

VI. Operational Management

In general, service driven animal protection societies are more business-like as regards operational management than campaigning or educational organisations. This is probably a reflection of both their organisational culture and the urgent practical nature of their work. However, professional – but appropriate - operational management is also vital to campaigning and educational NGOs, if they seek to achieve the maximum possible in terms of mission fulfilment for their resources. This chapter examines appropriate operational management models and extracts key elements of use to animal protection societies.

Operational Management in a NGO

In any NGO, the overall *management* aim should be to prepare a realistic and coherent operational plan, based on agreed strategy, which makes best use of available resources towards the fulfilment of the organisation's mission (i.e. to maximise animal welfare gains from resources) and to ensure that this is effectively realised (making any appropriate changes necessary along the way).

The main elements needed for this include: -

- Planning (long range and short range)
- Management control systems
- Project management
- Review and evaluation

The timescale of operational planning in NGOs varies widely. More effective planning includes the following: -

- **Long Range Plans**

Typically 5-year operating and financial projections, reviewed annually.

- **Short Range Plans**

Practical plans to implement strategy. Usually covering a two to three year timescale (reviewed annually), but one year for many smaller organisations. Two or three year operational plans tend to include less detail for second and third years, but are comprehensive for the first year.

Board/Trustees Involvement

A sweeping statement is often made that the Board/Trustees agree strategy, whereas operational management is the domain of staff. However, as can be seen in the chapter on 'The Relationship between the Board and Management', the division of duties between staff and governing bodies is never quite this simple! In fact, the way in which staff plan the operations of the organisation will determine the extent to which its mission (and goals) are achieved – if at all.

It is, therefore, suggested that a High Level Operational Plan (HLOP) is also prepared in order to consult the Board/Trustees on the way in which the strategy will be

implemented in practice. This can be extracted from the operational plan. It is an overview of planned major campaigns, educational work or service provision activities against which progress can be reported and measured. It would include budget allocations, timings and targets. The Board/Trustees should insist on being asked to agree major changes to the HLOP and budget.

In addition to enabling the Board/Trustees to ensure that the organisation's operations contribute effectively towards its mission (and follow the agreed strategy), the HLOP should enable the Board/Trustees to monitor the organisation's major activities throughout the year. All too often, progress reports given to animal protection organisation' Boards/Trustees represent a simple account of activities since the last meeting (often three or six months previously) – unrelated to either the strategy or operational plan. Sometimes such reports are received from each department and sometimes combined and filtered through the Chief Executive. A positive spin can always be put on these, and a good orator/presenter can impress even if not achieving (or even following) planned targets and goals! This shows the real value of the HLOP – as a tool to make each department accountable against plan (and pre-agreed targets and timings) for major programmes. This does not mean that the Board/Trustees should be involved in the minute detail of the organisation's operations, but to do what is necessary to ensure effective governance in terms of ensuring that the organisation's resources are used in the most effective way towards mission accomplishment.

Operational Management Models

Strategy Pyramid

The below diagram depicts the 'top down' approach to planning – based on the formulation of a vision and mission, the development of goals to achieve these, which are formed into strategy. From the agreed strategy, appropriate tactics are chosen (e.g. the 'Campaigns Toolkit') and finally action plans.



This approach is based on the old business model – which is effective in known and stable environments, but not in volatile environments or rapidly changing times. The difference is explained below.

Modern Versus Traditional Management Models

The following chart indicates the differences between a traditional management model and a modern model suitable for NGOs in volatile or creative environments. However, a stable service provision role may favour a management model with more traditional characteristics.

Traditional Business Model	Modern NGO-Friendly Model
Managing assets	Managing resources and capabilities
Accounting-driven	Effectiveness-driven
Product based	Campaign based
Hierarchical	Networked
Rationality and analysis	Intuition and analysis
Command and control	Empowered employees
Instructing and checking	Motivating and coaching
Reactive	Responsive
Risk averse	Encouraging risk and innovation
Blame culture	Supportive culture

Modern Management

The key to many modern management techniques lies purely in establishing teams and aligning team and individual goals with campaigns (or educational/project) goals, and providing the resources needed for accomplishment. The chapter on 'Managing the 'Mission-Driven' is particularly relevant. Key aspects of the modern management role are set out above. In addition, it is of vital importance for the manager to continuously monitor the external environment, to enable relevant changes to be made.

To lead in volatile times you must: -

- Learn to anticipate and prepare for volatility
- Learn to stay a step ahead of volatility and its inherent dangers
- Distinguish patterns and order amidst chaos
- Learn to manage opportunities as well as risks

Traditional Management

Even if a modern management model is adopted, some of the more useful aspects of traditional management can be applied. Below is a brief outline of the main aspects of traditional management that could be useful.

Setting Objectives and Planning

- To determine the objectives aligned with the organisation's vision and mission.
- To determine the goals for each issue.
- To decide the best way(s) to reach the objectives.
- To decide on most appropriate tactics to be used.

Organising the Group

- To analyse the activities, decisions, and relations needed.
- To classify the work.
- To divide the work into manageable activities and further divide the activities into manageable jobs.
- To group units and jobs into an organisational structure.
- To select people for the management of the units and for the job to be done.

Motivating and Communicating

- To make a team out of the people who are responsible for various jobs.
- To empower employees and motivate them to follow through on your strategic focus.
- To take relationship responsibility.
- To make human resource decisions on pay, placement, and promotion.
- To communicate the objectives to the people whose performance is needed to attain these.
- To communicate constantly to and from his subordinates, superior, and colleagues.

Measuring Performance

- To establish critical success factors (CSFs) - major factors that are of key importance to the performance of the organisation and members of staff.
- To establish yardsticks for measuring targets.
- To make the measurements focused on the performance of the whole organisation, and every individual, available to each staff member.

Operational Planning

Project Motto

Every project should aim to be: -

- On time
- To specification
- On budget

Project Planning Activities

The planning activities a manager needs to do, with the help of team members, are listed below: -

- To define the project boundaries ('scoping') - what it included and not included in the project
- To recruit and build the team
- To assess the work (in broad terms)
- To assess risks and develop contingencies
- To develop a project schedule
- To assess project resources
- To decide who will do what
- To assign accountability
- To agree the project budget
- To identify clearly the key goals for the project outcomes
- To develop and write up a final project plan

Defining Project Scope

A scope statement defines the project's place in a larger scenario, describes the major activities of the project, and puts some boundaries on the project to define what the project will and won't do. It contains the definition and detailed description of what will be produced by the project and desired outcomes. It contains the name and purpose of the project, the project manager's name, and a statement of support/approval from the sponsor or line manager/Chief Executive. The following steps are necessary in this process: -

- Define what is expected from the project - and project success and failure criteria that criteria that will used to evaluate results
- Explain how the project will contribute to the overall issue goals (as set out in the organisational strategy)

- Clearly define the methods, tasks, basic conditions, project objectives and final outcome(s)
- Define the project boundaries - what's included and not included in the project
- Identify all stakeholders - persons or groups of persons who are participating in the project, are interested in the project performance, or are constrained by the project
- Establish the overall direction, expectations and constraints that the team will use when they plan the project

Recruit and Build Team

- Make sure you have the right people on the team
- Make sure all key stakeholders have some type of representation (to advise the team)

Assessing the Work

This should be done and agreed by the team: -

- Establish what needs to be done
- Break the project down into manageable parts (sub projects)
- Assess potential implications for other departments and consult and involve
- Agree roles of team members, and how each fits into the system as a whole
- Establish guidelines for how team members will work together

Assessing Risk

- Explore what might go wrong and identify countermeasures to prevent problems from occurring
- Identify a team member responsible for each countermeasure
- Draft risk plan for management and team

Developing a Project Schedule

- Identify project phases, milestones and outcomes schedules and schedule all the works that must be accomplished to meet the project key dates and objectives
- From the above, compile the high-level schedule used to communicate the dates by which major accomplishments in the project will be completed to the project sponsor/manager, trustees, supporters and donors and other stakeholders

Resource Planning

- Identify resources required - project personnel, equipment, materials and facilities
- Optimise scheduling with respect to all available and procurable resources

Who Will Do What

- Assign each part to a team member

Allocation of Responsibilities and Accountability

- Write out allocation of responsibilities e.g. responsibility matrix
- Agree areas of budget responsibility and budgetary approval limits

Developing the Project Budget

- Identify and quantify the prospective costs of project outcomes
- Develop a spending budget – to include the projected cost of the project, including internal and external costs.

To Identify Clear Project Goals

- Identify clear project goals, ensuring that these provide maximum possible progress towards priority issue goals, as agreed in the organisational strategy. Do not make the mistake of including project stepping-stones (e.g. number of stalls held to recruit new campaigners, as opposed to number of new campaigners recruited). Goals should be achievement orientated, as opposed to activity orientated.

Writing the Project Plan

- Compile the information developed during the above planning into a formal project plan and obtain formal approval from the project sponsor/management
- Agree and document the procedures that will be used to make changes in the plan

The project plan should include: -

- Project goals
- Activities – and who assigned to (budget and timeline)
- Other departments involved (agreed)
- Risk analysis and contingency planning
- Project targets (both measurable i.e. quantifiable and qualitative) - and who is responsible
- Progress reporting arrangements

Targets should be **SMART** i.e.

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic and
Timed

The Strategic Feedback Loop

Any plan should support your organisation's mission and purpose. The following check list may prove useful!

1. Determine the major components or objectives of the plan.
2. Make sure that your objectives support your organisation's mission and strategy.
3. Collect and evaluate the data you will need to determine what it will take to complete each component of the plan.
4. Make sure that the data you collected and evaluated supports your organisation's mission and strategy.
5. Develop a forecast plan.
6. Make sure that your forecast plan supports your organisation's mission and strategy.
7. Determine action steps.
8. Make sure that your action steps support your organisation's mission and strategy.
9. Develop contingency plans.
10. Make sure that your contingency plans support your organisation's mission and strategy.
11. Implement your plan.
12. Make sure that your implementation supports your organisation's mission and strategy.
13. Check the progress of your plan frequently.
14. Make sure as your plan is implemented that your organisation's mission and strategy remains in focus.
15. Evaluate your completed plan.
16. Make sure your plan has progressed your organisation's mission and strategy.

This may seem to be overkill, but the point being made is valid: project choice should aim to maximise progress towards mission for given resources, and this aim should remain in mind throughout the lifetime of the project.

I'm working to improve my methods, and every hour I save is an hour added to my life.
Ayn Rand

Range of Management Systems

The 'best laid plans of mice and men' go astray, so management control systems are necessary to ensure effective project monitoring that is not intrusive, does not hamper creativity, but motivates. This would include: -

- Annual operating budget and periodical accounting reports and checks
- Project management procedures (including: regular reviews, monitoring progress markers, identifying and monitoring critical factors)
- HR management procedures (including performance appraisals)
- Policies
- Project evaluation
- Internal audits/internal monitoring procedures
- External evaluations e.g. periodic use of consultants
- Pilot projects and spreading

In general, animal protection organisations are not very good at carrying out project evaluations. All too often, as soon as one project is finished, the team leaps into the next – without looking back to evaluate the project and to learn from its mistakes. Yet evaluation is essential if performance is to be honed and excellence achieved. Similarly, internal and external audits and evaluations are rare, and yet they could yield enormous results in terms of mission fulfilment. This is particularly true in the case of learning and improvement across the organisation as a whole. For example, in an international organisation, good practice benchmarks can be applied across country boundaries (and the same is true for cross team learning in smaller organisations).

An excellent project management tool is to carry out a well-measured and monitored pilot project. This can then be evaluated and, if successful, perfected and spread (e.g. nationwide or internationally), using the improved model as guidance.

Kaizen

This brings us to the concept of '**Kaizen**'. This is a Japanese concept meaning 'continuous improvement'. Kaizen strategy calls for never-ending efforts for improvement involving everyone in the organization - managers and workers alike. It has two major components: -

- Maintenance
- Improvement

The objective of the maintenance function is to maintain current technological, managerial, and operating standards. The improvement function is aimed at improving current standards.

Another similar concept is that of 'continuous learning', put forward by the management guru Peter Senge. This also involved continuous learning and improvement.

Animal protection societies will only meet their true potential (and achieve maximum advancement towards their mission) if they embrace such an approach.

There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, learning from failure.
Colin Powell

Human Resource Aspects

Successful operational management also necessitates skilful modern human resource management including: -

- Recruitment
- Teambuilding
- Coaching and mentoring
- Motivation

- Staff appraisal
- Training and development

The chapter on 'Managing the Mission Driven' is also of key relevance in this regard.

Effective Leadership

Effective leadership is a combination of having (and using) the right attributes and achieving (the right) results. In the case of animal protection organisations, results equate to progress towards mission – but there are also important organisational results in terms of: -

- Supporter recruitment and donor development
- Organisations brand and reputation enhancement
- Organisational development, learning, improvement and innovation
- Staff, trustee and volunteer development and motivation

Use of Consultants

External experts and consultants can be useful for some animal protection societies in a number of ways: -

- To help provide or facilitate major strategic analysis or direction.
- To provide expertise or analysis of the international operating environment or international issues.
- To provide expertise or analysis necessary for organisational development and change.
- To provide expertise on an issue or country.
- To provide or develop areas of missing expertise or experience.

However, to ensure maximum impact from the use of expensive consultancy assistance, it is necessary for the task to be well formulated, the consultant carefully selected for the task, and the project well managed.

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost. That is where they should be. Now put the foundation under them.

Henry David Thoreau