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Organisation Management

Essay on Management Practices of Organisations (ACMA 4020)

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AI Acknowledgement

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2 Introduction

Management is the process by which organisations coordinate resources and direct human effort towards defined objectives. It is widely understood to encompass four interrelated functions: planning, organising, leading and controlling (Robbins and Coulter, 2018). Together, these functions provide the conceptual framework within which managers at all levels operate, and their effective integration is central to sustained organisational performance.

This essay examines these four management functions through the lens of LSN Diffusion Ltd, a specialist metal powder atomisation manufacturer operating within the automotive and aerospace supply chains. LSN Diffusion employs approximately 110 staff across its Llandybie, Carmarthenshire facility and operates under a quality management system certified to ISO 9001:2015 and aligned to IATF 16949 and VDA 6.3 requirements. The organisation therefore provides a relevant and representative context for exploring how classical management theory applies in a complex, quality-critical manufacturing environment.

Each section addresses one function in turn, before the conclusion assesses their collective contribution to management effectiveness.

Whilst the four functions provide a well-established framework, their application in a quality-critical, compliance-driven environment such as LSN Diffusion is rarely straightforward. This essay therefore argues that the value of classical management theory lies not in mechanical application but in its capacity to structure critical thinking: applied with contextual judgement, the functions offer a coherent basis for managing complexity; applied rigidly, they become bureaucratic constraints.

3 Planning

Three strategic objectives are essential to the long-term success of LSN Diffusion Ltd.

The first is to achieve and sustain ISO 9001/VDA 6.3 certification to secure automotive sector contracts. The second is to reduce powder cross-contamination defect rates across nickel, cobalt and iron-based grades. The third is to invest in process automation to improve classification yield and reduce unit cost. These objectives align with the principle that effective objectives should be specific, measurable and time-bound (Drucker, 1954).

Strategically, certification requires gap analysis against ISO 9001/VDA 6.3, executive sponsorship and a phased roadmap; operationally, this means revised control plans, PFMEA updates and internal audits. Contamination reduction combines a layered controls framework with validated bin-cleaning instructions, segregated material flows and SPC monitoring. Automation investment, such as the British Rema Aerosplit system, is justified by a capital business case and delivered through commissioning, training and revised maintenance — reflecting the distinction between strategic intent and operational execution (Mintzberg, 1994).

LSN Diffusion predominantly applies Management by Objectives (MBO) approach rather than a purely traditional top-down planning model. Objectives are agreed jointly between management and functional leads, with performance reviewed against measurable targets such as parts-per-million defect rates and audit non-conformance counts. For example, quality objectives are cascaded from the business plan to departmental key performance indicators and then to individual responsibilities, with periodic review meetings adjusting targets in response to customer feedback. This participative process improves ownership and motivation, consistent with the principles of MBO (Drucker, 1954). However, the approach carries risk: MBO can encourage short-term measurable wins at the expense of qualitative goals and may become bureaucratic if review cycles are excessive (Mintzberg, 1994). A traditional planning model offers tighter control and clearer accountability but reduces flexibility in a volatile automotive supply chain. On balance, LSN Diffusion benefits from a hybrid model in which strategic direction is set centrally while operational objectives are negotiated through MBO, allowing the organisation to remain both directed and adaptive (Armstrong, 2020).

4 Organising

Designing a small, centrally based workforce capable of providing continuous 24-hour, seven-day customer care coverage requires careful attention to shift architecture, employee wellbeing and external commitments. A continuous operation of 168 hours per week cannot be sustained by a conventional single-shift team; instead, the design must balance adequate coverage with the recognised risks of fatigue and work-life conflict associated with shift work (Costa, 2010).

The proposed model is built on a small core team of multi-skilled advisors supported by flexible and shared arrangements. A continental shift pattern, rotating mornings, afternoons and nights across a small Rota, provides coverage while distributing unsocial hours equitably. To accommodate external commitments such as childcare, study or caring responsibilities, the design incorporates self-rostering, where employees express shift preferences within defined coverage rules. This is supplemented by job-sharing for part-time staff and compressed working weeks, allowing four longer days followed by extended rest, which suits those with longer commutes. Annualised hours arrangements permit demand-led flexing, expanding coverage during peak periods and contracting during quieter intervals. Such flexible working arrangements are widely recognised to improve retention and reduce absence when implemented with employee involvement (CIPD, 2021).

Clear implementation guidelines are essential. For managers, the guidelines specify minimum staffing levels per shift, maximum consecutive night shifts, and mandatory rest periods compliant with the Working Time Regulations 1998. Managers should publish rotas at least four weeks in advance, maintain a transparent swap protocol, and monitor fatigue indicators. For employees, guidelines establish the procedure for requesting flexible arrangements, the notice required for shift swaps, and the expectation of cross-training to enable cover. A shared digital scheduling platform provides visibility and auditability. The work package is therefore framed around a small core supplemented by flexible contracts rather than a large, fixed establishment, which controls labour cost while sustaining service quality. This approach reflects contemporary thinking that effective workforce design must integrate operational requirements with the legitimate external commitments of employees to be sustainable (Wheatley, 2017).

5 Leading

In leading the quality function at LSN Diffusion, a representative example was directing the cross-functional team responsible for a Pre-Launch PPAP submission to a major automotive customer. This required coordinating engineering, production and logistics personnel under significant time pressure to resolve risks identified in the control plan and ERP integration. Reflecting critically on this experience, my personal leadership style is best characterised as predominantly transformational with a strong supportive orientation, combined with a tendency toward democratic decision-making (Bass, 1985).

Evaluated against situational leadership theory, this style was effective with experienced colleagues who required delegation rather than direction, but less effective with less confident staff who needed clearer instruction (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988). The transformational emphasis on shared vision and intellectual stimulation generated strong engagement; however, a self-identified weakness is a tendency to prioritise supporting others before my own workload, which can delay decisive action and reflects an over-reliance on consensus. This aligns with the recognised limitation that highly participative styles can slow decision-making when time is constrained (Northouse, 2021). A further development area is the under-use of a transactional, task-focused approach when deadlines demand clarity.

A structured action plan addresses these gaps. First, over the next three months, I will adopt situational diagnosis, consciously matching directive or supportive behaviour to each team member's competence and commitment. Second, I will develop delegation discipline by formally assigning ownership with defined deadlines, reducing the inclination to absorb others' tasks. Third, I will undertake leadership development through reflective practice, recording decisions and outcomes, and seeking structured feedback from peers and my line manager at quarterly intervals. Progress will be measured against reduced project slippage and improved 360-degree feedback scores. This plan is grounded in the principle that leadership is a developable competence rather than a fixed trait, and that deliberate practice combined with feedback drives improvement (Northouse, 2021).

6 Controlling

As a quality-department manager, control measures are required to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of individual employees and the overall performance of the unit. Control ensures actual performance conforms to planned standards through the cycle of setting standards, measuring, comparing and taking corrective action (Robbins and Coulter, 2018).

For individual employees, a balanced set of measures is proposed. Efficiency is assessed through output-based indicators such as audit completion rates, non-conformance reports closed within target, and documentation turnaround time, which directly support my objective of reducing time spent on document control. Effectiveness is assessed through quality-based indicators such as the accuracy of completed PPAP submissions, the rate of customer-returned documentation, and root cause analysis success measured by recurrence of defects. Combining quantitative output with qualitative quality measures avoids the well-documented risk that single-metric control distorts behaviour toward what is measured rather than what matters (Robbins and Coulter, 2018). Assessment methods include scheduled one-to-one reviews, competency matrices and periodic appraisal against agreed objectives.

For overall unit performance, a balanced scorecard is justified because it integrates financial, customer, internal process and learning perspectives, preventing an exclusive focus on cost (Kaplan and Norton, 1996). Relevant indicators include customer parts-per-million defect rates and complaint volumes for the customer perspective, internal audit non-conformance trends and first-time-right rates for the process perspective, cost of poor quality for the financial perspective, and training completion for the learning perspective. These indicators are justified because they are aligned with the strategic objectives identified earlier, are measurable from existing quality management system data, and provide leading as well as lagging signals. Statistical process control charts further support effective control by distinguishing common-cause from special-cause variation, ensuring corrective action is targeted rather than reactive (Oakland, 2014). Together, these measures provide a defensible, evidence-based framework for controlling both individual and unit performance.

7 Conclusion

This assignment has examined planning, organising, leading and controlling in the context of LSN Diffusion Ltd, demonstrating both the practical relevance and the inherent tensions of classical management theory in a quality-critical manufacturing environment.

In planning, a hybrid MBO approach keeps LSN Diffusion both directed and adaptive; in organising, the workforce balances coverage with employee wellbeing; in leading, the development plan addresses a transformational style's risk of delayed decisions; and in controlling, individual indicators and a balanced scorecard avoid single-metric distortion.

A recurring theme across all four functions is the need to balance structure with flexibility — whether adjusting MBO targets to customer feedback, accommodating employee commitments in shift design, matching leadership style to individual readiness, or distinguishing common-cause from special-cause variation. Effective management at LSN Diffusion thus requires both rigorous frameworks and contextual judgement, reflecting the insight that prescribed models must be applied critically rather than mechanically (Armstrong, 2020; Northouse, 2021).

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