

Position Management Principles

Definition - Position Management

Position management is the continuous and systematic process each manager goes through to determine how many positions are needed, how jobs should be designed, and the type of organizational structure that is required to accomplish the functional assignments of the unit.

Managers and supervisors assign specific duties to each position within their organization. How they distribute the duties among the different positions ultimately determines the pay plan, title, series, and grade of a position.

Nine General Position Management Principles

1. Avoid overlap in duties and functions, unnecessary positions, or fragmentation of the work process.

- Is there duplication of work among positions? Is it necessary:
- Could some of the duties and responsibilities be handled equally well elsewhere where there is more consistency with mission of the unit?
- Is there work the unit should be doing that isn't getting done?
- Is there work being performed elsewhere that would better be performed in your unit?
- (Responsibility: HR Specialist and supervisor/manager)

2. Align positions so they are consistent with the organization's current mission and/or function statements and staff resources approved in the budget process.

- Is your organization staffed on average rather than peak workload?
- Does your unit have current mission and function statements?
- Do your positions reflect and support the mission requirements?
- Is there work that can be contracted out?
- (Responsibility: HR Specialist and supervisor/manager)

3. Allocate positions in such a way that they are consistent with an approved staffing pattern and established career ladders.

- Do you have an annual workforce plan in which you continually update based upon not only approved staffing but budget and other resources as well?
- (Responsibility: HR Specialist and supervisor/manager)

4. Design positions so that they are consistent with the kinds and level of work assigned to the organization.

- Are positions performing work at their classified grade level, e.g., at least 25% of a position's duties are consistent with the grade level assigned? If not, is the classification valid? The 25% rule is a current requirement. However, years ago OPM's requirement was 50%; a better practice and more efficient use of personnel resources.
- Have you clearly identified accountability in your positions?
- If applicable, have you simplified administrative process and procedures?
- Have you clearly opened the lines of communications so there are no "bottlenecks"?
- (Responsibility: HR Specialist and supervisor/manager)

5. Certify the need for all positions. Utilize each position fully and eliminate work that is no longer essential for mission accomplishment.

- Have you certified all position descriptions in your unit as being correct? Supervisors certify the position description when they complete the AD-332, Position Description Cover Sheet, and submit the position description to the servicing HR specialist.
- Do your employees agree that the duties and responsibilities they are performing are adequately stated in the position descriptions you have certified? Supervisors should provide a classified copy of the position description to each employee.
- As a supervisor, are you continually reviewing work processes and reinventing ways to accomplish the mission?
- Are delegations to the lowest practical and possible level?
- Are higher-level duties too thinly spread across several positions? (This is frequently called job dilution). An example would be four specialists each who perform 25% clerical duties which represents one work year of non-specialist workload. It would be a more efficient use of personnel resources to have three specialists and one clerical position.
- (Responsibility: HR Specialist and supervisor/manager)

6. Certify the need for deputy and assistant positions and the appropriateness of their grade levels.

- Are the "assistant" and "supervisory" positions at all grade levels in your unit necessary?
- Are they properly classified?
- What is the supervisor to employee ratio? (USDA recommends 1:9 unless there are unusual circumstances).
- Have you determined the proper span of control?
- Have you read the General Schedule Leader Guide or the FWS Leader Guide? See <http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gslead.pdf> or <http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/fwsleadr.pdf> respectively.
- Would team leader positions be more appropriate?
- (Responsibility: HR Specialist and supervisor/manager)

7. Utilize trainee, apprentice, entry level, and developmental work situations whenever possible.

- Does your unit contain a balanced mix of positions, e.g., journey level, career ladder, technical support, developmental/trainee positions? This is usually called a “mix of grade” balance.
- (Responsibility: HR Specialist and supervisor/manager)

8. Utilize special appointment authorities to accommodate short-term assignments such as employing part time, intermittent, temporary workers, consultants, and contractors whenever possible.

- Is any of your work of a temporary or project nature?
- Can physically challenged personnel perform any of the duties and responsibilities you’ve assigned?
- (Responsibility: HR Specialist and supervisor/manager)

9. Consider “discharge of position management responsibilities” as a factor in evaluating the performance of supervisors and managers.

- If you are a second line supervisor, do you require an annual workforce plan from lower level supervisors? If so, are they rated on how this plan is prepared and implemented?
- As a supervisor, do you continually review your budget, personnel and resources and at the same time, work with the applicable staffs involved in position management?
- Have you assigned work to employees in order to tie them to the end product and in accordance to their position description?
- Have you stressed customer service encouraging customer feedback for improvements?
- (Responsibility: HR Specialist and supervisor/manager)

Job Aid on Common Problems in Position Management

Problem	Description	Impact	Considerations
Fragmentation	Organization split into many small segments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires more supervisors • Restricts the development of employees • Interferes with communication • Causes over-specialization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all of these organizational units necessary? • Which functions can be combined or deleted? • How can employee skills best be broadened and used? • Where is specialization required and where is it a hindrance?
Layering	Too many levels in the chain of command	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interferes with communication • Restricts the responsibility of lower level supervisors and other employees • Results in resources being “sucked up” by management before reaching the ground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there more supervisors than needed to plan and direct the work? • What is the supervisor to worker ratio? • Has authority been deleted to the optimum level?
Unnecessary positions	Surplus assistants, supervisors, staff or support positions, or “carryovers” from previous operating structures, for example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to redundancy in work • Is expensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the supervisory workload really call for two people at the top? • Is the supervisor often absent? • If so, must binding decisions be made during such absences? • Are the staff assistance functions needed? Can they be shifted to other line positions?
Narrow span of control	More supervisors than necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits initiative and responsibility • Is very expensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the workload call for the number of supervisors employed?
Job dilution	Lower level work performed by higher-graded employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results in low employee morale • Is inefficient • Is expensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are employees working at grade level 50% or more of the time? • Are positions established at appropriate grade levels?