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## Management Planning and Christian Managers: A Literature Review

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### **Abstract:**

*In the field of management research and practice, Management planning has been identified as a fundamental aspect of organizations. Increasingly however, observations on the role of religion in influencing management practice is on the rise, and this has driven the quest to study Christian managers and how their religious beliefs impact their roles as managers with a special focus on management planning. This study focused on management planning, Biblical perspective on planning and what is expected of Christian managers in the world of management with a special focus on management planning. The study identified that many lessons and recommendations from the Holy Bible actually do align with modern-day management practices. It also recommends that Christian managers should not only practice management planning but should prioritize planning amongst other management functions while also ensuring that their planning practices align with Christian values and ethics.*

**Keywords:** Management planning, manager, christian, christian manager, christian values

## **1. Introduction**

The focal objectives of this article are twofold. The first is to review management literature with a focus on the concept of 'management planning' while the second is to consider review the perspectives of Christianity on planning as a management function.

It has been observed in literature that interest in religion and how this impacts management has been on the increase over the years. The role of religion in management and how it impacts management theory and practice is gaining a lot of attention across the world and it has become an area of interest to many management scholars as well (Chan-Serafin, Brief, & George, 2013).

Organizations are increasingly identifying and appreciating the fundamental position of management planning in driving their goals and objectives successfully. This also includes projections and set out actions to be taken to ensure overall success of engaging and motivating employees to perform excellently at their jobs. Planning, however, should not be left to the executive management cadre alone as it has been discovered over the years that a lot of organizations still do not often recognize that many employees also want to participate in the organizational planning process (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2013).

The function of planning has been described as a fundamental platform upon which organizations goals and visions are anchored. This makes planning as a management function a very vital area to be focused upon and executed strategically to aid organizational success (Daft, 2014). This article would however go further to review what the Christian faith says about management planning and how Christian managers typically handle management planning. The article hence would discuss management planning with a special focus on Christian managers. In the following subsection, a review of literature will be presented on management planning and Christian management.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1. Management Planning**

Management planning was described by Kools and George (2020) as 'a deliberative, disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why. The concept of management planning was also described as the act of determining goals and defining the means of

achieving them (Daft (2014). He further identified different stages of management plans and goals as observed in formal or informal organizations. This was presented in a pyramid indicating that the identified stages differ with respect to how expansive they are. This refers to how broad and far-reaching they are across an organization. It also indicates involving or participatory they are.

Management planning could also be described as the process of choosing goals and developing the strategy to attain them (Williams, 2015). The scholar also described management planning as a two-edged sword that enhances individual and organizational performance if the process is effectively coordinated.

The importance of management planning has been studied by various scholars across different fields and disciplines. An example of such studies is that of L. Jesseviciute-Ufartiene (2014). The researcher reported that management planning keeps organizations afloat in a dynamic environment. The researcher reported that the continued growth of an organization is largely dependent on how well its future state can be predetermined and this is done essentially through effective management planning.

Peter Drucker (1993) also reported that management planning is one of the most fundamental activities of managers. Management planning indeed seeks to create the desired future for organizations and hence becomes very pivotal to the success or otherwise of an organization.

A number of considerations describing the importance of management planning were identified by Robins and Coutler (2014) and this will be discussed here succinctly. Firstly, the scholars recorded that while management planning provides guidance to managers on decisions and actions to be taken across varying levels of operations, it also provides guidance to non-managers. This implies that management planning is not a management function that is limited to managers alone. Robins and Coutler (2014) further reported that organizations from their observations, when all employees of an organization are provided with a clear line of sight into the corporate goals of the organization and the resources required to achieve them, such employees would be committed to ensuring that the goals are achieved. This lends further credence to the role of participatory management planning in achieving organizational goals.

Robins and Coulter (2014) defined management planning as an activity that involves defining the organizations goals, establishing strategies for achieving those goals, and developing plans to integrate and coordinate work activities. Management planning is considered to be concerned primarily about the 'what' and 'how' of management.

The scholars further reported that when employees are not fully aware of the organization's plans and strategic drives, it would be normal to see instances where such employees may begin to work at cross purposes, thereby working against the attainment of set corporate goals. There also organizations identified that management planning addresses the concerns about uncertainty within an organization. The clarity provided by effective management planning enables managers to project ahead, identify potential risks, and anticipate changes that may impact the achievement of corporate goals and objectives. While management planning will not completely remove the element of uncertainty from an organization, it would have the organization well-positioned to handle changes or risks when they materialize.

Another identified major advantage of management planning as reported by Robins and Coutler (2014) is its reduction of wastages and redundancies. Planning makes it possible for work engagements to be scheduled around appropriately drawn plans which often reduces inefficiencies within an organization. This position could however be summarized to state that management planning enables organizations to identify, correct and eliminate inefficiencies in operations.

The scholars also identified that management planning provides the launching platform for another critical management labeled 'controlling'. Management planning precedes the controlling function. There would be nothing to control when plans have not been made appropriately. This implies that management planning is the most fundamental management functions amongst the four identified primary functions of a manager which are: Planning, organizing, leading and controlling (Robbins & Coutler, 2014)

The foregoing submission implies that the other fundamental management functions are preceded by planning and their successful execution is largely dependent on adequate and effective planning. The authors further reported that numerous researchers have investigated and reported a positive relationship between management planning and organizational performance. Other positive relationships identified and reported by other scholars include management planning and improved profits, higher return on investments and several other positive organizational success or growth indicators.

Formal planning is often directed at identified goals with specified timelines. These goals are documented and communicated to employees in order to ensure a common understanding and drive towards their attainment. In other words, the essence of management planning is the achievement of identified goals. Planning directs management decisions and provides the premise upon which performance or achievements are measured. From the foregoing, it can hence be submitted that discussions on management planning should always include a perspective on goals and its varying dimensions.

Management plans are broadly categorized into operational and strategic (Robbins & Coutler, 2014). Strategic plans have relatively longer timelines and often have a holistic and relatively far-reaching impacts on an organization. They are considered directional and they affect all areas of an organization's operations. Operational management plans on the other hand are short-term and often focused on relatively smaller parts of an entire operation or division in an organization. They further reported that strategic plans often have a timeframe of three years and above while operational plans span within one year.

Another categorization of management planning is based on how specific or directional the plans are. Specific plans are adopted when the level of uncertainty is minimal while directional plans are adopted when there is a high possibility of unexpected changes. Specific plans however have a major weakness which is the fact that they often are rigid

and unadaptable. Directional plans are however more adaptable as their scopes are often broader and hence can accommodate changes in the external and internal environment of an organization.

Further distinctions were also drawn between plans that were tagged 'single-use plans' and 'standing plans. Plans described as 'Single-use' are essentially designed to meet a specific need in a particular situation and are often not adaptable to address other developments. Plans described as 'Standing plans' on the other hand are typically ongoing in nature and offer directions for routine operations within an organization.

Robins and Coulter (2014) further identified the import of factors in the external and internal environment of an organization on management planning and its success altogether. These factors include forces of demand and supply and other market forces, regulators' policies, government policies, and technological developments.

The scholars also recorded three contingency actors that have effects on planning in organizations across three levels as follows: Organizational level, degree of environmental uncertainty, and length of future commitments. They reported that the lower the level of a manager is, the more operational their plans will be while the higher the level of managers are, the more the likelihood of their plans being more strategic. The level of environmental uncertainty will go a long way in determining the flexibility required of varying levels of management plans. In other words, the higher the uncertainty is, the more flexible a management plan should be. The third contingency variable is the time frame allotted to management plans. Management plans should be designed to address all commitments that have been identified at the point of the plans being developed or agreed to. In the next section, a review of some biblical basis for Christian Managers to practice Management planning will be conducted.

## 2.2. Christian Managers and Biblical References to Planning

The disciples of Jesus Christ, people who believe in him, his teachings and live after his dictates are those called Christians (Acts 11:26). It was recorded in the Holy Bible that the first-time disciples of Jesus Christ were called Christians were in Antioch. In essence, a Christian is a disciple of Jesus Christ that lives according to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

A manager is someone who practices the functions of management as identified in preceding segments of this paper. This hence implies that a Christian manager is someone who is a disciple of Jesus and also practices the management functions as identified earlier in an organization.

The Christian Manager hence looks at God as the model manager and is expected to ground all his managerial practices on Godly values. The Holy Bible is the book Christians draw their teachings and lessons from, and there are many instances where God is depicted as a manager who not only plans but also ensure his plans are successful.

In Job 42:2 (New American Standard Bible) quoted as follows 'I know that You can do all things, and that no plan is impossible for You' it can be observed that not only does God plan, but His plans always come to pass. Here, the referenced scripture describes how all the plans made by God always come to pass. This hence emphasizes that God engages in successful planning. This hence implies that all Christian Managers are expected to be engaged in planning. If God would bother to plan, then all Christian managers must embrace planning and be successful planners.

Proverbs 16:3 states that when works are committed unto God, plans will be established. This in essence is stating that managers ought to plan and commit their plans unto God. In other words, a Christian manager must plan effectively ahead and ensure the plans are committed into the hands of God who is a planner himself, as we saw earlier in Job 42:2.

Proverbs 19:21 however also counsels that in spite of making several plans, the will of God is what will come to pass. While this does not dissuade Christian managers from planning, it encourages them to commit the plans unto God who will determine the success or otherwise of such plans.

The Holy Bible further provides that diligence is required for plans to be successful. After a plan has been crafted and committed unto the hands of God, the manager is required to be diligent if he or she would be successful in implementing the crafted plans. This is seen clearly in Proverbs 21:5 which states that 'The plans of the diligent {lead} surely to advantage, but everyone who is hasty {comes} surely to poverty'. Diligence and handwork are valuing a Christian manager must adopt in order to become successful at what they do. The verse further describes the fact they those who are not diligent but hasty in what they do will become failures.

Christian managers however must consult widely in preparing and developing management plans as seen in Proverbs 20:18 which states 'Prepare plans by consultation, and make war by wise guidance.' The foregoing implies that for plans to be effective and successful, it is required that the manager should consult broadly and seek wise guidance. This further implies that the Christian manager should not unilaterally draw up plans but should consult broadly while also encouraging his or her team members to also participate in the development of management plans. This aligns with the participatory management style which encourages employees to contribute in the decision-making process.

Proverbs 14:8 also states that it is a wise person that looks ahead while a fool would avoid paying attention to facts. This, in essence, emphasizes the import of management planning to the success of organizations and why Christian managers must ensure that they engage in planning howbeit with facts and not just feelings or emotions. This verse further implies that facts must be considered when developing plans and Christian managers must also take note of this.

Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts. (Proverbs 24:3-4 TLB). The verse further emphasizes the importance of planning to managers and the success of organizations. The verse clearly states that organizations that would be strong and successful are built on wise planning. This provides additional grounds for Christian managers to ensure that planning is done effectively if they want to build strong organizations.

### 2.3. Management Planning and Christian Managers

Having introduced the link between management planning and Christian managers in the preceding segment, this segment will further discuss the interconnection between Christian values, Management Planning and how they impact the planning function of Christian Managers.

Weber (1958) opined that a protestant ethic provides a foundation for traditional management theory, and hence makes it not and surprising that many scripture- enhancement articles argue that Christian values are consistent with traditional management theory. This position implies that there is a major link between the provisions of the Holy Bible and conventional management practices and management planning is a significant part of this. Premised on this assertion, the concept of management planning is essentially supported by the Christian Holy Scriptures.

Numbers 13:2 states that God had planned for Israelites to go into the Promised Land even before engaging Moses and giving him directions on how to lead the Israelites to the land. This shows that planning must reflect previously established goals. This goal of inhabiting the Promised Land dates as far back as the time of Abraham in Genesis 12:8 and 15:7,8. Moses' effort as a manager to get the Israelites into the promised land was aimed at achieving already set goals by God.

The forgoing also implies that priorities must be developed among given goals. The Christian manager must ensure that required actions to achieve set goals should be prioritized and addressed based on their perceived levels of importance to the achievement of the set goals.

Christian managers are to also note that planning requires knowledge for facts as previously identified in earlier segments of this paper as they exist and not as we wish them. Christian Manager must know the facts as they exist in order to know the appropriate actions to take in each scenario or situation. For example, Moses sent spies to Canaan in order to understand the land, the people, and what his men would be coming up against by the time the planned invasion is executed (Numbers 13:17).

### 3. Methodology

This study was conducted by systematically reviewing literature; various studies that discussed management planning and Christian philosophy of planning. Relevant materials such as textbooks, Journals, the Holy Bible and other official documents both in prints and electronic copies were widely consulted.

### 4. Findings and Discussions

Studying management planning with a focus on Christian managers is important to institutions and organizations as it has been discovered that religion influences management practice. This can be deduced from various scholarly articles and their recommendations.

Some of the examples include Jones (1976) who identified and reported some management lessons from the Biblical record of the story of Joseph and Pharaoh. The records depicted management planning as Joseph recommended and initiated a seven (7) year national plan to store for Egypt. The Biblical record of the story of David and Bathsheba was also used to illustrate how dangers associated with organizational success would be managed with some reference to planning as a manager's function. This was reported in the work of Ludwig and Longenecker (1993). This is another instance of drawing management planning lessons from the Christian Holy Scriptures and how they can influence management practice today.

Some others include studies on how to incorporate Christian ethics in the workplace and management practice (Rossouw, 1994). Rodgers and Gago, 2006 also studied and reported on how managerial decision-making practices could be impacted by religious beliefs. Molyneaux (2003) reported how the concept of meekness which is considered as a Christian value aligns with management best practices and recommendations for managers. The study of Whittington, Pitts, Kagel, and Goodwin (2005) also identified and reported leadership and management tips from Paul the Apostle. Ali, Camp, and Gibbs (2000) work also drew major management lessons from the Ten Commandments that can be applied to business management and how this influences management practices.

The foregoing submissions imply that the reported lessons will influence Christians management practices as they believe and read the Holy Scriptures. This then also implies that they would impact management styles, decision making and of course management planning practices of Christian managers.

### 5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings from this study posits that Christian managers are expected to engage in management planning using facts and other provided management technics as the Holy scriptures actually support this practice. This supports the results of several other researches conducted on leadership and management planning with a focus on religion and management practice.

This study also draws attention to the similarities between modern management practice of management planning and how they impact Christian managers in the delivery of their managerial functions.

A major recommendation from this study is for Christian leaders and managers to ensure that management planning is conducted effectively and objectively by adhering to the identified and discussed principles drawn from the Holy Scriptures. The alignment between the provisions of the Holy scriptures and modern-day management practices and more specifically, management planning is instructive to guide managers to achieve slated corporate goals and objectives. For future studies, the role of Christian values found in the Holy Scriptures in influencing management practice of Christians should be investigated through a quantitative research approach.

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