Chapter VI

Managing the Supply Chain Function

The supply chain manager is concerned with not only managing the flow of materials and resources, he or she is also concerned with managing the human resources through which control of materials is achieved. In this chapter I will investigate the problems associated with staffing the positions or roles that have been defined in the structure. I shall consider aspects of recruitment and training and the preparation of job descriptions and operating manuals. People are probably the most important asset in any supply chain.

In addition to these elements of the staffing problem, I shall also focus attention on a closely related managerial requirement. This concerns techniques of directing and motivating the staff to achieve departmental and corporate objectives and to provide opportunities for members of the logistics function to satisfy their own individual goals at the same time. This topic is a controversial one and in the social environment of today, traditional views have come under severe attack. I shall consider these opposing views in the context of supply chain management.
Staffing the Department

Audit

In an established organisation structure, a periodic audit of company resources essentially must include a survey of personnel in terms of adequacy of numbers and skills to meet the needs of changing programmes, particularly in a period of growth. A responsibility rests, therefore, with the departmental manager to determine the effect of corporate plans on the department and in conjunction with the personnel department to arrange participation in the training and development programme and for recruitment where necessary. The audit will need to relate workload to current staff and assess future needs. A programme of training and experience obtained through job rotation (particularly an advantage to the specialist in developing product knowledge), visits to suppliers to obtain firsthand experience of industrial processes, formal education courses for professional training. Job evaluation for recruitment and grading requires a description of the job, and a job specification describing the personal skills and attitudes required by the duties and responsibilities (matching person to job and therefore important in recruitment and training).

Job Description

One of the classical principles of organisation is to carefully define the duties and responsibilities of each position in the organisation structure. Job descriptions specify what the holder of the position should do and they are a major determinant of the behaviour of the holder. They provide a broad statement of the purpose, scope, duties and responsibilities of particular jobs and allocate job titles. The need for such descriptions increases with the size of organisation, but even in smaller organisations it is important that the occupants of job positions know what is expected of them. They act also as a guide for recruiting staff and for the assessment of training needs. For organisations that have not yet developed job descriptions, the following steps should be taken. The first task is to prepare an analysis of existing jobs by a series of interviews both with job-holders and other staff. Job analysis is concerned with establishing why a job exists, its objectives, and how those objectives will be achieved. It is also necessary to establish its relationships with other jobs in the department, what supervision is given and received and what qualities are needed by the job-holder. On the basis of the information that is collected, job descriptions can be compiled. It is important to retain flexibility.