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# PLANNING SKILLS:

## A Necessary Work Tool for Every Leader

*by*

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# Introduction

Planning is the process of setting goals, defining actions to achieve those goals, and organizing the resources and efforts needed to carry out those goals. It entails organizing and arranging activities and resources efficiently to achieve set goals. It generally involves deciding in advance what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and who is to do it. It is the means by which we get from where we are to where we want to go. Planning is an intricate and completely necessary principle for leadership; a vital first step of any accomplishment. It is pivotal and ensures productivity and proper use of resources. It also helps a leader avoid anxiety by meeting deadlines. Involved in this great principle are a variety of skills - The Planning skills.

# Importance of Planning Skills

Planning skills are crucial for all leaders to be successful. Strong planning skills can help a leader establish clear objectives & adopt best strategies to reach them; prioritize tasks; ensure effective & efficient allocation of resources; set deadlines; and remain focused on meeting goals. They prepare a leader for unexpected situations, assess potential risks and develop strategies to address them. It helps a leader to make more informed decision; be more organized and proactive.

# The Planning skills

- ## Estimation

Estimating is determining what tomorrow will be like so that our planning will reflect reality. We live in a rapidly changing world, and our plans are only as good as our ability to analyze and estimate what tomorrow is going to be like. To be effective in a selective area, a leader must have a good grasp of what has happened in the field he is planning, what is happening now and be updated on what experts in the field are projecting about what will happen tomorrow. This has nothing to do with stargazing or trying to look into a crystal book to second guest the future it means staying current and doing research on what is going to happen tomorrow. The estimation skill takes these factors into consideration, before making your projections. Since your plans are built on how you see tomorrow, It becomes apparent how important this step is and the need for a high degree of accuracy in this area. A sound estimate of the past and present will lead to a realistic and successful plan for the future.

Thus, estimation is the process of predicting the time, resources, and costs required to complete a project. It is based on the project's scope, complexity, and the availability of resources.



## • Establishing objectives

It is crucial in planning, to define and establish clear and measurable objectives. Objectives are end results which the management (leader) wants to achieve by its operations. The objectives of any enterprise determine how, and what extent the organisation will employ its resources. Objectives also largely determine what will be accomplished at the end of a period of time. Poor understanding, ambiguity or confusion about objectives are the causes of ineffective leadership. Therefore, it requires great care and skill to set forth clear understandable objectives, which eliminate wasted effort and go to the heart of the issue at hand.

Good objectives should state the intent, the activities involved in accomplishing it, and a basis of evaluation to determine if the intent has been met.

## • Developing Policies

A policy is a set of ideas or plans that is used as a basis for making decisions, especially in politics, economics, or business. Planning Policy refers to the suite of documents that set out the standards and expectations applied to development proposals, which are taken into account when decisions are made on planning applications. Policies are standing answers for recurrent questions, situations or problems. They can be very helpful in any organization when they are used as statement of understanding to guide the decision making process. Good policies, keep us from having to make the same decisions over and over again. Once the decision is made, it is communicated and everyone on the team knows what to do in that situation. However, policies if mishandled can become strangulating to an organization, they can create unnecessary red tape, wasted time, and great delays in accomplishing the goal. Therefore, a good policy should blend in innovations, trends and realities.

Planning policies are designed to guide and regulate development in a particular area. They can cover various aspects of planning such as land use, transportation, housing, environmental protection, and economic development. Good policies must be full and generic. The larger and older and organization becomes the greater the need for skillfully written policies, which guide and clear the issue rather than confuse it.

## • Programming

Programming is the determining of priorities and the sequence of activities necessary for accomplishing the objectives. More effort is lost here than perhaps at any other point in planning. Programming insures a steady flow from start to finish on any project and coordinates various activities and short- range goals in any optimum way, or the most efficient manner. Programming eliminates wasted efforts by making sure that everything comes together according to plan.



Programming entails discovering the real things needed and placing them in order of priority. It involves allocating resources in order to determine a program of projects the agency will pursue first.

## • Scheduling

Scheduling is putting a time factor on the program by fitting the sequence of activities into an actual calendar with dates, hours and minutes projected to the accomplishment of the objective. Scheduling is the process of determining the order and timing of tasks in a project. It considers the estimated time and resources for each task, as well as the dependencies between tasks. It is concerned with when and how it will be done. Too often the only date set is the target dates for the completion of the goal. But this is not enough. Short-term, easier- to- reach goals must also be target -dated as well as the activities and planning and leading up to the completion of each stage. Deadlines need not mean a last-minute rush if proper scheduling has been exercised.

## • Budgeting

Budgeting is estimating the total resources needed wisely, planning how to employ the resources available to obtain the greatest results. Budgeting details how the plan will be carried out month to month and covers items such as revenue, expenses, potential cash flow and debt reduction. A project budget is a plan that details how much one should spend, for what, and by when. When one creates a budget plan in advance and uses it to monitor money spent throughout a project, one can reduce the likelihood of running out of resources or going over budget—a common occurrence in many workplaces.

**- Estimate needs**

The first step in budgeting is to estimate the total needs or to count the cost. It is essential to consider all the necessary resources before embacking on a project.

**- Take inventory**

The second step, after having estimated the needs is to take inventory of the available resources to see if there is enough to complete the objective. Wisely appropriating the resources is a skill that demands great insight and wisdom.

## • Establishing procedures

Procedures are the standardising of methods, materials, and work to accomplish the objective. A wise leader, usually choose procedures that are in line with his own strength and gifts; are in keeping with the resources; and utilise optimally the strength and gifts of his team. This is because, methods that are or have been successful for others may not be the best for another's particular project. Hence, it is important to be careful in the choice of procedures. Once the methodology has been decided, however, it will promote unity, uniformity, and order in the fulfillment of the task. It must be remembered that procedures are dynamic, and in a constant state of change. They must constantly be examined in the light of present and future needs, and adjusted so as not to become hindrances. Yet, when used in the right way, procedures or methodology can prevent chaos.



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