

FIRE SERVICES EXAMINATIONS BOARD

STUDY NOTE

EXAMINATION	STATION OFFICERS' EXAMINATION
PAPER	BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
SUBJECT	PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT
ITEM	BUSINESS PLANNING AND FORECASTING
STUDY NOTE No.	3401

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY NOTE

This study note has been prepared as the basis of study in connection with the qualifying examinations for promotion.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the information contained in the study note and understand how it should be applied:

The 'References' made at the end of the Study Note are included for information only and candidates will not be expected to study these as part of the bibliography.

BUSINESS PLANNING AND FORECASTING

1. Introduction

Command, Leadership and Management

Command and leadership are traditional and familiar functions in the fire service but 'management', with its industrial and commercial overtones and apparent preoccupation with profitability, seems somehow an alien concept, hardly appropriate for coping with the extremes of firefighting. For some, the application of management theories and techniques in the fire service might appear to detract from the functions of command and leadership that are seen to be essential.

However, these reactions are generated by personal interpretations of the words themselves and their meanings are often coloured (or obscured) by the associations they conjure up in the mind of the individual. To avoid this confusion we could define these words in a way that integrates their meanings within a wider relationship, which is both acceptable and meaningful to fire service personnel.

Therefore:

- (a) **Command** is described as the authority invested in an individual for, and their exercise of, the direction, co-ordination and control of fire service personnel and resources.
- (b) **Leadership** is a combination of the willingness to lead and the character to inspire. It is a personal quality, which inspires others to follow.
- (c) **Management** is the means of making the best use of human and material resources to achieve the commander's aim.

2. Command

If the fire service is to function effectively, its members must be prepared to accept orders from more senior officers: the commander has the right to expect compliance from others, ie to possess authority. However, in exercising authority, the commander also accepts responsibility for the decisions that the commander makes and for the results that flow from those decisions. This responsibility in turn implies stewardship, the commander is responsible for the proper use of the resources entrusted to him or her. Additionally, command is a continuing and long-term activity, which requires the example of personal qualities as well as the management of resources. Thus, command can only be effective in the long run if exercised in conjunction with both good management and good leadership.

3. Leadership

Just as effective command cannot exist in isolation, so good leadership cannot be maintained without sound management, for a leader will not be followed for long if there is failure to plan and control the activities of the watch, station or section, in an effective manner. The leader who inspires others without regard to resources may be very effective in the short-term and there are occasions for the fire service when such leadership is the only way to achieve an objective. More often than not, however, leadership is concerned with the achievement of more distant goals and is accompanied by competence: good leadership and good management are virtually inseparable.

Management could be described as an activity that appears to contain two distinct elements:

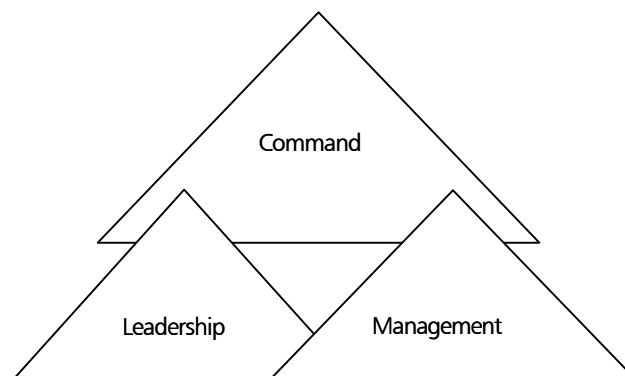
- (a) The first element contains aspects like competence, problem solving, decision making and making plans to implement decisions, and so on.
- (b) The second element is leadership - getting people to transform plans and decisions into action. While the first element is very important, it is dependent on the element of leadership to be effective; for any plan is a mere intention until the skill of leadership is applied.

Thus, it is possible to imagine a commander who is a strong leader, but a poor decision-maker, effectively leading people in the wrong direction. Equally, it is possible for commanders to be very good at decision-making and yet incapable of getting people to carry out their wishes. A station officer in the fire service must be competent in both elements.

With this approach, leadership and management can be considered as vital parts of operational command because it is only by the exercise of sound leadership and good management that the best use can be made of human and material resources.

The relationship between command, management and leadership can be depicted in the following model:

Fig 1.



In the model, command can be seen to depend on leadership and management.

Knowledge and training in the techniques and skills of management and leadership are essential to future performance. If you become a better leader and a better manager, you will become a better commander!

4. Management

In a publication of 1908, Henri Fayol quoted "to manage is to forecast and plan, to organise, to command, to co-ordinate and control". These principles still hold good today and are, without question, involved in the business of running a watch or fire station. How can we benefit from this knowledge to help us run a smooth and efficient watch or station?

5. Efficiency

First we need to identify what efficiency involves. Efficiency may be considered as 'effectiveness with economy'. The main aspects of efficiency are technical, personal and managerial.

(a) Technical Efficiency

This implies the need to keep up-to-date with all new technical advances relating to the service and to arrange for subordinates to be suitably informed and instructed about the nature and implications of these technical advances. A sound overall knowledge of brigade orders, technical bulletins and fire service publications is an essential feature of technical efficiency.

(b) Personal Efficiency

The main requirements of this are that a station officer should lead by example, especially in appearance, behaviour, and the ability to 'project' the best image of the service to subordinates and members of the public.

(c) Managerial Efficiency

This involves the creation of a management system with clear aims and methodology such that the aims are achieved with the use of optimum human and material resources, not only in the day to-day work of the station but also taking account of the longer term.

6. Management cycle

Next we need to spend time and thought looking at the processes first identified by Fayol, but expanded slightly to provide the following management cycle:

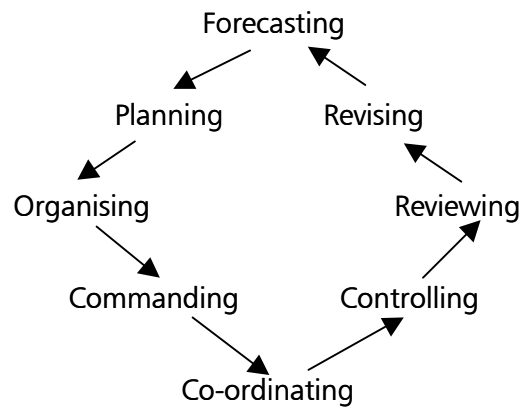


Fig 2

7. Forecasting

Forecasting is the conscious act of looking ahead so as to anticipate possible requirements and to avoid being taken unawares by future developments. It may be considered in terms of internal and external factors as indicated by the following examples:

(a) Internal factors

Forecasting in terms of manpower includes the anticipation of the necessary levels of recruitment of personnel to take account of resignations etc;

Assessment of the likely potential of personnel for promotion and their encouragement to improve performance, pass examinations, etc; and the preparation of reports on:

- (i) The suitability of personnel for courses in specialist work; and
- (ii) The progress of probationers, with any necessary recommendations designed to improve their overall performance.

Forecasting in relation to equipment includes giving recommendations regarding the possible need for new or replacement equipment, planning the routine servicing of vehicles and forecasting the need for temporary replacement of vehicles and equipment. In this connection, station officers will normally require to consult with other personnel for the completion of reports.

Consultation both with subordinates and more senior officers is an important aspect of forecasting.

- (b) External factors

The station officer should be aware of any proposals or developments taking place outside the fire service, which may have an effect on the station ground. Factors of this kind include town and country planning, city redevelopment, development of new towns, industrial estates, motorways and road works, etc. In particular, these could necessitate the re-routing of appliances attending incidents in the area.

8. Planning

Planning involves the setting of particular objectives, determining their order of priority and ensuring that the effort of all ranks is integrated with everyone operating from the same basis. Planning includes:

- (a) The formulation, dissemination and interpretation of policy as widely as possible;
- (b) The desirable timetable for the attainment of objectives;
- (c) The designation of those who are to be responsible in any respect for the achievement of the objectives; and
- (d) An action plan for the carrying out of the necessary work.

Within the station, planning in general includes the assessment of the daily workload. Fire prevention and Section 1(1)(d) inspections under the Fire Services Act, hydrant and water supplies, training programmes, practical work, lectures, and maintenance and cleaning schedules are all matters which come within the planning responsibilities of the station officer. In relation to the normal system of watches, planning for the next watch depends on work carried out by each watch in relation to the other - planning must be carried out at least one watch ahead.

9. Characteristics of a Good Plan

A good plan is:

- (a) Based on clearly defined objectives;
- (b) Simple and capable of being understood by all personnel concerned;
- (c) Designed to maintain appropriate standards;
- (d) Flexible;
- (e) Well balanced in its distribution of work and responsibility amongst the officers concerned; and
- (f) Designed to use available resources (ie manpower, equipment and time) to the best effect.

10. Organising

Organising means the allocation of duties and responsibilities to officers to achieve the most effective use of available resources for the smooth running of the station. Some of the main features of good organisation are that:

- (a) Definite and clear-cut responsibilities should be assigned to each rank;
- (b) Responsibility should always be matched by corresponding authority;
- (c) Any dispute or difference between personnel as to authority or responsibilities, no matter how trivial, should be given prompt attention or investigation;
- (d) Any change in the nature or extent of previously allocated responsibilities should be made known to all ranks concerned; and
- (e) Under normal conditions, any orders should come from one source through the normal chain of command.

11. Organisational Chart

A useful way to illustrate the levels of responsibilities is by an organisational chart. This can take many different forms and the ranks of the senior officers will vary according to the size of the brigade. For example, in large brigades senior fire prevention officers may hold the rank of Assistant Chief Officer/Assistant Firemaster, whereas in smaller brigades they may hold Divisional Officer rank of appropriate grade.

12. Delegation

An officer-in-charge is responsible to a more senior officer for the efficient management of the station. As part of the process of delegation, duties (with associated responsibility) may be allocated to subordinates in accordance with a definite plan, but the officer-in-charge will, of course, retain overall responsibility. Such delegation should provide for freedom of operation within the delegation, supervision of the results, and any necessary corrections in the nature or extent of the delegation.

Within the extent of their own responsibilities, station officers will decide the policies of their stations but will delegate to sub-officers, who may be given authority to decide the distribution of the work of the stations, their administration and appropriate record keeping. In addition, sub-officers may be in charge of inspections, drills and general station training. They are usually responsible for practical training in the station but may delegate some of the work to leading firefighters who are normally responsible for the actual supervision of the station work.

In allocating duties and responsibilities, the station officer should consider the following questions.

- (a) Have targets and objectives been thoroughly examined and explained to those who are to achieve them?
- (b) Are subordinates being used to the full capacity of their knowledge, training and experience?
- (c) Are they carrying out responsibilities, which are commensurate with their rank?
- (d) Are they clear as to their responsibilities?
- (e) Are they clear as to whom they are responsible?
- (f) Do they have time to check the quality of their work?

13. The Use of Specialist Officers

In addition to normal operational functions, brigades will have a need for certain specialist functions to be carried out. In the larger brigades officers may be appointed to fill designated specialist posts, but in smaller brigades it may be necessary for specialist functions to be combined with an operational role. Specialist officers will hold a rank appropriate to their duties and to the size of the brigade.

Specialist officers, who normally work at brigade or divisional headquarters, generally advise senior officers on the formulation of policy and assist and advise on the implementation of agreed policy.

The main categories of specialist officers with whom the operational station officer comes into contact are:

- (a) The Fire Safety Officer - provides advice on complex fire safety situations and community fire safety issues outside the scope of normal inspections carried out by operational personnel.
- (b) The Staff Officer - provides liaison between the service and outside bodies and may also give advice on the formulation of policy and assists and advises on the implementation of that policy.
- (c) Training Officer - is responsible for the formulation of training policy and the provision of other specialist assistance in carrying out this policy.
- (d) Safety Officer - is responsible for the formulation of Health, Safety and Welfare policy and assists and advises on the implementation of that policy.
- (e) Personnel Officer - is responsible for the formulation of policy relating to personnel issues such as recruitment, conditions of service, equal opportunities, payroll etc, and assists and advises managers on the implementation of those policies.

In all circumstances care must be taken to ensure that, between the specialist officer and the officer who seeks advice, there is a clear and mutual understanding about each other's responsibilities. In particular, it should be remembered that the specialist officer is an integral part of the service, whose work, like that of an operational officer, is related to its needs and objectives. Subject to this, other functions of a specialist officer include:

- (a) Assisting operational officers to carry out their duties more efficiently and deal with problems for which neither the time nor the specialised knowledge or experience required is available at station level;
- (b) Stimulating improvements by the study of developments in the specialist fields;
- (c) Collecting and evaluating information from inside and outside the service and communicating it to operational officers in an acceptable form; and
- (d) Helping to achieve standardisation and uniformity of practice where these are necessary in the interests of efficiency.

14. Delegation - Points to be Observed

In the interests of efficiency, the following are some of the points that should be observed by all station officers.

- (a) They should not consider themselves to be indispensable.
- (b) They should not be secretive or maintain a 'mystique' about their job.
- (c) They should organise their day-to-day duties in such a way that they have time to plan ahead.
- (d) They should be prepared to admit that, in particular circumstances, they might need help to keep on top of their job.
- (e) They should avoid interfering with everything that is going on in the station, regardless of whether or not it concerns them directly.
- (f) They should apply the appropriate degree of supervision and should not always keep a close watch on subordinates to ensure they are carrying out their duties correctly.
- (g) They should not normally be interrupted by subordinates seeking decisions that they should make for themselves.
- (h) They should not in normal circumstances carry out work or assignments that are appropriate to subordinates.
- (i) They should not find unexpected administrative emergencies constantly arising in the field for which they have responsibility.

- (j) They should delegate to subordinates to avoid an accumulation of unfinished jobs.
- (k) They should always strive to achieve the completion of newsletters, statements or reports.
- (l) They should meet official deadlines.

15. Control and Review

Control is the process of ensuring that all actions are in conformity with the appropriate rules or instructions, or with the terms of any specific orders in the matter, including restraints on time, resources and limits of authority.

This process helps those in charge to know whether particular objectives are being achieved, or in what respect the organisation or individual has fallen short of its targets.

Effective control depends to a great extent on appropriate information being fed back to management from the various levels of command. It is thus a continuing process of comparing targets and results, leading, when necessary, to appropriate corrective action.

The information obtained should be fed back into meetings and information systems, at the co-ordination stages, as part of the management cycle.

To ensure that all actions conform to the appropriate rules or instructions and that projects are progressing satisfactorily, it is essential for an efficient method of control to be adopted. In conjunction with this, all ongoing actions or projects should be reviewed at appropriate stages to ensure that the aims and targets are being met in the most efficient manner.

Station Commanders may wish to consider the following methods used to help maintain control and provide a continuous review process:

- (a) Clear and well kept records;
- (b) Discussion in meetings and committees;
- (c) Inspections;
- (d) Progress reports from subordinates; and
- (e) Efficient bring forward systems.

Where, in particular, periodic reports and returns are used as a method of control, these should be reviewed from time to time to ensure that they still serve a useful purpose and be amended or discontinued if they do not.

References

Fire Services Examinations Board