



## **Business Perspectives**

### *Operations Management Perspective*

Operations management is crucial to the competitiveness and sustainability of all types of organisations. It's challenging because the ever changing nature and dynamics of the business environment require organisations to continually adapt their operations to new requirements, demands, situations, and expectations in the market. And it's exciting because, in order to make operations really contribute to the competitiveness and success of an organisation, operations managers have to be active, creative and innovative in improving the company's operations. So how do I see my role as an operations manager? What do I do, and what sort of challenges and difficulties do I face? Who do I have to interact with both within and outside my organisation?

All organisations exist for a purpose. As an operations manager I'm responsible for managing the resources and processes necessary for the production and delivery of goods and services. I have to make sure that operations contribute to the achievement of the main strategic objectives of the organisation, the design of the systems and processes that produce the organisation's goods and services, the allocation of the resources necessary to produce the goods and services, the planning and control of the operations' activities, and the improvement of the operations over time.

So I'm a designer. Although I don't have direct responsibility for the design of a product, I play an important role in providing the information and advice upon which the successful development of that product depends, and I'm involved with the design of the processes that will produce the goods and services to be delivered to end customers. At a strategic level, I 'design' the supply network of operations that will deliver goods and services to customer. At an operational level, I 'design' the physical arrangements of the facilities, technologies, people and activities that will produce the goods and services.

The sorts of challenges I face include decisions about what technology to adopt or replace, the resources and staff necessary for the operations, the capacity required to face predicted (and sometimes unpredicted) demand, the adequate suppliers for the operations, the proper systems and tools to help operations planning and control, and the best performance level for the operations. I have to make sure that the operations meet customers' requirements, health and safety standards, and high quality and dependability levels, and that operations are flexible enough to respond quickly to new requirements and demands.

Operations management is a constant improvement exercise and everything has to be done in the most efficient and cost effective way.

Fortunately, there are a myriad of systems and managerial approaches to help deal with the challenges and difficulties involved. Operations management as a discipline has significantly evolved over the years, and practices for planning, controlling, designing, and improving operations are now well established. They include capacity management strategies, process technologies, quality control approaches, and 'lean' management practices.

I deal with many people inside and outside the organisation. Many operations processes flow from and to other organisational functions such as marketing, personnel, and finance, so good communication with these other functional areas is essential. I need to be able to explain my plans to other functions, and also to make clear the operational implications of what other functions are trying to achieve.

Externally, I deal, directly or indirectly, with both suppliers and customers: developing good relationships with both is essential. I need to select and maintain an efficient and effective network of suppliers and accurately identify customers' requirements and preferences.

