

Warwickshire and Birmingham Wing Air Training Corps



Junior NCO Leadership Development Course

GETTING THINGS DONE



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INTRODUCTION

1. A leader is necessary when a group of people have to achieve an objective. A leader, therefore, is expected to use a team to achieve results or get things done. Many leaders can get things done but some seem to do it quicker and with less fuss and frustration. That is because they have taken a logical approach to getting things done. It is this logical sequence that we will discuss in this section.

TASK SEQUENCE

2. Any task can be broken down into a logical sequence which, if followed, will make getting things done much easier. This sequence is shown in Figure 7.1 and can be easily remembered by the abbreviation PICSIE.

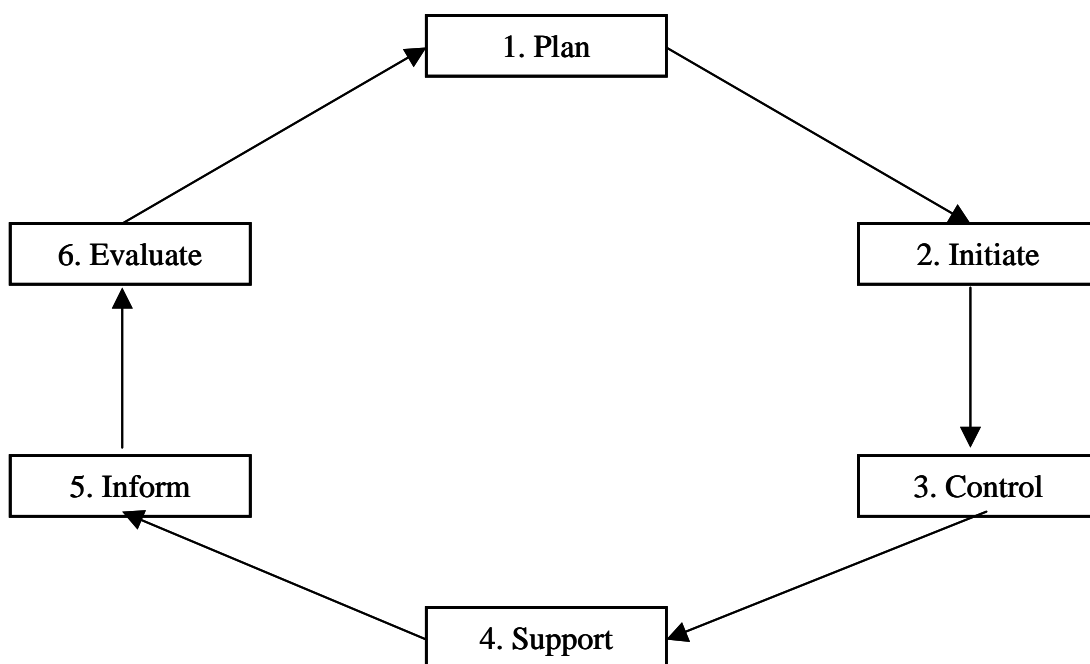


Figure 7.1 The process of getting things done.

PLAN

3. Before starting any activity it is important that the objectives or Aim of the task are clear. It is very easy to misinterpret the objectives of the task and do something which is almost, but not quite, what is required. “Almost, but not quite”, is not an acceptable standard. If an employer paid you almost, but not quite what you earned you would be rightfully annoyed. An airline pilot who almost, but not quite reached the runway on approach to land would not be safe.
4. It is important, therefore, that you spend time thinking about the aims of the task and gathering information about it, as all future steps are based on a clear understanding of what is required. Poor appreciation of the task at this point in the process will mean all future steps are wrong, and the objectives will not be met. It is possible to re-plan to the correct objectives mid-way through a task but this is wasteful of time and effort and the leader will lose their credibility with the team.

5. There is usually more than one way to complete a task, but there are usually only one or two solutions which do it most effectively. The first step is to list all the possible solutions and then do simple tests to check their feasibility; e.g. is the rope or plank long enough, do I have sufficient lashings, will one barrel support four people? It is possible to run through the plan in your mind, evaluating the problems you might meet and deciding on the solutions.
6. Once you have tested the plans you must select the best one. The best solution will:
 - a. Fulfil all essential requirements of the task.
 - b. Fulfil all or most of the desirable requirements of the task.
 - c. Cater for unforeseen occurrences and be capable of being modified.
 - d. Use the resources efficiently.
7. Having selected a basic plan it is necessary to add the detail and allocated tasks and responsibilities to the team members.

INITIATE

8. You now have a plan and the next step is to initiate action by communicating that plan to your team. This step in the process is most important because no matter how good the plan is, if the team does not understand it, then it will not work. To ensure that a plan is briefed in a logical and consistent manner a standard procedure has been developed across all three armed services. This procedure can be remembered by the abbreviation SMEAC, which is described below.
 - a. **Situation.** This describes in outline the situation in which the group is operating. It is necessary to set the scene so the rest of the brief makes sense to the team.
 - b. **Mission.** This must be a short, sharp and singular description of the task. Time and place are usually the only limitations included.
 - i. A poor example of a mission statement is:

“We have to find the equipment, I don’t know what it looks like but it is heavy, and take it to the assembly point, I’ll give you that later, be careful the ground is pretty slippery today, and put it together by mid afternoon.”
 - ii. The above description is too long and vague, the team has to filter out the unnecessary information. A better example might be:

“We are to recover the equipment and assemble it at GR135749 by 1500 hours Zulu today.”

- c. **Execution.** This section is where you tell the team the detailed plan. Be careful, if you give it in a disjointed manner it will be difficult to follow.
- i. You should give an outline plan initially, for example if the mission is to cross a river the outline plan should state whether you intend to build a bridge or a raft and what the crossing points are.
 - ii. Next should come the resources available and any limitations effecting the task. This puts the detailed plan in perspective and allows the team to assess the plan and formulate questions at the end.
 - iii. Describe the plan in detail, allocating tasks and responsibilities as the plan evolves. Give a summary of locations and timings so that these can be copied down in one place by the team members.
 - iv. Ensure that a safety brief is included if appropriate, covering possible injuries or emergencies and to include contact numbers and safety routes.
- d. **Any questions.** Give the team time to digest the information you have provided and formulate any questions. Ask each team member in turn if they have any questions. If they have, answer them clearly and fully, on no account ridicule the person asking the question or imply the question is stupid. If you do that no-one will ask any further questions and your plan may fail as a result. Remember questions are easier to handle than mistakes.
- e. **Check Understanding.** Once the team have had their opportunity to clarify their understanding of the plan ask some relevant questions to satisfy yourself that they have really understood the plan.
- i. Do this by selecting key points of the plan, especially locations, timings and limitations and use the “Pose, Pause, Pounce” technique. That is Pose a question, Pause while everyone thinks about the answer and then Pounce by nominating someone to answer it. Use the open hand, palm up, to indicate the person you are nominating to answer the question. This gesture is more inviting than the pointed finger, which is accusing and aggressive.
 - ii. If a question is answered incorrectly then ask if anyone else can answer. If no-one knows the answer then your brief may not have been clear. In which case go over that area of the brief again and recheck the understanding.

CONTROL

9. Your team is now ready to execute your plan. If your plan is clear and you have allocated tasks and responsibilities all you should have to do is monitor and control its progress. During this phase the leader must monitor and control the sub-leaders along with the group’s discipline and standards.
10. It is necessary to ensure that all the activities are working towards the end objective and that they are happening at the right speed. Do not let the energies of the team be diverted to non-essential tasks. A leader must think ahead and foresee the possible problems and plan a solution before they occur.

11. One typical problem with inexperienced leaders is that they become too involved in individual tasks such as lashing poles or pulling on ropes. If you do this you are concentrating on what's happening now rather than looking ahead. Remember don't become too "hands on", stand back and take a good look at the whole picture and think ahead.

SUPPORT

12. So far we have discussed the Task Needs of getting things done. However, the Functional Leadership model identifies that the Team and Individual Needs affect how well the team works to achieving the task. It is necessary to support the team as a whole and the individuals that make it up. This can be done by maintaining discipline, recognising efforts, providing encouragement and praise as appropriate.

INFORM

13. Throughout the execution phase it will be necessary to keep communication flowing. First from you to the team to keep them informed of any changes in plan or to updates them on the overall progress of the task. Secondly from the team to you as they discover that something is not as easy as first thought, or someone comes up with an idea that simplifies the task.

EVALUATE

14. No plan is perfect and you should always expect minor problems to arise. As a leader you must continually evaluate the progress of the team against your initial plan. If you are not meeting plan try and determine why and decide what can be changed to make it happen. Always keep the end objectives in your mind and ensure your plan still meets them.
15. Evaluate the members of your team and how well they are doing the tasks that were allocated to them. Identify any training that may be necessary to expand the teams abilities.

SUMMARY

16. Your success as a leader lies not only in your leadership skills but also in your abilities to appreciate a task, plan a solution, communicate the solution to your team and successfully execute the plan while continually evaluating its success in meeting the original objectives. To help a summary of the actions a leader should take at various phases is given in table 7.2.

Key Functions	TASK NEEDS	TEAM NEEDS	INDIVIDUAL NEEDS	
PLAN	Define Aim	Identify tasks and constraints.	Involve team and share commitment.	Clarify aims and gain acceptance.
	Detailed Plan	Establish priorities. Check resources. Produce plan.	Consult and agree standards.	Assess skills. Establish targets. Delegate.
INITIATE	Brief Group. Use SMEAC. Set standards	Obtain feedback and ideas. Encourage initiative.	Advise, Listen, Enthuse, Praise.	
CONTROL	Maintain standards. Set work tempo. Maintain discipline.	Co-ordinate effort. Allocate responsibilities.	Give a sense of purpose. Reassure Observer	
SUPPORT	Monitor work and resources	Reconcile conflicts. Build team spirit. Encourage. Develop team suggestions.	Attend to personal problems. Train individuals. Give status.	
INFORM	Communicate progress and changes to plan.	Clarify objectives. Provide new information.	Praise abilities and effort.	
EVALUATE	Review objectives. Assess progress and re-plan if necessary.	Assess team performance. Recognise success. Learn from failure.	Assess and discuss performance. Guide and train.	

Table 7.2 The relationship between the Functional Needs and “Getting Things Done”.