, we note that this version of administering (as husbanding details) is not new, it is only generally forgotten or glossed over. In 1788 Alexander Hamilton, in a contribution to *The Federalist* (No. LXXII), pointed out: "The administration of government in its largest sense, comprehends all the operations of the body politic . . . but in its most usual, and perhaps its most precise signification, it is limited to executive details." We propose using the term in its "precise signification" and omitting the "largest sense" since today it borders largely

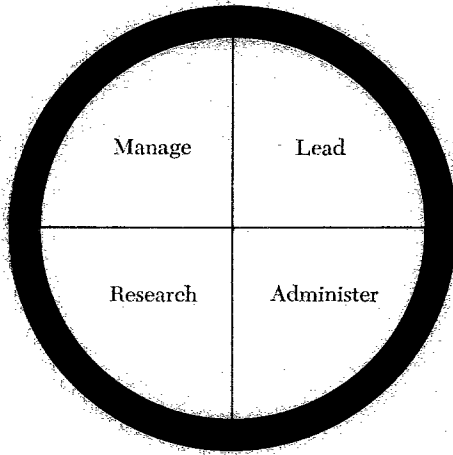
on none-sense. As typified by those corporations who, since World War II, have appointed senior officers in charge of administration, it means more precisely the accumulation of meaningful data, facts and figures; plus recording, processing, retrieving

and providing the means for measuring and controls.

Four Aspects

We might depict these four aspects of the business process in simple graphic form as follows:

Figure 1

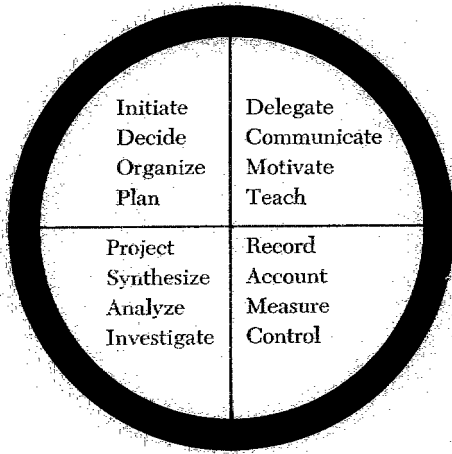


It should be noted that the upper half — managing-leading — combine to represent development and growth; it has to do in the larger sense with innovation, initiation and inspiration. The lower half — administering-researching — is primarily a measuring and maintenance function; it has to do with audit, analysis and synthesis. The left side of the circle — researching-managing — depicts the source and impulse for strategy and long-range planning. The right side — leading-administering — constitutes most of the tactics for the day-to-day performance and success of the enterprise or of the particular position. To be sure, the business executive is surrounded with a complex of circumstances and social forces; with economic realities and

political practices, with opposing groups and publics. These we ignore for purposes of this discussion. But whatever the business purpose or the extent and complexity of the environment, we must develop and maintain; we must indulge in strategy and tactics; we must think hard as well as work hard.

The wheel is certainly an over-simplification of the management cycle; its symbol is too well ordered, too symmetrical and seemingly precise. We are never sure of the beginning and there is only an end when managers fail in some major function. Business managers are the inventors and the victims of their system. The men make the enterprise and the enterprise makes the men. Within the gen-

Figure 2



erally accepted structure of any enterprise, each manager has his own sense of order and organization, his own meaningful format and style of doing things. His self-concept tends to mold his performance, and often, distorts the process and the end result.

One of the readily recognized dilemmas of the businessman is that very few managers can perform to a maximum degree of proficiency in all four quadrants of the wheel, but more disconcerting is the fact that hardly any manager dare admit to others that he cannot. The executive seems to "learn", without actually being taught, that he must not admit to any serious deficiency in any of the required talents of his many tasks. Hence it is readily observed how "infallibility" dawns the morning after promotion and how the unsure person must somehow appear deadly certain and authoritarian. Very often, the executive is more deeply involved in wielding authority than he is in discharging responsibilities. He can be more concerned with defending his actions than in correcting his er-

rors; with hiding his weaknesses than in demonstrating his strengths.

Managing

Managing, among other things, calls for aligning and spurring action that leads to objectives; it converts ideas into patterns of performance for profit. The manager orders in the dual sense: he organizes and directs. In another vein, the manager has to do with planning, deciding and ordering mind, muscle, money and material for the achievement of goals and targets. And orderliness usually goes against the grain of our mental make-up. His communications are most often formal and direct and oriented toward programs and processes rather than toward peoples' whims and idiosyncrasies. The manager more often would gain his goals by precept. He sets and assigns clear and sensible channels of authority and accountability. He establishes and announces systems and ways.

For example, in the key area of salary programs and practices, the manager settles on frequency and amount

of increases and exceptions to the rules; the processing, recording and statistics on salaries are the functions of administration. The manager proposes, the administrator disposes. And to keep men performing at top proficiency with delayed or dilatory salary increases may be considered a mark of leadership! Or again, the manager would determine the need, the researcher would determine the kind of budget system desirable; the manager would initiate, the administrator would audit and control budget adherence and practices. The leader might tend to forget what he had budgeted.

Leading

Leading, in a partial sense, is breathing the breath of life into the people-organization to achieve people-goals and people-profits while reducing people-expenses. (Are there really any others? Too often we scan our exhibits, statements and graphs oblivious of what actually lies behind them. Our fond ratios and percentages always reflect circumstances involving people. Our charts, if we look behind them, always symbolize somehow human behavior and influence. Just as the scientists languished for years before they taught themselves to think in terms of matter-energy, time-space, body-mind, etc., the businessman too might be well advised to foresake some of his arbitrary dichotomies and try to think of people-materials and people-profits. To try to assess the corporate condition or position without regard to the people who make it up and make it go, is to indulge in rather dangerous theorizing. Statistics and ratios are made of, by and for people; they cannot exist by themselves.) But to return to the wheel: A leader exudes and imbues the kind of spirit that makes a team of individuals out of a mere collection of people. He creates desire where only a sense of duty or an adherence-to-

practice existed before. He inspires and motivates.

As many have surmised or pointed out, *leadership* consists of a flair, an aptitude, a bent or leaning, perhaps even an instinct, and surely it verges on art (hence it is a capability difficult to instill by instruction). But it is less vague than all this, too. It can be detected in the business situation in many ways. All too many managers are lacking in this regard. Leadership may be a natural willingness to assume the risk of delegation. It is a willingness to "stand out" and a desire to participate. A leader motivates without manipulation; he teaches without indoctrinating. He gains staunch followers by his conduct rather than by "sermons". He sees quite properly that an "executive's job" is a teaching position. He knows inherently when reason is much to be preferred to logic. He counsels with a view to develop rather than reprimand. His sense of mission inspires confidence. By his deeds, he gives recognition to the idea that the need to communicate is as fundamental as the need for food, shelter or sex (a point missed by Maslow!). The leadership function is an appraising, coaching, counseling and approving function. Its demands and methods supply vitality and drive to the organization. Not too long ago President Eisenhower complained in public print that the present administration (another use of the term!), in its conduct of foreign affairs, tended to dominate rather than lead. An observation worthy and typical of a leader. He might well have substituted the word "manage" for "dominate". Many business executives "dominate" more than they lead; some "administrate" more than they manage.

Administering

Administering provides the stuff that efficiency and sound decisions are

made of; the raw material for the creative shaping of plans. The administrator collects, corrects, controls and balances. Administration is that segment of business that today calls for the aid of automation. It is that swelling, paper-shuffling, inundating activity that human minds and hands cannot seem to stem—except, to a degree, with refined methods and procedures. It is detailed practices and accurate handling of bits and pieces which must be gathered systematically into a meaningful whole. Its booming importance is the result of government regulation, policing and interference; inflation and concomitant increasing expenses; narrowing profit margins and sophisticated buyers in fluid and fluctuating markets. It has therefore become a function unto itself, requiring its own time and talents and demanding its own currents and ways.

Perhaps the major challenge here is to have and maintain just enough of the right kinds of records for proper measurement and still avoid palsy of the procedures. Bureaucracies are known to concentrate their major efforts in this area to achieve their minimal and messy results. Records, reports and legalities—facts and figures and statistics—forms and filings and manuals are all brought into being to machine the means and medians and modes of business activity. These data are sometimes used as a substitute for thinking and imagining and creating. Their weighty and false precision can mire the operation in tradition and produce a technical corps of second-guessers rather than a team of forward-looking, innovating executives.

But the need for these functions is of ultimate value if held in proper balance and perspective. No manager can excel without a healthy respect for sound measurement and sensible control. Careful audit, evaluation and appraisal of past performance is pre-

requisite to setting realistic goals, adjusting for miscalculations and minimizing risks. It gives order, system and balance to the enterprise, and acts as a stabilizer for other parts of the wheel. Sound and simple controls contribute to sound decision-making and moves the entire operation closer to the established goals.

Researching

Researching spreads across and probes the total operation not only to keep pace with but to out-distance the many forces that would hinder progress. It is the activity that forestalls surprises and, hopefully, avoids reversals. Research, as a unique function of the business executive and the business enterprise, poses its own, but in a real sense similar, problems. In Figure 1 we placed research between “manage” and “administer” and farthest from “lead”. The thought here is that research merges the imagination of manipulation and science with the observation and fact-gathering of the technician. The successful manager must, to some degree, bring about the merger of these important functions. But he must also recognize that the talents required for each are different even when they are combined in the same task. Many people observe without much imagination; they investigate without benefit of the big picture; they collect and collate data without the ability to synthesize. “They fail to see the forest for the trees.” The business executive, in his role of researcher, must be capable of making pertinent assumptions on the basis of incomplete data; he must design targets and project action with the knowledge that predictions can never be precise. He must have the manager’s courage for risk-taking without the leader’s tendency to impulsiveness; he must have the researcher’s keen insight without the hunch-playing flair of the gambler;

he must proceed with deliberation, but not with the dawdling deliberateness of the typical administrator.

Research, investigation, analysis and synthesis are activities or abilities which in a sense may be regarded as abnormal for adult human beings; for those who have been generally "taught" to see what they want to see and hear what they want to hear; for those who are wedded to their beloved preconceptions, fresh truth is truly rare. We tend to resist investigation's pull down strange paths, so that much of the research that goes on about us sets out to prove a point rather than to find a fact; we prefer to overlook the synthesis that runs counter to our comfortable past patterns of thought; and beyond these innate and acquired barriers to research, is the fact that information is rarely reliable or obvious. Perhaps because it is the rare individual who excels in this function, we often find that people who have this ability are more different (the "odd balls"). It requires an open and flexible and oft times an unconventional mind to research or originate. It takes an ability to cope with contradictions.

Incentive

But perhaps the most common barrier to research is lack of incentive. The system somehow does not make it worth the manager's effort to think and explore. Too often he is not invited and rarely do we demand that he stretch his mind in this manner. His voluntary observations, opinions and suggestions are often ignored or scorned early in his career. His salary increases do not normally depend on his ability and willingness to question the status quo; or his tendency to flout tradition; he is paid "to get results"!

There is a growing concern for the business enterprise and the business executive of the future because of the inflationary complexity and the in-

creasing demands anticipated for both. Some pundits are pointing out that the business manager of the future will have to be a different "breed." This is highly unlikely within a few generations. Breeding takes time, and changing a breed is a highly precarious endeavor. It is just a little more likely that we can undertake to change attitudes, points of view and ways of looking at things. Perspective is all important. If we must despair of breeding top-notch managers—leaders—administrators—researches in one skin, we can at least look to more sophisticated selection and the teaming-up of appropriately separate talents within a group or unit. A deeper appreciation of the proper division of duties involved; a clearer delineation of the separate talents and interests required, might well help us to select, appraise and train for the job to be done. A sloppy use of terms only beclouds our problems by interfering with the proper pairing of talents and the proper use of diverse strengths.

Natural Preference

It is probably true that the four dimensions here described were somewhat arbitrarily separated for the purposes of examination and analysis. It is also true that in day-to-day practice they flow together into a process of executive business behavior. On the other hand, they are different responsibilities and require their own unique accent and qualifications. How much time a given man may spend in each area is partly dependent upon what he thinks he is being paid for, and partly the result of his natural inclinations and endowments. If a man is told he must manage and then his job is so engineered that he must spend most of his time in administration, we have built into the job a conflict of interest, so to speak.

Or, if the man has a deep-seated

preference for administration and we place him in a position requiring a high degree of leadership ability, we have placed him in an incompatible situation. Rarely do these two talents, these two ways of behaving, come naturally and in equal amounts to one person. Probably the best way of minimizing this dilemma is, by careful selection, to complement and supplement the individual incumbent with assistants and associates who possess counterbalancing strengths, interests and values. This is the prime basis for our recognition of specialties in businesses, departments and men. "Give a man a horse he can ride." Fit the qualifications to the requirements and the demands of the job environment.

Specialization

It may be well to remind ourselves that, customarily, a business career begins in some area of administration or research, more often the former. Both tend to narrow a person down to a specialty and restrict his view. Both tend to take attention away from the over-all corporate picture and the nature of the people around us, thus concentrating our efforts on facts, figures, details and ideas while obscuring the human element. This early exposure and experience unfits many for positions of manager or leader.

To manage, to lead, to administer and to research are the four dimensions of a well-rounded company or executive. It is most helpful to know when we are doing which, and when we are expected to do which, if for no other reason than to help us all realize which we are doing well. Furthermore, such awareness helps us to plan conferences, seminars, courses, etc., for development. Conversely, we will not design a course on administration if it is managing we seek to improve; we will not confuse the detailed practices

with the long-range plans; perhaps, most importantly, we can appreciate more objectively the sound administrator who is a weak manager, the strong leader who is an inept researcher, and perhaps this awareness can help us to work with each more meaningfully in the interests of corporate goal achievement.

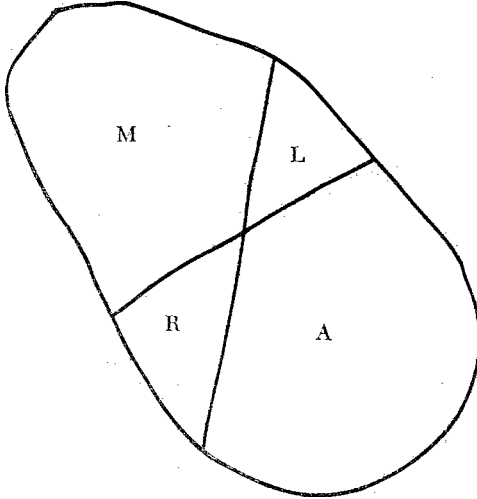
The situation as we observe it in many companies, and all too typical of financial institutions is more like Figure 3.

Most of the time and effort appears to be concentrated in the areas of administration and management; in the areas of contriving, designing and manipulating facts, figures and things. This is human enough, for we may note that if there is anything more difficult than systemitizing things, it is organizing thoughts and concepts—unless, of course, we are to consider standardizing and disciplining people. Thus quite naturally most people struggle mightily to deal with the possible, the plausible; and, insofar as circumstances permit, they avoid the perplexing, the difficult, the people problems.

Balance of Talent

The situation is further compounded and perpetuated by a conscious effort to attract into the organization people who can better manage things rather than people who can lead people. There is also a seemingly pervasive preference for people who can and want *to do* rather than for people who like *to think*. If almost per chance a person is hired who has a talent and preference for thought and research, we do worse than ignore him. We so engineer his job that there is precious little time for thinking; the time then required for serious thought is deemed a waste of time. As a result of these practices, many plans are put into minds minus important ingredients and they are brought out of these same

Figure 3



minds half baked. A talent imbalance is created, promoted and maintained.

Our goals should be (1) to seek a balance of abilities, of temperaments and of interests compatible with the tasks; (2) to fully recognize and ap-

preciate individual differences in jobs and people; and (3) to constantly promote an awareness and respect for these important differences—then team them up and help them to function participatively.

Detroit ASTD Award to Larsen

Dr. Spencer A. Larsen, Director of the Applied Management and Technology Center, Wayne State University, has been awarded a "Certificate of Recognition for Distinguished Educational Service" by the Greater Detroit Chapter of ASTD.

The award was presented to him September 12, by Chapter President William E. Jackson, Administrator of

Education and Training for the Chevrolet Division, General Motors Corporation.

Previous recipients of the Chapter's Distinguished Educational Service Award are Dr. Samuel M. Brownell, former Superintendent, Detroit Schools, and Dr. William E. Stirton, a Vice President, University of Michigan.