

Tactical Management

by Richard A. Reda and
Jean B. Lenderking

The need for effective planning is understood. However, facing accelerated change, uncertain resources and shifting objectives, most managers don't have time or staff to devote to strategic planning. Many won't commit to long-term goals or objectives, especially when they become holy writ and inflexible mandates by which management progress, performance and pay are measured.

Managers are expected to be visionaries, making decisions with the “bigger picture” in mind. Strategic planning helps map an organization's path forward, accounting for contingencies. Traditional strategic planning requires an investment of time, and ongoing attention and adjustment. Consequently, plans are often developed with minimal effort, minimal expectation of follow up, and minimal grounding in reality, if they are developed at all.

How, then, do managers address constantly changing immediate needs with longer-term goals, objectives and organizational direction? By maintaining a balance between fire fighting and fire prevention: making tactical decisions that respond to real time demands while keeping in focus the greater needs of the organization as a whole.

The Big Picture

As Lewis Carroll wrote, “If you don't know where you're going, it doesn't matter which road you take.” Effective

management requires a sound strategic plan. The extent that plan is communicated depends on the organizational environment or climate, and the degree to which management has the flexibility to modify goals, adjust milestones and target dates, and revisit its vision. Whether this plan is clearly known or merely a mental picture in the mind of the Chief Operating Officer, the basis is a clear determination of the organizational needs both near term and future.

The plan begins with an assessment independent of current organizational capabilities. What does the organization need right now; and five years out? This may be completely different, especially if the organizations' mission has changed since its inception.

Once these needs are identified, existing resources are plugged in, including identification of known or anticipated changes, such as retirement or routine attrition. The result is the shortfalls and/or deficiencies, which impact the organization's ability to accomplish its mission.

Getting Where You Want to Go

Resource decisions — e.g., work assignments, training expenditures, reassignments, contractor dollars, etc., — address resolution of immediate, isolated needs and longer term organizational demands. Define short-term goals that address both of these needs. For example, if functions are being combined, recruitment or training efforts should focus on skills required in both areas, even if the organization hasn't yet changed to reflect the combination of functions.

Things that are important tend to get measured and things that get measured are often considered important. To keep attention on organizational transformations, establishing and defining short-term goals is not only helpful, but also acknowledging successes when decisions are effected brings the organization closer to its future status.

What makes this a more tactical approach is that the goals and measurements are not a whip and chair,

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forcing an organization into a new mold, but are like guideposts on a road map, which consider alternative routes when the path forward is delayed or blocked. Change often comes reluctantly.

Look for opportunities to celebrate “opportunities for growth” instead of the elimination of functions or responsibilities. When decisions don’t live up to expectations, build on what aspects went right, rather than fixating on shortfalls.

In a fire-fighting environment, immediately recognizing accomplishments is as important as responding to disasters. From a tactical standpoint, such recognition is often what keeps fire fighters fighting fires.

Getting the Most From Managers

Effecting organizational changes can no longer be accomplished by the organizations’ leader alone. Subordinate management structures are critical for the organizations’ survival and success. In many circumstances, the best air traffic controller, analyst or inspector is promoted to supervision and never developed so he/she is no longer an ATC, analyst or inspector.

Now their primary responsibility is the management of human capital. Clarification provides an appreciation of the investment in and importance of first line management, and people in those positions need the right kind of experience to become effective leaders and senior managers.

Many professions have requirements for continuing professional education. This normally doesn’t exist for management positions.

A tactical approach redefines the roles of the management structure, develops a training agenda that gets the most out of the management team and gives them tools to get the most from employees. Investing in training for managers is important resource expenditure, but often the one most overlooked.

Getting Employees On Board

Most employees value working in an organization where they believe in the mission, enjoy challenges, and feel appreciated. All that can be undermined when employees don’t know what’s going on, how they benefit the organization or where the organization is going.

This all falls into the same category: lack of communication. Employees like to hear from their leaders; more than that, they *need* to hear from their leaders. An effective communications strategy can be anything from regular email





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messages from the top to a monthly newsletter. Whatever the venue, it must be accurate, timely and relevant.

Effective communication in any organization — especially in a time of uncertainty or change — is critical in a tactical strategy. There are a number of approaches to managing people and change.

One option is *Appreciative Inquiry*. This builds on positive past experiences, rather than focusing on shortfalls or deficiencies. The inquiry process looks at what makes an organization successful, and draws on those characteristics and conditions to create a vision of what is possible.

It differs from conventional problem solving, which assumes that organizations are problems that need to be solved. Appreciative Inquiry holds that the organization has the solution within its diversity, multiplicity and forward movement. Engaging employees in this kind of visioning provides them an opportunity to be a part of that forward movement.

When There’s a Union

Labor relations are one of the most complex and yet most misunderstood and underestimated aspects of human resource management. In most organizational relationships, there are two parties: management and staff. While there may be disagreement, generally the positions/interests of the respective parties are similar.

Where employees have a labor representative, there are now three parties, with their own rights and interests; and even between the employees and their union, the interests may not be the same.

Management support from seasoned, knowledgeable labor relations professionals that provide effective support is critical — e.g., in-house, contractor support or combination thereof.

Paying attention to sound structures to manage relationships that balance labor law and labor relations is as important as maintaining an effective communications strategy. Failure to do so is sure to result in a much greater investment of time and resources after the fact than before.

To establish and/or maintain an effective and consistent labor relations strategy, it is important to first define the nature of the relationship. Is it going to operate “strictly by the book,” or is it one based on mutual respect, cooperation and constructive collaboration? Regardless of how top management wants to address its labor obligations, the best of relationships require integrity and consistency.

Communications with the union, as the representative of bargaining unit employees, is as important to success of the organization as is communications within the organization. In fact, in many instances, it is required. A good rule of thumb is to err on the side of inclusion, rather than exclusion.

Define boundaries and/or conditions up front. In a tactical setting, this can be a valuable resource for information. Sharing plans and ideas before final decisions are made can give you insight into issues, concerns or problems with potential implementation.

Adapt, Adopt, Improve

The landscape in today’s workplace seems to be shifting at different rates and in different directions. Keeping one eye on the future and the other on obstacles in the road immediately before you requires an expertise in which few have been trained.

The key to surviving and succeeding is to adapt to changing conditions, adopt innovative, creative and successful approaches and ideas and to improve communications, interpersonal relations and organizational effectiveness. Simple. ✦

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Tactical Management: The Big Picture

By Richard A. Reda and Jean B. Lenderking

Taking a deeper look at the first step in making decisions that address immediate needs while keeping a longer term goal in focus...

In an earlier article, we provided an overview into the concept of Tactical Management and supplied six milestones towards focusing on long term goals while addressing short term demands. This article centers on the first step in that process: **the big picture.**

In today's world of high speed information exchange, a pace that seems to increase exponentially, and a state of change that is all too often unpredictable, a natural trap for managers to fall into is that of fire fighting rather than fire prevention.

Mission Statements Supply Vital Clarity and Direction

In organizations where the leadership itself undergoes frequent turnover, new styles and new approaches that are inflicted on mid and lower level managers are frequently the only things that are unchanging or predictable. The development of mission and vision statements and the exercise of strategic planning, unfortunately, in many organizations, have fallen victim to being viewed as the "cliché de jour."

One of the "Habits" in Stephen Covey's book, *"The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,"* is to "Begin With the End in Mind." New York Yankee and baseball great Yogi Berra is said to have put this a bit more colorfully: "You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there."

An even more fundamental question than "Where are you going?" is "Why?" If your organization doesn't have a clear idea of why it exists, or what its purpose is, it is doomed to failure from the onset. Too often, the mission of an organization is taken for granted. A clearly defined mission statement is essential to success and provides guidance, clarity and direction for all.

Stop a minute and think about how the following examples offer vision and inspiration: "Quality is Job One," "We bring good things to life," "We try harder."

Are these advertising slogans? Yes. But what they advertise is the mission of the company. They also send a clear message to both employees and the management team as to what they are all about.

Vision Statements Define the Future

Coupled with the mission statement, and equally important, a vision statement is a look to the future. John F. Kennedy clearly stated NASA's vision for the sixties when he said we would put a man on the moon before the end of the decade. NASA employees and the public as a whole had an unmistakable picture of where the agency was headed for the next several years.

With a mission and a vision in place, the next step in the process is developing a plan to get there. There

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The first installment of **Tactical Management** appeared in the January/February 2004 issue of *Managing the Skies*. A PDF of the publication can be downloaded at www.faama.org/Magazine/MTS0104.pdf.

are a number of approaches to creating strategic or business plans, and there are a number of theories about the value and interconnectivity of strategic plans with business plans with action plans.

Most of them follow the same procedures for outlining how to get from point A to point Z. Basically, the drafters look at where the organization is now, compare it to where the organization plans to go at some point later in time, and then analyzes the gap between the two. A key part of that background analysis includes addressing internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats.

Outcomes along with goals and related time frames are then developed. This strategic or business plan is an effective way to guide that organization forward over the life of the plan—if it's one that doesn't anticipate major changes: changes in leadership, changes in objectives, changes in resources, etc.

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Building on Success

In a tactical management environment, often a more useful approach is to build on other successes. Most of us have been involved in, or are at least aware of, efforts or endeavors that were very successful. In all but perhaps a few of those efforts, the success was a shared experience. In other words, it was a team effort.

The most successful, or, as Covey refers to them, “Effective Efforts,” rely on several factors. The first have already been discussed: a clear understanding of the organization’s mission and vision. Other factors include sound communication strategies to ensure everyone knows what’s going on; fixing problems rather than fixing blame; seeking to understand expectations and needs rather than assuming; and valuing the diversity of the members of the organization—the different perspectives and backgrounds we all bring to the table, and building on that synergy.

Tactical management uses an approach that organization development consultants refer to as *Appreciative Inquiry*. This starts with the management team sharing their own best experiences with successful projects or programs. From there, they examine the characteristics of those projects: what made them successful?

These characteristics form the basis for defining either the vision statement of the organization (if one hasn’t already been established), or the overall objectives of a strategic plan. How can these same characteristics be applied to the present organization to get it to its goal?

Characteristics of Strategic Plans that Really Work

Strategic plans need to be long term in nature, broad in scale and provide for periodic revisions. They need to include contingency plans in the event of unexpected changes in resources or demands. Remember, this is the big picture.

Business plans and action plans take the elements of the organization’s overarching strategic plan to a deeper and shorter term level. Each component: its own mission statement—why does it exist; what is its role in support of the organization’s mission; its own vision statement—what are its goals for the future, how does it plan to be seen by its customers; and its own plan of action—what is its piece of the road map? Each piece of the organization is linked, tactically, to the other; each in support of the bigger picture. ↗

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Tactical Management: Getting Where You Want to Go

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Taking a deeper look at the second step in making decisions that address immediate needs while keeping a longer term goal in focus.

After initial drafts of mission and vision statements have been prepared and the first cut of a strategic plan has been developed, it's time to map out the move towards the future state. Keeping the longer term goals in mind, managers need to also be cognizant of short term needs.

- **Look** for opportunities to redefine jobs or functions, combining near term needs with longer term goals.
- **Establish** interim or transitional functions that bridge the gap between the two.
- **Capitalize** on the skills of employees who adapt well to change, to have them serve as mentors or guides to others during the transitional period.
- **Create** specific opportunities to transition from lesser needed functions to newer needs and roles, and celebrate interim successes.
- **Promote** buy-in by including your management team in making resource decisions that facilitate transition.

Make Resource Request Decisions that Are Integrated and Interdependent

Making sound decisions on resource requests and allocations can't be done in a vacuum. Look at how each of these is integrated and interdependent. When budgets tighten, training dollars

are often the first thing to get cut, especially when staff losses can't be filled. However, this is a time when training dollars are even more necessary. When employees are expected to make up for staff shortages, they often take on tasks and responsibilities for which they haven't been prepared or trained.

Don't limit training to the formal class room kind, though. Some needs can be addressed through mentoring, in-house training, developmental assignments and short term project oriented teams. Similarly, if you're able to supplement your work force with contractor or other external services, this has to be included in the mix.

Consider Delegating Some Functions to Customers

Another element to consider is functions that can be delegated or passed on to customers. If that seems implausible, just look at the transition to self-serve gas stations. Many other businesses have managed to cut costs by transferring some responsibilities to their customers. Examples include on-line airline ticket processing and automated/self serve check-ins; self serve check outs at grocery stores; and self administered medication in hospitals.

Is there a clear understanding within your organization and with your customers, about which functions currently performed are really essential, which ones are mandated by

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law or regulation, which ones can be done by someone else, and which ones are obsolete or add little or no value?

In planning for the future, a regular program of self-analysis will help keep the organization streamlined and focused on its true mission. Start by taking a close look at your internal processes and deliverables. How can these be modified, "re-engineered" or deleted?

Include the Transitional Process in Your Strategic Plan

Whether you've done a traditional gap analysis, or used an appreciative inquiry approach to constructively build on successes, your strategic plan needs to also incorporate two goals that are usually overlooked in plan development.

Keep in mind, though, that transition is often fluid and far from mechanical. Expect the unexpected. Expect delays and obstacles. The purpose of the milestones is to serve as guides, not rigid requirements. If you're off course, fix the problem rather than fixing blame.

The first is the steps related to the move itself from present state, through transition to desired state. There is a tendency to direct resources at future state goals alone and to forget the transitional process. This bridge period focusing on near-term needs and objectives is as critical to success as any other step.

Most traditional planning also is often task oriented. There is nothing wrong with that. It's just incomplete. Part of the plan should address building and maintaining effective relationships within the organization and with customers, as well. That leads to the second goal: communication.

Communication Involves All Stakeholders

Communication—an area often overstated, and yet frequently under-addressed—involves *all* the stakeholders. An effective communications strategy is key to the success of your overall strategic plan, especially during a transition period. This is not limited to communication to subordinates, but should also address communications strategies horizontally as well as vertically and outside the organization as well as inside.

It's not enough to include in a plan that there will be communication. It has to happen, it has to be measured and it has to be two-way. Managers need feedback from employees, customers and each other to ensure that messages are being received—and understood—and that they're on the right track.

It also helps to let customers know that changes are happening as well as why and what the planned outcomes are.

Time spent on up front communications will pay off by avoiding or minimizing time needed to dispel rumors and rebuild relationships with irate and/or apprehensive employees and customers.

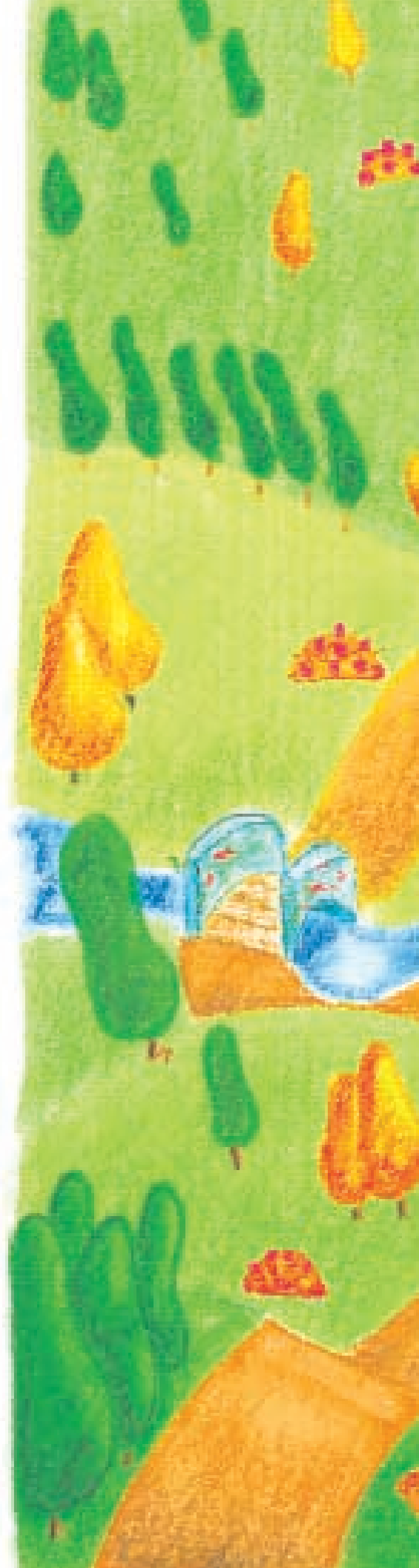
Your plan should also include regular measurements. Anyone who has flown knows that your plane and pilot are handed off from one air traffic controller to another. This is not just so that everyone knows where the plane is, but also to make necessary course corrections along the way.

Being only one degree off on a flight from New York to Los Angeles can have disastrous implications. Your plan must have milestones with clearly stated interim expectations. Keep in mind, though, that transition is often fluid and far from mechanical. Expect the unexpected. Expect delays and obstacles. The purpose of the milestones is to serve as guides, not rigid requirements. If you're off course, fix the problem rather than fixing blame. ✈

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Tactical Management: Getting the Most from Managers

By Richard A. Reda and Jean B. Lenderking

Taking an in-depth look at the next step in making decisions that address immediate needs while keeping a longer term goal in focus.

One of the most difficult transitions in an organization is moving from the rank and file into supervision. The skills and competencies that get people to that stage are not the same ones that will sustain them or further their growth in the organization.

The role of supervisors and managers relies less on technical expertise and more the ability to listen, motivate, mentor and manage—manage work loads and schedules—and, more importantly, people, problems and relationships.

Relationships Are Investments in People to Get the Job Done

Building and maintaining relationships is critical to a supervisor's success in managing work processes and outcomes. How can this be true? Most of us don't have time to hold the hands of our employees. We just need to get the job done!

Why is it, then, that the first thing every leader in the military learns is that they are responsible for the accomplishment of the mission *and* to maintain the welfare of the troops? This is not an "and/or" proposition. These two concepts are equally balanced. Without doing the second part, the first cannot be achieved.

Just how important are relationships versus task accomplishment? First, let's define what we're talking about. Tasks are simple enough: job outputs such as

producing widgets, designing better mousetraps, landing a man on the moon, managing air traffic: the steps a business takes to produce goods or services. Relationships complement technical skills and include a wide variety of related issues. Characteristics of successful relationships include:

- Open Communication
- Information Sharing
- Trustworthiness
- Reliability
- Listening Skills
- Compassion
- Understanding.

Most of these qualities are hard to define, but we know them when we see them. Now, take a minute to think about the best supervisor you ever had, and some of the characteristics that describe that person. You'll probably come up with descriptions such as: honest, reliable, a good listener, a problem solver, a motivator.

Think about the worst supervisor you ever had. What words or concepts describe that person: untrustworthy, self-serving, deceitful, secretive, problem avoider? In both examples, most often the descriptions address relationship issues. In some instances, task oriented phrases may come up, such as clock watcher or taskmaster; but they will seldom, if ever, describe the best supervisor.

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Balance Technical Skills with Managerial and Leadership Skills

Why is it, then, that there is seldom an investment made in developing and nurturing the characteristics that make a good supervisor? It's as if there is an expectation that they will appear magically by donning the title of manager.

Many professions have requirements for certification and/or for continuing professional education. This doesn't seem to exist for management positions, independent of any technical requirements associated with the organization's function.

A tactical approach to effective management begins with an understanding of the need to begin a supervisor's new journey with clear instructions as to role and responsibilities as well as exposure to the fundamentals of



“A tactical approach to effective management begins with an understanding of the need to begin a supervisor’s new journey with clear instructions as to role and responsibilities as well as exposure to the fundamentals of communication, problem solving and conflict resolution — balancing the technical skills with managerial and leadership skills.”

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At one time, in the Federal government, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) required that new supervisors receive 40 hours of supervisory training within their first year after promotion, and another 40 hours before the end of their second year.

When OPM dropped that requirement, most Federal agencies eliminated any training whatsoever for new supervisors. The result has been disastrous. Investing in training for managers is one of the most important resource expenditures that can be made, but often is the one most overlooked.

Tactical Management Encourages Applying New Approaches to Old Problems

Training need not be limited to formal classroom training. Tactical management requires examining new approaches to old problems. There are a number of options that can respond to the need for training without the additional expenditure of limited funds. Some of these tactics include:

- Sending one person to formal training and having that person train others within the organization.
- Contract training to meet specially designed needs.
- On-line training.

- Developmental assignment elsewhere in the organization.
- Exchange programs with other organizational elements or with other organizations/agencies.
- Discussion groups: peers who meet to address specific topics and invite a veteran manager to talk about approaches or options.
- Mid- to long-term mentoring programs.

Success Depends Upon Supplying the Right Tools and the Right Training plus Continuous Follow-up

In order to get the most from managers, they need the right tools to do the job. But it’s not enough to just hand them those tools—or to just send them to training. Not every program is going to work. Nor does every formal training class provide the solutions that are sought. There needs to be continual follow-up and discussion:

- What is working and what is not?
- How effective was the training, the discussion, the developmental assignment?
- What could have made it better?
- What could have made it more germane?
- Is there additional support we can provide managers?

Even in an organization that is not limited by financial resources, it’s important that those resources are used effectively. To make the most of developmental opportunities, maintain a library that’s easily accessible, which describes the program attended or the developmental opportunity.

In the library, supplying a short summary of the program and the benefits and/or limitations can help those who follow you. More importantly than the short analysis of the course, the name and telephone number of the attendee will allow for a discussion and a better insight into the needs and the deliverables. It also will provide another opportunity to build a relationship. ✈

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Tactical Management: Getting Employees on Board

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Taking a deeper look at the next step in making decisions that address immediate needs while keeping a longer term goal in focus.

In the military, every leader learns from day one that his or her primary responsibility is the accomplishment of the mission and the welfare of the troops. Both aspects have equal weight and importance. There is no comma in that statement, and it's not an "and/or" situation.

Many organizations include in their value statements that employees are their most important resource. Unfortunately, often times that's as far as that sentiment goes. In developing a tactical strategy to move your organization forward, an element that is as critical as the task oriented goals and objectives is the one of communication.

In the previous article (*Tactical Management: Getting the Most from Managers*) we discussed the importance of relationship building. Communicating effectively with your employees is the practical application of that skill.

Well Balanced Strategic Plans Include a Communications Strategy

A well balanced strategic plan must include a communications strategy. There must be goals and objectives, milestones, accountable individuals and feedback mechanisms. In an organization that is going through significant change, it also is advisable to include a "rumor control" function, such as a hot line or a

web site with frequently asked questions, or, as often as possible, regularly scheduled briefings.

By publishing and circulating the strategic plan,—which includes an extensive communications strategy—you've taken a huge step in stemming rumors and lowering anxiety in the work force. If possible or practical, seek input from employees on options for enhancing communications, as well as with identifying and developing strategies for changing the organization.

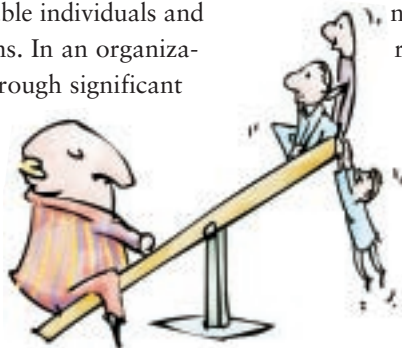
Make Employees Part of the Solution: Begin by Assessing the Workforce

If employees are part of the solution, the changes are likely to be more easily effected than if they are just thrust upon those who are responsible for implementation.

One aspect of a tactical communications strategy is to begin with an assessment of the workforce. Set the framework of this assessment by defining the present state and the future state of the organization. Determine whether or not employees understand the need for the changes,

not just what the end result is expected to be.

Jumping ahead to merely discussing the future state, and how wonderful everything is going to be, assumes that everyone has the



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same understanding that you do of what the driving forces are, and what the ramifications of not changing could be.

In doing this kind of assessment, you also will have a better idea of where you need to enhance your communications efforts and where potential problem areas are likely to pop up.

Next Assess Your Customers and Clients

The next step is to do a similar assessment with your customers and clients. They need to understand where you're going and why, just as much as your employees, especially if they will have delivery of their services disrupted, or modified, or if new expectations for them are a possible outcome (such as the self service gas station example).



“Each normally wants the organization to succeed; each wants to take pride in their organization; each wants to do the best job possible; and each wants to have a sense of security in the organization and in their job.”

How does this relate to getting employees on board? Your employees are often the direct representatives of your organization with your customers. If the employees don't understand where the organization is going and why, their aversion to any changes can undermine the confidence of your customers in your vision and direction.

It also can put your customers in the position of demanding that you don't make any such changes, even if the end result would mean worse service or none at all. Additionally, if your customers don't understand where you're going, and why, their doubts and misgivings will only fuel the concerns and apprehension of your employees.

Share the “Big Picture” With Employees

In many instances, rank and file employees don't have a clear picture of the needs of the larger organization or where they fit in. Their view is limited to their own back yard: their own team or unit and their specific responsibilities.

Interaction with other elements of the organization in discussions about the changes in the organization, and the reasons for those changes can provide them with an opportunity to widen their horizons and enhance their effectiveness. It is also an opportunity for interest based problem solving.

In spite of organizational stove-piping, most employees have the same



or similar interests as their peers, and as their management. Each normally wants the organization to succeed; each wants to take pride in their organization; each wants to do the best job possible; and each wants to have a sense of security in the organization and in their job.

Create a Collaborative Process

Include in your communications strategy an opportunity for the different elements of the organization to discuss their interests and to collaborate on ways to help effect the changes that the organization will be going through. By discovering common interests individuals can be guided through a collaborative process to look for solutions that work for all, or at least for a greater number.

In looking at the big picture, your immediate reaction may be that you can't have every employee participate in designing and implementing the organization's changes. That's not what we're suggesting. There are, however, several opportu-

nities along the way to obtain employee input on how to effect some of those changes, and to even improve them.

Sometimes, just having the chance to make that kind of contribution, even if never acted upon, is enough to change an employee from being an obstacle to being a facilitator. Ultimately, management provides the leadership to enhance teamwork that produces results. †

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Tactical Management: Adapt, Adopt, Improve

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How to survive and succeed by adapting to changing conditions; adopting innovative and successful approaches and ideas; and by improving communications, interpersonal relations, and organizational effectiveness

ADAPT: High Adaptability Gives the Tactical Manager an Edge

Change is inevitable. Managers have a choice to be either ahead of the curve or to play catch up. While no one can predict the future, effective managers can be prepared, or at least be better positioned for it. One talent that can help a manager is the ability to adapt.

Most managers have the opportunity to exercise or develop this skill several times in their careers. Any time there is a change in leadership, whether it's a complete change as occurs in the Federal government when there is a change in the administration, or if it is merely the selection of a new supervisor, the incoming leadership will often change the direction of the organization, the policies or procedures followed, or the actual structure of the organization. In many instances, all three are changed.

New management, faced with what may be perceived as a dysfunctional organization, or at the very least, one that is not as productive as it could be, usually will revert to what it is familiar with—past successes. Where possible, they will bring in staff and other managers from their prior organizations.

They will impose procedures that were used in those prior organizations, and in almost every instance, will “reorganize” their new organization.

What they are actually doing is attempting to replicate their prior organization, rather than to appreciate the unique aspects of the new organization and to build on them.

Incumbent members of the organization can respond to all of this in one of two ways. They can assume the attitude of, “This, too, shall pass,” providing only lip service to the changes, waiting until the new regime moves on to other pastures, and hoping that things will eventually return to “normal.” Or they can commit to giving the new leadership their full support, doing whatever needs to be done to make the new processes work, provide options that constructively influence change and be effective.

Maintaining a high level of flexibility or adaptability gives the tactical manager an edge. Image yourself in the position of the newly arrived management team. Would you be more inclined to listen to and rely upon a team that appears to be waiting you out, or to one that is giving you honest feedback and making a sincere effort at implementing your programs?

One note of caution here, however—as a part of the organization under new leadership, you should avoid becoming what may appear as a “yes man.” You still need to provide sound advice and counsel your new management about opportunities as

Tactical Management

This is the last in a series of articles that describe the concept of **Tactical Management**, and the milestones that enable managers to focus on long term goals while addressing short term demands. This article looks at the cycle of continuous growth and next steps.

Previous articles can be downloaded from PDFs of the four previous 2004 issues of *Managing the Skies* located at www.faama.org.

well as the potential obstacles that may arise.

Regardless of whether or not you are “under new management” or just adapting to changes in resources, mission requirements, or process requirements, a good tactical manager is not confounded by change, but instead adapts to it, as a part of the business. Indeed, he or she may even play a key role in leading change.

ADOPT: Take Advantage of Different Points of View, Approaches, and Interests

Often, the concept of diversity is relegated to matters relating to traditional EEO issues. An organization is considered “diverse” when it has a balance

of women and minorities in its staff and management. Valuing diversity goes beyond this kind of limited definition, and includes valuing differing opinions, differing cultures, and differing perspectives.

If you and your supervisor think exactly the same way, and approach and solve problems in exactly the same manner, one of you is superfluous, and it's probably not going to be your supervisor.

Take advantage of the different points of view, the different approaches and the different interests each member brings to the table, and adopt those ideas and suggestions that work best for the organization as a whole. In solving problems, or in ensuring the survival or success of the organization, it is time to leave egos at the door. Collaborative leadership brings together diverse experiences and expertise to produce results that work best for the organization and produces results that reflect positively on those involved in such teamwork.

Another tool that can be used in the search for good ideas is that of benchmarking. Look to your peers, whether competitors or allies, across organization lines.

What has worked for them? Equally important—what has NOT worked for them? You can often learn more from other's failures than you can from their successes. Finding out what has not worked and why can not only save you time and resources, it can spark other ideas or modifications for consideration.

IMPROVE: Every Change Brings an Opportunity to Improve

The process of tactical management is not a one time approach. It is cyclical. Every change that confronts an organization brings with it an opportunity to improve.

An old adage is *times of change are times of opportunity*. Even when you



think things are stable, the process of re-examination, exchange of information, and evaluation of ideas can help improve current operations or may aid in preparing the organization for imminent additional changes.

While your own operation may not be anticipating any mandated changes, new approaches are being tried and implemented elsewhere, as well as changes in technology, or even just changes in ideas that may be of value to you or your organization.

Failing to continually challenge the members of your organization or failing to continually evolve, results in stagnation

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and complacency and costs more dearly later on when trying to catch up. No tool ever gets better by not being used.

The key to surviving and succeeding is to adapt to those changing conditions, adopt innovative, creative and especially successful approaches and ideas, and to improve communications, interpersonal relations, and organizational effectiveness. These approaches and the continuing, constructive participation of managers not only make the job more satisfying for each of us but also are critical to organizational effectiveness.✈

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