Understanding management: I'm managing thank you!

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Contents

Introduction

This course provides you with a set of ideas for developing your approach to managing your own work – what we might call 'self-management'. In order to do this, we will examine some of the key processes of management decision making – allocating time, staff, physical and financial resources; prioritising and problem-solving; and monitoring performance – and a range of techniques managers find useful in dealing with them.

We will also be examining some of the essential people skills needed by managers, most notably communication, interpersonal skills and team-working and encouraging you to become more aware of your own approaches to these aspects of your work life. The majority of the ideas and techniques in this course form the basis of many short management training courses of the type you or your manager(s) may have attended.

The course concludes with some study advice on writing for academic purposes. We will consider some of the different forms of written material you may come across in your studies and examine the two main forms of writing required in management and business studies: the essay and the report. The activities in this course are designed to support you in the development of the type of extended writing skills needed for both these forms. We will also offer you some guidance on the acknowledgement of your sources of information, a vital ingredient in successful writing for both academic and business purposes.

A case study within the course will introduce you to Kiran, a mother of two who wishes to return to paid employment in her chosen profession of teaching. We will see that the decisions she faces and the work she must do to manage her return successfully are much more complex than they appear on the surface. We will examine how some of the ideas mentioned in this course can help her.

This OpenLearn course provides a sample of level 1 study in Business & Management

Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- understand some of the key processes in management decision making and how they are performed
- understand some of the interpersonal skills and aspects of management
- apply some of these ideas to the management of our own work
- write for academic study purposes.

1 The appliance of science

Many managment techniques are rooted in an approach to management that focuses on the careful control of tasks. Historically, this was referred to as ‘scientific management’ because it was felt that the manager's role was like that of a scientist, to control, or at least intervene in, processes in order to change them. For the ‘scientific’ manager, the desired change in these processes was an improvement in **efficiency** in the way in which they operated.

Scientific management (sometimes known as ‘Taylorism’ after its key founding figure, F. W. Taylor, Figure 1) started out as a way of managing the operations of an organisation, i.e. its main activities. F.W. Taylor (1856–1917) was a mechanical engineer who spent most of his working life in the US steel industry. He began his career as a labourer and rose to eventually become Chief Engineer for a large steel manufacturer, before finally becoming a freelance writer and consultant. Most of the companies he worked with were principally concerned with increasing production to meet the growing demands of the rapidly developing US economy.

Figure 1 F.W. Taylor

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In his study of 1911, Taylor developed the view that all jobs could be broken down into a set of narrowly defined tasks and activities, each of which should be made clear to the person in the job. Each of these tasks and activities should then be observed and timed accurately, with a view to identifying any obstacles to speed and efficiency. From this a ‘most efficient method’ of performing each task could be developed for the job and all other jobs in turn. Taylor's ideas, and in particular his focus on control and efficiency, took root in many developing manufacturing industries during the heyday of mass production in the first half of the twentieth century. The success of such business giants as the Ford Motor Company, an early convert to Taylor's methods, owes much to scientific management. Indeed, there are still many signs of Taylorism in contemporary organisations such as fast food outlets, call centres and theme parks, where job roles are fairly tightly defined and employees actions are carefully controlled. Efficiency is also still a very important aspect of management and working life. Nevertheless, modern management thinking is that efficiency, which is related to the speed and volume of output a process produces, needs to be balanced against **effectiveness**, or the quality of that output.

In the next section, we will spend some time considering how the ideas that have been highlighted so far fit together, before moving on to consider how you can use them in your own working context.

2 Parts of a process: managing resources efficiently and effectively

2.1 The process approach

The ‘process’ approach is crucial to our understanding of task management in modern organisations. One of the simplest ways of explaining the process approach is through the diagram known as the transformation model (or the input/output diagram). The basic transformation model is provided in Figure 2.

Figure 2 The basic transformation model

Any job or task can be analysed (or broken down into smaller parts) using the process approach, by first identifying its inputs and its final outputs, and then by examining the activities that cause the transformation from one to the other. These activities are known as sub-processes. **Analysis** in this way helps us to understand how we might improve the performance of the task in some way. Let us use the simple example of preparing a sandwich to illustrate analysis. Using the process approach we can analyse the job as having the inputs, sub-processes and outputs seen in Figure 3.

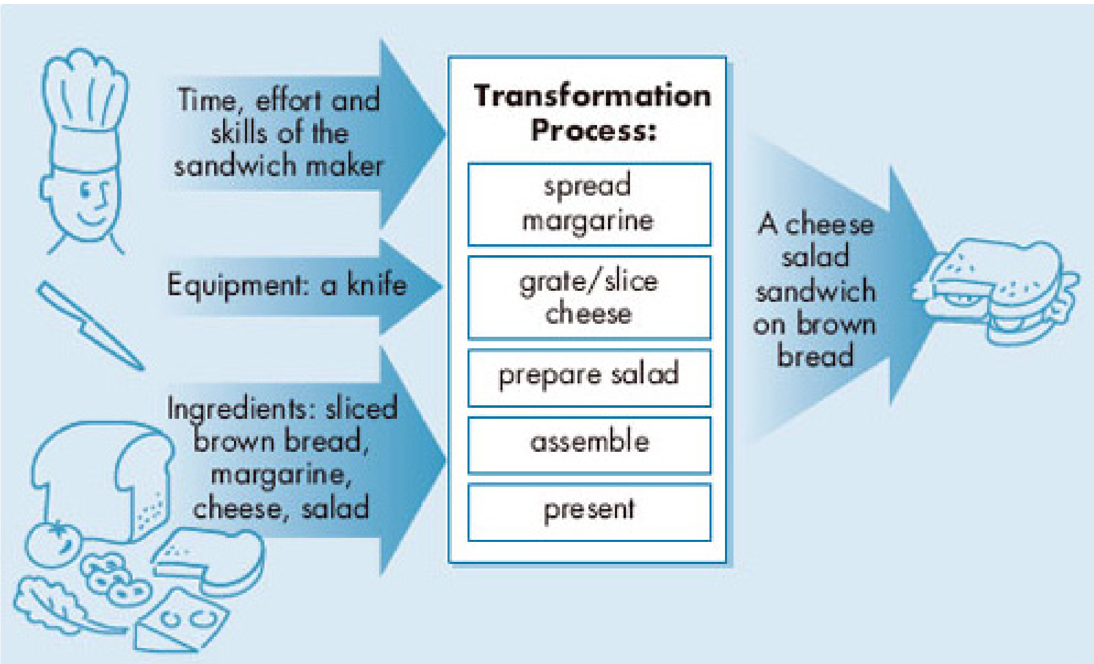

Figure 3 An example transformation model

In Figure 3, you can clearly see the main inputs of food ingredients, equipment (a knife), and human effort and expertise. These feed into the transformation process of making the sandwich which produces the desired output of … a cheese salad sandwich on brown bread (Figure 4)!

Figure 4 A cheese salad sandwich

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We could go further with our analysis and examine the sub-processes involved in the transformation in more detail. For example, as you can see the making of the sandwich requires: the spreading of margarine, the slicing or grating of the cheese, the preparation of the salad, the assembly and slicing of the sandwich, and the presentation of the sandwich to the eater. Each of these activities we have analysed can be broken down even further into its component parts involving transporting of the food products around the kitchen, movement of the knife in buttering and slicing, and so on.

2.2 Applying the transformation process

To start managing your own work, it is important to develop an understanding of the different tasks and activities involved. This enables us to identify where we can make improvements in efficiency and how we can improve our effectiveness. The next activity asks you to analyse a small part of the work you do using the idea of the transformation model.

Activity 1

0 hour(s) 10 minutes(s)

Think of a simple job or task you do routinely either at work or at home. You need to choose one which is not too complicated. Draw a transformation model diagram, like the one in Figure 3, to analyse the job or task. Label clearly the following:

1. the inputs (don't forget your own efforts)
2. the sub-processes involved in transformation, and
3. the outputs.

Now put your diagram aside in a safe place. We will return to it in Activity 2.

Even having analysed a task to this degree of detail, there may be more to it than meets the eye. If you are the consumer of the sandwich, it is very likely that you will only make (and eat) one or two before your hunger is satisfied. If you are catering for a large group or running a lunchtime sandwich making business, you have to produce a large number of sandwiches, often in quite a short timescale. You may well employ your staff or volunteers in specialist roles: one person will butter the bread, another will grate the cheese, another will prepare the salad and another (if you have that many) will assemble the final sandwich, not forgetting to package and store them appropriately so they stay fresh until eaten. This specialisation of job roles to deal with sub-processes, known as **task specialisation**, should save you some time or at least make sure the required volume is delivered at the appropriate time. In other words, it should improve the efficiency of the process so that higher volumes of inputs can be transformed into higher levels of outputs in a relatively short time. Certainly that is what Taylor and his scientific management followers believed.

However, there still remains a potential difficulty. What if no one wants to eat a cheese salad sandwich on brown bread? It is a common source of irritation, I suspect, to those of us who make lunchtime sandwiches for other members of our families to find them uneaten at the end of the day. For a sandwich making business, however, unsold sandwiches are an expensive waste of their inputs. They have been efficient enough to produce the required number of sandwiches, in the time given, to satisfy their consumers' hunger. Unfortunately, the consumers themselves do not feel satisfied with what is being offered. In other words, while they have been efficient, they have not necessarily been effective in satisfying their consumer. Hence, for many businesses and organisations nowadays, it is important they gain an understanding of their customers' or users' needs when planning the production of their outputs. And even for employees, the needs of their managers and colleagues must be borne in mind as the **internal customers** of their work output. Their effectiveness can then be judged in terms of the satisfied needs of the customer or user, not just the end product.

In Activity 1, did you remember to put in your own time, efforts and skills as inputs, as we advised? What about the inputs of other people? In many jobs and tasks, particularly in management, it is these *human resource* inputs which are vital to the transforming activities. For now, though, let us try to identify the other categories of input and output. Did you, for example, use any tools or equipment in your task? Or did you mix or assemble any components or ingredients, as we did in our sandwich example? These are known as *physical resource* inputs. This leaves us with the question of who pays for the physical and human resources and how. It may be your employing organisation who pays, the business you run, or from your own pocket. Whoever it is, the money must be found, and this represents the *financial resource* input.

2.3 Resources and outputs

As for outputs, we have already identified the end product or service as one key output. We have also recognised that effective processes lead to the 'output' of a satisfied customer. There are often other unintended outputs which should not be forgotten. In our sandwich example, as in all work activity, there are: *waste products*, e.g. bits of limp salad, discarded packaging, etc., which need to be cleared up; other *tasks* generated, e.g. washing up the equipment used and the selling of the sandwich; and potentially useful *by-products*, e.g. the breadcrumbs could be used in other recipes.

Our diagram can now be organised slightly differently to reflect these things (see Figure 5).

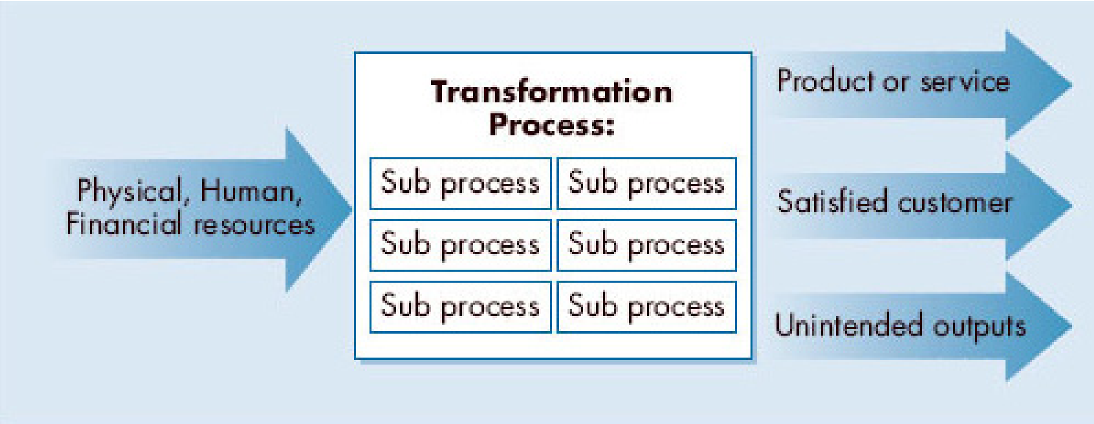

Figure 5 An expanded transformation model

Activity 2

0 hour(s) 25 minutes(s)

Let us return to the example of a transformation model you drew for yourself in Activity 1. Get a clean, lined piece of notepaper and at the top write the title 'Task Process Report'. Underline this and on the next line write 'Task Description'. Immediately next to it write two sentences to describe the task you analysed in Activity 1. Then on the space below this on the sheet, do the following tasks:

1. Write the sub-heading 'Physical Resources' and underneath list the physical resources you used in the task.
2. Next, write the sub-heading 'Financial Resources' and underneath write two sentences on what funds were needed for the task and where they came from.
3. Under the next sub-heading of 'Outputs' list what you think these were and label them *intended* or *unintended*.
4. Finally, write the sub-heading 'Effectiveness' and under it write two sentences on how effective you were in performing the task and why you think that.

Doing this activity has allowed you to develop a more detailed understanding of the work task you chose to analyse. You may now feel confident that you are doing this task effectively and you should be able to identify why you feel this: among the intended outputs you should have some idea of the goals or objectives you had in doing the task being achieved. You may also have some feedback from a satisfied customer or internal customer. On the other hand, you may feel you could improve your performance of the task and have some ideas how to go about it. There may be physical resource improvements based on the state of the equipment you used, or the materials you had to work with. Perhaps there were financial reasons based on the cost of the inputs or a lack of funding.

Alternatively, it might be the way you are using the other inputs, in which case you may have some unintended outputs, such as a lot of waste. In addition to this, the activity was structured so that in the end you produced a brief management report.

Case study: supply and demand

The aim of this case study is to examine how the ideas and techniques for self-management you read about can be used and adapted to fit personal circumstances. In this case – the story of Kiran, a mother of two young children returning to paid employment – you will be asked to think how the ideas might be useful to her in managing her return. You may be asking why a decision to go back to paid work is being discussed in the context of a course about management. You may know that one of the definitions of management is *to cope with, to deal with, to handle, to manipulate*. By considering Kiran's case study, we want you to think about how she copes with significant changes in her life, in other words, how she manages them.

Figure 6 Kiran and Mary

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Supply and demand: Part 1 – Kiran's decision

I'm a mother of two children, Akaash who is aged eight and Vanita who is five. I've been married to Rohit for twelve years. Before Akaash was born I trained as a secondary school teacher. I worked for about four years, mainly teaching health and social studies, including vocational A levels. Since then, I've been a full-time mother and homemaker. I've really enjoyed spending time with Akaash and Vanita, but I have always promised myself that I will get back into teaching when Vanita was old enough. My husband, Rohit, always thought this would be a good idea, although as a quantity surveyor he works long hours and sometimes has to work away from home on new projects.

Figure 7 Kiran

Copyright © BananaStock/Alamy

We now live in Castletown in the English Midlands. Rohit's family have lived in this area since the 1970s, but I was brought up in London. I really get on well with them, especially his mum. She's been a widow for a few years and she is in very good health. She spends a lot of time at the local gurdwara [a Sikh temple] and remains an active member of the community. She does like me to call in when Rohit is away.

This September, Vanita started in the reception class at primary school. A couple of weeks into the school term I noticed an advert for a teacher supply agency which specifically mentioned that they needed specialists in health and social care subjects.

You won't believe how much I thought about that advert as I got on with things until Rohit came home. After the children had gone to bed, that evening we had a long discussion about the issues around my going back to work.

JE Teacher and Lecturer Recruitment Agency

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Figure 8 Job advert

Activity 3

0 hour(s) 10 minutes(s)

This activity asks you to analyse Kiran's task of returning to paid employment using the transformation model diagram drawn in Figure 9. Copy the diagram onto a blank piece of notepaper and then do the following tasks:

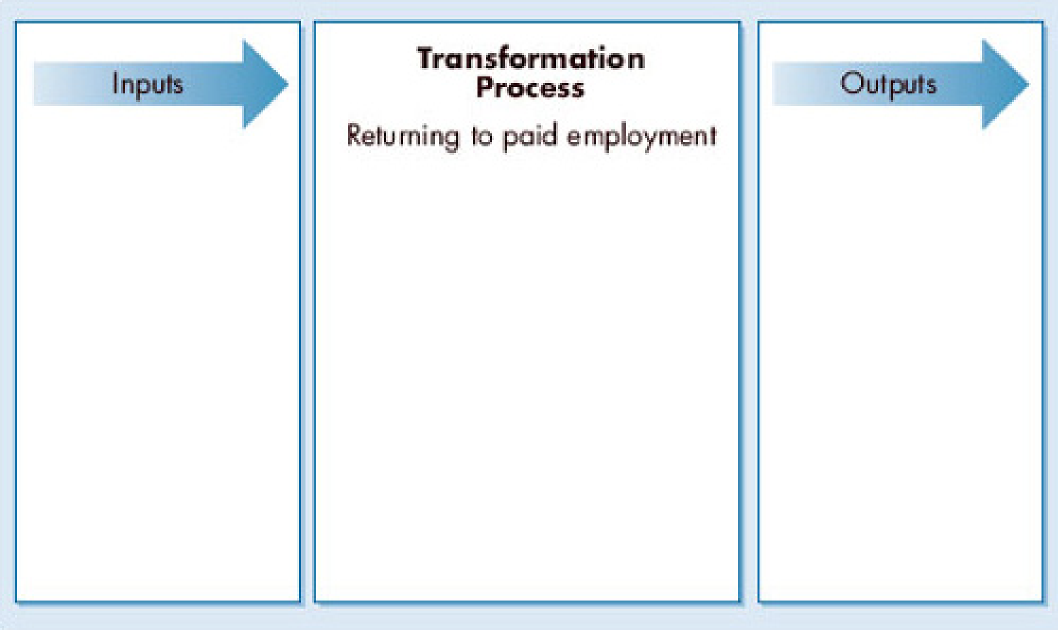

Figure 9 Kiran's decision: a transformation model

1. From your reading of the case study so far, identify the goals Kiran might have. List these under the '*Outputs*' heading to the right of the box in Figure 9.
2. What 'resources' does Kiran have to help her achieve these outputs? List these under the '*Inputs*' heading on the left of the box in Figure 9.

What sort of output did you identify? It should really be securing a supply teaching post. Of course, it is possible that other goals might have been established. Kiran and Rohit might have decided that they wanted a third child or that they wanted to focus on Rohit setting up an independent quantity surveying company. However, for the purpose of this case study, let us suppose that they did decide that Kiran should resume her career.

What inputs did you suggest? Remember that these should be resources that Kiran can draw on.

My list included:

- Kiran's teaching qualification
- her teaching experience
- her increased time availability
- Rohit's support
- possibility of family support.

3 Decisions, decisions: dealing with tasks

3.1 A matter of urgency

While it is important for managers to develop an understanding of individual jobs or tasks and how they can be done efficiently and effectively, a lot of the time management work is about juggling these many different tasks and activities. Managers often need to make decisions about which tasks to focus on, when they should be worked on and for how long. So how do they decide? There are a couple of simple techniques which can help here. The first is about identifying your priorities, and the second is about assessing the difficulty of the task.

The volume of tasks most of us are asked to deal with in a typical working day is a great source of personal stress. This, in turn, can be a significant obstacle to our effectiveness. The most common response to a seemingly overwhelming and stressful workload can be likened to fire fighting: deal with tasks only when they are starting to cause a problem. A simple way of addressing them is to try to establish how *urgent* a task or problem is and how *important* it is.

- An *urgent* task is something which either has a very short deadline or requires immediate attention because failure to address it will impact on the other tasks or routines. The ordering of tasks may be connected to your own work schedule or it may hold up the schedule of others' work. Urgency (or non-urgency) is an assessment of how quickly a task must be tackled.
- An *important* task is something which has more wide-ranging and far-reaching effects than on your own day-to-day working routine. It generally has a longer-term impact on your work and the work of others over whom you have a degree of authority or responsibility, for example, by affecting the flow of resources within your department, business or household or the way you choose to organise process activities. The importance or otherwise of a task will tend to guide how much time you might wish to spend on it.

It is worth bearing in mind that urgency and importance are not alternatives – all the tasks have to be done, after all! The task prioritisation grid shown in Figure 10 can be used to help you classify your work tasks by urgency and importance.

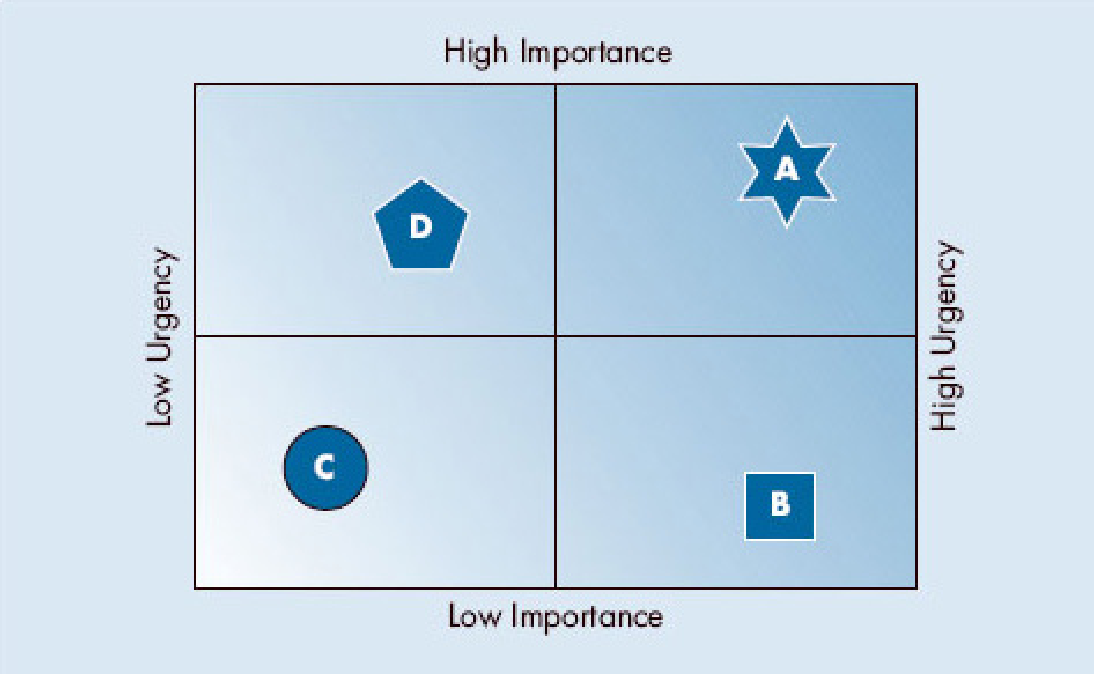

Figure 10 A task prioritisation grid

The grid contains four different task types to illustrate how it might be used.

Task A is high importance and high urgency. In other words, it is something which needs to be done quite quickly and has a longer-term impact on your work and possibly the work of others. So it is likely to be fairly time-consuming. Examples of these types of task are subject to individual and organisational circumstances, but some you might be familiar with are: filing tax returns; producing a monthly staff duty rota; or, in a household setting, getting your children to school.

Task B is high urgency but low importance. It requires speed but should not be too time-consuming. Dealing with emails or phone call requests for information are typical examples.

Task C is low importance and low urgency. These types of task may be to do with information you receive which does not require your response but may add to your decisions about other tasks.

Task D is high importance but low urgency. These will be time-consuming, probably requiring some reflection on your part, but your output is not required for some time. Of course, the longer this task is left, the closer to the deadline it becomes and the more urgent it becomes, like Task A.

Activity 4

0 hour(s) 20 minutes(s)

Most of us, whatever our work entails, tend to have several tasks and activities to perform in a typical working day. Some people, and you may be among them, periodically write a list of all the tasks they need to do – it is often called a ‘To Do’ list. To start this task, write your own ‘To Do’ list of the outstanding tasks you have to perform in the next day or two. Give a number (1, 2, 3, 4 and so on) to each of the items on the list. Spend no more than five minutes on this part of the activity and try to list between five and ten items.

Now quickly draw a task prioritisation grid like the one in Figure 10. Try to place each of the numbered items on your ‘To Do’ list in the appropriate box on the grid. This is not always easy to do and may require some thought, but try to make sure each numbered item is placed in the box you think is appropriate. What does this tell you about the work you do?

This task is intended to make you think carefully about something you may do regularly and quickly or you may not have done before. As such you may have found it quite difficult, but we hope you found interesting what it indicates about the work you do. You may have found the tasks evenly spread around the four boxes or they may be heavily weighted towards the urgent or the important. To a degree this depends on the job you have, the organisation you work for and the sector you work in. For example, someone who works in telesales, a restaurant kitchen or in a hospital accident and emergency unit is probably likely to have a high number of urgent tasks, given the fast pace of activity. On the other hand, someone who works as a Health and Safety Compliance Officer, or in book-keeping would have fewer urgent and more important tasks, given the need for accuracy and the impact of their work on others.

3.2 Bounded and unbounded tasks

Another way of tackling tasks and problems, particularly judging how much time you will need to spend on them, is to assess how simple or complex they are. Here we distinguish between *bounded* and *unbounded* tasks or problems. Bounded tasks are typically small scale, well defined and relatively uncomplicated; unbounded problems are larger scale, poorly defined and generally quite ‘messy’. Figure 11 paints a more detailed picture of the differences.

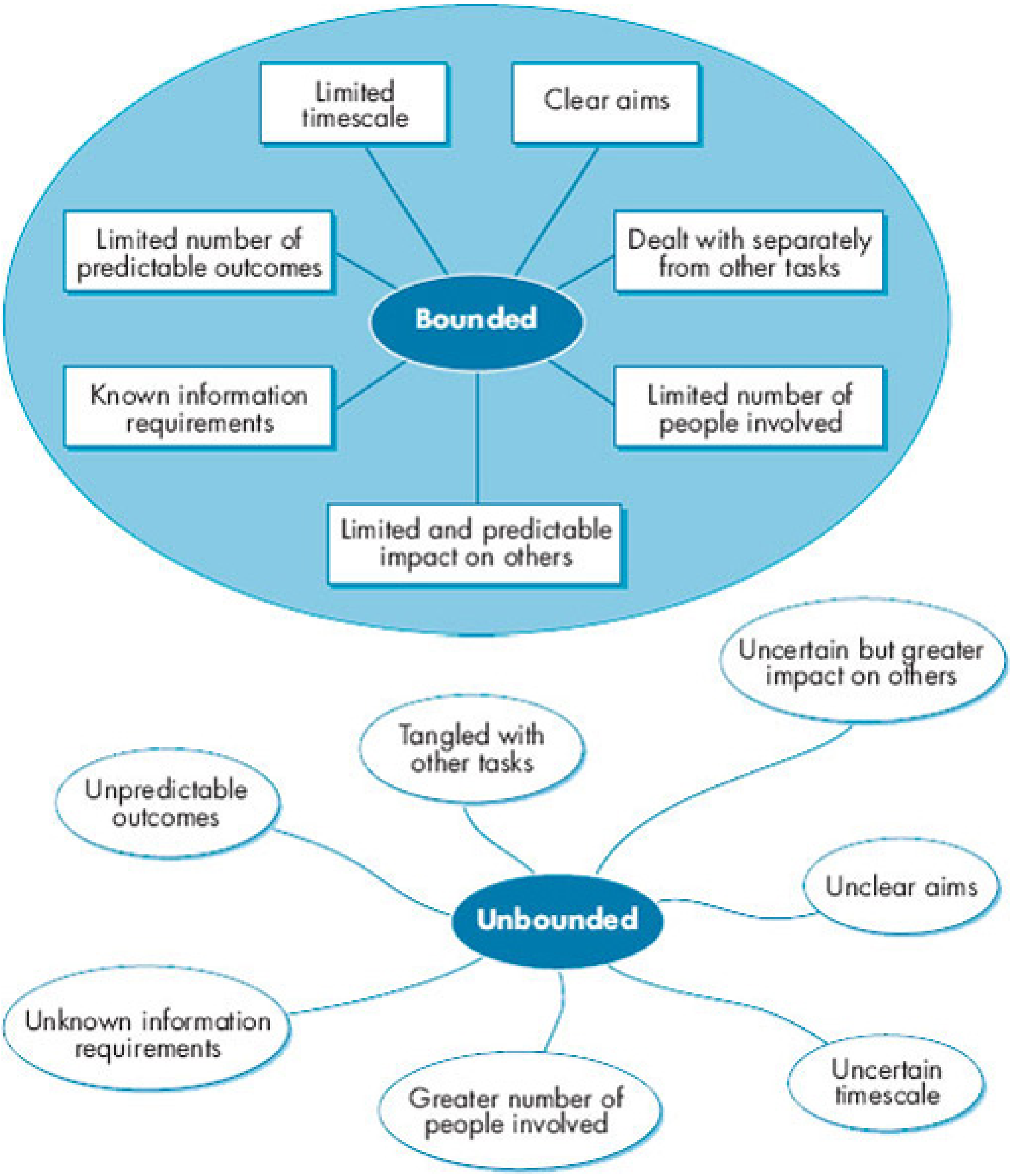

Figure 11 Bounded and unbounded tasks or problems

The two key differences between bounded and unbounded tasks are in the *size of the task* and the *degree of uncertainty* involved.

The *size of a task* relates firstly to the length of time it takes to do. Unbounded tasks will always take longer to do than bounded tasks, so bear that in mind in any time planning you may do. Size also relates to the number of people and the volume of other resources involved in doing the task and the number of people affected by its outcome. Unbounded tasks, again, tend to involve and affect more people than bounded tasks.

The *degree of uncertainty* is more difficult to explain but a way to understand it is that unbounded tasks tend to need more thinking time than bounded ones. In unbounded tasks you will need to figure out for yourself:

- what your aims are
- what information you need from whom or where
- what results or outcomes you would find acceptable

- when to finish.

In bounded tasks, however, many of these things are decided for you by your manager or workplace routines.

In reality, of course, most work tasks aren't quite as clear-cut as this and the ideas of the bounded and the unbounded are at either end of a kind of sliding scale, where we can say some tasks are relatively bounded or relatively unbounded. In the workplace, we can say that routine administrative tasks or one-off letters, memos, emails and phone calls are examples of relatively bounded tasks, whereas team-leading roles or projects, events and exhibitions for which you have some organising responsibilities are relatively unbounded. Or to take some domestic examples, we could say that cleaning a room is a relatively bounded task (although if it is your teenage child's room it might not feel like that!), whereas organising a group or family holiday is relatively unbounded.

Case study: Supply and demand: Part 2 – The Head Teacher's story

My name's Mary Jackson. I have been the Head Teacher at Longheath School for three years now. It's a mixed comprehensive in a socially disadvantaged area of Castletown. When I was appointed, the school had received an unfavourable Ofsted [official body which inspects schools] inspection. The previous Head had resigned and many long-serving staff had moved on, too. Since then we have all worked hard to turn things around.

When I was appointed Head, I didn't fully appreciate the scope and scale of the responsibilities of the role. I have been teaching long enough to remember when heads were just the most senior teacher. But the role I took on in the wake of the poor inspection result is a lot more about managing the school towards continuous improvement in the interests of our students. For example, I am responsible for an overall School Improvement Plan which is reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis. This checks whether we are reaching the targets set in various action plans.

Figure 12 Mary

Copyright © John Birdsall Photo Library

However, it is also my responsibility to manage our limited resources as well as possible. I have to be a finance manager and a personnel manager, as well as a figurehead and a leader for the school. I am really quite concerned about the amount of money we have had to spend on supply teachers over the last year or so, particularly in relation to the vocational A levels. It's especially frustrating when many of the supply teachers do not seem very bothered about the quality of the learning that occurs in their sessions.

Alongside the many pressures, the job also gives me a sense of personal reward and I'm pleased to say that our inspection last year was generally favourable. There was, however, some concern expressed about the quality of teaching on our vocational A-level programme, especially in health and social care. Unfortunately, it is precisely this area where I have found it hardest to recruit good teachers. This has meant that I have had to manage with a succession of supply teachers, some of whom have worked out better than others.

Our last health and social care supply teacher decided that she wanted a school in what she described as a ‘nicer area’. I didn't ask too closely what she meant, but it's a comment we still get from time to time. So, I had to make another call to the supply agency. My contact there is Roger Mannering. Roger explained that they were very short of teachers who could offer health and social care. I was just about to put the phone down when he noticed that they had only just had a new person come onto their list, Kiran Sangha. She might be a possibility, at least she's had some experience, even if it was years ago. And in any case, it's Friday afternoon and I need cover next week. I agreed to give Mrs Sangha a phone call and see if she was prepared to teach at Longheath.

Activity 5

0 hour(s) 20 minutes(s)

This activity asks you to identify a range of management issues facing Mary in her role as a head teacher. You may need to remind yourself of these again by quickly reviewing Sections 2 and 3 respectively.

Write a short paragraph of at least two sentences to answer each of these questions. Then compare your two paragraphs with those in the discussion below.

1. What issues of efficiency and effectiveness does Mary have to consider when appointing supply teachers?
2. In deciding to approach Kiran about the post, what is the balance between urgency and importance?

You may have identified some of the issues of effectiveness in this part of the case study. They are mainly to do with the quality of teaching staff and how the supply teachers contribute to the school's improvement of its results and Ofsted rating. Quality is clearly an important consideration in Mary's work, given the school's poor ratings in the past. The efficiency issues may not be as obvious. They are to do with having the right number of staff in place to meet the needs of the school's pupils and the teaching timetable.

To an extent this also relates to the balance of urgency and importance. Although Mary urgently needs a new health and social care teacher, it is important to her and the school that the person is suitably qualified and experienced. It is also important that the person is committed to the pupils and can help the school improve its record in this subject area.

While your two paragraphs might not match the two above exactly, this does not matter too much. The most important thing is that you have managed to write a short but readable answer, which touches broadly on the same issues, in the form of a *paragraph*. Paragraphs are the building blocks of essay writing. We will consider how they can be put together to help write an essay later on in this block.

Case study: Supply and demand: Part 3 – Kiran's response

I had just returned from collecting the children from school. I was putting the key in the front door and heard the phone ringing. Why does the phone always go at the most awkward times? I asked Akaash to put the telly on and get a glass of juice for himself and for Vanita while I answered. I picked up the phone.

'Hello, Mrs Sangha?' I didn't recognise the voice. 'This is Mary Jackson from Longheath School. I understand from the agency that you're available as a health and social care teacher. Could you start on Monday?'

I hesitated for a moment. I guess Mrs Jackson must have sensed my hesitation, she's probably dealt with lots of supply teachers. She continued, 'Look I know it's short notice, we can probably cope on Monday. I see you've been away from teaching for some time. Would it help if you came in on Monday to discuss this? With a view to starting on Tuesday.'

I didn't want to put her off, so I agreed to meet on Monday.

Activity 6

0 hour(s) 10 minutes(s)

It is clear that Kiran has a number of things to do and decisions to make over the next few days. All of them are fairly urgent because of the limited time available to her.

1. Draw up a ‘To Do’ list for her, including the decisions she must make over the weekend before she has her meeting with Mary on Monday.
2. Assuming that she is going to start work, what other tasks will she have to do before she comes into work on her first day?
3. For each item on the ‘To Do’ list give the most important the number ‘1’, the second most important the number ‘2’, and so on until you have created a priority listing.

Kiran really needs to have a ‘toolkit’ of resources to see her through the first few days. This might include the ability to prioritise decisions and her ability to manage herself and her time. Setting down the demands and the time available to meet them can be a useful way of clarifying the workload and making it possible to prioritise and go about them in a reasonable way. She might need to consider the following demands:

- prepare sessions for the first few days
- arrange for collection of Akaash and Vanita from school
- decide what to wear!
- sort out family meals
- buy a diary
- make a time plan.

4 Managing the time available

You will have noticed from the last two sections of this course that time is a very important resource in management, whether you are responsible for managing only your own work or the work of others. Harnessing and allocating time is often a big concern amongst managers in these busy times. While the techniques in the preceding section may help you in planning your time according to the nature of the tasks you have to deal with, the reality is often that new sets of tasks and problems face you daily which add to those you may not already have dealt with. The best way to tackle this situation is to step back from your day-to-day work, look more closely at how you currently manage your time and then devise ways of improving that.

The following four-step process may prove useful:

Step 1: analyse

Analyse how you use your time in a typical day or portion of the day. A simple way to do this is by keeping a log of your daily activities and approximately when you do them. You probably need to do this for three to five working days. If you have a diary with large enough pages you could record your log in it, or you may wish to create a log sheet like Table 1. Please note that this is an example of one person's log of their morning from around 8 a.m. until around 11 a.m. We recognise that your day may be very different from this and that you may need to divide your time differently and that the tasks you record may vary greatly.

Table 1 Example of an activity log

TIME:	DAY:	Tuesday (day 2)
8 a.m.	8.00	Drop the twins at the child-minder.
	8.20	Arrive at work. Turn on computer.
	8.30	Make a coffee. Collect mail and distribute to team.
	8.45	Read emails, answer four immediately. Make note to find information on two more.
9 a.m.	…	
	9.45	Get out papers for 10am staff meeting and scan them quickly
	…	
10 a.m.	10.00	Attend staff meeting
	…	
11 a.m.	…	

Step 2: evaluate

Once you have logged your activities, you should then try to evaluate each activity using clear criteria. Some of the following questions may be useful in identifying your criteria:

- Is this activity part of my main job role?
- Am I efficient and effective in dealing with it?
- Does it involve or affect others? How?

- Is it an urgent task? Is it an important task?
- Do I need more information to deal with it? From whom or where?

This should enable you to see whether you are using your time appropriately and to identify more clearly some of the sources of potential overload, inefficiency and ineffectiveness.

Step 3: change

You should now be more aware of how you spend your time and where there might be some scope for improvement. Having done this, you should spend some time considering the options open to you and decide how you will proceed with any changes needed. Amongst the options you may identify the following:

- using your diary or calendars as planning tools
- constructing ‘To Do’ lists or checklists to ensure effective task completion
- undertake training and development activities to improve your skills in particular aspects of the job
- identifying information needs and potential sources of information for the task
- shadowing or rotating with other colleagues in your organisation
- opportunities to clarify your job role with your manager and what they expect of you as a priority.

Step 4: review

Having taken action to plan and manage your time more proactively, you should make a note in your diary – say in three or four weeks’ time – to review how things are going. Use the criteria you set in Step 2 to help you. Build on what you think went well, e.g. more regular meetings with your manager, more IT training, using planning tools, etc., and reflect on what didn't go so well and why. If there is further room for improvement, you will be better informed for having gone through this process and should be in a position to identify and address it more directly.

Activity 7

0 hour(s) 45 minutes(s)

The main tasks are divided into producing your log sheet and logging your activities at various points in the day. Allow fifteen minutes for this and a further thirty minutes for doing a brief evaluation report.

1. Based on your own view, now and in the next week or so, identify a typical working day. On that day, have a go at producing a log of your activities just like that suggested in ‘Step 1: analyse’.
2. Do the following tasks taken from ‘Step 2: evaluate’ to assess whether you are managing your time appropriately. Leave a line between each answer:
   a. Take a blank sheet of paper and at the top write ‘Time Management Report’ for the day and date you did your time log for Question 1. Underline the title you have just written.
   b. Write the sub-heading ‘Core Job Role’. Underneath, describe your main job role in no more than two sentences.

c. Write the sub-heading ‘Non-Core Tasks’. Underneath, identify and list, from your time log, any activities which are not part of your main job role.
d. Write the sub-heading ‘Urgent/Important Tasks’. Underneath list separately the ‘urgent’ tasks in your time log and the ‘important’ tasks.
e. Write the sub-heading ‘Unfinished Tasks’. Underneath, identify and list any unfinished tasks in your time log. Write a sentence about each explaining why you think they are unfinished.
f. Write the sub-heading ‘Conclusions’. Underneath, write a list of how you might make improvements in your time management, based on your responses to the above tasks.

The four-step approach to time management appears very straightforward, but its success depends on the information you gather and use to analyse your existing practices and how well you evaluate it. Evaluation relies on you being able to ask questions about it which will help you identify where the problems are. This is why we have given you the tasks in question.

This activity has provided you with the opportunity to analyse and evaluate your current time-management practices. You were also asked to put your response to the tasks in a particular format which, like Activity 2 earlier in the course, is a type of brief management report.

Case study: Supply and demand: Part 4 – Kiran's story, three months later

When I look back to that first week at Longheath, I wonder how I coped. Everything seemed to happen at once. I had to prepare lessons for a wide variety of groups, which meant that I was up late most nights preparing materials and lesson plans as they have really tightened up on these from when I was teaching before.

As well as that, I also needed to make arrangements to make sure that there was someone to collect Akaash and Vanita from school and to look after them until I got back home. Rohit's mum was really fantastic. She helped us out a lot but I think they must have missed her at the gurdwara. It was hard work but the planning I did made it, well, manageable. I also had a lot of help from other people both at home and at the school.

By the end of the week, I was beginning to get back into the swing of teaching and teaching is something I have always loved doing. I think that what really made me want to go on was just as I was leaving the school on Friday afternoon, I happened to meet Mrs Jackson in the car park. She asked me how the week had gone. I told her I had enjoyed it. I was delighted when she told me that she had heard very good reports about me from some of the others in the health and social care team. She even added that she hoped I would be able to do more supply work for them in the near future and had said as much to Roger Mannering at the agency. I was so pleased with myself, I couldn't wait to get home to tell everyone!

After those first few days at Longheath my phone seemed to be always ringing with requests to do supply work. They kept me really busy and at one point I was working in five or six different schools, almost on a regular basis. I did a term and a bit working like this before I began to feel that it was getting a little too much and not really giving me what I wanted in terms of getting to know particular groups of students.

Activity 8

0 hour(s) 50 minutes(s)

Write a short paragraph of at least four sentences to answer the following question:

Imagine that you are a good friend of Kiran's. Drawing on your reading of Sections 2–4, what advice would you give her in terms of managing the competing demands on her time?

This activity provides a useful opportunity to review the ideas we have talked about so far in this course. It also asks you to select some of the ideas you may have found useful and to produce a piece of written advice for Kiran. In order to give you a broader picture of the ideas you could have included in your answer, we have provided two paragraphs below. Remember, however, that you were only asked to write one.

> Having achieved her first goal of returning to teaching on a part-time, supply basis, Kiran clearly established a good reputation. Her work is seen as very **effective** by her 'customers', the students and the Head Teacher at Longheath. The long evenings working at lesson plans and preparation are very common for new or returning teachers. It is likely that Kiran is becoming more **efficient** at this as she builds up a larger stock of useful class activities and teaching notes, and identifies good pre-written materials like textbooks that she can use with her students.
>
> Her good reputation has led to an increased workload, which means that she needs to **manage her time** better. Perhaps she could **analyse** her week into a personal timetable and see which of the materials she prepares for one school can be reused in another. This would be a useful **unintended outcome** of her preparation process. However, it does seem clear that Kiran has taken on a little too much in working for five to six different schools. She needs to identify her goals and **priorities** now that she has moved three months on. She may need to reduce the number of schools she works for in order to maintain her effectiveness.

5 Effective study: writing for academic study purposes

5.1 Types and styles of writing

In your studies, as in everyday life, you will come across many different *types* of written information, including newspapers, books, magazines, letters, emails, promotional literature and websites, to name but a few. Each type of writing has a particular *style* or set of conventions associated with it. Some will have an entertaining style, while others will be written in factual style; some will be formal, while others will be friendly and chatty. This course, for example, is for teaching ideas about management to readers who are not familiar with them. Hence we have been trying to write in an informative, quite formal but hopefully readable and interesting style. We might contrast this with a newspaper article, which is often written for readers who are familiar with the news story it relates to and attempts to put forward a particular point of view about it.

The writing you are required to do in the study of business and management is usually one of two types, an essay or a report. Both are an opportunity to show your ability to use your knowledge to answer a specific question. You will not be asked to write about something in a general sense, but rather you will be asked to focus on a particular topic. You can see this in each of the activities that you have worked on throughout this course.

The styles you are asked to adopt for essays and reports have some similarities. For example, any writing for academic purposes usually sets out to inform the reader in an objective, even-handed way rather than to entertain or express an opinion. It also tends to deal with more complex ideas and facts than writing for other purposes. The following are four accepted conventions which should be followed when writing for academic purposes:

Formality In academic writing, we try to avoid the use of 'I' as this can appear subjective and biased. This is called making use of the passive voice, e.g. 'It may be thought that …', rather than the active voice, e.g. 'I think …'.

Balanced views We often need to show that we can see beyond one person's opinion, including our own, of an issue and that we are trying to come to a balanced conclusion. There is not much room for personal or emotional detail but this can be included where we feel that our personal experience adds to the writing. What the reader wants to see is your ability to understand the material, to present evidence to support your argument and to come to an informed answer to the question or task you were set.

Some analysis Academic writing requires students to think carefully about the ideas they have studied and how they might help to answer the question asked or do the task required. This means that the piece of work needs to do more than just describe parts of the material you have studied; you have to break down the question or task into smaller parts. You practised this in Activities 1 and 2, when you were asked to analyse a simple job or task using the transformation model.

Referencing Although academic writing can include summaries, in your own words, of the materials you have studied, you should not use or quote ideas and phrases without acknowledging where you read them and who originally wrote them.

5.2 Writing essays and reports

We have already mentioned that essays and reports are the two types of writing most often required in business and management studies. Both are essentially extended pieces of writing with three main parts: an introduction, a main body and a conclusion. Although both have the similarities we have outlined above, there are also some key differences.

The purpose of an essay should be more than a simple description of parts of the material that has been studied. It is about analysing and evaluating the ideas that you find in your studies. This means an essay requires you to show your understanding of the ideas by breaking them down into their component parts. Essays can also encourage you to explore a topic or issue using ideas. In the introduction to an essay the student may tell the reader what will be covered. The conclusion of an essay is often a simple summary of the preceding arguments. Arguments in this context are not heated battles but a set of reasoned points of view that help the reader to better understand the issue being written about. Finally, the structure of essays and reports is different. An essay may use some headings but will rarely use sub-headings.

Reports are a common method of conveying information in the business world. The introduction section of a report is much more specific than an essay, with background information as to why the report is necessary and a clear statement of its purpose saying what the report will try to do. In academic studies, reports usually require you to address an issue and/or to make recommendations for solutions to a problem. The conclusion of a report is much more specific and often includes recommendations or solutions to the problem being examined. In general, reports are more descriptive than essays. A report uses headings, sub-headings, graphics and a table of contents to make its contents clear and easy to find. The headings and sub-headings are usually numbered and bullet points are a common way of making points concisely.

In Table 2 we have summarised some of the key differences between an essay and a report.

Table 2 Differences between an essay and a report

Characteristics of an essay	Characteristics of a report
Presents an argument or ideas	Presents information
Is usually read carefully so as to follow the argument	Can be skim/read quickly for the ‘big picture’ (see below on ‘abstracts’ and ‘table of contents’)
Will rarely need an abstract (a summary of the text at the beginning)	Will often need an abstract (usually called an executive summary)
Will not have a table of contents	Will usually include a table of contents
Will rarely have recommendations	Because it addresses a particular problem or issue, it may end with recommendations for courses of action
Makes very little use of diagrams, tables and charts	Makes common use of diagrams, tables and charts
Makes little use of sub-headings	Uses numbered headings and sub-headings
Structures ideas into paragraphs that are linked	Uses short, to-the-point paragraphs
Does not use bullet points	Uses bullet points

Will always need a bibliography and a list of references	Does not always need a bibliography or a list of references

5.3 Getting your writing started

The activities in this course have offered you some opportunities to plan and practise writing in different types and styles.

Like many people you may find it difficult getting your writing started. You may think that you need to produce something which has a perfect turn of phrase and has flawless grammar, punctuation and spelling right from the start. This is not the case. We realise that writing in an academic style, like a lot of things, takes practise. You could start by writing down the key points you want to make (in any order) and then to organise these key points so that they fit together in a logical way. This is rather like the ‘To Do’ lists we asked you to put together for yourself in Activity 4, and for Kiran in Activity 6. The key thing is to make a start and not to try for perfection at the first attempt.

Effective report writing relies on clear objectives and structure. Each part of the report requires you to convey information useful to the solving of a problem or the evaluation of an issue which is the report's main objective. The sub-headings in the report should aim to reflect how you have analysed the issue or problem in terms of its component parts. In Activities 2 and 7 you were asked to produce brief report-style answers to certain questions which helped you assess, respectively, a task process you had performed and your time management for a specific day. Essays, on the other hand, usually ask you to answer a question or explore an issue in more extended paragraphs of writing. An essay paragraph is no less than two sentences and, in the main body of the essay, can generally be four sentences or more. In a similar way to a report, what is written in each paragraph of an essay is decided by analysing the question or issue you are being asked to tackle into its component parts. In Activities 5 and 8 you were asked to write paragraphs of varying lengths to answer brief questions about the case study using some of the course ideas. These activities have all given you some practise in writing using academic ideas and we hope you now have the confidence to try a more extended piece of writing for your next course assessment.

Conclusion

This course has provided you with a better understanding of some of the key **processes** and **skills** involved in management of work tasks and people. You have been asked to study a range of ideas and techniques which inform the training and development of managers and to apply some of them to the management of your own work. Once again you may have noted in reading this course that management is a matter for personal opinion and judgement. There are very few, if any, right or wrong answers in management. We have presented you with a number of established ideas, some of which have been thoroughly researched whilst others have simply proven effective in practice. It is part of your own development and learning to decide which of these ideas prove useful to you.

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