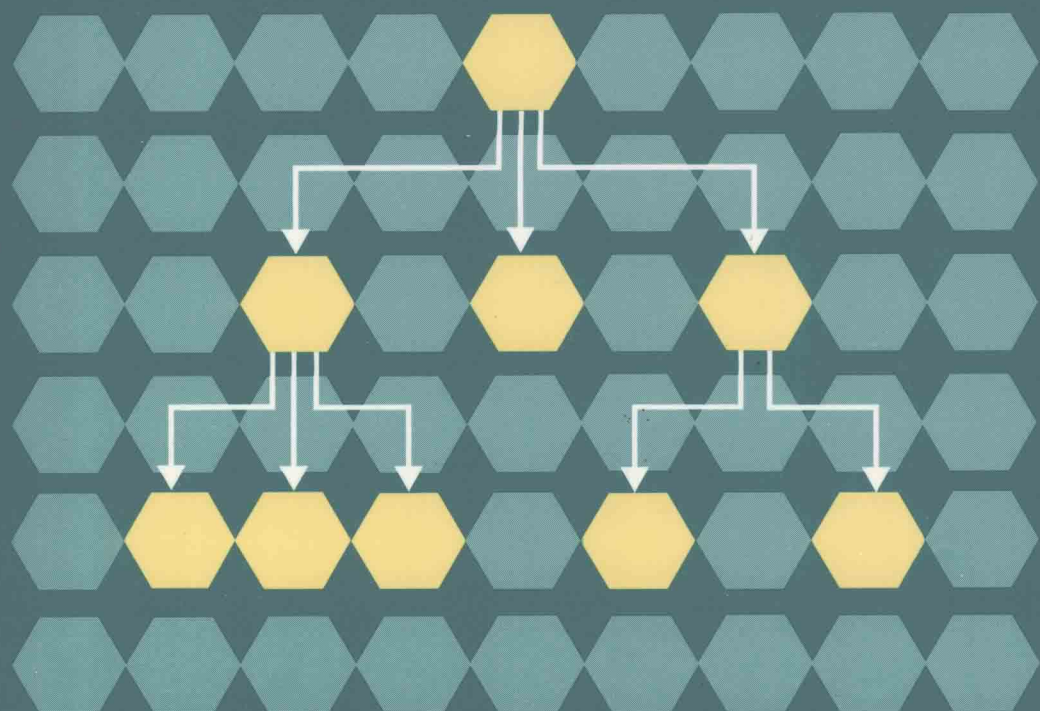


FUNCTIONS of a MANAGER in Occupational Therapy

Revised Edition



Karen Jacobs
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Functions Of A Manager In Occupational Therapy

Revised Edition

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Preface to Revised Edition

Since 1989, much has changed in the health care arena. The climate in the United States is changing and we all await the impact of President Clinton's health care reform. It has become crucial for occupational therapists to have a good understanding of the functions of a manager during these times. This revised edition of *Functions of a Manager* contains ten chapters, all of which have been rewritten or updated to reflect our health care climate. In addition, we have added a chapter on developing new programs.

Preface to First Edition

The theme of this textbook for undergraduate occupational therapy students is the functions of a manager, including those of a planner, director, organizer, budgeter, supervisor, and leader. Being a manager is a role that many occupational therapists assume during the courses of their careers. By providing information on the functions of a manager during the years of formal education, we hope to introduce and foster the enjoyment and importance of this role. This book is designed to address ten functions of a manager organized into macro and micro-management environments. The macro-environment includes Chapter 1: Managing Human Resources; Chapter 2: Management Information Systems; Chapter 3: Marketing Occupational Therapy Services; Chapter 4: Ethical Issues in Occupational Therapy; and Chapter 5: Supervision. The micro-environment includes Chapter 6: Cost Management; Chapter 7: Documentation in Health Care; Chapter 8: Designing Fieldwork Programs; Chapter 9: Quality Management in Occupational Therapy and Chapter 10: Developing a New Occupational Therapy Program. Use of this textbook has been facilitated by the provision of two case studies and multiple choice questions at the end of each chapter.

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CHAPTER 1

Managing Human Resources

Rita A. Parisi, OTR/L

Introduction

The primary objective of this chapter is to discuss the role of a supervisor in managing human resources, specifically recruitment and retention of employees. To manage that process effectively it is necessary to integrate and implement many management concepts. Important concepts include:

- Marketing management
- Managing organization and individual behavior
- Understanding what motivates employees
- Developing effective communication
- Understanding individual and group dynamics
- Developing leadership skills

Recruiting and retaining health care professionals has become increasingly difficult during the past 10 years. It will be one of the most difficult issues that department managers will have to face in the 1990s. In the 1970s much of the literature that analyzed and predicted career trends projected tremendous growth in the need for therapy providers. Unfortunately, from the perspective of a department manager, the number of clinicians does not meet the need for therapy services, creating a supply and demand problem. To grasp a full understanding of the issue, the following brief historical information is provided. A literature review revealed the following major reasons for increased demand of therapy services.

1. Growth of rehabilitation because of increased public awareness and push for increased independence of handicapped/disabled individuals.
2. Trend of using highly trained nonphysician professionals to provide services previously provided by physicians.
3. Federal and state regulations that demand therapy services for target populations. For example, children between the ages of 3 and 21 with identified needs.
4. Increased Medicare and Medicaid coverage for occupational therapy services provided in outpatient and home health settings.
5. Increased emphasis on health care promotion and prevention therapy creating new employment markets that require occupational therapy services. For example, walk-in clinics and sports medicine clinics.
6. The aging of America, which creates an increased number of elderly who are major users of therapy services.

Recruitment

Health care business trends usually are behind other business industry trends. Recruitment methods utilized in health care are not exceptions to that rule. Therefore, a health care manager can learn a great deal by exploring recruitment methods utilized by other industries. Managers can relate those methods to their organizations.

Recruitment can be approached from a marketing perspective. Marketing is simply defined as understanding the consumer's needs so that the product is seen as having value to the consumer: in marketing it is important to clearly define the product, price, and sales/promotion plan to the consumer. The same ideas can be generalized to recruitment. The applicant is the consumer, the product is the facility and/or organization, the price is the salary and benefit package, and the sales/promotion plan is a method utilized to attract applicants. Therefore, from a marketing perspective, it is important to do the following:

1. Identify the applicant's or consumer's potential needs. For example, many clinicians are women who have young children. Flexible hours and child care might be important to their needs. Other needs might be ladder opportunities, education, and so on.
2. Define the product in terms of the facility/organization's strengths and unique characteristics.
3. Define the price or salary and benefit package. If the applicant is considering employment at the facility, the salary and benefits need to be competitive and of value to the consumer or applicant. This idea is similar to the consumer who needs to feel a product is worth the price for which it is selling.
4. Develop a sales/promotion plan that is needed to attract applicants and sell them on employment.

Health care recruiters and recruitment companies are showing tremendous growth. Ten years ago less than 5% of therapy providers were introduced to their jobs via recruiters. That figure has grown significantly over the past ten years. In fact, many health care organizations have hired recruiters. The recruitment process has become very costly and frustrating to many organizations.

Following are six basic steps in the recruitment process:

- Define the job and qualifications
- Attract applicants
- Set up an interview
- Check references
- Offer the job
- Follow up the worker's progress

Job Definition

The job definition is an important step that requires more attention than it is usually given. It is of vital importance to match the applicant with the job. It is impossible to do that without a clear understanding of the job the applicant is being recruited for. As we all know, the role of the occupational therapist varies in each setting. Therefore it is important to have a job description for the position that is being recruited.

A job description should contain the following elements:

- Title of job
- Organizational relationship—include in this section whom the individual reports to and the kind and degree of supervision received. Also include who this individual coordinates with and supervises
- Summary of primary functions
- Work performed—describe specific duties indicating the importance of each
- Job requirements—include specific skills and education required to perform the job
- Significant environmental risks—includes hazards of the position, e.g., back injuries from lifting, exposure to diseases

After a job description is completed it is important to translate the duties in the general job description into individual specifications. A job description does not always tell what to look for in a candidate. Individualized specifications might include personality characteristics, past experience and accomplishments.^{1,4,10}

Methods to Attract Applicants

Look at methods utilized to attract applicants from short- and long-run perspectives. It is very important to present a positive image and keep your organization's name in front of prospective candidates.

Successful short-run methods in attracting applicants include the following:

- Sponsor open house events that invite clinicians to the facility
- Place an eye-catching ad in recruitment journals and/or newspapers
- Offer incentive bonuses to employees who recruit their friends and classmates to work at the facility
- Attend recruitment fairs sponsored by recruitment forums
- Attend professional conferences for the purpose of recruiting, not education
- Send recruitment letters to clinicians' homes
- Send out informational papers to local clinicians
- Encourage staff to write articles on clinical programs offered in the facility to be placed in recruitment newspapers

Methods utilized to keep attracting applicants in the long run do not usually yield immediate rewards. Because it is hard to show immediate benefits of these efforts, many shortsighted organizations might not value the time invested. Our experience confirms that the time spent in these methods is just as valuable as the time invested in short-run methods. Activities used to attract applicants in the long run are as follows:

- Provide lectures to colleges and universities that have occupational therapy programs
- Participate in high school career days to promote the profession and make direct contact with students
- Encourage staff to present papers at national and local education forums
- Train occupational therapy students at the facility
- Build networking channels within the profession by participating in state organization and special interest groups
- Send out educational mailing on a regular basis

Interviews

Once there are applicants, the interview process begins. It is important to prepare for the interview. The interview style can be directive and formal or nondirective and informal. The manager needs to decide which style is most comfortable and which will obtain the information the manager needs. This is the time to set mutual expectations. Active listening skills are a must for interviewing. The objectives of an interview are to determine the following:

- Is the applicant a match for your organization and job description?
- Do the applicant's technical skills match the organization's needs?
- What are the applicant's career goals?
- Does the applicant's working style match the environment?
- Is the applicant interested in working at the facility?

The shortage of clinicians has created a situation where the applicants are usually interviewing at several facilities at the same time. The manager should consider giving the applicant written information to take when leaving. It is important for the manager to highlight the strengths and unique characteristics of the organization. Meeting the key individuals other than the department manager might be useful and allows the applicant to gain a better perspective about the organization. It also gives the manager opportunities to solicit opinions from others regarding the applicant's potential.^{2,8,9}

Reference Check

It is important to check references on applicants to whom you are planning to offer a job. The increasing shortage of clinicians and desire to fill vacancies might influence a department manager to skip this step. This is not a good idea because the information obtained on a reference check assists the manager in making an informed decision. It is not always possible to determine if an applicant is a good match for your job based on an interview. It is more costly to hire an individual who does not match the job and organization's goals.

Reference checks can be performed on the telephone or by mail. Telephone references are faster than mail references. The telephone also can allow more flexibility than a written reference. A written reference usually requires less time from the manager to obtain information.

Job Offer

The department manager usually makes the job offer to the potential employee. The job offer should include terms of employment, salary, and an agreement on starting date.

Follow Up

Once a verbal agreement has been reached between the potential new employee and department manager, write a letter to the new employee. The letter should contain a welcome to the organization, salary, starting date, work hours, documents necessary for first day of work, and any other information that would be helpful to a new employee. For example, the dress code, parking and public transit, and types of food available on-site to the employee.

If more than one month passes between the job offer and starting date, a phone call might be worthwhile. Many individuals have ambivalent feelings when leaving one employer and going to another. Therefore, a phone call confirming the job offer might reassure the new employee.

Retention

It is important to be successful at recruitment, but success at retention is more important. The way the clinician is assimilated into the organization plays a major role in retention of that employee. The employee's early experiences in the organization can

significantly affect job satisfaction, employee attitude, productivity, and turnover.

The psychological contract—setting of expectations and matching of the individual's and organization's goals—begins during the interview process.¹¹ Once a new employee is scheduled to begin working, each manager struggles with setting up priorities about how much work time versus training time is expected. The training time can vary depending on the work experience the new employee has. Training time might be minimal if the department has been short staffed and there is a lot of work waiting for the new employee.

The orientation process has both formal and informal components. The formal process attempts to assimilate the new employee into the organization and give the employee a common base of reference and resources. It sends a message to new employees that their understanding of each department and the facility as a whole is important. The informal welcoming process is just as important for the individual to learn the informal channels in the organization.

The following are recommendations to successfully recruit and retain employees in the organization:

1. Match—Managers should match the employee's strengths with the first assignment, have written material available for reference, and balance new employee's work schedule between initiating the job and the orientation process.

2. Training—Each manager should internally review the priorities of the balance of orientation and training process versus job productivity expectations. An appropriate amount of time spent training an employee pays off in less time and higher job performance in the long run. The employee that has just been hired is on your payroll because you hired him or her, and because you want that employee to be a productive, efficient member of your unit. You want to develop the new employee into someone who measures up to your standards of performance.

The following are some thoughts to keep in mind about what individuals want their jobs to be:

- Most clinicians want to do well on their job and desire to excel in the new employment
- Clinicians want to believe their jobs are important. It is necessary to continue to convince the clinicians at the start that you are counting on them and will help them attain the skills necessary to perform their jobs well^{1,9}
- Clinicians like to perform a job that shows results. It is important to help clinicians see the value of their contribution to the organization. They need to understand that they are not just filling a void⁴
- Most clinicians like to work for a manager who sets high standards that are challenging but attainable
- A training program should establish an environment that will encourage the new clinician to do the best in learning the job, set standards of performance and give the clinician an opportunity to demonstrate abilities. As managers you should check often to show you are interested in the clinician's progress

3. Job Expectations—Clear job expectations need to be established. Specific criteria performance expectations need to be clear to clinicians. Criteria based performance systems might help establish clear expectations.

4. Orientation—Each clinician should participate in a formal orientation process. A manager understands that effective orientation takes planning. The following checklist might be helpful to plan an effective orientation program:

- Establish the right environment
- Explain the orientation and training program
- Make appropriate introductions and take the clinician on a tour of the department
- Tell the clinician how the job is integrated into the organization as a whole
- Review administrative rules and regulations
- Follow up regularly, especially the first week
- Do not keep unsatisfactory clinicians in the department. If you are convinced the new clinician is not able to achieve the minimum performance expectations, do not put off the inevitable

5. Informal Welcoming Process—Structuring of the informal welcoming process might help managers improve their skills in this area. We each get caught in the hectic pace of daily operations and might not take the time to converse with the new employees. The assignment of a senior worker in a “buddy system” also can help the new employee feel welcomed.

6. Motivation—Managers should examine what motivates their employees. There are many theories as to what motivates employees. Most theorists agree that understanding employee motivation involves a variety of individual and organizational factors. The organizational factors include the job, pay, recognition, and job security. The individual factors include needs, abilities, goals, and attitude. Managers need to match rewards to the factors that motivate their employees. Rewards can be financial, promotions, and/or recognition.^{1,11}

7. Supervision—Check on the clinician’s performance via regular supervision meetings to allow for regular feedback for performance appraisal. Taking the time to work with new employees sends the message to clinicians that the quality of their performance is important. Ensure the performance appraisal process is more than a once a year event. Management by an objective performance review system allows for more staff participation than traditional performance review systems.^{4,5}

Career development is a continuous process. A supervisor can be instrumental in assisting an employee to achieve career goals. Career development is a selection and growth process that takes place between individuals and their employers. It should be a process of matching individual and organizational needs over time.³ It takes conscious effort on the part of employee and supervisor to develop the employee’s skills and match them with organizational needs. This match can only occur when the employee and the organization

know each other's needs and expectations. Individuals go through stages in developing their careers: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline.¹¹ Open communication and employees establishing their own goals during a performance appraisal process will help in matching and knowing each other's career goals if the supervisor understands what career stage the employee is in.

8. Benefits—It is important to develop a benefit package that meets the needs of employees. A flexible benefit package allows the opportunity to meet a variety of needs. Major benefits to consider are health, dental, education, childcare, and time off.⁷

Conclusion

In summary, recruitment and retention have become major and important job responsibilities for department managers. A manager who effectively manages these processes needs to understand how to manage human resources—especially how to integrate the concepts of marketing, employee motivation, effective communication, and how to manage organization and individual behavior.

Questions

1. The psychological contract formed between an employer and an employee begins:
 - a. First day of work
 - b. At the time of the first performance review
 - c. During the interview process
 - d. At the end of the probationary period
2. A job description contains which of the following categories:
 - a. Personality characteristics necessary to perform job
 - b. Organizational chart
 - c. Dress code
 - d. Organizational relationships to job
3. A definition of marketing is:
 - a. Understanding the consumer's needs so the potential products have value to the consumer
 - b. Selling products to the consumer
 - c. Determining the price of a product
 - d. Public relations
4. Career stages individuals go through include the following (circle all of the appropriate answers):
 - a. Training
 - b. Establishment
 - c. Decline
 - d. Growth
5. Professional networking for the department manager is important for:
 - a. Visibility
 - b. Recruitment
 - c. Retention
 - d. Getting ahead
6. High turnover might be a result of:
 - a. Training
 - b. Matching of rewards to what factors motivate employees
 - c. Formal orientation
 - d. Mismatching of employee and employer expectations
7. Which of the following are parts of the recruitment process:
 - a. Job definition
 - b. Performance appraisal
 - c. Orientation
 - d. Welcome process