

# SPARTADIA

A BATTLE PLAN FOR TODAY'S BUSINESS

E-Book Excerpt

## DEFINING THE JOBS



By Ray Martin

E-Book: Defining the Jobs excerpted from:  
Spartadia: A Battle Plan for Today's Business  
by Ray E. Martin

Copyright © Ray E. Martin 2015

All Rights Reserved. No portion of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data

Martin, Ray

Spartadia: A Battle Plan for Today's Business

1. Business Management

ISBN 978-1-312-94779-5

The brand names and technologies mentioned in this book are property of their respective companies.

Printed and bound in Canada.

First Edition

## Defining the Jobs

If jobs aren't clearly defined, every employee will automatically look good. Although that might sound ideal at first glance, it's not. Employees look good because they are doing mediocre things well, but that is not the same as having them match their skills to the optimum goal of the tasks at hand. Employees who simply match the *general idea* of a job are not able or empowered to distinguish themselves or the company. They can't. They don't know how to and they don't really have the authority to; they are simply doing what they think needs to be done, as best as they can, with whatever knowledge they are able to pull together.

Too many departments and companies either underperform or fall apart because the manager—not the employee—fails to fully understand the job at hand. The manager fails to define the job's steps and natural outcomes, and fails to circle back regularly with the employee to ensure comprehension and compliance. Worse, the manager of an underperforming department fails to understand the candidate, upon whom the blame generally falls.

It is essential at the outset for a manager to make sure the job definitions and requirements are attainable and comprehensible. This is done by ensuring they are clearly defined. Every job should have a one-page summary – a mission statement – that details specific tasks and their limits, who the employee reports to, as well as specific responsibilities. The employee should be able to translate these responsibilities into measurable actions. A clear mission leads to measurable accountabilities.

The modern military embodies this in the concept called “Commanders Intent,” which is a description of work that allows subordinates to develop their own plans and actions to achieve its goal. By linking the mission, the end state and key tasks in between, commanders encourage initiative and self-direction.

With definitions and benchmarks in place, if an employee is still not able to reach the objectives, it is then that the employee must hold him/herself accountable.

But in parallel to the job definitions, when a manager makes a hiring decision, a careful balance must be struck between hiring that person

for who they are, and envisioning the person's capabilities and potential in the future. It is important not to let the vision of who they should or could become fog the hiring process through misplaced optimism. An employee must grow into their defined position, but can do so only if they are confirmed to be the right match from the start. There is always a strong possibility for drift, with the new employee's personal style changing the course of the job's trajectory. Sometimes this can be a good thing, when they bring their own brand of innovation and aptitude to the table, but often times it's not. It starts things down a path of misdirection. When a manager is hesitant or even unable to recall what the initial mandate of the job was, it becomes easy for a company to wander from its vision.

It is a good idea, then, for a hiring manager to actually consider saving a note—like a time capsule—that describes current thoughts, definitions and expectations regarding the position. The manager could review these thoughts later, possibly three months after hiring the employee, prior to the expiry of the probationary period. This current, careful and precise vision for an individual and the matching of personal skills to the tasks becomes the baseline to more accurately assess whether the employee has understood, matched up, and proven to be the right fit.

As Marcus Buckingham writes in *The One Thing You Need to Know*, great managers are catalysts: they speed up the reaction between each employee's talent and the company's goals. The manager's unique contribution is to make employees more productive, and consequently the only way to pull this off is to make the employees' success the manager's primary goal. One of the concrete ways to do this is to ensure all steps in a task are accounted for and there is no opportunity for confusion or assumptions.

In the world of project management, there is a cardinal rule that dictates that every task in every job must be clearly identified and described to its atomic level, meaning it cannot be broken down any further. Without this granular level of clarity, it would be impossible to adequately budget, estimate, plan or run a project. The success of a project relies largely on the quality of the *project plan*, which itself relies on the detail included in describing every task and procedure.

There has to be a clear mutual understanding of a task if it is to be delegated efficiently and safely to a team member.

Any organized group of people charged with the task of successfully delivering a product or service must have a set of rules and definitions that cover every task involved. This is one of the reasons why so many businesses fail. When a business is set up and run by an entrepreneur, much of the process comes from trial and error, or perhaps through the entrepreneur's innate abilities. These activities become experience, and experience turns into wisdom. The actions of the business have become rote and instinctive.

Someone who has built a company from the ground up, or who has worked their way up through the departments, as I did, might feel there is no need to undertake the tedious chore of categorizing and defining every task and every job. After all, it is already ingrained. The very notion of formalizing a decade's worth or a lifetime's worth of experience is daunting.

But when a company grows, and chooses to take on more staff to perform the jobs required, this clarity of understanding—this formalized transfer of knowledge from master to student—is essential, and becomes the basis for successful interviewing, candidate selection, hiring and departmental progress.

Without structure there is chaos. Not anarchy, perhaps, but a formlessness in both physical actions and the mindset required to perform them; this leads to further damaging results such as procrastination, errors, substandard quality, and an inevitable loss of customer traffic. In short, no employee can be great until s/he knows what to be great at.

Download additional e-books at: [spartadia-recruit.com](http://spartadia-recruit.com).

---

### **SIDEBAR: Defining a Job versus Micromanagement**

Occasionally I am asked whether the act of defining a job down to its most basic elements is micromanaging. “By doing this, you are leaving nothing to chance,” I am told, “no spontaneity or creativity can happen here.”

While I understand the motivation behind such a question, I believe the problem comes from a misunderstanding of the difference between defining a job and micromanagement.

Defining a job means identifying a process, but placing greater focus on the outcome, as in, “By the end of the day, I need you to do **x**. You need to do it according to our rules of quality control and health and safety, but other than that, it’s up to you.”

Micromanagement, by contrast, is the insistence on performing a task in one single particular way, pushing aside an employee’s own thoughts or talents to reproduce the task exactly as it is defined. Such rote actions may sometimes be appropriate, for example when using heavy or dangerous machinery; however, in an environment in which personal motivation and self-management are encouraged, it is counterproductive.

When we define a job, we seek to identify its tasks and goals and define what the company would be missing without this role in place. We want to ascertain what end goals this job will achieve. We also seek to establish the milestones that help identify outcomes and define success, in order that an employee and the employee’s manager can truly know if the employee has succeeded.

Certain jobs, such as the warehouse, require specific personal behaviour styles. What is best behavioural fit for a warehouseperson? We believe it should be someone who is friendly yet mostly introverted; someone who can work quickly while still being detail-oriented. So we seek

to find people who demonstrate these behaviours rather than candidates who have specific warehouse ability/experience.

By defining a job, we seek to ensure that the candidates fit the role, and that there is a tangible connection and understanding between the job and the candidate. We like to have the job in mind before the hiring process, but that job itself is defined by the tasks that have to be done. We look at the tasks and see the job that gives purpose to those tasks. So, when we hire, we need to tell the person, "This is your mission. What will you need from me to achieve those objectives?" Once you have that, both parties sign off on it. If they do not achieve the goal by the specific date, they have no excuse for failing.

