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FACT SHEET

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Focusing on Management in the Family:

PROCESSES

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BASIC MANAGEMENT PROCESS:

Recognize the problem

Choose among alternatives

Act to carry out plan

SECONDARY MANAGEMENT PROCESS:

Communication

Evaluation

Innovation and integration

Leadership

Learning

Motivation

Socialization

Learning your ABC's is a process. Growing from infancy to death is a process. Going from new bride to middle-aged mother, from the bottom of the stairs to the top, from dirty dishes to clean ones are all processes.

A process is like a chain. Link by link, the blacksmith forges a chain. One link alone is not a chain.

Like the chain, a *process* is a series of changes taking place in sequence or pattern over time. Each link is an action toward a goal or objective. Each new link is the new change.

THE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The management process begins with a problem. For instance, a family of four living on a farm or ranch in Texas decides to give up farming and move to the city.

Then *mental activity* or conscious thought is added. As a child doesn't climb stairs without a notion to do so, neither does the family go from farm to city, from poor to rich, from old car to new car without conscious thought.

Process also means *movement*, movement of one foot and then the other while climbing stairs or the addition of one link and then another until the chain is complete.

The process is directed toward a *goal*, such as using that chain or reaching the top of the stairs.

The process must also have *related activities* and *flexibility*. As the chain has one link intertwining with another, so activities must be inter-related to achieve a particular goal. For instance, the family's goal may be to buy a new car at year's end. The goal will not be reached if Mother buys a new washer and dryer. The chain is broken. There's no relationship between the goal of the new car and the desire for a washer and dryer. However, a savings program and plans for a trip are related to the car buying goal.

The following is a sample situation demonstrating the management process.

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Mr. and Mrs. Adams live in College Station, Texas. Two of their children, Susy, 9, and Bobby, 7, go to school there. Kathy, 3, is at home with her mother during the day.

Mr. Adams is working on his doctorate in agriculture. He works part time for \$2,000 and goes to school the remaining time. This is their only source of income. His tuition is low.

The Adams have been married 12 years. They spent their first year in College Station while Mr. Adams finished his B. S. degree. He was a vocational agriculture teacher for 2 years in a small Texas town. Then he returned to farming for the next 7 years.

Returning to College Station, he began work on his doctorate. He spends all day on campus, comes home for the evening meal and then goes back to the campus for study.

Both Jim and his wife come from the same small town. Mrs. Adams attended the state teachers' college for 2 years and taught elementary school 4 years.

Now study the problem circumstances:

- What stage of life are the Adams in?
- Where do they live?
- How many children do they have at what ages?
- What is their income?
- What are the occupations of the parents?
- What do you think of their values?
- What is their problem?
- What are the *goals* sought by the Adams?
- What *mental activity* or conscious thought did they engage in before returning to College Station?
- What *movement* did they make toward their goal?
- How are these steps toward their goal *related*?
- Where did plans and steps to achieve their goal have to be *flexible*?

These are questions the Adams might have regarding their situation. How can they stretch their income? How should they use other resources? What kind of work should Mr. Adams

do when he completes his study? Think of other questions they might ask.

Before the Adams can decide soundly, they must recognize their real problems. They must look critically at alternative choices before deciding. They must then put their final plan into action.

THE BASIC MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The major steps in the basic management process are these:

1. RECOGNIZING THE PROBLEM
2. CHOOSING AMONG ALTERNATIVES
3. ACTING TO CARRY OUT THE PLAN

These steps are merely guidelines for using productively family resources.

Look closely now at these steps operationalized.

Step 1 – *Recognizing the problem*

Do you think the Adams would have left the farm to study in College Station had they been in this situation 30 years ago? Probably not.

Why did they move today? Some reasons may be a desire for a higher level of living, the influence of others or the desire for knowledge in today's world. These factors contributed to the gap between what they had and what they *wanted* to have.

They did something to bridge this gap. They looked critically at their *real reasons* for wanting to return to school, what they *could* do about it, what information they needed and how they would deal with their circumstances.

Step 2 – *Choosing among alternatives*

The Adams had many alternatives. Jim Adams could have taken short courses, studied on his own, changed jobs or gone to another school.

Selection of *relevant alternatives* as solutions to problems is based on facts, not emotions or wishes. The number of alternatives is limited to two or three by consciousness of people, family and others.

What will be given up if any of these alternatives is selected? The Adams also had to determine and accept what is given up when any alternative is selected.

Step 3 – *Carrying out the plan*

When a choice is made, decide what responsibilities and activities are necessary to carry out the plan. *Flexibility* is important because families are people-centered, not object-centered.

We can use past experiences effectively by evaluating them. We look at *what* has been done and *why*. This helps us see what was achieved and serves as a basis for the next plan.

When the Adams decided to move to College Station, they also accepted responsibilities in carrying out their decision. They had to change family routine, material possessions and the time they had together as a family.

Suppose Jim Adams could not make the grade and had to quit after 1 year. Should the family be prepared for this? Being prepared is a part of accepting responsibility.

Basic to good management are these factors: recognizing problems, choosing among alternatives

and carrying out decisions. Finding solutions to real problems is not a habit. It comes from careful consideration of alternatives.

SECONDARY PROCESSES OF MANAGEMENT

As the blacksmith had materials and tools to forge the chain, families have materials (resources) and tools (processes) for them to manage.

One set of tools was the basic management process. The second set is secondary processes that go on constantly.

Below are listed a few of these processes. They help families interact within themselves or within the community. Think how they relate to the Adams' decision to move to College Station.

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- COMMUNICATION** — *transmission of a message from one individual or group of individuals to another individual or group.*
In what ways does a mother communicate her disapproval to a child?
- EVALUATION** — *a process by which circumstances are examined and judged according to a set of criteria.*
What criteria are used for judging the following: a cherry pie, a beauty queen, a job applicant, a daily work plan, a candidate for state senate?
- INNOVATION** — *the process of adapting to a changing situation by combining known elements into a new form.*
- INTEGRATION** — *unifying conflicting elements into an agreeably related whole.*
How would a Peace Corps volunteer innovate and integrate when working in a foreign land?
- LEADERSHIP** — *a process by which a person (or persons), because of his actual or supposed ability to solve problems of current interest, is followed by others and by which he influences their behavior.*
Consider the qualities you admire in a leader you know. What are these qualities?
- LEARNING** — *the process of modifying behavior somewhat permanently through activity, special training or observation. Two sources for learning are new information and past experience.*
What does a youngster learn by taking part in 4-H, scouts or a camping trip?
- MOTIVATION** — *the process of initiating conscious, purposeful action toward desired goals.*
Consider the motivation or lack of it involved in winning a cookie selling contest, becoming a school dropout, refinishing a table, stealing, being a volunteer in a hospital, electing a state representative.
- SOCIALIZATION** — *the personality, attitudes and ideas acquired through interaction with family and society.*
What makes your son want all the education he can get, while your grandfather was satisfied with finishing the eighth grade?
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You will, no doubt, think of other processes. The quality of these managing tools that families use influences their managerial ability.

For instance, the decision of the Adams family to move to College Station perhaps could have been relatively easy if Mr. Adams had effectively *communicated* his desire for knowledge through words and actions. Involving the family in his interest might have stimulated their interest and motivated them toward ready acceptance of the sacrifices they would make.

MANAGEMENT IN THE FAMILY

Families move through the life cycle, regardless of their knowledge of family management. However, productive use of family resources requires information and the ability to decide intelligently.

The whole management process enables family members to grow and mature. It also helps promote productive functioning of the family in society.

Management fosters an environment helping family members move

from	toward
self _____	others
things _____	people
products _____	processes
ignorance _____	knowledge
isolation _____	communication
illness _____	health
material & physical concerns _____	intellectual & spiritual concerns
part-seeing _____	whole-seeing
closed-mindedness _____	open-mindedness
static _____	dynamic
poverty _____	production
common sense _____	science

A family manages when it decides to buy a new car, decides to clean the kitchen systematically or decides to solicit funds for a local charity. It is adding one more link to the chain.

Adapted from *Processes*, Home Management Newsletter. Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. March, 1967.