WHAT DO MANAGERS REALLY DO?

Most books deal with what managers should do.

Ways to describe managerial work:
• calculated chaos
• controlled disorder
• celebrating intuition

Eastern mind vs Western mind
Textbooks on managerial work:
• planning
• organizing
• coordinating
• controlling

DISCUSSION:

WHAT DO YOU DO AS A MANAGER?
FOLKLORE AND FACTS
About Managerial Work

1. Folklore:
   *The manager is a reflective, systematic planner*

Fact:
*Mangers work at an unrelenting pace. Their activities are characterized by brevity, variety, and discontinuity. They are strongly oriented towards action and dislike reflective activities*
Evidence: findings

a. CEOs: 50% of activities lasted longer than 5 minutes; 10% exceeded 1 hour
Steady stream of callers and mail

b. Foremen: 583 activities per 8-hour work shift

c. British CEOs: worked a half-hour or more without interruption only about once every 2 days
d. Verbal contacts: 93% arranged on ad hoc basis
One of 368 verbal contacts related to general planning

Explanation:

a. Manager simply responding to the pressures of the job

b. Managers wanted to encourage the flow of current information

c. When the manager must plan, it is done so implicitly in the context of daily actions, not
some abstract process reserved for 2 weeks at the org’s retreat

d. Plans of CEOs exist only in their heads – as flexible, but often specific, intentions

e. The managerial job does not breed reflective planners; the manager is a real-time responder to stimuli, conditioned by the job to prefer live to delayed action
2. Folklore:

*The effective manager has no regular duties to perform*

FW: Managers told to spend more time planning and delegating, less time seeing customers and engaging in negotiations. These are not true tasks of the manager. Manager = good conductor, orchestrating everything in advance; in absolute control.
Fact:
In addition to handling exceptions, managerial work involves performing a number of regular duties, including ritual and ceremony, negotiations, and processing of soft information that links the org with its environment.

Evidence: findings

a. Small companies: No staff specialists -- CEO does it all
b. CEOs – natural part of job to see important customers

c. Ceremonial duties – presiding over special dinners, etc are an intrinsic part of the job

d. Managers play a key role in securing “soft” external info and in passing it along to their subordinates
3. Folklore: 

The senior manager needs aggregated information, which a formal management system best provides

Manager sits at apex of pyramid with giant MIS

Managers have commands 6 media: documents, phone calls, scheduled and unscheduled meetings, observation tours, and e-mails
Fact: Managers strongly favor the oral media – namely phone calls and meetings

Evidence: findings

a. Brits: managers average 66% - 80% of their time in oral communication
   USA: 78%

b. Mail is a burden: “get rid of all this stuff” sessions on weekends
c. Skim over routine reports and periodicals, ritualistically

Explanation:

a. Mail analysis: only 13% was of specific and immediate use; not much of mail provide live and current info

b. Managers cherish “soft” info, esp gossip, hearsay, and speculation.
WHY? The reason is its timeliness; today’s gossip is tomorrow’s fact

c. Oral info is stored in people’s brains – the strategic data bank of the org is not in the memory of its computers so much as in the minds of the managers

d. Managers extensive use of the oral media helps to explain why they are reluctant to delegate tasks.
Time consuming to “dump memory” – to tell that someone all they know about the subject

Manager is damned by his/her own info system to a “dilemma of delegation” – to do too much him/herself or to delegate to subordinates with inadequate briefing
4. Folklore:

*Management is, or at least is quickly becoming, a science and a profession*

Science? Systematic, analytically determined procedures

Profession? Cannot even specify what managers are to learn
Fact:
The manager’s programs – to schedule time, process info, make decisions, and so on – remain locked deep inside their brains

To describe those programs, we rely on words like judgement and intuition, which are labels reflecting our ignorance
Observations:

Managerial actions today do not differ from those of a hundred years ago.

Info – still much oral, with new help from electronic media

Managerial work is enormously complicated and difficult:

• burdened with obligations
• cannot easily delegate tasks
• driven to overwork
• forced to do many tasks superficially
Characteristics of managerial work:
• brevity
• fragmentation
• oral communication
Manager: person in charge of an organization or one of its subunits

All are vested with formal authority over an org unit

From formal authority comes status which leads to various interpersonal relations

From status comes access to info
Info enables the manager to make decisions and strategies for his/her unit
INTERPERSONAL ROLES

1. **FIGUREHEAD ROLE** -- status
   Ceremonial nature of work
   a. 12% of time
   b. 17% of incoming mail
   c. routine, little serious communication, no important
communication, no important
d-m.
d. important for smooth functioning of an org; cannot be ignored
2. LEADER ROLE
Formal authority vests the manager with great potential power

Leadership determines how much of it he/she will in fact use

Responsible for the work of the people in that unit
a. hire and train own staff
b. motivate and encourage
c. reconcile indiv and org needs
3. LIAISON ROLE
   Makes contacts outside his/her
   vertical chain of command

   Spends as much time with peers
   and other people as with
   subordinates

   CEOs’ contacts:
   Clients, business associates and
   suppliers; managers of similar
   orgs, govt or trade org officials,
   fellow directors in outside
   boards; etc – between 25 and 50

   WHY?
Cultivates contacts largely to find info

In fact, building his/her own external info system – informal, private, oral but nevertheless effective
INFORMATIONAL ROLES
Communications is his/her work

Manager emerges as the nerve center of his/her org unit – the center of the info flow

May not know everything, but typically knows more than any one of his/her subordinates

Info from other managers of equal status who are also nerve centers in their orgs

Dev powerful info data bases
4. MONITOR ROLE
Perpetually scans the environment for info, interrogates contacts and subordinates, and receives unsolicited info via network of personal contacts he/she has developed

Good part of info comes in oral form – gossips, hearsay, speculation

Natural advantage in collecting soft info for his/her org
5. DISSEMINATOR ROLE
Manager shares and distributes much of this info with subordinates who would otherwise have no access to it.

Manager also passes info from one subordinate to another.
6. SPOKESPERSON ROLE
Managers send some of their info to people outside their units – speeches, lobbying efforts

Must inform and satisfy the influential people who control his/her org unit

Deal with influential outsiders – directors, shareholders, financial analysts regarding the performance of the org
DECISIONAL ROLES

Info is not an end in itself; it is the basic input to decision-making.

The manager plays an important role in the d-m system, committing the unit to important new courses of action.

As the nerve center, the manager has the full and current info to make the set of decisions that determines the unit’s strategy.
7. ENTREPRENEUR ROLE

Seeks to improve unit by adapting it to changing conditions in the environment

Development projects at CEO
a. projects do not involve single decisions or even unified clusters of decisions. Emerge as a series of small decisions and actions sequenced over time

b. multitasking – CEO maintains a kind of inventory of the dev
projects at various stages of dev
Juggler – all in the air; one comes down and is given a burst of energy and sent back into orbit; some come onstream, others discarded
8. DISTURBANCE HANDLER ROLE

Managers respond to high pressure disturbances and changes (looming strike, energy shortage) beyond their control.

Reality:
Poor managers ignore situations until they reach crisis proportions.

Good managers cannot anticipate all the consequences of the actions they take.
9. RESOURCE ALLOCATOR ROLE

Decides who will get what when

Allocates his/her own time

Designs the unit’s structure, that pattern of relationships that determines how work is to be divided and coordinated

Authorizes the important decisions before they are implemented – to fragment this power is to encourage
discontinuous d-m and disjointed strategy

Need to consider the impact of each decision on other decisions and on the org’s strategy. The decision would be acceptable to those who influenced the org as well as ensure that resources would not be overextended

Key is timing
10. NEGOTIATOR ROLE
Considerable time in negotiation. To commit org resources in “real time”
GESTALT: INTEGRATING THE ROLES

Holistic approach
E.g. a manager without liaison contacts lacks external information crucial to the org
Result: can neither disseminate info subordinates need nor make decisions that adequately reflect external conditions

Herein lies the problem of team management
Difficult to divide up the ten roles and reintegrating them
Most difficulty is with the informational roles. Without full sharing of managerial info (primarily oral) team management breaks down

Gestalt does not mean equal attention to each role:

Observations:

• sales managers: more attention to interpersonal roles, reflecting the extroverted nature of marketing activities
• production managers: more attention to the decisional roles, reflecting their concern with efficient work flow

• staff managers; more time in the informational roles, since they are experts who manage depts that advise other parts of the org

Yet interpersonal, informational, and decisional roles remain inseparable
TOWARD MORE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

The manager’s effectiveness is significantly influenced by their insight into their own work.

Major managerial logjams stemming from the oral nature of the manager’s information:

- dilemma of delegation
- the data base centralized in one brain
- problems of working with the management scientist
1. The manager is challenged to find systematic ways to share his/her privileged information

- regular debriefing with key subordinates
- weekly memory dump on the dictating machine/PC
- maintain a diary of important info for limited circulation

Trade-off:
Efficiency in disseminating info Vs the question of confidentiality
Reality: job pressures drive manager to be superficial in his/her actions –
- overloaded with work,
- encourage interruption,
- respond quickly to every stimuli,
- seek the tangible and avoid the abstract, and
- make decisions in small increments, and
- do everything abruptly
2. **Dealing with pressures of superficiality:**
   - give serious attention to the issues that require it,
   - step back from tangible bits of info in order to see the big picture, and
   - make use of analytical inputs

Danger:
Responding to every issue equally – need to prioritize

Solution:
Work closely with planning staff or those with experience in
planning – when little time available in addressing complex issues

The “planning dilemma”: Managers have info and authority
Analysts have time and technology
3. **Gain control of his/her own time:**

   *Turn obligations into advantage and those which he/she wishes to do into obligations*

Lots of demands for obligatory time:

Turn a speech into a lobbying for a cause or a promotion of the org

A meeting is a chance to re-organize a weak dept

A visit to an important customer is a chance to extract trade info
Do things that are important – turn them into obligations

Free time is made, not found; forced into schedule

Wants to innovate? Initiate a project and obligate others to report back

Need certain external info? Establish channel that will automatically keep him/her informed

Need to tour facilities? Publicly commit to doing so