

sección especial en idioma inglés

developing your management philosophy

the need for definite standards and criteria

E.T. EGGERS.

Professor of Management
Georgia State University

AS THE PROCESS of management is universal, so is the process of control. Any organization cannot exist for long without some form of control or regulation. At times such regulation may be quite informal and have to do with each individual determining his own behavior patterns. However, such direction will not exist except for very small and informal ventures. Every organization must involve a certain amount of

leadership, and leadership functions cannot be carried out unless there is some degree of control.

Control has been construed to mean regulation of the organizational activities in accordance with plans. Its purpose is to make sure that activities conform to the attainment of the goals of the organization. Unfortunately, the word



control is too often taken to mean prevention or restriction of the behavior of subordinates. The very word may bring about a negative feeling—that of opposition—whereas it should relate to the guiding of activities of both managers and operative employees. Simply stated, control within the enterprise means knowing what is actually going on compared to set standards.

Thus, through the process of control, managers are kept informed of the progress being made, and they are more able to interpret trends and predict the final results. Proper control measures will also point out where, when, and how any necessary remedial action should be initiated. Overall, control is aimed at reducing the gap between what is planned and what actually results.

Control is absolutely essential in order to bring about the coordination of effort of all personnel. Without it, employees tend to deviate from the plans and policies. Regulation must be maintained to assure proper performance as established by the plans. Any interferences with the proper carrying out of the plans can thus be determined and removed. Because the control process involves the setting of certain standards, the employees will make fewer mistakes they will know what action to take and how to perform; they will also know when they may make their own decisions and when to seek advice from their superiors. Therefore, a manager's time can be spared and his problems lessened. The proper handling of the regulatory function can also be a valuable means of developing subordinates. It will encourage the taking of initiative and the acceptance of responsibility. Of course, it is hardly necessary to point out that control is vital with regard to product and service quality, inventories, production, and all of the functional areas within the organization.

The Control Procedure

Were all the other functions of management performed perfectly, the function of control

would not be so difficult or so important. However, all planning and worker performance involve a degree of uncertainty and the human element. Nor is the function of control something that comes about after all other managerial functions are accomplished; it is a fully integrated portion of all management work and exists at all levels within the organization. But no matter how great or how small the physical area involved or the number of personnel concerned, the management function of control always consists of three major components. And this is true regardless of whether one has in mind the control of people, inventory, quality, costs, or a safety program.

The Determination of Standards

The control process begins with the setting of certain standards which become the bases for comparison. Oftentimes such standards are not spelled out in a purely quantitative manner; in fact, they may be rather vague and subjective and largely of an intangible nature. Nevertheless, for every kind of work there must be some factors concerning quantity, quality, dollar costs, and time utilization. Observance of such factors will allow a manager to make comparisons with what he considers to be satisfactory achievement. That is, the work of controlling will assume some type of objective or purpose to be obtained.

The manager must realize that much of his work is of an unmeasurable nature especially when it deals with people and not with things. The varying personalities of subordinates, their attitudes, morale, and different behavior patterns must always be considered. Thus, it may be unwise for the manager to try to compare an individual with some sort of average for the group; different behavior criteria may have to be set for each person.

However, the function of control is usually more often considered to be concerned with measurable standards. These are criteria with which results can be more easily compared. Such standards may deal with employee output per hour as set by motion and time studies; they



may involve production schedules as they are prepared in accordance with standard procedures; or they may have to do with quality controls necessary for consumer satisfaction in a competitive market. Other quantitatively oriented controls are those of inventories for raw materials work-in-process, or finished goods. Measurable factors in such cases may be in terms of days' supplies, pounds, packages, or monetary value. Even speed limits for mobile equipment within an industrial plant are control standards.

Checks and Inspections

A second portion of the process of control and the one which many seem to consider the predominate one, is that of comparing the actual results with the standards which have been established. This is simply an evaluation or appraisal and will indicate what additional action, if any, is to be taken to ensure proper accomplishment. The very nature of the standards may determine the type of checks to be made. If the standards are easy to measure—such as, pieces per hour or bolts of gray cotton cloth—the appraisal will be quite feasible. On the other hand, the performance of a public relations director, a research chemist, or the girl at the reception desk may be quite difficult to evaluate.

Major problems often have to do with when, where, and how much to inspect and appraise. The evaluation process may become very extensive and complex if products demand frequent inspection and great accuracy is necessary. An example of such products is found in food and pharmaceutical manufacturing. If models or designs are being changed, if labor is unskilled or there is a considerable change in the labor force, or if standards are being shifted, more checks and inspections may be necessary. However, it is quite possible to stress inspection too much; the manager may do well to keep in mind the law of diminishing returns.

Some tolerances or deviations from the set standard must be allowed, and these should be known ahead of the checking procedure. Per-

haps the most valuable method of keeping tab on whether acceptable standards are being met is by use of the various reports from managers and functional areas. Visual controls such as charts, graphs, and tabular data are frequently employed to compare actual with intended or desired results. The well known Gantt Chart with its many variations is a valuable tool to many manufacturers. When inspecting and checking, the checker is always looking for deviations from the chosen course.

Of course, the best kind of review of progress is present when all employees, both managers and operative workers, can check and evaluate their own work. More initiative and a more favorable attitude on the part of employees will likely result when they are given responsibility for performing the checks on their work and bringing about correction themselves. Furthermore, it helps to lessen the somewhat negative feeling many people have toward control.

Taking Appropriate Action

The first two steps in the control procedure would be of little value without the follow-up of taking whatever action is indicated. If the standards are being obtained in a satisfactory manner, of course, the same actions are continued. However, when deviations from the standards occur, corrective action is in order. This action will usually call for managerial participation. Undesirable performance may result from a great variety of things. There may, for example, be poorly trained or inefficient workers, machinery or equipment may be improperly maintained, defective materials may cause poor workmanship, there may be a lack of adequate motivation, or it simply may be that employees do not understand what standard performance should be. In any event, the cause must be found and proper action to correct the flaw must be taken. Such instances present the observant manager with an excellent opportunity for continuous development of his subordinates.



Aids in Securing Effective Control

The grouping of necessary organizational activities can often be done in such a way so as to facilitate the function of control. Use of the concept of "Management by Objectives" as well as following the principle of "Management by Exception" are excellent points of departure. Managers often utilize the comparison method, sometimes called the "deadly parallel," as an aid in control. For example; the results of sales in a dozen comparable sales territories or accident rates in nearly alike production departments may help to indicate performance quality. Quality control of products should not be placed under the foreman who is primarily responsible for production volume; receiving of raw materials should not be a responsibility of the purchasing agent; nor should all cash records, cash flow, petty cash, and so on, be directly under one person. Examples of such precautionary measures allow for independent checks by other employees. Another major aid in bringing about more effective control stresses the desirability of the clear establishment of authority and responsibility. If everyone clearly understands the **specific** performance for which he will be held accountable, responsibility for deviations can be fairly

placed. In short, there should be a "clean break" between departments, functions, and operating responsibilities.

In Summary

The management function of control is a universal activity. It comprises a kind of work that permeates the entire organization and is essential before adequate coordination of effort can take place. Regardless of what or who is being regulated, there are certain phases or components of the control process which must always be carried out:

1. Definite standards or criteria must be set. They may be informal or formal, lax or strict, measurable or unmeasurable, vague or specific; but they do establish the desired performance.
2. Performance must be measured against the standards by using some type of check or inspection.
3. Action must be taken —the same action if standards are met, corrective or remedial action if they are not.

