



SECTION I

Challenges for Managers and Key Concepts

1.0 Overview

How can managers manage in the context of increasingly complex organizations? How can they reconcile conflicting and diverse interests and get the job done? Are there ways that managers can increase their potential to develop and implement an agenda in an organization? How do they personally cope with demanding jobs and develop their managerial identity? These are some of the questions that face today's private and public sector managers. These challenges are even more extreme for first-time managers who are experiencing their first taste of supervising staff and working with superiors and others.

The title of this course, "The Politics of Management," stems from the essential challenge of management: to bring together conflicting interests in order to achieve the aims of the organization. The skills required to achieve this kind of organizational leadership are in most respects "small p" political skills of establishing a vision, mobilizing support, and building partnerships. The Guide places a particular emphasis on the challenges for first-time managers in developing their managerial identity.

The framework and concepts presented here are based on an extensive review of relevant management literature, several hundred studies of executives, my own research on the role of

deputy ministers and chief executive officers (CEOs), my management experience of many years, and my time at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. In addition, I have drawn on some important research by Linda Hill on the challenges of becoming a manager. This research is particularly relevant to the students of this course, most of whom are starting their careers and often working part-time in government or non-profit organizations.

This Guide helps students address some of these management and leadership challenges. It aims to provide a managerial perspective based on the realities of managing a modern organization and the challenges faced by managers in reconciling conflicting priorities and interests. Moreover, this Guide includes a practical management framework that will provide the focus for all readings, cases, research, and discussions in the course.

1.1 What Is Management?

Management involves getting the work of the organization done through other people.

The nature of management is closely linked to the nature of organizations. We define organizations, as Chester Barnard did in *The Functions of the Executive*, as

“. . . a system of co-operative activities of two or more persons, something intangible and impersonal, largely a matter of relationships . . .” (p. 75)

According to Barnard, the distinguishing feature of organizations is that they are systems of activities composed of human beings who are co-operating. And to co-operate and work effectively, these people must develop certain structures, communications, and operations. It is the task of ensuring that the overall organization is working that Barnard calls executive functions, or the functions that are specifically “management” in nature.

In 1937, Barnard developed a definition of the executive functions that has stood the test of time and that is still relevant today. He wrote:

Executive work is not that of the organization, but the specialized work of maintaining the organization in operation. (*The Functions of the Executive*, pp. 215–17)

In other words, when a sales agent becomes a sales manager, his/her job is no longer selling cars or houses. The job is developing the organization, the incentives, and the framework to help sales agents sell cars or houses. Even though they may engage in some non-executive work, their primary job is to “maintain the organization,” or to ensure that the system within which sales agents work helps to achieve the organization’s objectives. This lesson, as Linda Hill has explained in *Becoming a Manager*, is the most difficult lesson for first-time managers to learn.

Barnard described three executive functions that are critical to any organization:

- Formulate and define purpose (this is essential for linking staff to the overall direction of the organization).
- Provide a system of communication (enabling staff to understand what is expected).
- Secure essential efforts (enabling staff to contribute to the organizations). Barnard’s view was that employees had considerable power simply by not giving their best, or by not linking to the organization’s objectives.

Barnard also indicated that the executive, as head of an organization, has an obligation to find the proper equilibrium or balance between the organization and the external environment.

Rather than engage in the fairly tiresome distinction between managers, executives, and leaders, I will simply use the term manager to mean those individuals at supervisory, middle, and senior levels who have a responsibility for mobilizing and guiding organizations and their staff. Also, I will use the term managers, leaders, and executives interchangeably throughout the Guide.

Henry Mintzberg, who is recognized as one of Canada’s global gurus on the subject of management, has done an excellent job of

pulling together the views of various authors on management in his recent book, *Managing*. Following are a few quotes from that book.

On the distinction between management and leadership

Frankly, I don't understand what this distinction means in the everyday life of organizations. Sure, we can separate leading and managing conceptually. But, can we separate them in practice? Or, more to the point, should we even try? (p. 8)

How would you like to be managed by someone who doesn't lead? That can be awfully dispiriting. Well, then, why would you want to be led by someone who doesn't manage. That can be terribly disengaging; how are such "leaders" to know what is going on? As Jim March put it: Leadership involves plumbing as well as poetry. (p. 8)

On the role of the manager

Managing takes place on three planes, from the conceptual to the concrete: with information through people and to action directly. (p. 49)

We might thus characterize the manager's position as the neck of an hourglass, sitting between a network of outside contacts and the internal unit being managed. (p. 30)

Managers frame their work by making particular decisions, focusing on particular issues developing particular strategies, and so forth, to establish the context for everyone else working in the unit. (p. 50)

Mary Parker Follet wrote in 1920 that "the test of a foreman is not how good he is at bossing, but how little bossing he has to do." (p. 215)

On the authority and style of managers

What you do as a manager is mostly determined by what you face as a manager. (p. 13)

While every manager has to make the job, he or she also has to do the job. That is why managerial style cannot be considered out of context, independent of where it is practiced . . .” (p. 13)

When a specialist becomes a manager, the biggest change often is (or should be) the shift from “I” to “we.” Having become responsible for the performance of others, the first instinct, as Hill found out, is to think, “Good, now I can make the decisions and issue the orders.” Soon, however, comes the realization that formal authority is a very limited resource of power and that to become a manager is to become more dependent on others to get things done. (p. 65)

Mintzberg in *Managing*, also quoting Hill in *Becoming a Manager*:

Management has just as much, if not more, to do with negotiating interdependence as it does with exercising formal authority . . . being a manager means not merely assuming a position of authority but also becoming more dependent on others. (p. 65)

Summary

Managers are responsible for the total organization and their job is to provide direction to that organization, create meaning for staff and stakeholders, help establish the fundamental purpose and agenda of the organization, and enable the people and groups in the organization to work effectively and efficiently to achieve the purpose of the organization.

The manager’s role is, however, deeply situational. It depends on the challenges facing the organization. The role of the manager often can involve the full range from strategy and policy and

external relations to operational details, if they are relevant to achieving a successful organization.

The major challenge that first-time managers face is defining their role and agenda in the context of the specific situation, and to develop a managerial identity and style that is both appropriate to their strengths and personality and that is required in a given managerial situation. This is the subject of the next section.

1.2 The Unique Challenges of Supervisors and Middle Managers

This section describes the unique challenges of supervisors and middle managers in a range of organizations. There are three examples provided: a policy director, a head of an enforcement unit, and a general manager of a golf course. These examples will be used throughout the Guide. In addition, this section describes the results of the general research on the challenges of transition to middle manager jobs.

Jacob Martin, director of policy: Aboriginal Affairs

Jacob Martin is a respected senior policy advisor who has developed some important policies and cabinet documents. He is the senior officer in a group of sixteen policy analysts and administrative staff. He has six years' experience in a government organization and a Masters in Public Administration with a focus on policy. When his director is promoted to director general, Jacob assumes that job.

Although Jacob has little management experience and is not too comfortable with the idea of being a manager, he wins the job due to his knowledge of the policy area and his capacity to develop briefings and presentations for senior management and stakeholders. He was also recognized for his capacity to work with teams of policy analysts and other groups. As a director with a staff of sixteen, Jacob begins to recognize that he has made a huge transition and that he needs to learn what it means to be a manager. Unfortunately, like most first-time managers, he is

going to learn on the job, in the midst of significant challenges that involve new areas of expertise such as managing relations with superiors, developing a budget and allocating resources, and dealing with staff performance issues, etc.

Diane Lavoie: manager enforcement, Fisheries

Diane is a senior fisheries officer in the Maritime region who has demonstrated superb skills at working with fishers and negotiating with clients and other groups. After five years in this position, she is promoted to be chief of fisheries enforcement, reporting to a director general who has overall responsibility for regulatory affairs and intergovernmental co-operation.

In moving from this role as a fisheries officer and working with teams on specific projects, she is now responsible for a group of twelve enforcement officers, many of whom have twenty years or more experience than her, and some who are close friends. What kinds of challenges is she going to face moving into this position? How can she best establish her role while maintaining a strong and effective group? How will she wrestle with the personal challenges of balancing her work and family life and coping with the deficiencies she will inevitably face in doing this job?

***Ronald Storie:
general manager, Heritage Golf Course***

Ronald is a golf professional with a degree in business and golf management. He has been a successful golf professional at the Heritage Golf course, responsible for managing a golf shop with four staff. When the general manager is fired because of poor organizational skills and poor member relations, the club decides to appoint Ron to the job. Ron is keenly aware of the fact that over ten years there have been six general managers, only two of whom were considered competent and successful. One moved to another club, and one left due to illness. The others were “let go” at the end of the golf season.

What kinds of challenges is Ron going to face in making this transition? He will now be responsible for the overall physical management of the course, the clubhouse, and the food and

beverage facility, as well as golf operations. Instead of just four golf professional staff, he will now have all of these groups reporting to him and he will report directly to a board of directors and the president of the board.

These kinds of transitions are not easy and can be treacherous to those who are not able to adapt and learn the new requirements of the job.

The challenges facing these three managers are very typical in government organizations and, on a smaller scale, in non-profit organizations. According to Linda Hill, this is the most difficult transition that managers face because it requires them to move from the role of an individual contributor to that of managing an organization. Unfortunately, there is not an easy bridge to these new roles as managers, and many people find they are facing a very different set of challenges and skills than on their previous jobs.

Generally, new managers form a managerial identity in their first couple of jobs, and their approach does not change substantially over their careers. Judging from the experiences of many of the students in the Politics of Management course and discussions with a range of executive coaches, many managers in government and non-profit organizations are facing huge difficulties dealing with their jobs, and many arrive at a managerial position long before they are ready to take on that challenge.

Managers who cannot adjust to these new roles face severe personal challenges. Their inability to manage their jobs also results in a range of counterproductive tendencies such as: micro-managing to the extreme; lack of team building; poor relations with superiors; inability to develop agendas; and difficulty managing relations with other groups. This results in the creation of dysfunctional organizations, which creates conflict and stress for staff and a lack of innovation and productivity.

Employees who have worked in a hostile, conflict-ridden, stagnant organization with a terrorizing boss know the toll that it can take on staff. Those who have experienced a superb and caring working environment with strong leadership and excellent

morale, teamwork, and performance will remember those organizations for years as the best places they ever worked.

Unfortunately, there are far too many organizations where managers cannot cope with their jobs and end up creating a negative environment, eroding potential performance, undermining the development of staff, and jeopardizing the success of the organization.

Since many of the students who take my course at Carleton University recognize that at some point in their careers they could be in supervisory or middle-management positions, or at least work with such managers, it is important to explore why this transition is so difficult and what it means to the forging of a managerial identity.

There is little research on the challenges faced by middle managers in public organizations, but fortunately, there has been some excellent work on private sector organizations that is relevant to both non-profit and government organizations. Linda Hill has written two significant books on this subject and has developed many cases. The first book is *Becoming a Manager: How New Managers Master the Challenges of Leadership*; it is a study of first-time managers and the challenges they face in the first two years on the job.

Hill's work is extremely relevant to the needs of students taking the Politics of Management course. Most of the research was focused on private-sector executives who made the transition from individual contributors (e.g., car salesman to sales manager). As the three examples above illustrate, managers in government and in non-profit organizations face the same types of challenges.

Five key challenges for supervisors and middle managers

Based on the experience of the writer and the above research, there are six major challenges faced by supervisors and middle managers. These challenges are all outlined in the superb *Becoming a Manager* book by Hill. This Guidebook highlights five of the challenges that Hill mentions.

(i) Recognizing the complexity, uncertainty, and demands of the job

As the head of a unit, a manager comes face to face very quickly with the fact that he is the pivot point between his group and his superiors and other groups; and he must deal with the overall environment facing the organization, which is usually complex with many issues. His job is to manage up and out and at the same time manage the overall work of his group. Hill explained this with these words:

Managers have to juggle diverse, often ambiguous, responsibilities and are enmeshed in a web of relationships with people who often make conflicting demands: subordinates, bosses, and others inside and outside the organization. As a result, the daily routine in management is often pressured, hectic and fragmented. (pp. 13–14)

(ii) Defining one's as a manager

The hardest part of the transition from individual contributor as a program officer, salesman, or policy analyst to supervisor or manager is to define one's role and where one can add value to the organization. This is where the quote by Chester Barnard really becomes useful. Managers need to define their role in terms of maintaining the organization, not doing the work of the organization. They need to define their role in terms of how they balance the external environment and expectations of superiors with the need to secure and engage their staff in achieving the purpose of the organization. Linda Hill found this to be the case in her research.

The new managers generally defined their new positions by their responsibilities, not their relationships. Starting out as new managers they did not appreciate the distinction between being primarily responsible for people rather than the task. . . . All new managers were uneasy about managing relationships with superiors and peers. (p. 21)

(iii) Understanding the limitations of authority and how to lead organizations

One of the surprises that first-time managers and supervisors find is that once they get to be the boss, the authority of the position does not equate to significant power and influence. As a result, they have to find other ways to lead their groups and achieve the results required.

As John Kotter has illustrated in his book *Power and Influence*, the complexity, diversity, and interdependence of organizations often means that the key groups that are required to achieve an agenda are outside the authority of a manager. Managers have to find ways to mobilize their organization to achieve results. Linda Hill, in her research on first-time managers in their first year on the job, described the challenges these managers faced in her book *Becoming a Manager*.

The managers did not realize that they were confronting a basic reality of managerial work: that management is as much a position of dependence as a position of authority. They had to learn to lead by persuasion and not by directive. (p. 100)

During their first year the managers became aware of some of the major principles in exercising authority: establishing credibility, building subordinates' commitment, and leading the group. . . . They still had much to learn about how to exercise power and influence; now that they understood some of the principles, they had to implement them. Exercising power and influence, especially without relying heavily on formal authority, is a challenge for even the most seasoned managers. (pp. 111–12)

(iv) Managing themselves: dealing with the stress of learning a new function and the inherent conflicts in the job

Linda Hill has also found that most first-time managers go through a very difficult period developing their managerial identity, which

involves a lot of soul-searching about their capabilities, difficulties in terms of time management, and challenges in dealing with conflicts or expectations of staff. For many of these managers, it took at least a year to become comfortable in the role and to know how to carry out the job.

Through their experience, they had to learn to reframe their understanding of what it meant to be a manager and feel competent in their new role.

The managers not only struggled with anxiety about their performance, but they also grappled with what it felt like to be undergoing a change of identity. They reported feelings of marginality, of being betwixt and between. They found “changing from” as traumatic as “changing to.” . . . the promotion to manager was a mixed blessing because it forced the managers out of the specialty with which they identified. They lost their sense of mastery and of who they were. (pp. 177–78)

(v) Developing the required understanding of the political or relationship-building requirements of the job and capacity to manage

One of the major challenges faced by supervisors and middle managers is recognizing that there are “political” aspects to their jobs that involve networking and relationship building.

Hill summed it up this way:

To succeed, most of the new managers acquiesced to their “political” responsibilities. They acknowledged that they should devote time and energy to developing relationships with those outside their unit. (p. 83)

As they became aware of and accepted both their agenda-setting and network-building responsibilities, they began to recognize just how right they had been during their first days on the job. Time management, ability to set priorities, and decisiveness were critical managerial skills. Now . . . the challenge they faced was more complex. First, they

had to be able to set the agenda for their unit, to ensure that they were focusing on the things that were the most important . . . Second, they had to manage the tradeoffs, a very delicate balancing act among their responsibilities. (pp. 79–80)

Hill researched the prime qualities that are required to make the transition from policy or program officer to supervisor or manager:

From interviews I was able to identify the prime qualities the managers saw as part of managerial character: self-confidence, willingness to accept responsibility, patience, empathy and ability to live with imperfect solutions. Most said such factors of temperament were critical in making the transition successfully. (p. 167)

In addition, Hill notes that the development of this capacity occurs mainly through the experience of doing the job. In essence, they became managers through the experience of managing.

There is some preparation that can be done to ease this transition from individual contributor to manager. However, it is likely, based on Hill's research, that managers have actually to go through this experience completely to understand and be comfortable in a managerial role. This transition—as we will see below with Diane Lavoie, Jacob Martin, and Ron Storie—is not just cognitive learning. It involves carrying out new roles and developing the emotional strengths required to manage an organization.

One of the great contributions of Hill's book is that it helps managers going through this transition understand that they are in good company, and that they can make this transition smoother by learning from the experience of other first-time managers.

Middle managers in the public sector

One of the observations by the author in his article on middle managers, "Middle Managers: Upscale Supervisors or Emerging Executives," in the Canadian federal government was that they had to recognize that in making the transition to managers, they were no longer expected to be technical experts.

They were required to understand the environment they worked in, the realities facing superiors. Moreover, they had a responsibility to develop an agenda and direction for their group that was realistic and achievable within the context of their organization. In other words, they had to recognize that there is a “small ‘p’ political” side to their job involving building relationships and developing support for an agenda or direction.

The Paton research on middle managers shows that public sector managers face many of the same challenges as first-time managers in the private sector. Public sector managers face the challenge of managing interdependence within and without their organizations, perhaps in an extreme form.

Public sector managers had to recognize that they had to manage their relationships with superiors in a way that helped their boss to achieve their objectives and, at the same time, enable their own organization to meet their objectives.

Prior studies have addressed the complex accountability affecting Canadian deputy ministers in relation to, for example, the prime minister, the ministers, central agencies, etc. This is illustrated vividly in Osbaldeston, *Keeping Deputy Ministers Accountable*. Junior managers face similar complexity and uncertainty in their working environments, as they depend on many different groups. However, their authority is often very limited.

Like senior executives, junior managers need to follow the advice that Kotter has outlined in *Power and Influence*, of developing an agenda, building a network of support, and implementing that agenda through the network. As the author explained in his article on middle managers, junior managers, too, need to think like executives and manage their environment in order to achieve their agenda.

As an absolute minimum, managers at the chief and director level need to understand the environment that top executives face and endeavour to build relationships in order to achieve their superiors’ and their own agenda.

The Paton article also illustrates that the political environment of government, the pressures of dealing with the public and the press, and other considerable constraints are not limited to

senior executives such as deputy ministers. A program manager, or a regional director general in, for example, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, or Fisheries and Oceans, also requires a lot of managerial, leadership, and networking skills to manage their environment and achieve their objectives.

Middle managers will continue to have to learn how to manage in an uncertain and complex environment. . . . The more senior executives focus on working with ministers, parliamentarians, and external groups, the more important middle managers will become to carry out program and departmental management functions in the context of the overall policy directions and agenda of the minister. . . . To manage in this environment, middle managers will be required to develop the strategic perspective, environmental sensitivity, and broad understanding of departments and government that is usually associated with senior executives. (Paton, *Middle Managers*, p. 259)

Summary

Managers and supervisors can be successful in meeting the challenges of their new positions if they understand and accept the inherent complexity and difficulty of the job; define their role as manager as distinct from a program officer or policy advisor; understand the power relationships and decision-making in their organization; forge a managerial identity; and develop the capabilities and emotional intelligence required to lead their group.

Jacob Martin, as a recently appointed policy director; Diane Lavoie, as a new manager of enforcement; and Ronald Storie, as a general manager of a golf course, will all likely face the challenges that Linda Hill and Paton identified.

Before becoming general manager of the Heritage Golf Club, Ronald Storie has only managed a pro shop with some staff; now he is responsible for managing all aspects of a golf course, including areas where he has little experience or credibility. He also is taking on a job where the failure rate is astounding. He will need

to quickly develop his managerial identity and define his role. Unfortunately, as Hill has described, he will be doing it while on the job with the board of directors and members, as well as staff, looking over his shoulder.

Given the lack of serious management training in most public organizations, and the lack of support or advice for managers who struggle with their roles, there are far too many instances where managers face serious difficulties doing their jobs and are never successful in a managerial role.

A manager who is struggling with his or her job is not pretty. This can result in serious problems for organizations and particularly for the staff. It also can create havoc in the lives of these new managers who are just not comfortable in their jobs and never quite feel that they have a “handle” on how to carry out their role successfully.

The Politics of Management course is designed to improve the capacity of students to:

- Understand what management involves
- Analyze the organizational environment and power relationships
- Think like a manager and develop a managerial identity
- Determine the best way to develop an agenda or strategy for carrying out particular management jobs—especially in their first supervisory or management job

1.3 How Do Organizations Work? A Managerial Perspective

To be effective as a manager, one has to understand how organizations work. Because management takes place within a specific and changing context, it is very difficult to rely on general theories to guide managerial behaviour. The history, culture, structure,

environment, decision-making process, and players in each organization are different. In fact, the same organization might operate quite differently over a period of a few months.

A manager needs to know the factors, or influences, that can shape a particular organization and its decision-making processes and recognize certain trends or patterns. The executive has to, in effect, put together his/her own analysis of the organization, based on the factors at play, and has to understand how he/she interacts with the organization. The organization may be analyzed from three different perspectives:

- The overall dynamics of the organization as a whole, its environment, and its systems
- The key relationships among the groups and players within the organization
- The major issues, events, or decisions the organization faces, often within a relatively short time period

This Guide will briefly describe these three levels of analysis and their significance for managers and executives. In addition, readings in other areas of organizational behaviour, human resources, and organizational change may also be relevant. This course, however, will be focused on what these concepts mean in practical terms to the executives who have to lead and direct such organizations.

Overall dynamics of the organization and its systems

To best understand the overall dynamics of an organization, students should refer to John Kotter's *Organizational Dynamics*, which explains the six key elements required for analysis. The chart in that book is an excellent reference for understanding these factors. This chart will be included in the readings for the course.

- Environment (external and task)
- Dominant coalition
- Employees and other tangible assets
- Formal organizational arrangements
- Social systems
- Technology

(i) Environment

Kotter describes the environment as including two aspects:

- a. The external environment
- b. The task environment

The external environment is the broader context within which the manager and the organization must operate. It could include the economy, the political environment, societal values, relationships with other governments, etc. The task environment refers to the key suppliers of resources (Kotter, *Organizational Dynamics*, p.12). This would include funding organizations, those that are integral to delivery, and those in a relationship of direct interdependency such as in, for example, immigration and the RCMP, which must co-operate in the delivery of border services.

There is a wealth of research (Lawrence and Lorsch, *Organization and Environment*, p. 209) that illustrates the need for organizations to interact with their external and task environments, and organizations have to be designed to respond to these requirements. As Barnard noted many years ago, the role of the manager is often to determine how best to balance external requirements with the goals of the organization for which they are responsible.

(ii) Employees and other tangible assets

This dimension includes factors such as the size of the workforce and the nature of the assets of the organization—land, infrastructure, tools, and money (Kotter, *Organizational Dynamics*, p.14).

The range can vary widely among organizations. For example, a department of national defence can have tens of thousands of employees, dozens of locations in the country and overseas, and literally billions of dollars in equipment, some deployed abroad. Compare this to a central agency that has a few hundred staff, is located in one building, and has as its major material assets computers and computer systems. Likewise, their dynamics and their challenges will vary widely.

(iii) Organizational structure

This element refers to the formal organizational arrangements and systems that shape the operations of the organization. This includes the division of labour, hierarchy, and operational systems (Kotter, *Organizational Dynamics*, p.15). Kotter argues that organizational structures and systems can have a major impact on organizational dynamics. This is why it is so critical for managers to understand the structure and systems of their organization, and their likely impacts on the available options. One part of understanding the organization is the degree of differentiation and integration as defined by Jay Galbraith in *Designing Organizations* (Appendix A).

(iv) Social systems

The social system, according to Kotter, is the culture and social structure of an organization (Kotter, *Organizational Dynamics*, p.18). Organizations develop cultures and values that lead to the establishment of social systems, where groups sharing a common perspective work together more easily than groups that have a different background and organizational culture.

(v) Technology

Kotter defines technology as the techniques, or approaches, that the organization uses to achieve its objectives. He does not define technology as machines or equipment, but more in terms of processes. For example, the technology for a central budget agency may include: the review of submissions, the development of policy, the establishment of budgets, and controls for

departments. This is very different from a fisheries department that allocates quotas for fishing and enforces regulations in the field; or a revenue department that processes millions of tax filings and interprets the application of the tax code.

(vi) Dominant coalition

This element is extremely useful and important for managers to understand. Kotter defined it basically as the: “minimum group of co-operating employees who oversee the organization as a whole and control its basic policy making.” (Kotter, *Organizational Dynamics*, p.20)

To identify the dominant coalition, one needs to look at the major decisions made by the company, department, or association and ask who had to be involved and provide support.

Most of the time, the dominant coalition includes the senior people in the hierarchy, but not always. For example, sometimes the minister and chief of political staff take on the major policy role and allocate implementation to the deputy minister. In this case, even the deputy minister might not be critical to the dominant coalition for overall policy decisions. In other situations, it might be the deputy who is the real power broker, and the minister is content to focus on a few areas of interest and focus on his constituency.

In non-profit organizations, the key members of a dominant coalition are usually on the executive committee, or are prominent board members who represent key organizations. In some cases, however, a person will be part of the dominant coalition because they are able to articulate approaches to policy and gain support for their position.

In governments, managers are continuously assessing power relationships to understand who is shaping the decisions and how the various players interact. This is essential to determine if a cabinet document will “fly” or not.

The organizational dynamics components developed by Kotter are not new. What is really useful is how he puts them together into a framework that helps managers understand how organizations work.

The idea that these elements, in the medium term, will need to be in alignment, or achieve some sort of equilibrium, is a very significant insight. Managers can use this understanding to determine how to respond to issues when becoming aware of a major non-alignment.

If an organization faces a major change in its external environment there will be a non-alignment with the organizational structure, social systems, or other elements. This will require, through a chain reaction, that some adjustments be made to maintain alignment.

Take, for example, Research in Motion (RIM). It faced a major market shock in 2012, as Samsung and Apple developed their hand-held phones with many more applications. This eventually put a strain on the unique co-management regime of the company, required a change of the dominant coalition to a new leader, and brought about serious changes to the organizational processes involved in product development and the product itself. By 2013, they had made a lot of adjustments and launched new products to try to re-establish alignment with the market. By 2013, the stock price had somewhat recovered. At least, the company did what it had to do to realign with the market environment. Time will tell whether they were successful or were too late.

Another example might be a government organization that has a very strong culture and social system linked to established professions and universities. Or one that is wedded to a particular approach to implementing environmental or health policies and is based on strong government intervention, complex federal regulations, and lengthy processes. This culture may have little sensitivity to economic realities, economic development, and job creation.

With new governments and changes in political direction, senior management reporting to ministers may face significant challenges balancing the culture, expertise, and advice offered by incumbent officials. The government may want a more streamlined approach to regulation, more provincial versus federal leadership, and higher priority for economic and resource development. This could create a major non-alignment with the leading

officials and social system in a department. Unless the department adapts quickly, the minister will either have to appoint new senior managers, or drastically change the traditional practices and policies of the organization.

So, the reason that Kotter's framework is so useful to the Politics of Management course is that it provides a way of understanding the dynamics of organizations, and it can be easily used by managers to assess their management challenges and the areas they will need to focus on to be effective.

This Guide is designed to provide only the bare essentials that students require to analyze organizations and understand how to manage better within an organizational environment. This brief introduction is aimed to help students assess the context of the major cases in the course; it is within this organizational context that managers must develop and implement their chosen strategies.

To oversimplify this fascinating area, there are seven factors that must be continuously taken into account in analyzing an organization and developing various strategies for management.

All of these aspects of organizational behaviour must be understood within the context of the specific organization and its relationship to a particular unit or group.

- Assessing the External and Task Environment
- Determining the Power Structure and Decision-making processes.
- Identifying the Key Dependency Relationships
- Understanding the History and Culture of an Organization
- Knowing the Incentives that Drive Behaviour
- Analyzing the Forces for and Against Change and Leverage Points

- Understanding the key decisions, and the dynamics surrounding those decisions. These decisions can enhance or undermine the agenda of a manager.

Summary

There is a wealth of literature on all of these aspects of organizational behaviour, including excellent books on organizational culture, decision-making, dependency relationships, etc. It is not the purpose of this Guidebook, however, to provide a course on organizational behaviour. The key elements provided by Kotter in his *Organizational Dynamics* book will provide a sufficient foundation for the assessment of management challenges and the development of strategies to meet those challenges.

The three managers we described earlier—Jacob Martin, policy director, Diane Lavoie, fisheries manager, and Ronald Storie, golf club manager—will all find that, in their jobs, they must understand their organization and its relationships with key stakeholders and the environment.

If, for example, Diane is facing very hostile fishing groups, due to dwindling stocks and prices, the enforcement challenge is going to be very different than if all these groups are happy with their business and the department. She may require more support from superiors than normal, and the skills and capacities of the team might be quite different than if relationships with fishing groups were healthy and stable.

To succeed in his job as a manager, Ronald Storie will have to really understand the dynamics of the Heritage Golf Club and the key factors that lead to the persistent firing of previous general managers. He has to find a way to perform and meet the expectations of the board.

For Jacob Martin, a policy group usually is linked to the overall agenda of the department as derived from the minister, the deputy minister, and the overall government agenda. To do his job well, Jacob will have to understand the overall dynamics of the department and interface with the Aboriginal groups. It might be sufficient for a cabinet document to get the support of the minister, but if the government and the prime minister have

a clear preference, it will be critical further to understand the dominant coalition with respect to that issue.

All three of these first-time managers will enhance their capacity to be successful if they can understand their role and the dynamics of the organizations. This is why understanding organizations and how they work is so essential to effective management.

Power mapping for managers

In addition to the broad systems that shape the organization, a manager must take into account its structure and division of labour and its authority and power structure and identify the key players or dominant coalition.

As various authors have pointed out (Richard Cyert and James March, *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm*, p. 27), organizations are usually made up of coalitions of interests and can often be best understood by analyzing which coalition has the dominant influence at any given time or on a particular issue.

Thus, from a manager's viewpoint, it is very important to analyze how the structure, as well as the key players and groups, can shape an organization. If, for example, an executive committee is dominated by a deputy minister and assistant deputy ministers who more or less share a common philosophy and approach, then it is likely that they will make most of the decisions. However, political leaders, especially after an election, might have a very clear agenda as well. In this case, the main drivers of change will be these elected leaders, and the role of the public service would be to implement their proposed changes.

In a private sector firm, for instance, there might be tremendous differences among the executives on strategy, policy, or operations. If these strong sources of power counterbalance each other, the company will inevitably face a crisis of decision-making, including erratic decisions that are incompatible with a consistent approach.

The Politics of Management course aims to develop skills to analyze power relationships in an organization, understand the major dependency relationships, and identify the levers that a

manager can press. This type of analysis, or “power mapping,” is the focus of one of the first two cases of the course.

To establish and implement an agenda and get the job done, the executive must understand the organization and its players and be able to assess with some degree of accuracy the probability of support for a given course of action. An executive who constantly pursues an agenda, only to be thwarted by other players or by circumstances that he has failed to take into account, will soon lose credibility, as well as the ability to influence superiors, colleagues, and subordinates.

At this point three concepts must be discussed: authority, influence, and power.

Authority

Authority is the right to make decisions, or take action, as the person responsible for an organization or group. It is usually conferred to a position and can involve a variety of activities, such as establishing a budget, hiring staff, reviewing performance, signing off on contracts, or correspondence, etc.

Authors such as Kotter argue that the authority of most positions in complex organizations is not sufficient to achieve a management agenda. Managers and organizations are usually dependent on many other groups and individuals over whom they have no authority. He also argues that managers are dependent on staff for their commitment, expertise, etc. and that authority is not sufficient to elicit the required commitment to achieve an agenda.

Influence

Influence can be loosely defined as the capacity to have an impact on the actions or behaviour of others. In his book *Power and Influence*, Kotter illustrates the myriad ways managers employ to influence others: personality, credibility, expertise, vision, appeal to self-interest, and even humour (pp. 78–92).

Kotter also argues that since most positions do not, and cannot, have sufficient authority, there will be enormous power gaps in any job involving a complex organization; that is, the

gap between the required power to establish and implement an agenda and the power that the manager actually has.

For this reason, managers must develop exceptional abilities to exert influence in order to overcome their dependency on superiors, colleagues, other organizations, and even on staff. As a result, Kotter also argues, in both *Power and Influence* and *The General Managers*, it is in the area of influence where most of the focus should be for executive development. This will be further explored in the last section of this Guidebook.

Power

Power is often defined as the ability of Person A to get person B to do something that person A wants done, or, among organizations, the equivalent. Power can combine both authority and influence and possibly other factors. The successful exercise of power can be observed and measured by determining whether person A was able to get person B to take a particular action, even if person B did not agree or was not interested. If Person B was not subject to the authority of Person A, this would be a clear illustration that this was the exercise of power and not authority.

J. Pfeffer (*Power In Organizations*, pp. 97–135) illustrates many of the sources of power in an organization, which may include control of scarce resources, management of uncertainty, provision of expertise, and control over defining alternatives. One of the first cases in the course focuses on power mapping for a regional director.

Power can often be seen as a negative concept, as in the brutal regime of Stalin or Hitler, or the abuse of power by governments or individuals. In organizations, there are certainly managers who through manipulation, loyalty, fear, divide-and-conquer techniques, and even sabotage can wield power for their own self-interest or aggrandizement. In these cases, having sufficient power does not contribute to a healthy or innovative organization.

In this course, power is a neutral concept related to the capacity of a manager to develop and implement an agenda in complex organizations. The exercise of power in the Politics of Management course is aimed at achieving the attributes of effective organizations, as described in section 1.4, above.

Summary

Developing the power to define and implement an agenda is essential to management in complex organizations with high dependency relationships, and the inherent conflict that occurs in diverse organizations.

Jacob Martin, as a new policy director, will need to quickly understand where the power lies in the department, and what the major priorities are. Is it the minister who is driving the agenda? Is it the Aboriginal groups? What roles is the deputy minister carrying out—trusted policy advisor to the minister, or policy-taker from either the minister or the prime minister? Is this issue part of the overall government agenda and that of the prime minister? Is there a consensus on the problem and a clear path forward, or are there major differences of views among the key players?

As a policy director, especially a newly appointed one, Jacob has to do his own power mapping and be ready to determine his agenda and approach in relation to these factors.

A couple of examples illustrate how important it is for managers to understand the power relationships in an organization. In one federal department, a DG of Communications was known as a “yeller.” She constantly berated staff with a loud and aggressive voice and created a hostile and fearful organizational environment. At one point, thirty staff signed a petition asking for her to be replaced and sent it to the deputy minister. The deputy minister did nothing. Apparently, he had concluded that she was doing a good job; and was not inclined to make hard personnel decisions anyway. Clearly, the staff overestimated their power and did not appreciate how the deputy minister would respond.

A similar situation occurred when the senior management of the RCMP petitioned the prime minister concerning the management style of the commissioner. All of the senior staff eventually lost their positions before the commissioner changed. The commissioner outlasted all of them because, clearly, the government was not yet ready to make the change and had their own reasons for keeping him.

These two examples show how easily it is for managers to misunderstand the power relationships in an organization. The

focus of the discussion of power in this course is to learn to offset the inherent power gaps present in most modern complex organizations, and enable good managers to get the job done.

Managers and the decision-making process

One of the key ways in which managers can shape organizations is by developing a clear agenda supported by the key players, understanding the decision-making process, and using all their influence to ensure that decisions enhance the achievement of their agenda.

One useful reference that helps explain how organizations make decisions is *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* by John W. Kingdon. His analysis is consistent with other authors who found that some organizations tend not to be goal- or objective-oriented. In some cases, many other forces, other than the pursuit of specific objectives, have an impact on the work (e.g., history; professional orientation; avoidance of uncertainty; desire to maintain autonomy; etc.). Hence, it is important for executives to understand what tends to drive the organization in order to manage it.

Kingdon also argued that to understand decision-making, four relatively separate streams must be taken into account: problems, solutions, participants, and opportunities. Sometimes, the relationship between these factors is not clear. As Kingdon states:

Some participants will actually fix on a course of action and cast about for a problem to which it is a solution, discarding problems that do not seem to fit. (p. 91)

In his case studies, Kingdon also noted that the four major streams often flowed separately, and that movement of the agenda often occurred when these streams came together either by chance, or by design.

Once we understand these streams taken separately, the key to understanding agenda and policy change is their coupling. The separate streams come together at critical times. A problem is recognized, a solution is available,

the political climate makes the time right for a change, and the constraints do not prohibit action. (p. 93)

When problems, solutions, policies, and politics come together, there is what Kingdon calls a policy window, of which policy entrepreneurs can take advantage—just like a space window (Kingdon, p. 204).

From a managers' point of view, Kingdon's analysis describes a real and immediate aspect of management. It is clear that to achieve their agenda, executives must be on top of highly current information, know the views of the various players, and understand the coupling of key streams of activity.

The organizational entrepreneur is able to take advantage of events to promote an agenda. The executive who is constantly missing the signals and who has timing problems in presenting his/her proposals will have limited success. One of the qualities of very successful deputy ministers is this ability to influence the decision-making process in government in the midst of complex political and bureaucratic dynamics and complicated processes involving cabinet and ministerial decision-making.

The same is true of managers in non-profits or the private sector. Those who can assess the total environment and trends and bring together pertinent key decisions, at exactly the right time, can develop power and influence. This is how reputations are built and careers made.

One of the most useful and unknown books on public sector management is by Gordon Chase, *How to Manage in the Public Sector*. This book was developed by a fellow student in the Kennedy School of Government in 1981. After the untimely death of Chase in a car accident, Elizabeth Reveal developed this book based on lecture notes. Chase, who was an accomplished manager in Washington and New York City, taught management from the point of view of a manager leading an organization having to deal with politicians or mayors, central agencies, the media, and other organizations.

The work of Kotter and Reveal/Chase bring an incredibly realistic assessment of management with a rare ability to articulate

the craft of management and provide real insights into what it takes to be successful.

These two quotes illustrate the insight that Chase brings to the subject:

Managers operate in a highly political and complex environment. Managers who produce are managers who have learned to turn internal and external relationships to their advantage: who know how to anticipate conflict, promote their agenda, and earn the professional respect of varied and diverse associates. Failure comes often to managers who have not mastered this environment, or taken its pitfalls and perils seriously. To understand this environment requires an appreciation of who the players are and why they are important. (p. 16)

Other players can affect the manager in a number of welcome and not so welcome ways. They can provide or withhold necessary clearances, authorizations, and approvals on budget, personnel, procurement, or regulation—that determine whether programs will flourish or wither. They can provide political support, or they can turn political power against a manager's agency and program. And they can co-operate actively and participate in a program's management and operation—through volunteer services, donation of time and skills, or organize grass roots opposition to a manager's goals and strategies. Determining who is likely to do what, to whom, and when, is a skill as well as a talent. (p. 17)

Successful executives try to manage the process of decision-making to bring together key forces in an organization (e.g., problem; choices; opportunities; participants) and promote a given agenda. They will work to define or frame a problem in a certain way to assist the agenda. They will ensure certain players are involved to support a certain direction. They may limit various

choices or shape alternatives to help their own cause. In government, if they are able to develop a strong synergy with their minister and chief political advisor in a department, their chance of success is greatly enhanced.

Osbaldeston (*Keeping Deputy Ministers Accountable*, p.85) has a chart that illustrates the complex nature of decision-making in government through a diagram that puts the minister and deputy minister at the neck of an hourglass, managing an agenda up to the prime minister and cabinet, out to various key groups, and down to the organization and department for which they are responsible. This chart will be included in the readings for the course.

Osbaldeston also argued that when ministers have a common agenda with senior management and the political staff, their chances of success are significantly enhanced. This is also a good example of the development of power in complex and uncertain situations. By aligning agendas with key department leaders and the overall agenda of the government, the ability to achieve that agenda will be considerably improved and the power gap will be dramatically reduced.

It is important that middle managers, or first-time supervisors in public organizations, understand the agendas of the key leaders of the organization and how they are working together or not co-operating in achieving this agenda.

Based on research with ministers and deputy ministers, Osbaldeston (*Keeping Deputy Ministers Accountable*, p. 90) notes that a major source of difficulty for ministers is their inability to develop a strong, coherent agenda aligned with the key players.

The very same kind of assessment could be done in terms of the relationship between a particular proposal in a private company and the overall direction of the top executives, or strategy of the corporation. A proposal that moves the corporation strategy forward and is aligned with the CEO's mandate will have a much better chance of success than one that is seen to be associated with aspects of the business that the company wishes to sideline or eliminate.

Case example: Jacob Martin

As a new policy director, if Jacob Martin is able to understand how streams of decision-making come together, determine how a particular policy proposal fits with the agenda of the government, minister, and deputy minister, and then identify the opportunities to move forward a policy agenda, he will increase his chances of success.

In an environment with many different coalitions of interests, whether it be government, corporations, or associations, an executive has to work hard at understanding key events and issues and determining how to take advantage of the convergence of issues and opportunities to promote his/her agenda.

1.4 Creating Productive, High-Performance Organizations

The business and management literature is full of studies that outline the requirements for effective organizations. As new managers take on their roles, it is very important that they have a good idea of the key elements that make organizations successful.

There is no doubt that the realities of working in government and non-profit organizations are very different from those in the private sector. An effective manager must completely understand the nature of the organization where he/she is working, and the specific requirements of managing in that environment.

The knowledge of the organization and its systems and the informal relationships one develops over the years can be a huge advantage in developing and implementing an agenda. For that reason, knowledge of the business is a very important factor. But the core challenges are very similar in public, private, and not-for-profit organizations.

There are as many differences within each of these three sectors as there are among them. Running a small, high-tech software company frequently developing new products is totally different than running an established railway or a shipping company. In government, managing the Department of Defence is surely very

different than Aboriginal Affairs or the Health department. Finally, even within the non-profit sector, there are huge differences among these organizations in terms of size, membership, policy direction, etc. that definitely affect the management approach.

To manage in a given situation is necessary to understand the unique nature of that situation and organization, reviewing how it meets the key criteria for effectiveness; then, determining the best management strategy given the realities of that situation.

Regardless of whether one is managing in government, in a private company, or in a not-for-profit association, the key elements of the job are the challenges of:

- Providing direction for an organization
- Developing the required support and commitment to achieve the objectives of that organization

This Guide is focused on the essential challenges and choices that managers must make to ensure that the organization is productive and effective. The perspective of this course is that every organization has its own history, culture, and dynamics, and a good manager has to figure that out and then develop a management approach so that he or she can create the most effective organization possible.

Successful organizations have certain characteristics that managers will need to strive to achieve if they want to accomplish its mission and build a good team.

The article “No-Name Management for the ’90s” by this author and Agnes Jelking outlines seven requirements for successful organizations in the public and private sectors (*Optimum*, Summer 1994, pp. 35– 41). These attributes were derived from an analysis of public and private sector literature on management, leadership, and organizations. These features are still valid today.

There is general agreement on the key attributes of the well-performing organizations. Thus, rather than creating still one more management panacea or buzzword, the authors presented these as elements of a “no-name management” approach, and

argued that we should focus on the consistent application of these basic principles, as opposed to the continuous reinvention of approaches to performance assessment.

Thus, good organizations, according to the no-name management approach, must have:

1. *Clear mission, vision, and strategy.* The literature on companies illustrates that companies that have a clear view of their role and, particularly, their strategy in a highly competitive market, are the most successful.

Jim Collins has written a fantastic book titled *Good to Great*. He shows that those companies with a relentless focus on establishing the right mission or strategy and achieving that mission succeed while others can disappear very easily. The challenge of having a clear mission, vision, or strategy is difficult in the private sector due to changing markets and technology and the capacity of leadership to make adjustments when strategies are not successful. In government, there are even more challenges in creating a consistent direction. The changes in government, ministers, and senior personnel can result in constant adjustments to the directions of departments that make it very difficult to provide a coherent focus and direction.

Notwithstanding these challenges, managers of organizations have to determine the core purpose and direction for an organization and then ensure that the organization works to achieve that direction.

2. *Strong and effective leadership.* Organizations are usually more effective when the leader is able to provide the direction and achieve results. This does not mean that the leader has to be an egocentric “heroic” manager, but there are certain basic requirements of leadership that make organizations successful. Jim Collins’s book also notes that the most successful leaders he has observed are amazingly humble and also believe strongly in a top-notch team approach to decision-making.

Providing direction and a sense of purpose, and building the required team required for the organization to be successful is the essence of leadership and management. Managers must be able to provide this kind of leadership but also to be able to assess themselves and their capacities and make the adjustments necessary to their strategy and their own style, depending on the requirements of the organization and its situation.

3. *Efficient structures and networks.* Most modern organizations recognize the importance of a strong financial management function, or information technology, and recognize the need to adjust organizational structures to meet changing needs. To address their challenges, companies have created single IT, human resources, and financial platforms for operations around the world. So, it is naïve to think that there is huge flexibility in large, global companies. Achieving this kind of uniformity is a major challenge for managers in global corporations.

Like large corporations, governments are complex and require some uniformity and consistency, sometimes to the point of being counterproductive. Generally, governments do create constraints, rules, and procedures that are incredibly difficult to deal with, such as staffing, purchasing, contracting, reporting to Parliament, etc. A lot of these rules and processes are driven by the public nature of government and the requirements for accountability. One of the major challenges for public sector managers is to deal with these constraints but get the job done. This sometimes involves some creativity and the ability to challenge the purpose and approach to rules and practices. It definitely requires a good understanding of these requirements and the people responsible for administering them.

Thus, whatever the organization or sector, managers have to learn to work with the organizational structure, systems, and networks that exist and shape them, where required, to achieve their agendas.

4. *Commitment and involvement of employees to perform their functions productively.* In private corporations that are successful, employees are committed to the company, and the leaders of the organization know how to build and strengthen that commitment. As far as the author has been able to determine, all surveys addressing workplace morale in government departments indicate major challenges.

The nature of government with continuous change, political dynamics, serious constraints, and constant turnover of managers can easily undermine commitment of staff to the public service. When private companies begin to fail financially, the morale issues that emerge are serious. Keeping a strong committed and focused staff in these circumstances is very challenging.

Regardless of the sector, managers have to figure out how to build a quality team and maintain the focus and commitment of staff to the organization.

5. *Clear client focus and efficient quality services and products.* In the private sector, if you do not serve clients with either products or services, you basically disappear as a company. The history books are littered with examples of companies that have missed the boat with clients or customers, while others have thrived. Jim Collins in his book *Good to Great* provides examples of these. Providing services in government is also challenging—whether it be getting a passport, an old age pension, or a driver's licence, or working with regulators on product approvals.

Managers must be able to assess the quality of the service their organizations provide and their distinctive value and to understand how their organization contributes to the quality of services and products. Then, they must be able to lead the organization into making the required improvements.

6. *State-of-the-art management support systems to ensure their continued performance.* The importance of the

administrative and management systems needed to support effective organizations is often underestimated. Unfortunately, these systems are often described as overhead, as opposed to essential functions to achieve the organization's mandate.

The great companies that Jim Collins describes develop superb human resource development policies to ensure that their companies excel. Companies like Fed Express or Wal-Mart have developed IT systems for inventory, shipping, and logistics that are very important to their competitiveness. In government, the financial, personnel, IT, and other systems are also essential for high performance.

Unfortunately, in large public sector organizations, there are so many factors shaping these support systems that they often end up being overly centralized and process-oriented and lose sight of their essential purpose. For example, government contracts as low as \$25,000 require time-consuming open bidding for transparency, and the staffing process gets mired in so many factors that getting the right person for the job becomes almost a subordinate priority.

It is essential for managers to understand these support systems and how they can help to achieve organizational objectives. It is also essential to manage their intrinsic constraints and work effectively with staff in these support functions, if one wants to be effective as a manager.

7. *Capacity for continuous learning and innovation.* This last attribute is discussed in the literature on learning organizations. Given the rapidly changing environment that most organizations face today, it is necessary to have the capacity to learn and innovate on a continuing basis. Again, Jim Collins found in his book *How the Mighty Fall and Why Some Companies Never Give In* (pp. 21–22) that organizations that fail typically ignore the signs of problems and just do not respond and learn.

Managers of organizations must be ready to learn continuously about what makes their organization tick, what

makes their team effective, and how to generate innovation and success. This also requires them to be able to reflect and learn about the effectiveness of their management approach and what adjustments might be required in various situations.

Case examples

To effectively lead a high-performance organization today, managers must learn how to develop these attributes in government, non-profit, or private sectors. In this way, a department or company can create a sustainable organization that is able to focus on its key objectives, achieve them, and constantly learn how to improve itself.

Diane Lavoie, as a recently appointed head of an enforcement group in the Fisheries department, has quickly to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of her organization and its capacity to meet its mission. She will have to understand and maybe even interpret the mandate she has been given. She will have to provide direction to her group in a way that mobilizes them to do the job. She will have to clearly define how her group will deal with clients, which in this case is more complicated because the ultimate objective is to protect the fish from being overharvested.

As part of government, she will undoubtedly face challenges with support systems, which may include materials, such as cars, boats, or computers, or staffing actions. She may even come face to face with the challenges of dealing with poor performance. Finally, a key to success for Diane will be to continuously learn what works and to develop a team that has the capacity to learn. In addressing all of these dimensions of productive organizations, Diane can build a strong team that is able to serve the department well.

Given the complexity of organizations and their tendency to be shaped by various coalitions of interests pursuing different objectives, or responding to events in a different manner, high performance attributes may not be easy to achieve—especially on a continuing basis.

1.5 Management Challenges in Modern Organizations

The challenges that managers face at any given level in order to achieve productive and effective organizations are considerable. This course is focused on the core challenges that first-time managers and supervisors face in a wide variety of organizations. The course includes a variety of cases involving government departments at the regional level, a central agency position, and a corporate service function. The course also includes cases on non-profits. Over time, other cases will be added to increase variety and to focus further on the first two levels of management. The aim of the cases is to put students in the shoes of managers and, through the experience of analyzing and discussing cases, to develop key insights into the choices that managers can make in a variety of organizations and circumstances.

The major textbook that was originally used for this course was John Kotter's *Power and Influence*. Unfortunately, that book is now out of print, but this course contains key readings from that source. This Guidebook will briefly describe the overall approach that Kotter developed to assess management challenges. These insights were developed largely through his study of general managers of corporations (J. Kotter, *The General Managers*) but his initial work was done on his study on mayors of large cities and their roles. Interestingly, he found that the key elements for being effective as a manager in either type of organization were very similar.

Kotter's insights are at the heart of this course. He argues that there is an irreversible trend in business and government toward increasing organizational diversity and interdependence (Kotter, *Power and Influence*, pp.12–51).

Diversity can generate extensive conflicts between individuals and groups with different perspectives or stakes in an organization and make it very difficult for managers to achieve a particular agenda or direction. Interdependence—when two or more parties have power over each other and require each other to get the job done—is also a growing feature of modern

organizations. In organizations that are interdependent, unilateral action is rarely possible and co-operation is essential.

In diverse and interdependent organizations, the challenge for managers is to reconcile many different interests, conflicts, and priorities and bring them into a co-operative working relationship. Hence, management and leadership can be viewed as the “politics” of establishing the required coalition to achieve the aims of the organization or of implementing the manager’s agenda.

Thus, the central theme of the “The Politics of Management” is the challenge faced by managers of modern organizations highlighted by their dependency on many players over whom they have limited or no authority, or who may have substantially different agendas or priorities. This can create what Kotter calls a power gap—that is, the difference between the amount of power needed to get the job done and the amount of power that the manager has.

For this reason, a session in this course is directly focused on improving the ability of students to assess the levers of power that a manager can use in a particular situation to overcome the inherent power gaps in a job.

Another course priority is to discuss how managers can develop an agenda that is implementable in the context of the growing power gaps that characterize modern organizations. To be successful in these situations, managers have to understand their organizational environment, the multiple dependency relationships they face, and the key opportunities and constraints that shape decisions. Out of this assessment, they must design an agenda, or strategy, that will maximize the chance of success and contribute to an effective organization.

Kotter argues that the most effective managers are those who develop an agenda, build a network, and implement their agenda through the network. He came to this conclusion through extensive research and interviews with general managers of corporations and of mayors of cities in the USA (J. Kotter, *The General Managers*).

Managers who are trying to implement an agenda or achieve a high-performance organization must bridge power gaps through the development of influence and co-operation with superiors, colleagues, subordinates, clients, and partners. In short, to be successful in modern organizations, leaders have to learn how to gain sufficient power and influence to do a job; and learn how to use their power and influence responsibly.

The challenges that Kotter outlines for managing organizations today apply to a wide variety of complex organizations. Similarly, the kind of assessment and analysis required to develop effective managerial strategies are remarkably consistent throughout government, business, and non-profit organizations.

The reason why Kotter's *Power and Influence* is such a useful book for studying management in the public sector is that government is the extreme version of a complex organization with high interdependence and multiple dependency relations. Moreover, the techniques that Kotter advocates for dealing with complex organizations today are highly applicable to public-sector organizations.

This "Politics of Management Course" has been designed to build a strong repertoire of analytical skills and the capacity to assess the management challenges for producing effective organizations and developing strategies that can apply to a wide range and types of organizations.

The next section of this Guidebook outlines the framework that the author has developed for the assessment of the management environment and the analysis of the choices and opportunities available to a manager. This framework is the centrepiece of the course and is utilized to analyze the cases throughout the course.



SECTION II

Thinking Like a Manager: A Framework

2.0 The Framework

The framework outlined in this Guide is the centrepiece for the “Politics of Management: Thinking Like a Manager” course. It was developed by the author in the early 1990s and was based on a combination of the approach outlined by Kotter (*Power and Influence*), and by Rosemary Stewart (*Choices for the Manager*).

The “Thinking Like a Manager” framework below deliberately places the manager in the centre of relationships with superiors, subordinates, clients, and other groups. It includes key concepts necessary for analyzing the relationship of the manager with these key groups and developing an agenda. “You cannot take the manager out of management” is one of the central premises of the course.

This is the course in one chart or framework. Students achieve the most learning by continuously applying this framework throughout the course to discuss management challenges and then applying the framework to management cases. The feedback from many students over the years is that the framework is the most useful part of the course because it gives them a way to make sense of complex management situations and then determine approaches or strategies for dealing with them.

The challenge faced by many managers is bringing together the people, resources, decisions, and key forces within the organization

required to achieve a particular agenda or aim. It is critical that the manager align the key players and factors shaping the organization with the overall agenda. Executives must also recognize when constraints are real and when they can be overcome. They must, as Rosemary Stewart has shown, learn what kinds of choices they can make in terms of their role, the domain they will focus on, and their roles with respect to others.

The concept of alignment is key to understanding how managers can get their jobs done within the diversity and interdependency that characterize modern organizations. The key to managing an agenda successfully in most complex organizations, public or private, is to align all the factors that relate to the job—people, priorities, resources—so they mutually support and reinforce a particular direction. Then, over time, managers must keep adjusting, changing, and developing the key elements of the organization, the agenda, and other factors.

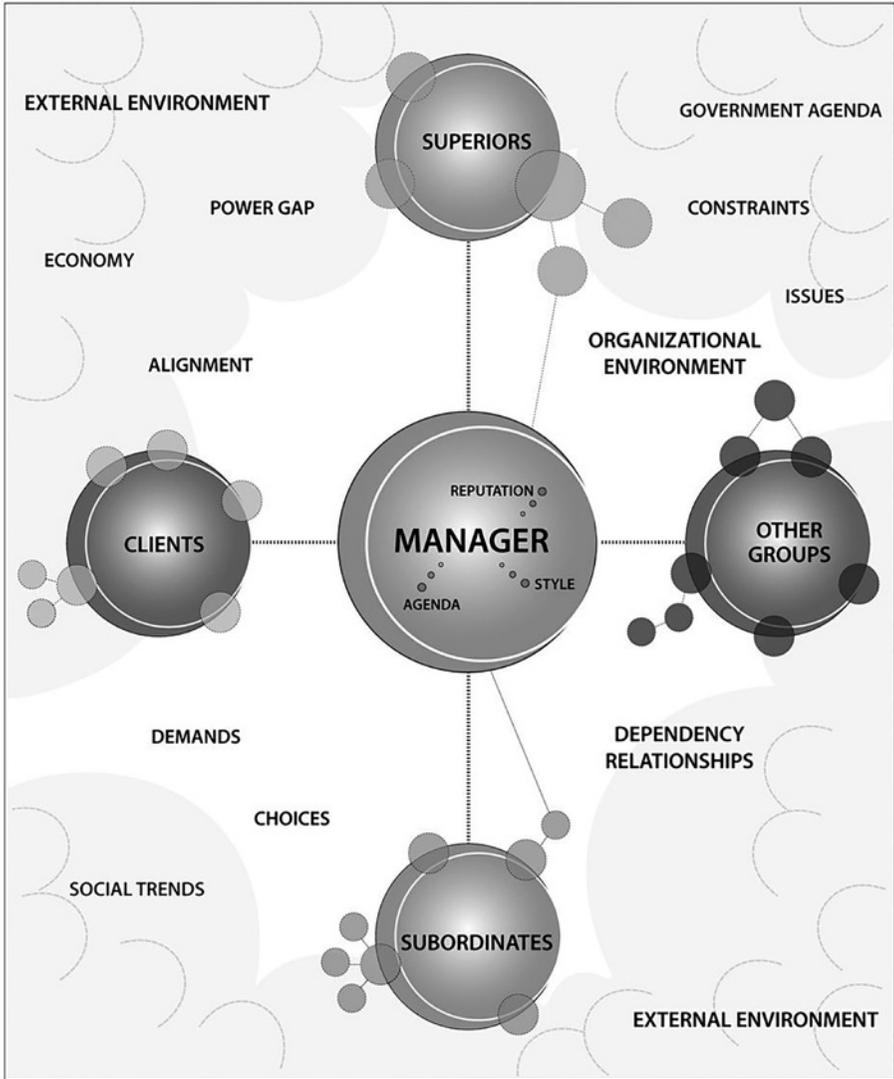
The “Thinking Like a Manager Framework” re-emphasizes the core focus of this course: the manager and the job. At the centre of the diagram is the manager, who must achieve an agenda and get a job done while dealing with superiors, subordinates, clients, and colleagues, as well as taking into account the external environment and the organization. The manager typically interacts with all of these areas simultaneously.

The manager is not just a person in a position. The manager is someone with a background, a reputation, and a certain set of skills. The managers must design their approach to the job based on the relationships they have and the requirements of the job, but also must consider their own credibility, skills, and potential to achieve a particular course of action.

In pursuing an agenda, managers are faced with issues, demands, constraints, choices, crises, personnel problems, conflicting priorities, and multiple objectives, cultures, and personalities.

The challenges that managers face are simultaneously short-term (a few minutes or hours) and long-term (several years). The issues range from specific and operational (e.g., who comes to a meeting, what should be done about a specific problem) to fundamental strategic issues of policy, organization, and service

CHART 1: THINKING LIKE A MANAGER FRAMEWORK



delivery, which could affect the organization for years. Managers must operate on all of these levels at the same time to be able to lead and direct the organization. A key challenge is to determine what needs to be done and where to focus among a myriad of possibilities.

The framework that will be used in this course is based on seven key elements that affect how managers manage. These include:

- Manager and the job
- External environment
- Organizational environment
- Relations of the manager with superiors
- Relations of the manager with subordinates
- Lateral relations of the manager with key individuals and groups
- Relationship of the manager and organization with clients

The better aligned these factors are, the more likely that a manager will overcome the challenges of diversity and interdependence and achieve a particular agenda.

Over the twenty years that I have used this framework, students have found that it provides them with an approach and concepts to make sense of what seems to be a complicated, confusing set of forces and relationships with no clear path forward.

In this course, students will learn how to use this framework to analyze the relationships between the manager and each of the elements. This will help students to improve their potential to develop strategies that can address various management challenges.

2.1 The Manager and the Job

The Manager

At the centre of this framework is the manager who has a particular agenda, or is in the process of developing one. A large part of how a manager deals with the agenda, or management issues, is the manager himself/herself.

It is essential to understand the manager and his/her style of leading an organization and the key strategies that the manager relies on to manage. There are some key references that can help students to understand these aspects of management. Students may refer to Stephen Covey, *Principle-Centered Management*, and Warren G. Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*. Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline* discusses the leader as architect of a learning organization. In addition, the Myers-Briggs framework for identifying clusters of characteristics (extroverted, introverted, etc.) is useful for a manager to understand his/her own strengths.

Important aspects of management style include how the manager goes about setting the vision and direction of an organization and mobilizing people to carry out that vision. It is also vital to understand how much personal credibility the manager, or leader, enjoys in an organization.

Understanding the manager and his/her credibility and style are so important that this is the subject of Part III of this Guide, which focuses on the choices managers can make concerning their operating styles.

The Job

The second major aspect of the framework is the job for which the manager is responsible. The nature of the work, the accountability structure, the authority, and the resources available are important to understanding how the manager must act to achieve expectations.

To understand a management job, it is necessary to know the accountability requirements associated with the job. Osbaldeston's

Keeping Deputy Ministers Accountable provides some insights into the complex accountability requirements of deputy ministers and some of the differences between the public and private sectors.

Rosemary Stewart's *Choices for the Manager* is useful for understanding how managers define their jobs. Ms. Stewart relies on three very useful concepts for analyzing a management situation:

- Constraints: those factors that limit a manager in getting the work done
- Demands: those factors absolutely required to do the job
- Choices: the kinds of decisions managers make regarding their style, role, domain, boundaries, etc., while doing their jobs

It is also very important to understand the authority and the levers, in terms of decision-making, that come with the job.

Roles

What are the key roles that the manager must play in this job? Change agent, controller, resource allocator, or downsizer?

Is the manager focusing on relationships outside the organization, or mainly concerned with internal management?

Some questions vis-à-vis the manager and the job:

What are the key demands (absolute musts) on the manager at this point in time? Who is making these demands?

- Can the key demands or pressures be divided into long-term, medium-term, and short-term priorities, and managed as such?
- For the immediate demands, how long does the manager have to show real progress in addressing these demands?
- Is this particular manager oriented to developing positive working relationships with colleagues, superiors, and subordinates?

- What choices does the manager take with respect to defining his or her role (leader, negotiator, decision-maker, comptroller, firefighter, technical expert)?
- How well does this manager understand his/her own management style, its impact on others, and how to learn from experiences? (Refer to Chris Argyris, “Teaching Smart People How to Learn,” *Harvard Business Review*, May–June, 1991)
- Is the manager able to establish trust with subordinates and communicate a vision that can generate commitment and support?
- What is the manager’s style in gathering information and making decisions (open, consultative, closed, secretive)?
- How does the manager deal with superiors? Does the manager work on developing a common agenda with superiors, or try to keep them out of the way long enough to get his/her job done?
- What are the personal assets that the manager brings to the job that enhance his/her personal influence? What are the particular attributes of the manager that reduce his/her effectiveness and influence?
- How does the manager spend his/her time? How does this relate to organizational needs? Is it possible for the manager to balance new and existing demands on his/her time to achieve a particular agenda without a significant change in his/her approach?

The challenge is to figure out how to manage in a specific organizational context. Managers usually develop strategies that are contingent on the situation, but that also reflect their specific style and personal attributes.

2.2 The External Environment

An organization's external environment is critical to shaping the pressures on a manager. This external environment includes all those players or forces that are outside the direct chain of command in the organization. Generally, the role of an executive is to balance the demands and requirements of the external environment with the needs and requirements of the organization. If there is a significant change in the forces that make up the environment of an organization, the executive has to find a way to realign with those influences and manage the interface between the organization and the environment.

The following questions are relevant in our analysis of the environment:

- Is the manager working in a complex or simple environment; a stable or unstable environment?
- Among an organization's key sponsors or clients, is there a consensus on the organization's aims, objectives, mission, or operations?
- In the external environment, what are the manager's most significant dependency relationships? Upon what are these dependency relationships based (e.g., technology, need for support, resources)?
- Are there major trends and forces in the environment that support, or detract from, the direction of the organization? Are these forces, or trends, gathering momentum or dissipating over time? Force-field analysis, which reviews the forces for and against a particular change, is useful for this kind of analysis.

These dimensions of the environment can impact significantly on the manager's role. For example, the environment's degree of stability and complexity will impact on how executives spend

their time. Generally, the more complex and unstable an environment, the more necessary it is for managers to devote their efforts to maintaining the relationship between the organization and its environment and to devote time to boundary-spanning activities (James D. Thompson, *Organizations in Action*, pp. 66–82).

In stable and simple environments, managers can often devote more time to the organization's internal management and operations.

A critical aspect of management is to assess the key players, trends, and influences that are shaping the organization and to understand how these will affect the manager's superiors and job. A critical characteristic of effective managers is their ability to align their agendas and actions with the trends and influences present in the environment and to take advantage of them whenever possible.

2.3 Organizational Environment

A manager works within the context of an organizational structure and division of labour, as well as within the social system and culture that shape the organization. Thus, it is critical for the manager to understand how the organization works and makes decisions.

The type of organization and its environment can have a profound influence on the nature of the manager's job. For example, there is a huge difference between a large tax collection organization, such as Canada Revenue Agency, and an agency such as Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, which, as a federal department, is involved in a wide range of programs and services (e.g., housing, education, social services, and infrastructure) aimed at thousands of Aboriginal communities. The same differences exist in the private sector between large manufacturers, small retail organizations, and conglomerates with multiple product lines.

The evolution of the organization, its history, and the key events that have shaped its progress are important in understanding some of the elements of the manager's job. It is particularly

important to understand the culture of the organization, the kind of people who work there, and how they view their mission.

The overall structure and the key information processes are also important to understanding the organization. If it is a large machine bureaucracy—a term commonly used by Mintzberg—it will tend to apply rules and hierarchy in making decisions. A different approach would be taken by a professional organization where high standards dictate the primary decision-making method.

Moreover, decision-making processes will be affected by the extent to which an organization has a high vertical or horizontal differentiation (i.e., different and distinct groupings or divisions of labour). The more levels and differentiation that exist, the more coordinating and integrating mechanisms will be necessary to implement an organization's essential functions.

As Kotter illustrates in *Organizational Dynamics*, organizations are constantly faced with the challenge of maintaining equilibrium among factors such as dominant coalition, external environment, technology, social system, hierarchy, and assets. These factors can shape the organizational environment and how the manager must respond to various issues and challenges.

A number of excellent references provide an insight into the analysis of organizations, for example, Harry Levinson, *Organizational Diagnosis*; and Henry Mintzberg, *The Structure of Organizations*.

Some questions on the organizational environment: These are important questions for managers to understand when determining what kind of priorities to pursue and how to pursue them.

- How does the organization generally respond to changes in the environment (responsive; rigid; head-in-the-sand; reactive; crisis-driven)?
- Does the organization tend to work as a unit, or is it highly balkanized and differentiated—with each unit

pursuing its own goals—and with few unifying or integrating processes such as plans, human resource rotations, or team approaches present during decision-making? (See differentiation and integration concepts in Appendix A on concepts.)

- Do executives support each other to achieve overall goals or directions?
- How strong is the tradition of leadership by the deputy minister, CEO, or board of directors?
- Are there significant conflicts within the organization with respect to direction and mission, divisions of labour, or social systems?
- What are the core technologies, or work processes, present in the organization, and how do they shape its behaviour?
- How does the system of incentives and rewards function, and what kind of work is most valued?

2.4 Superiors

The relationship between a manager and his/her boss or bosses is a vital aspect of successful management. One of the most popular articles for students of the Politics of Management course is the article by J. Gabarro and J. Kotter, “Managing your Boss,” which is included in the bibliography.

As Gabarro and Kotter point out, the manager has considerable responsibility for developing a positive working relationship with his/her superiors by understanding their agenda, working style, and requirements. This is straightforward and obvious, but it is amazing how many managers neglect this aspect of their jobs.

One of the realities of modern management is that managers may have more than one boss. It is increasingly necessary to consider a group of people as your superiors. For example, in a government department, an assistant deputy minister's superiors might include a deputy minister, an associate deputy minister, and a senior ADM. Sometimes the relationships with ministers and their staff can further complicate these superior-subordinate relationships and the accountability structure.

With the adoption of matrix organizations and functional reporting relationships, the same complexity might exist in the private sector. In the world of global corporations, the director responsible for a plant in Canada may report to several different global groups for different aspects of the business. For example, the plant director might have two or three different products and report to global business leaders for those products. In addition, the large global companies have a central public affairs function and the director in Canada will report to them on key policy and regulatory issues— especially those of a global nature like climate change.

Some questions on managing relations with superiors:

- What are your boss's or bosses' agenda and priorities?
- What pressures or expectations is your boss facing and how does this situation affect the way he or she does the job?
- When does your boss want you to deliver on his or her key priorities?
- How does your boss learn and make decisions?
- What does the boss expect of you as manager (what are his/her key demands)? How can the manager best help the boss achieve his or her agenda?

- What are the strengths of your boss or bosses and how can they help you achieve your priorities as a manager?
- What is your boss's style of management? Are there major conflicts or differences with your approach? How can you deal with them?
- If your boss faces stiff opposition from a stakeholder group or staff, will he/she continue to support the priorities and directions established by the manager, or will he/she retreat quickly at the first sign of resistance?

Never underestimate the importance of managing the relationship with superiors. Being responsive to your superiors is not only responsible management; it is a necessity if you want to get the job done.

The surprise for many students of the course when discussing this article is that managers and staff have to devote time and energy to managing their bosses, and that a subordinate can actually shape that relationship. Some students have actually tried some different practices as a result of this session in the course and found that they were able to change the dynamics of their boss-subordinate relationship by, for example, recognizing that the boss either liked or did not like detailed briefings; by determining how the superior liked to be informed; etc.

Given the diversity and interdependence present in most modern organizations and the difficulty in achieving results, your boss is a critical asset. Without her/his support, your power and influence are considerably diminished. Managers must find ways to augment their influence and reduce their power gaps by working in partnership with their superiors. When a superior's approach to management is incompatible with that of a manager's, or is inappropriate for responding to the organization's needs, there will be huge barriers to progress.

2.5 Staff

To achieve their own agenda, managers must mobilize their staff, on which they are highly dependent. Even though managers have direct authority over staff, they must rely on the same leadership and management techniques that are appropriate in dealing with those outside the chain of command, namely influence, as opposed to authority.

The degree to which the staff are committed to the manager's agenda depends on whether the staff

- Believe the manager is credible and can achieve the agenda
- Share a common vision on the challenges facing the organization and the path forward
- Get personal meaning from the leader's approach to the organization
- Participate in the creation of the agenda
- Believe the agenda will help staff develop their own skills and career
- Feel they will be rewarded in objective or subjective terms for helping to achieve the agenda.

To mobilize staff, managers must assess their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as those of the organization and staff. Managers must understand the limitations of authority and how dependent they are on staff to get the job done.

Managers have to determine what roles they can best play and where other people in the organization can contribute. Rosemary Stewart calls this work-sharing. By determining how to share work with key subordinates, managers, colleagues, and even people outside the organization, a manager can increase the time available to pursue other items on their agenda.

To be effective in dealing with change, modern organizations require managers who are creative; and open, positive and innovative environments where staff can challenge old assumptions but are still able to work as a team committed to the organization.

Some questions on managing relationships with staff:

- What are the demands placed on the manager and their relationships with their superiors? What is the impact of the operational style of the manager? For example, a manager working for a workaholic micro-manager will inevitably be affected by the situation and will have difficulty following a delegating style of management.
- Has the manager provided an agenda, vision, or purpose that can mobilize the commitment, trust, and support of staff?
- Is the organization for which the manager is responsible able to accomplish the agenda?
- What are the work demands, incentives, constraints, and factors that affect how staff do their jobs?
- Are there key people in the organization who will be able to facilitate or inhibit the achievement of the agenda, or the demands the manager is facing?
- Are there major organizational, management, personnel problems, or constraints that must be resolved?
- What are the expectations of staff with respect to leadership style, participation, vision, and approach to decision-making?

2.6 Key Individuals and Groups

All organizations have key groups on whom the manager is dependent and that can be mobilized to help achieve her/his agenda. The distinguishing factor among these groups is that, unlike staff, the manager has no direct authority over them.

It is essential to identify such people and groups and to understand their perspectives and agendas. As Kotter has suggested, to achieve their agendas, managers must build the required network of individuals and groups, both inside and outside the organization, and then implement their agenda through the network.

It is often useful to analyze the dependency relationships between executives, certain groups, and other key players to determine the extent to which they have power over your management agenda. Then, it is important to determine their degree of support. By understanding the degree of power others have over your agenda and their degree of support, one can quickly determine who is absolutely essential to the achievement of an agenda. If you cannot figure out how to get the key players to support your agenda, you may have to find a different agenda.

There are some ways to develop these co-operative relationships; some of these are outlined in *Power and Influence*, chapter 4. In a typical organization, however, the key groups and individuals involved in a particular decision will vary tremendously according to the subject or issue at hand. For example, a manager may be extremely dependent on the vice-president of finance and vice-president of marketing to develop and introduce a new product. On the other hand, if a manager wanted to change the distribution of a product that has been successful for years, the dependency relationships would be very different.

Some questions on managing relationships with key groups and individuals:

- Who are the key groups and individuals on which you depend?
- What are the agendas, perspectives, and views of these key people, and what pressures are they facing in their jobs? What incentives affect their behaviour?

- How would you analyze these key groups and individuals or their degree of authority or influence, and your need for their support to achieve your agenda?
- What kinds of approaches could be used to build positive working relationships and partnerships with these key groups or individuals?
- What kinds of approaches could be used to neutralize or minimize the degree of harm they could do to a manager's strategy?

A manager who can develop creative approaches for building coalitions required by the organization is often highly valued and is able to accomplish tasks that others only dream of.

Clients

To a large extent, the purpose of an organization is to serve its clients. Whether the organization is serving fishermen, consumers, bank customers, or car buyers, clients are a key part of a manager's job.

Much of the literature on total quality management and the experience of some of the most successful corporations have focused on forging a positive relationship with clients. This is done by knowing what clients or customers want and knowing how to serve them, by constantly being sensitive to changes in needs or requirements and by measuring performance. The same approach can be used by governments when dealing with its citizens.

Some organizations have used the client as the focus for defining the manager's agenda and mobilizing the support of superiors, colleagues, and subordinates. Many corporations and government departments are also developing new organizational and management approaches by focusing on the client and the quality of services delivered.

Some questions on managing relationships with clients:

- Who are the organization's clients?
- Are there major conflicts between the needs of different clients?
- How do clients feel about the organization (from well-served to very irate)?
- How does the organization (superiors, subordinates, colleagues) deal with clients?
- In government organizations, it is important to know how powerful the clients are, as a group, and how they may influence policy decisions.
- How do superiors, subordinates, and colleagues work, as a whole, to meet and respond to client needs?
- What are some of the key impediments to serving clients better (management approach; systems; skills; distribution of functions; key people; etc.)?
- How does the organization measure client response or satisfaction and reward those who work to improve client satisfaction?

Managers who develop a strong and positive approach to dealing with the needs of clients can often increase their influence in an organization.

Unfortunately, in many organizations, a client-focused perspective is at odds with traditional practices. It often requires an energetic and focused leader to be able to make this kind of change. Focusing on clients can also be a useful tool for realigning other parts of the organization behind your agenda (changes to organizational structure, changes to technology, etc.)

Summary and Challenges for Managers and Supervisors

We started this Guidebook with examples of three first-time managers in a policy group, an enforcement group in Fisheries, and a golf course.

In carrying out their jobs and developing an agenda, these managers can employ this framework to understand the challenges they face in their external and task environment, the agenda and style of their superiors, their dependency relationships with other groups and their agendas, and the capacity of staff.

For the new policy director, this will provide an essential understanding of the organizational context within which he or she works and the areas that should be assigned the highest priority. Using the concepts of the course, these new managers will be able to assess the demands, constraints, and options they face and make important choices. Moreover, they will be able to identify the most important functions they must adopt and the choices they can make with respect to their domain. Likewise, they will know how to manage boundaries with other organizations and staff.

If these first-time managers follow the advice of Chester Barnard and focus on the job of maintaining the organization—setting direction, ensuring commitment of staff to the goals of the organization, and managing the interface of the organization with the environment—they will develop a stronger understanding of their role as managers and provide essential value to the organization.

As Linda Hill has found out in her research, managers essentially learn by doing. By combining an active interest in assessing their jobs and situation with hands-on experience, managers can adjust to their jobs more quickly and learn how to be effective in creating a high-performance organization.

Through this process and assessment, these new managers and supervisors can overcome some of the challenges faced by first-time managers, as identified by Linda Hill, in defining their role and establishing their managerial identity.



APPENDIX A

Key Course Concepts

This appendix outlines and defines some of the key concepts used in The Politics of Management course. These concepts are tools for analyzing the case studies and developing managerial strategies. They are also useful for studies of managers.

Politics

Politics “involves activities which attempt to influence decisions over critical issues that are not readily resolved through the introduction of new data and in which there are differing views. Political activity is activity which is undertaken to overcome some resistance or opposition. Thus, politics is really the process of building and gaining support from various individuals or groups and inevitably includes influencing others.” (Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Power in Organizations*, p.7)

The politics of management is therefore defined as the activities that executives carry out in order to influence others to achieve their agenda and the aims of the organization.

Power

“It is generally agreed that power characterizes relationships among social actors. Most definitions of power include an element indicating that power is the capability of one social actor to overcome resistance in achieving a desired object or result . . . power is a relation among social actors in which one social actor ‘A’ can get another social actor ‘B’ to do something that ‘B’ would not otherwise have done.” (pp. 2–3)

In this course, power is viewed as a neutral concept. Power can be used wisely and can be absolutely necessary to achieve the aims of the organization or society. In the wrong hands, too much power can also lead to negative results. In this course, we assume that the aim of maximizing power for the leaders of organizations is to achieve a productive organization or the positive agenda of the leaders. Power is in many ways the sum of authority and influence.

Power Gap

A power gap is a major gap between the amount of power needed to achieve an agenda or a particular job and the amount of power that the executive actually has. As Kotter indicates, authority is limited for most managers and is not sufficient to achieve an agenda in most complex organizations. When pursuing an agenda, many of the groups on which the manager depends are outside the manager's chain of command. Even with the staff reporting to a manager there can be limits to the effectiveness of authority. Understanding power gaps is therefore a critical skill in developing and implementing an agenda.

Authority

"The distribution of power within a social setting can also be legitimated over time, so that those within that setting expect and value a certain pattern of influence. When power is so legitimated, it is denoted as authority . . . The transformation of power into authority is an important process, for it speaks to the issue of the institutionalization of social control." (p. 4)

In organizations, authority is often established through positions or roles or history and culture. However, as Kotter has pointed out, direct authority in most complex organizations is limited and not sufficient to achieve the agendas of the organization or leader.

Dependency and Dependency Relationship

"The argument that the organization is a coalition of support implies that an important factor determining the organization's behaviour is the dependencies on the various coalition

participants. Three factors are critical in determining the dependence of one organization on another. First, there is the importance of the resource, the extent to which the organization requires it for continued operation and survival. The second is the extent to which the interest group has discretion over the resource allocation and use. And, third, the extent to which there are few alternatives, or the extent of control over the resource by the interest group, is an important factor determining the dependence of the organization.” (Pfeffer, *The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective*, pp. 45–46)

As Kotter has indicated, given the interdependence of organizations and the importance of players to the executive’s agenda, it is critical to understand the degree of dependence on others. Most complex organizations are faced with multiple dependency relationships that must be defined and understood clearly, and executives must develop strategies for gaining co-operation and support where required.

Accountability

Accountability is the obligation to answer to a person or group for the exercise of responsibilities conferred. Accountability involves the fundamental question of who is responsible for what and to whom. According to this definition, people are accountable only to those individuals or groups with whom they have a direct authority relationship based on legislation, convention, or organizational hierarchy. It is important to note that the concept of accountability is much more precise than more general concepts such as responsibility to someone or being answerable to someone. (G. Osbaldeston, *Keeping Deputy Ministers Accountable*, p. 5)

Obviously, knowing to whom the manager is accountable will help him/her design an agenda and identify demands, choices, and requirements for managing the relationship with that person (i.e., the boss).

Demands

Demands are what anyone in the job has to do. There are many things that a manager ought to do because they are in the job description, or because his or her boss thinks them important,

but demands “are only what must be done.” (Stewart, *Choices for the Manager*, p. 2)

For this course, I like to think of demands as the three or four tasks that a manager absolutely must do if he/she is to be viewed as doing his/her job. These are the basic expectations of bosses, the firm, or others that must be fulfilled if the person is to carry out his/her basic responsibilities. For example, think of performance appraisal time when the manager is meeting with his/her superior. What are the three or four tasks (maximum) that the manager should have done to keep the job and be viewed as a high performer?

Constraints

Constraints are “the factors internal or external to the organization that limit what the jobholder can do.” (Stewart, *Choices for the Manager*, p. 2) Constraints can consist of resource limitations or legal, technological, cultural, organizational, and political limitations. Constraints are not just objective impediments. They are a combination of real obstacles and subjective perceptions of obstacles.

While many managers can find constraints everywhere they look, others can work around every constraint that comes up without even slowing down. Why? One of the major challenges for managers is to decide which constraints they should accept, which ones they should challenge, and which ones they should simply avoid. This often requires a good understanding of the systems that the manager is working with; moreover, the manager must understand his/her own tendencies to follow rules, ignore rules, or manage rules.

Choices

According to Rosemary Stewart in *Choices for the Manager* (pp. 17–24), choices involve the decisions managers can make about doing their jobs where they have some discretion. This can involve choices about the degree of delegation, the focus of the group in relation to other groups, and the degree of focus on technical as opposed to the overall management of the group. One of the major points in Stewart’s work is that managers are not

sufficiently aware of the choices they have and do not often take advantage of some of the opportunities that exist for choices.

Stewart points out that in managerial jobs, there are major choices in what aspects of the job are emphasized, what tasks to focus on, the degree of work-sharing or delegation, and the extent to which the jobholder concentrates on the traditional domain for the job or focuses on adding new areas of responsibility.

Choice: Work-sharing

Work-sharing, as described by Rosemary Stewart in *Choices for the Manager* (pp. 50–53), involves the sharing of work responsibilities or tasks between a manager and his/her superiors, subordinates, and colleagues. It is one of the areas of choices that managers can make with respect to how they carry out their jobs. Work-sharing can be an important strategy for building alliances, sharing responsibility, or enabling a manager to pursue particular priorities.

Choice: Boundary management

Boundary management involves the management of the relationship between the unit for which the manager is responsible and the groups or activities outside the unit. Managers often make important choices with respect to how they manage these relationships. For example, some may be active in managing the interface between the organization and outside groups, and others may be passive.

Managers who are aware of this choice will seek to maintain or to improve the conditions within which the unit operates. Their efforts may need to be focused upon their boss, other senior managers, staff and service departments, suppliers and customers, whether inside or outside the organization . . .” (Stewart, *Choices for the Manager*, p. 25)

Dominant Coalition

The dominant coalition is “the personal characteristics and the internal relationships of that minimum group of co-operating

employees who oversee the organization as a whole and control its basic policy-making.” (Kotter, *Organizational Dynamics*, p. 20)

One can discover the dominant coalition not by organizational charts but by determining the groups of people who have to be involved and agree before major decisions are made. If one were to take ten major decisions and find out who was involved, there would usually be a few dominant players who would be critical to all the decisions. Dominant coalitions can vary tremendously in organizations. Obviously, understanding the dominant coalition is important for managers in analyzing how they can achieve an agenda.

Alignment and Non-Alignment

When an organization’s key systems have characteristics that fit together, are congruent, consistent and co-aligned, one usually finds there are efficient processes at work and a relatively stable equilibrium. This usually means there is alignment in the organization. When there are significant imbalances or contradictions between, for example, the demands of the external environment and the organizational structure, there is a non-alignment. This usually leads to disequilibrium and changes. (Kotter, *Organizational Dynamics*, p.39)

Heroic Manager

This term, used by David L. Bradford and Allan R. Cohen in *Managing for Excellence*, (pp. 10–17), means the following:

A heroic manager is a person who sees himself or herself as being the person responsible for the future direction and tasks of the organization. Heroic managers figure they must understand what is going on in the department at all times. They should have more technical expertise than any subordinate. They must be able to solve any problem that comes along, and they should be the primary, if not the only, person responsible for how the department is operating.

The tendency of the heroic manager to crave complete responsibility and control may create major dysfunctions in an

organization. This management style can limit the free flow of information, undermine the staff's sense of responsibility and create an organization that is limited by the creativity and energy of one person, as well as major bottlenecks that reduce the organization's ability to adjust to change.

Heroic managers usually create an environment that results in lower-quality decisions and motivation problems with employees. The best employees usually leave because they cannot grow and develop without being able to assume responsibility, take risks, and make mistakes—which the heroic manager won't allow.

The heroic manager's style often creates a self-fulfilling cycle where the manager accepts more and more responsibility and subordinates back away from responsibility . . . often reducing their performance. The result is that the heroic manager works harder and harder to make up for the gaps and eventually falls victim to his/her limitations. (See p. 17)

Post-Heroic Manager

Manager as developer: Bradford and Cohen, *Managing for Excellence* (pp. 60–62)

The post-heroic leader believes that an organization's success is the result of teamwork and co-operation of staff and shared responsibility. At the same time, as the “manager works to develop management responsibility in subordinates, he/she must develop the subordinates' abilities to share the management of the unit's performance.” (Bradford and Cohen, *Managing for Excellence*, pp. 60–61) The manager takes the view that “only when subordinates become skilled in the managerial tasks required for total departmental success can the sharing of responsibility lead to excellence.” (p. 61)

Rather than depending on heroic rides-to-the-rescue—with all the answers and total responsibility—they have sought the far greater power and potential for excellence available in the commitment and abilities of their whole group. (p. 61) These managers have in mind a developmental, collaborative, galvanizing, but subordinate-centred image. (p. 61)

Espoused Theories and Theories—in-action (Argyris)

Argyris distinguishes between “espoused theory” and “theory-in-use.” The former is the theory of action to which a manager gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However, the theory that actually governs his actions is his “theory-in-use,” which may or may not be compatible with his “espoused” theory. Furthermore, the individual may or may not be aware of the incompatibility of the two theories. (*Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*, p.11)

Force Field Analysis

This term refers to the assessment of the potential for change. (Beckhard and Harris, *Organizational Transitions*) Before deciding on an intervention strategy, the manager needs to determine the amount of control or influence he/she has over the causes or conditions providing the stimulus for changing in the first place. To do this, he or she could do a force field analysis.

“On one axis we can list the sources of the forces pressing on the management that are pushing toward a change . . . and on the other axis we can identify the potency of the force. Management can then array the nature of the forces operating in the situation.” . . . Using the length of arrows, one can then indicate the strength of these forces for and against a particular direction. (p. 29)

Differentiation and Integration

These two concepts are very important for understanding the challenges of managing organizations and their dynamics.

Jay Galbraith, in *Designing Complex Organizations*, describes differentiation as the organization of various sub-tasks in the organization. This is usually equated with some common elements of the tasks involved and a division of labour. (p. 3) For example, a department of health might have highly differentiated groups consisting of scientists doing research, program groups promoting health outcomes, and administrative and information technology staff. All of these groups would involve different occupational groups and operational functions.

The other dimension involves the various approaches used to bring together the organization to achieve the overall objectives. The fundamental dynamic that he describes is that the more differentiation, the greater the challenge in finding ways to achieve integration. Throughout the book, he describes various ways to achieve this end, such as common objectives; information and planning systems; lateral relations; and ad hoc co-operation across specialty groups.

These concepts are useful for managing organizations because if a manager is faced with a highly differentiated organization with little cohesion and little interest in co-operating to achieve a common purpose, the management challenge will be considerable.

About the Author



Richard Paton was born and raised in Renfrew and still regards Renfrew fondly as his hometown. He was an avid Junior “A” hockey player in the 1960s, and a competitive golfer at the Renfrew Golf Course and in Ontario.

Since his education and career started in Renfrew, he chose the General Store Publishing House, located in Renfrew, to publish his first book.

Richard has an MA in Canadian Studies from Carleton University and a MPA from Harvard University. He has taught the Politics of Management course part time over the past twenty-five years in the Masters of Public Policy and Administration Program at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario.

His management experience involved a variety of senior executive positions in the federal government, including deputy secretary of the Treasury Board Secretariat. He has been president of the Chemistry Industry Association of Ontario for the past seventeen years.

He lives in Ottawa with his wife, Julia, his son, Michael, and his daughter, Jasmine.