

Spans of Control and Accountability

*Business And
Management*



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Introduction

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In a business of more than one person, unless the business has equal partners, then there are managers and subordinates. Subordinates are workers controlled by the manager.



Hierarchy

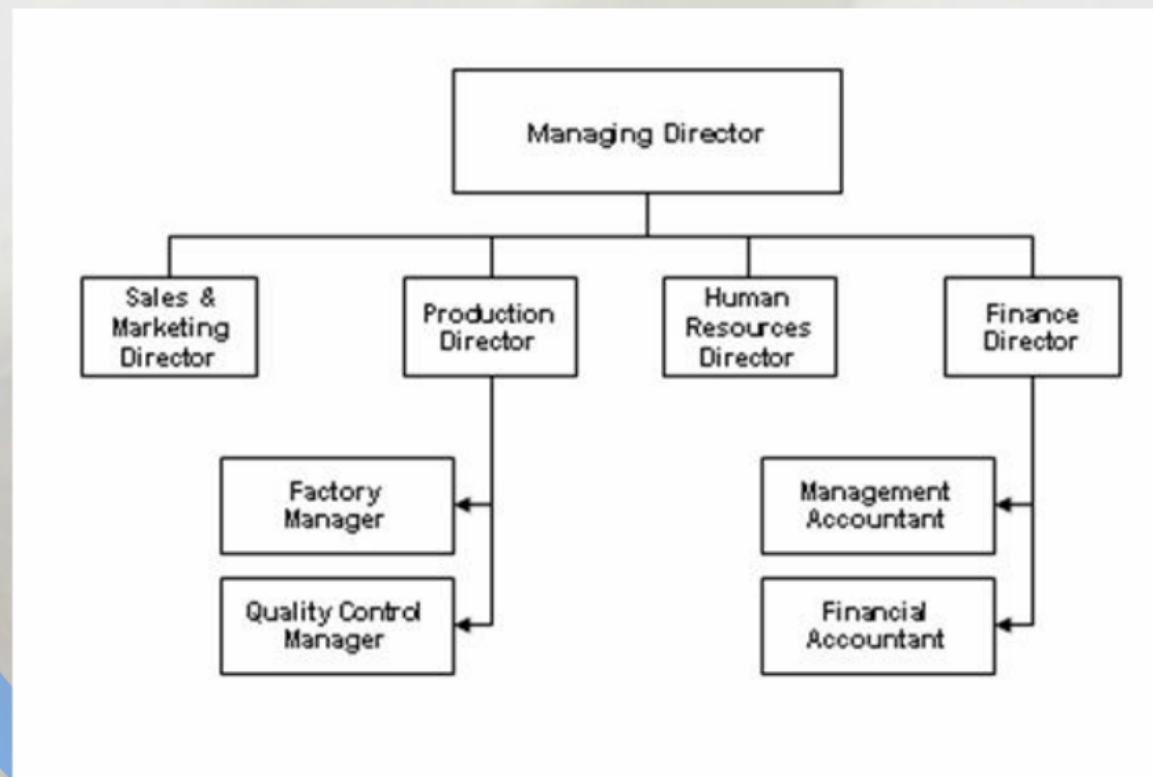
A hierarchy describes the structure of the management of the business, from the top of the company – the managing director, through to the shop floor worker, who reports to their foreman, in a manufacturing business.

The hierarchy of a business is usually best understood by drawing an organisation chart showing which levels of management and employees report to whom.

An example of a hierarchy is shown in the following diagram

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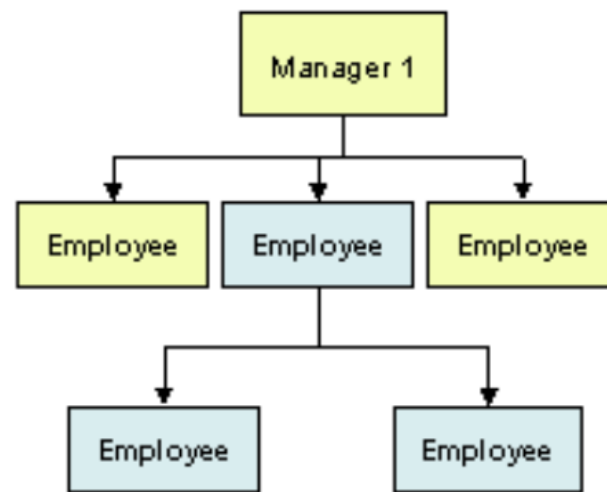
Span of Control

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A span of control is the number of people who report to one manager in a hierarchy. The more people under the control of one manager - the wider the span of control. Less means a narrower span of control.

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Example of a Narrow Span of Control



Each employee holding a position of authority is responsible for at least two others – i.e. the span of control is at least 2

Advantages

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The advantages of a narrow span of control are:

A narrow span of control allows a manager to communicate quickly with the employees under them and control them more easily

Feedback of ideas from the workers will be more effective

It requires a higher level of management skill to control a greater number of employees, so there is less management skill required

Disadvantages

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Disadvantages of narrow span of management

It tends to increase the total number of organizational levels. This makes it difficult for managers at higher levels to keep in touch with ground realities at operating level.

It increases the total number of employees in the organization. This increases cost of employees.

It creates problem of coordination between different managers and organizational units.