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CONTROLLING

Controlling Process

Controlling is a systematic process involving the following steps.

1. Setting performance standards

2. Measurement of actual performance

3. Comparison of actual performance with standards

4. Analysing deviations

5. Taking corrective action

Step 1: Setting Performance Standards: The first step in the controlling process is setting up of performance standards. Standards are the criteria against which actual performance would be measured. Thus, standards serve as benchmarks towards which an organisation strives to work. Standards can be set in both quantitative as well as qualitative terms. For instance, standards set in terms of cost to be incurred, revenue to be earned, product units to be produced and sold, time to be spent in performing a task, all represents quantitative standards. Sometimes standards may also be set in qualitative terms. Improving goodwill and motivation level of employees are examples of qualitative standards. The table in the next page gives a glimpse of standards used in different functional areas of business to gauge performance. At the time of setting standards, a manager should try to set standards in precise quantitative terms as this would make their comparison with actual performance much easier. For instance, reduction of defects from 10 in every 1,000 pieces produced to 5 in every 1,000 pieces produced by the end of the quarter. However, whenever qualitative standards are set, an effort must be made to define them in a manner that would make their measurement easier. For instance, for improving customer satisfaction in a fast food chain having self-service, standards can be set in terms of time taken by a customer to wait for a table, time taken by him to place the order and time taken to collect the order. It is important that standards should be flexible enough to be modified whenever required. Due to changes taking place in the internal and external

business environment, standards may need some modification to be realistic in the changed business environment.

Step 2: Measurement of Actual Performance: Once performance standards are set, the next step is measurement of actual performance. Performance should be measured in an objective and reliable manner. There are several techniques for measurement of performance. These include personal observation, sample checking, performance reports, etc. As far as possible, performance should be measured in the same units in which standards are set as this would make their comparison Easter It is generally believed that measurement should be done after the task is completed. However, wherever possible, measurement of work should be done during the performance. For instance, in case of assembling task, each part produced should be checked before assembling. Similarly, in a manufacturing plant, levels of gas particles in the air could be continuously monitored for safety. Measurement of performance of an employee may require preparation of performance report by his superior. Measurement of a company's performance may involve calculation of certain ratios like gross profit ratio, net profit ratio, return on investment, etc., at periodic intervals. Progress of work in certain operating areas like marketing may be measured by considering the number of units sold, increase in market share etc., whereas, efficiency of production may be measured by counting the number of pieces produced and number of defective pieces in a batch. In small organisations, each piece produced may be checked to ensure that it conforms to quality specifications laid down for the product. However, this might not be possible in a large organisation. Thus, in large organizations, certain pieces are checked at random for quality. This is known as sample checking.

Step 3: Comparing Actual Performance with Standards: This step involves comparison of actual performance with the standard. Such comparison will reveal the deviation between actual and desired results. Comparison becomes easier when standards are set in quantitative terms. For instance, performance of a worker in terms of units produced in a week can be easily measured against the standard output for the week.

Step 4: Analysing Deviations: Some deviation in performance can be expected in all activities. It is, therefore, important to determine the acceptable range of deviations. Also, deviations in key areas of business need to be attended more urgently as compared to deviations in certain insignificant areas. Critical point control and management by exception should be used by a manager in this regard.

1. Critical Point Control: It is neither economical nor easy to keep a check on each and every activity in an organisation. Control should, therefore, focus on key result areas (KRAs) which are critical to the success of an organisation. These KRAs are set as the critical points. If anything goes wrong at the critical points, the entire organisation suffers. For instance, in a

manufacturing organisation, an increase of 5 per cent in the labour cost may be more troublesome than a 15 per cent increase in postal charges.

2. Management by Exception: Management by exception, which is often referred to as control by exception, is an important principle of management control based on the belief that an attempt to control everything results in controlling nothing. Thus, only significant deviations which go beyond the permissible limit should be brought to the notice of management. Thus, if the plans lay down 2 per cent increase in labour cost as an acceptable range of deviation in a manufacturing organisation, only increase in labour cost beyond 2 per cent should be brought to the notice of the management. However, in case of major deviation from the standard (say, 5 per cent), the matter has to receive immediate action of management on a priority basis.

Step 5: Taking Corrective Action:

The final step in the controlling process is taking corrective action. No corrective action is required when the deviations are within acceptable limits. However, when the deviations go beyond the acceptable range, especially in the important areas, it demands immediate managerial attention so that deviations do not occur again and standards are accomplished.