

Span of Control

Span of control can be defined as the total number of direct subordinates that a manager can control or manage. The number of subordinates managed by a manager varies depending on the complexity of the work.

For example, a manager can manage 4-6 subordinates when the nature of work is complex, whereas, the number can go up to 15-20 subordinates for repetitive or fixed work.

★ Factors :

The span of control means the total number of employees that a manager or superior can manage. Several factors are taken into consideration before allocating subordinates to a supervisor.

1. Type of work to be manage :

The most crucial factor that affects the span of control and management skills of a manager is the type of work. If all the subordinates are doing the same job at the same time, then it is easy for a manager or superior to manage all employees at the same time.

For example, it is easy for a supervisor to manage 50 call executives at the same time because they are doing similar work at the same time. On the other hand, a professor can take two or a maximum of four students pursuing a doctorate.

2. Geographical distribution:

If the branches of business are located at far geographic locations, then it becomes difficult for a manager to manage all the executives working at all the branches.

Therefore, areas will be divided into clusters, and different managers are hired to manage each cluster.

3. Administrative tasks performed by a manager:

The span of control of a manager reduces if he is required to complete several administrative tasks daily.

4. The Capability of the Manager:

An experienced manager with a good understanding of the work and having good relationships with employees can manage a higher number of employees. Whereas, an inexperienced manager with limited skills can handle a few employees.

5. Capabilities of employees:

The span of control of a manager not only depends on the capabilities of a manager but also depends on the capabilities of employees to be managed. But a manager, no matter how much experienced he is, can handle only a few inexperienced or new employees at one time.

6. Responsibility for other task:

The span of control of a manager will reduce if he has duties of different jobs on his shoulders. That means he will be able to dedicate a limited time to manage his subordinates.

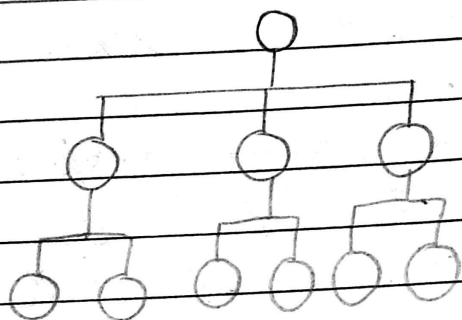
For examples, a professor is not only required to handle and help his dedicate students, but it is also necessary for him to dedicate time to his research work and to take theory classes of other students.

7. Type of business:

The span of control of a manager also depends on the kind of business. Different types of business processes can reduce the span of control of a manager.

* Types of Span of Control:

1. Narrow span of control:
Narrow span of control means a single manager or supervisor oversees few subordinates. This gives rise to a tall organizational structure.



Narrow Span of Control

Advantages:

- The manager can supervise each of his subordinates intimately.
- The nature of work is usually complicated.
- Effective communication between the subordinates and their manager.
- More layers in the hierarchy of management.

Despite many advantages, the narrow span of control is not free from disadvantages.

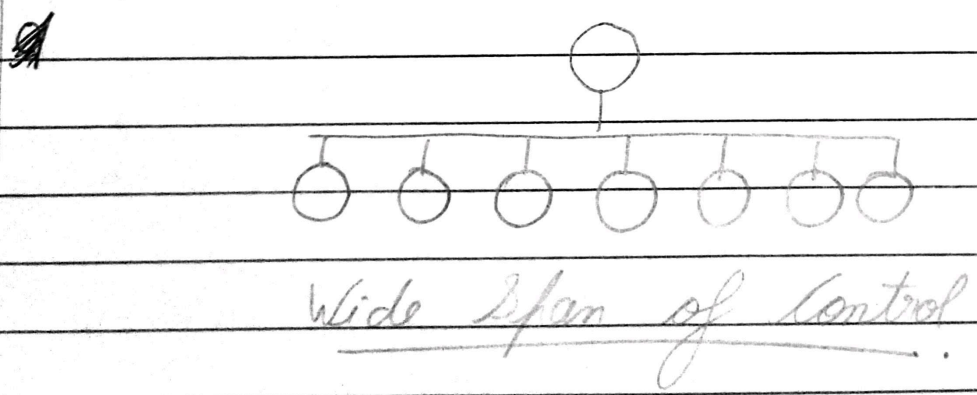
Disadvantages :

- Too much control over employees might hamper their original talent and creativity.
- Extended hierarchy of control results in a long time in decision-making.
- Narrow span of controlling prevents cross-functional problem-solving.

On the other hand, a span of control is wide when a manager manages or controls up to 20 subordinates.

2. Wide Span of Control :

Wide span of control means a single manager or supervisor oversees a large number of subordinates. This gives rise to a flat organizational structure.



Advantages :

- In a wide span of control, subordinates are more independent.

- Fewer layers in the hierarchy of management.
- The nature of work is repetitive.
- Less direct communication between subordinates and managers.

Disadvantages:

- Ineffective management.
- Increased workload on managers.
- The roles of team members are not clearly defined.
- Less communication between managers and subordinates reduces the control of the manager.