

**Yogoda Satsanga Mahavidyalaya**  
**Department of Commerce**  
**B.Com Semester I**

**Paper Name: Business Organization and Management**  
**Paper Code: MJ 1**  
**Topic: Span of Management-Meaning, types and Factors affecting it**

### **What is Span of Management?**

When we are talking about the **span of management** or the “**span of control**”, we are referring to the same phrase. In management, span of control refers to the number of employees a manager directs effectively and efficiently. In a wider span of control, a manager has many employees who report to him. In a narrow span of control, a manager has fewer employees under him.

So we can say, the number of employees that can effectively be managed for supervision and delegation of authority would be finite and depend upon a number of factors.

### **Definition of Span of Control**

The followings definition of span of control given by authors:

*“Span of control refers to the number of people that a manager can supervise.” -Lois Allen*

*“Span of control refers to the maximum number of subordinates which may be placed under the jurisdiction of one executive immediately superior to them.”-Peterson and Plowman*

*“Span of control is the number and range of direct, habitual communication contacts between the chief executive of an enterprise and his principle fellow officers.”-Dimock*

### **Factors Affecting Span of Management**

Following are some important factors affecting span of management:

1. Management Policies
2. Nature of Work

3. Similar Activities
4. Complexity of Activities
5. Closeness of Employees Areas
6. Direction and Coordination
7. Capability of Subordinates
8. Workforce of Manager
9. Relationship Between Manager and Subordinates
10. Planning

### **Management Policies**

Management has a great influence on the span of control. If the policies are clear and comprehensive, this results in an increase in the span of control. The clarity in plans, definiteness in fixing responsibility and use of standing plans reduce the pressure of decision-making by the top managers that increase the span control.

### **Nature of Work**

If the nature of work is uniform, typical and ordinary, it can be effectively monitored and regulated through programmed decisions. As a result, this leads to an increase in the span of control.

### **Similar Activities**

If the subordinates are given the same or similar activities, then it is possible for the manager to supervise more employees. And if problems occur it would be similar in nature and would be easier to solve.

### **Complexity of Activities**

If the activities that the employees are performing are complex and sophisticated and require constant supervision, then it would be more difficult for the manager to handle too many employees at once, and hence, a narrow span of control would be desirable.

### **Closeness of Employees Areas**

The closer the subordinates are to each other in a physical location, the easier it will be for the manager to handle more employees.

### **Direction and Coordination**

The span of control would also be determined by the coordination between subordinates, both within the units and other departments. If the units need continuous directions and extra time from managers in coordinating these activities, then fewer employees would be better to manage.

## **Capability of Subordinates**

Workers who are well trained, professionally developed, and experienced, need little supervision. In such situations, more employees can be effectively supervised.

These subordinates can further be helped by providing them with “standing plans” that are applicable in repetitive operations and routine recurring problems, thus requiring less supervisory assistance.

## **Workforce of Manager**

If the manager has a supporting staff that is equally skilled in handling situations, then it would be possible to handle a wider span of control because the responsibilities of supervision would be shared.

## **Relationship Between Manager and Subordinates**

The optimum number of subordinates under a manager would vary and directly dependent upon the type of relationship between the manager and subordinates, not only on a one-to-one basis but also with subordinates as groups, taking into consideration the cross-relationships among the employees themselves.

## **Planning**

The effectiveness of supervision would also depend upon how much time managers spend on planning. If the managers spend too much time in systems planning then they will not have time to supervise the activities of too many employees.

## **Types of Span of Control/Management**

There are two types of span of control structures. Which are discussed below:

1. Narrow Span Structure
2. Wide Span Structure

### **Narrow Span Structure**

Narrow span refers to the existence of too many levels in an organization. There are some advantages and disadvantages of the narrow span structure which are:

#### **Advantages of Narrow Span Structure**

- Effective leadership and control can be directly exercised on subordinates.
- The senior can easily communicate and effectively coordinate the efforts of his subordinates since their number is small.

- Direct contact, close supervision, and tight control can help improve the performance pattern.

### **Disadvantages of Narrow Span Structure**

- Too many levels delay two-way communication when a message has to pass through different levels.
- A large number of managers is required which results in additional salaries and a high cost of management.
- A tall structure may have an adverse impact on morale because of the absence of a close link between the top executive and the bottom worker.

### **Wide Span Structure**

A wide span of control means a manager can supervise and control effectively a large number of people at a time. It is because the shorter span of control leads to a rise in the number of steps or levels in the chain of command which leads to a tall organization. Furthermore, wide span structure has its own advantages and disadvantages which are:

#### **Advantages of Wide Span Structure**

- It indicates that the chain of command is short. Because of this, communication tends to be quicker and more effective.
- This system allows delegation of authority and the development of subordinates.
- Subordinates feel more autonomous and independent in wide-span organizational structures.

#### **Disadvantages of Wide Span Structure**

- A flat structure makes supervision and controls loose and less effective.
- A single executive may not have enough time and energy to supervise all subordinates.
- It is not at all suitable for large manufacturing organizations that have developed businesses with narrow span structures.