

## Skills of an Effective Manager and Level of Management

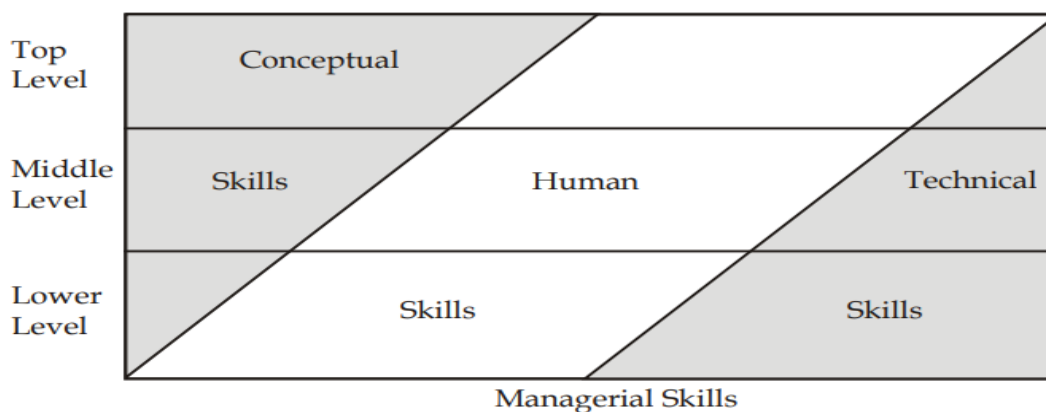
An effective manager must possess certain skills in the areas of planning, organising, leading, controlling and decision-making in order to process activities that are presented to him from time to time.

In order to be effective, a manager must possess and continuously develop several essential skills. Robert L. Katz has identified three basic types of skills - technical, human and conceptual - which he says are needed by all managers.

**1. Technical skill:** It is the ability to use the tools, procedures or techniques of a specialised field. Technical skill is considered to be very crucial to the effectiveness of lower level managers because they are in direct contact with employees performing work activities within the firm. For instance, the success of a drilling supervisor of an oil rig depends a great deal on his technical knowledge of drilling. However, as one moves to higher levels of management within the organisation, the importance of technical skill diminishes because the manager has less direct contact with day-to-day problems and activities. Thus, the president of an oil company does not need to know much of the technical details of drilling for oil or how to refine it.

**2. Human skill or Interpersonal Skills:** It is the ability to work with, understand and motivate other people. This skill is essential at every level of management within the organisation, but it is particularly important at lower levels of management where the supervisor has frequent contact with operating personnel.

**3. Conceptual skill:** It is the mental ability to coordinate and integrate the organisation's interests and activities. It refers to the ability to see the 'big picture', to understand how a change in any given part can affect the whole organisation. The relationship between management levels and managerial skills is shown in Figure



**4.Design skill:** Koontz and Wehrich added one more skill to the above list. Design skill is the ability to solve problems in ways that will help the organisation. At higher levels, managers should be able to do more than see a problem, to design a workable solution to a problem in the light of realities they face. If managers merely see a problem and become problem watchers they will fail.

#### **Specific Skills Important at Different Levels of Management:**

Technical skill is the most important at the lower levels of management; it becomes less important as we move up the chain of a command.

On the other hand, the importance of conceptual skill increases as we rise in the ranks of management. The higher the manager is in the hierarchy, the more he or she will be involved in the broad, long-term decisions that affect large parts of the organisation. For top management which is charged with the responsibility for overall performance, conceptual skill is probably the most important skill of all. Human skill is very important at every level of the organisation. One reason this is so is because to get the work done through others; high technical or conceptual skills are not very valuable if they cannot be used to inspire and influence other organisation members. Supporting Katz's contention that specific skills are more important at some levels than at others is a study of managerial roles and behaviour by Jerdee and Carroll. More than four hundred managers from all levels of management and a variety of types and sizes of business are asked to estimate how much time they spent on eight management tasks: planning, investigating, coordinating, evaluating, supervising, staffing, negotiating and representing. Lower and middle-level managers replied that supervising was their dominant activity, while top managers claimed to spend proportionately more time on planning.

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