Chapter 3: Managerial Roles and Skills

Introduction

Management is not just about giving orders or monitoring results—it is about playing dynamic roles and applying diverse skills that align with both organizational objectives and individual team needs. In today's fast-paced technological environment, especially in industries related to Computer Science and Engineering, managers must understand people, processes, and data. To succeed, they must effectively switch between various roles and continually sharpen essential managerial skills. This chapter explores the foundational roles that managers play and the critical skills required at various levels of management.

3.1 The Concept of Managerial Roles

The idea of **managerial roles** was first introduced by **Henry Mintzberg**, a management scholar who observed what managers actually do in real-world situations. Based on his research, he categorized managerial roles into **three major types**:

3.1.1 Interpersonal Roles

These roles involve interactions with people inside and outside the organization.

- **Figurehead**: Performs ceremonial and symbolic duties such as attending ribbon-cutting ceremonies or signing certificates.
- **Leader**: Guides, motivates, and develops the team; responsible for staffing, training, and associated duties.
- **Liaison**: Maintains networks of contacts outside the immediate unit for the exchange of information and favors.

3.1.2 Informational Roles

These roles involve handling, sharing, and analyzing information.

- **Monitor**: Gathers internal and external information relevant to the organization.
- **Disseminator**: Transmits important information to team members and subordinates.
- **Spokesperson**: Represents the organization and conveys information to outsiders (e.g., media, stakeholders).

3.1.3 Decisional Roles

These roles involve making decisions and solving problems.

- **Entrepreneur**: Initiates and encourages innovation and change.

- **Disturbance Handler**: Deals with conflicts or crises.
- **Resource Allocator**: Distributes resources (time, funding, staff) efficiently.
- **Negotiator**: Engages in negotiations within or outside the organization (e.g., with vendors, unions, or clients).

  Note: A good manager effectively transitions between these roles as required by the situation.

3.2 Managerial Skills

While roles represent **what** a manager does, **skills** define **how** effectively these roles are performed. Renowned psychologist **Robert L. Katz** identified three primary managerial skills:

3.2.1 Technical Skills

- Involve understanding and proficiency in a specific kind of activity, particularly one involving methods, processes, or techniques.
- Essential for **lower-level managers**.
- Example: In a tech company, a project manager must understand programming logic to communicate effectively with developers.

3.2.2 Human (Interpersonal) Skills

- Ability to work with, motivate, and lead individuals and groups.
- Critical at **all levels of management**.
- Encompasses empathy, communication, team-building, and conflict-resolution.

3.2.3 Conceptual Skills

- Ability to see the organization as a whole and understand how its parts are interdependent.
- Crucial for **top-level managers** involved in strategic planning.
- Helps managers forecast future trends, identify opportunities, and avoid threats.

3.3 Additional Managerial Skills in the Modern Era

In the digital and globalized world, the role of a manager has expanded. Managers now need to master additional skills:

3.3.1 Decision-Making Skills

- Ability to analyze situations and make informed decisions.
- Involves both logical reasoning and intuition.

3.3.2 Communication Skills

- Verbal, non-verbal, and written communication is key.
- Includes the use of digital tools (emails, presentations, reports).

3.3.3 Time Management Skills

- Prioritizing tasks, delegating work, and meeting deadlines.
- Essential for productivity in multi-tasking environments like tech startups.

3.3.4 Emotional Intelligence

- Recognizing and regulating one's emotions and understanding others'.
- Enhances leadership, collaboration, and resilience.

3.3.5 Change Management

- Adapting to and facilitating organizational change.
- Includes understanding resistance to change and implementing strategies to overcome it.

3.4 Managerial Roles vs. Managerial Skills: A Comparison

Aspect	Managerial Roles	Managerial Skills
Definition	Duties or functions played by a manager	Competencies required to perform those roles
Example	Spokesperson, Leader, Entrepreneur	Communication, Human relations, Conceptual
Focus	What managers do	How managers do it
Originator	Henry Mintzberg	Robert L. Katz
Application	Situational and dynamic	Developable and trainable

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3.5 Managerial Roles in Tech and Startup Environments (Special Context for BTech CSE)

In CSE-related industries, especially in IT startups and product-based companies:

- **Managers are often required to blend technical and leadership roles**.
- **Scrum Masters or Agile Project Managers** take on roles like facilitator (interpersonal), backlog prioritizer (decisional), and progress tracker (informational).
- Managers often lead **cross-functional teams** and need **hybrid skillsets** like programming literacy, product understanding, and stakeholder communication.

3.6 Developing Managerial Skills: A Roadmap for BTech Students

Even as a student or early-career engineer, you can begin developing your managerial skills:

1. **Team Projects** – Take up leadership roles.
2. **Internships** – Observe how your reporting managers handle tasks.
3. **Workshops & MOOCs** – Learn soft skills, decision-making, and project management.
4. **Time-bound Coding Challenges or Hackathons** – Help improve technical and time management skills.
5. **Volunteering/Clubs** – Participate in student organizations to practice real-world leadership.

Summary

- Managers wear many hats—they play different roles depending on the situation: interpersonal, informational, and decisional.
- Skills like technical expertise, human relations, and conceptual thinking are vital at various managerial levels.
- With the tech landscape evolving, additional skills like emotional intelligence, communication, and adaptability are becoming more critical.
- Understanding these roles and skills equips future engineers and professionals with the mindset to lead, collaborate, and innovate effectively.