

Katie Stringer
November 10, 2010
MGMT 6000
Homework Discussion Questions

- **Identify potential disadvantages to decentralized authority.**

Centralized authority and decentralized authority both have advantages and disadvantages. An example of centralized authority is a company with only top executives and no middle or lower level managers. Decentralized authority incorporates middle and lower level managers into the chain of command. While decentralized authority could lead to feelings of ownership or personal investment in a company, the decentralization of a group could cause problems as well.

Disadvantages to distributed authority include managers taking advantage of their situation or status for personal gain, lack of communication and understanding among various departments, and misunderstandings among departments. Additionally, when more departments and more people have authority, the impact of authority may be affected.

Sometimes, managers who are mid-level may not have the experience needed to make decisions that their job calls for. Their responsibilities may also overwhelm them, and the manager may require job simplification over time.

- **Provide examples of professionals who are more productive/effective due to job simplification**

Job simplification, or the process of reducing the task each worker performs, can result in a more productive or effective worker. Specialized workers have more information or education to perform their jobs properly.

Lawyers are an example of professionals who are classified in particular specifications to better perform their jobs. Different lawyers specialize in trials, defense, litigation, divorce, or wrongful injury to name a few. Each concentration requires the lawyer to take different classes while in law school and then continue their training under a skilled lawyer in their classification.

Another example is educators. When students are studying to become a teacher, they chose their specification. Examples of the different concentrations include elementary, secondary, or college levels teachers, and from there the teachers can chose to study how to teach a variety of subjects such as math, science, reading and literature, history, or languages. Without these specifications, teachers would be required to know an innumerable amount of subjects and ideas that would be overwhelming.

Additionally, the program in which I am enrolled at MTSU holds examples of job simplification. Within the Public History department, PhD students can choose from one of four concentrations: Cultural Resource Management, Historic Preservation, Archives Management, or Museum Management. These narrow the field of study so students will have a greater understanding of the concentration they choose.

A real life example of job simplification concerns my advisor at the University of Memphis. Dr. Connolly was not only a professor of Anthropology, but also a board member of the Museum Studies Certificate Program. In addition to this, he works part-time as the director of the C.H. Nash Museum, and until recently he was on tenure-track. Upon review of the needs of the museum it was revealed that job simplification was needed. The museum required his attention more than was initially realized, so Dr. Connolly decided to take one thing off his plate: tenure track. He is still dealing with a lot of different aspects of his job, but by simplifying his load, he is now able to devote more time to the museum and his students.

- **If job enrichment is so great, why don't we see more of it?**

Job enrichment is the process of increasing the degree of responsibility that a worker has over his or her job. Examples of job enrichment include:

- Empowering workers to experiment to find new or better ways of doing their job
- Encouraging workers to develop new skills
- Allowing workers to decide how to do their work
- Allowing workers to monitor and measure their own performance.

These all may sound like positive advancements that many employees would appreciate and enjoy the freedom of enrichment; however, managers must think critically about the implications and possible problems that could occur as a result of their implementation.

If an employee is experimenting with new ideas and procedures, there is the possibility that he or she may discover a great new way of doing something. Nevertheless, this could result in problems, as well. For example, in my field, experimentation with educational programming is important to keep up with current trends. Employees must still be monitored though, to make sure that the state educational curriculum standards are still being met in spite of new procedures within the presentation and information distribution.

If a worker is encouraged to develop new skills, he or she becomes a more well-rounded individual with more abilities to perform the job. However, this could take away from the skills the person already has, or he or she may focus on those new skills more than the job at hand.

Allowing workers to decide how to do their own work is similar to allowing the employee to experiment with new procedures. There must be a degree of trust between the manager and the employee to allow this to happen. For example, as an employee in the education department of a certain museum, I was given a large amount of freedom to do my

work. My work was always completed on time and done according to standards or above them, but I generally did all of the work in one day of the week. One can argue that the work was done and done well, but the process was not at all efficient for the company.

This relates back to workers monitoring and measuring their own performance. People may come across as honest and well-meaning, but they may not be completely honest with themselves or their boss so as to avoid trouble and reprimand. All of this relies on trust and the knowledge of the risks and problems that could occur if something did go wrong.

- **Describe a situation where departments within your business do not communicate effectively with one another.**

I have several examples of times when departments do not communicate effectively among themselves. The most frustrating one for me has caused many problems of varying degree among staff and operations at a museum in Memphis. At the museum there are only three full-time staff, and a part-time director and several graduate assistants and interns who help with daily operations. Not all employees communicate well, through emails, phone calls, meetings, face-to-face confrontation. The other staff has tried many ways to start dialogue and information.

Another staff member came up with a detailed and simple reservations form that employees were required to fill out at the time of the reservation. The form takes the name, date and requested programs, as well as other important information for the museum to know when groups of 50-150 school age children are coming to visit. The idea was that the form would be emailed to all involved staff and graduate assistants or interns so that everyone would remain informed. This never quite happened, but for the most part, the reservations did begin to appear more on the online calendar system the museum staff uses and is responsible for checking daily.

This is an example of a time when lack of communication can cause unnecessarily stressful and problematic situations. Though work still remains to be done to perfect the system, steps have been made in the right direction regarding the lack of communication.