
Completed Staff Work

“Completed Staff Work” is the study of a problem, and presentation of a solution, in such form that all that remains to be done by the Manager/Staff is to indicate their approval or disapproval of the completed action. The words “completed action” are emphasized because the more difficult the problem is, the more the tendency is to present the issues in piecemeal fashion. The theory of completed staff work does not preclude a “rough draft”, but the rough draft must not be a “half-baked” idea.

Why the Worker?

The worker is often the person who first recognizes a potential problem. Due to his/her intimacy with the situation, they are usually the best source for solutions. Therefore, necessity dictates that once the worker recognizes a problem, they think about possible solutions as they prepare data to support their belief that a problem exists. The worker may and should consult with other colleagues. Then, they present this data and their thoughts regarding possible solutions to the supervisor. Now it becomes the responsibility of the supervisor to authorize the worker to commit resources to finding a solution.

What is the Supervisor’s role?

The supervisor has the responsibility of choosing the best of possible solutions and as a result must review the material and make a decision. *If the decision is not consistent with the proposal from the worker, then the supervisor is obligated to provide feedback to the worker as to why.* Furthermore, the supervisor is responsible to set parameters within which the worker shall operate and to provide critical information that the worker may be unaware of. *For example, perhaps the company always favors subsidiaries when making purchases.*

If you were the Manager/Staff, would you be willing to sign the Paper you have prepared and stake your professional reputation on its being right? If the answer is no then take it back and work it over, because it is not yet “Completed Staff Work.”

Framework for Systematic Thinking

One of the reasons that workers hesitate to identify possible solutions to a problem is that, at first glance, the problems themselves seem too big or unwieldy. The Framework for Systematic Thinking¹ is one approach towards identifying possible solutions and achieving completed staff work. Listed below is a framework for systematic thinking when a problem arises:

Data

- What is the problem?
- Where is the data to support the problem?

Diagnosis

- What are possible causes?

Direction

- What strategies might be wise?

Do Next

- What are some specific next steps?

Always, Always, Always ... Follow Through!

¹ Roger Fisher and Alan Sharp, *Getting it Done: how to lead when you're not in charge*, Harper Business Publishing pg. 77-111