DIRECT AND PREVENTIVE CONTROL

DIRECT CONTROL

Direct control is a management technique in which managers personally supervise, monitor and evaluate employees' performance. The manager identifies deviations from established standards and takes corrective action to achieve organizational objectives.

OBJECTIVES OF DIRECT CONTROL

1. Monitoring Employee Performance

The main objective of direct control is to monitor employees while they perform their duties. Managers observe whether employees follow instructions, organizational policies and established performance standards. Continuous monitoring helps managers understand the actual progress of work and identify areas that require improvement.

Example: A production supervisor observes factory workers to ensure that products are manufactured according to the required specifications.

2. Identifying Deviations and Errors

Direct control helps managers identify differences between planned performance and actual performance. When employees make mistakes or fail to meet established standards, managers can identify the reasons and take appropriate action.

Example: A sales manager reviews the daily sales activities of employees and identifies why a salesperson has not achieved the assigned sales target.

3. Taking Immediate Corrective Action

Another important objective is to correct mistakes as soon as they are identified. Managers can provide instructions, guidance and support to employees to prevent small problems from becoming serious issues. Immediate correction helps maintain the smooth functioning of organizational activities.

Example: If a machine operator follows an incorrect procedure, the supervisor immediately explains the correct method.

4. Maintaining Quality Standards

Direct control ensures that products and services meet the quality standards established by the organization. Managers inspect work, observe procedures and provide feedback whenever the quality of work does not meet expectations.

Example: A quality-control supervisor checks manufactured products to identify defects before they are delivered to customers.

5. Improving Employee Efficiency

Through direct supervision, managers can identify employees' strengths and weaknesses. They can provide suitable guidance and training to improve work methods, reduce delays and increase productivity. This helps employees perform their duties more efficiently.

Example: A department manager guides employees on how to complete customer orders quickly without compromising accuracy.

6. Maintaining Discipline and Compliance

Direct control helps ensure that employees follow organizational rules, safety regulations and standard operating procedures. Managers can identify violations and take appropriate action to maintain discipline and ensure that work is performed correctly.

Example: A hospital supervisor checks whether nurses follow infection-control procedures and hospital safety guidelines.

7. Improving Communication and Coordination

Direct control creates opportunities for regular communication between managers and employees. Managers can clarify doubts, explain work expectations and coordinate activities among different employees or departments. This reduces misunderstandings and improves teamwork.

Example: A construction supervisor coordinates workers, engineers and technicians to ensure that project activities are completed in the correct sequence.

TECHNIQUES OF DIRECT CONTROL

1. Personal Observation

Personal observation is a technique in which managers directly watch employees while they perform their duties. It helps managers understand actual working conditions, employee behaviour and the methods used to complete tasks. Managers can identify mistakes, delays and unsafe practices and provide immediate guidance.

Example: A factory manager observes the assembly line to check whether workers follow the correct production procedures.

2. Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal is the systematic evaluation of an employee's work against predetermined standards and objectives. Managers assess factors such as productivity, quality, punctuality, skills and achievement of targets. The results help identify good performance and areas that require improvement.

Example: A sales manager evaluates each salesperson based on monthly sales targets, customer feedback and service quality.

3. Inspection and Supervision

Inspection involves examining products, equipment, documents or work processes to ensure that they meet the required standards. Supervision involves guiding employees and checking whether work is performed correctly. Both techniques help maintain quality and reduce errors.

Example: A quality-control manager inspects finished products and instructs workers to correct defects before dispatch.

4. Progress Reports

Progress reports provide information about the status of work, tasks completed, pending activities and problems encountered. Managers compare reported progress with the planned schedule and take action when delays or deviations occur.

Example: A project manager reviews weekly progress reports to determine whether a software development project is on schedule.

5. Feedback and Counselling

Feedback provides employees with information about their performance, including strengths and areas for improvement. Counselling allows managers to discuss performance difficulties and suggest suitable solutions. These techniques help employees understand expectations and improve their working methods.

Example: A department head discusses an employee's repeated errors and provides guidance on improving accuracy.

6. Corrective Action

Corrective action is taken when actual performance differs from established standards. Managers identify the cause of the problem and take suitable steps, such as providing additional training, changing work procedures, reallocating resources or issuing instructions.

Example: If a production team repeatedly fails to meet its daily target, the manager examines the causes and adjusts the workflow or provides additional support.

Advantages of Direct Control

- Errors can be identified and corrected quickly.
- Employees receive immediate feedback and guidance.
- It improves coordination between managers and employees.
- It helps maintain quality and discipline.
- Managers can understand actual working conditions.

Limitations of Direct Control

- It requires considerable time and attention from managers.
- Continuous supervision may increase administrative costs.
- Employees may feel that they are not trusted.
- It may not be suitable for large organizations with many employees.
- Managers' personal judgments may sometimes lead to bias.

Example

In a hospital, the nursing supervisor checks whether nurses follow proper procedures when administering medicines. If an error is identified, the supervisor immediately guides the nurse to correct the procedure and maintain patient safety.

PREVENTIVE CONTROL

Preventive control is a management approach that focuses on identifying potential problems and taking necessary action before they occur. It emphasizes planning, training, policies and procedures to reduce the possibility of errors.

Preventive control is also known as feedforward control because it attempts to prevent problems before actual work or results are affected.

OBJECTIVES OF PREVENTIVE CONTROL

1. Preventing Errors Before They Occur

The primary objective of preventive control is to identify possible mistakes in advance and take steps to avoid them. Instead of waiting for a problem to occur, managers establish proper procedures, guidelines and safeguards before work begins. This reduces the need for repeated corrections.

Example: A company provides operating instructions and safety training before employees use new machinery.

2. Identifying and Reducing Risks

Preventive control helps managers identify potential risks that may affect organizational activities. These risks may relate to finance, employee safety, equipment failure, product quality or information security. After identifying risks, managers introduce suitable measures to reduce their likelihood and impact.

Example: A hospital identifies the risk of medication errors and introduces prescription verification procedures before medicines are administered.

3. Ensuring Quality in Advance

Preventive control establishes quality requirements before production or service delivery begins. It ensures that appropriate materials, trained employees and standard procedures are available. This helps prevent defects rather than detecting them only after the product has been completed.

Example: A manufacturing company checks raw materials before production to prevent defective materials from affecting finished products.

4. Reducing Costs and Wastage

Errors, accidents and equipment breakdowns can lead to financial losses and unnecessary wastage. Preventive control reduces these losses through advance planning, maintenance, proper resource allocation and employee training. As a result, organizations can use their resources more effectively.

Example: Regular maintenance of factory machines helps prevent expensive breakdowns and production interruptions.

5. Improving Employee Safety

Preventive control aims to create a safe working environment by identifying hazards and implementing safety measures before accidents occur. Safety training, protective equipment, warning signs and emergency procedures help protect employees and visitors.

Example: A chemical laboratory provides protective gloves, safety goggles and handling instructions before students conduct experiments.

6. Ensuring Compliance with Rules and Regulations

Organizations must follow applicable laws, industry standards and internal policies. Preventive control helps ensure compliance by establishing clear procedures, conducting advance checks and training employees about their responsibilities. This reduces the likelihood of violations and penalties.

Example: A hospital establishes patient-data access rules and staff training to reduce the risk of unauthorized disclosure of medical information.

7. Achieving Organizational Objectives

Preventive control supports the achievement of organizational goals by reducing uncertainty and preparing employees for their responsibilities. Proper planning, resource allocation and risk management help activities proceed according to the established schedule, budget and quality requirements.

Example: Before launching a new product, a company tests its design, estimates costs and evaluates customer requirements to reduce the risk of failure.

TECHNIQUES OF PREVENTIVE CONTROL

1. Planning and Forecasting

Planning involves deciding in advance what activities must be performed, how they should be performed and what resources are required. Forecasting helps managers estimate future conditions, demand and possible risks. Together, they help organizations prepare for challenges before they arise.

Example: A hospital forecasts patient demand and arranges sufficient staff, medicines and beds before a seasonal increase in patient admissions.

2. Employee Selection and Training

Selecting qualified employees and providing appropriate training helps prevent mistakes caused by insufficient knowledge or skills. Training familiarizes employees with work procedures, equipment operation, safety practices and organizational policies.

Example: A company trains machine operators in equipment handling and emergency shutdown procedures before assigning them to production duties.

3. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Standard operating procedures are written instructions that explain how specific tasks should be performed. They establish consistent working methods and clarify employee responsibilities. SOPs help prevent confusion, reduce variation and maintain quality and safety.

Example: A clinical laboratory uses an SOP for blood sample collection, labelling, storage and processing to reduce identification errors.

4. Risk Assessment

Risk assessment involves identifying possible hazards or problems, evaluating their likelihood and consequences, and deciding how to control them. It allows managers to prioritize serious risks and implement preventive measures before operations begin.

Example: Before conducting a laboratory experiment, the instructor identifies possible chemical spills and electrical hazards and establishes appropriate safety precautions.

5. Preventive Maintenance

Preventive maintenance involves regularly inspecting, cleaning, servicing and replacing equipment components according to a planned schedule. It helps identify signs of wear or failure before equipment stops functioning. This reduces breakdowns, repair costs and interruptions to work.

Example: A hospital schedules regular servicing and calibration of patient-monitoring equipment to help ensure reliable operation.

6. Budgetary Control

Budgetary control involves preparing budgets in advance and setting limits for expenditure, income and resource use. Managers estimate expected costs and allocate funds to different activities. Reviewing proposed expenditure before approval helps prevent unnecessary spending and financial problems.

Example: A department prepares an annual budget for laboratory equipment, consumables and maintenance to avoid overspending.

7. Policies, Rules and Safety Standards

Policies and rules establish acceptable behaviour and define the procedures employees must follow. Safety standards specify precautions required to prevent accidents, injuries and damage. Clear guidelines help employees understand their responsibilities before performing a task.

Example: A factory requires workers to wear helmets, safety shoes and protective gloves before entering designated production areas.

8. Quality Control at the Input Stage

Input-stage control involves checking the quality of raw materials, components, information or other resources before they are used in a process. It prevents unsuitable inputs from creating defects in the final product or service.

Example: A pharmaceutical manufacturer tests incoming raw materials against quality specifications before using them to manufacture medicines.

Advantages of Preventive Control

- It reduces the possibility of errors and accidents.
- It saves time and money by avoiding costly problems.
- It improves product and service quality.
- It promotes employee safety and confidence.
- It helps organizations achieve objectives efficiently.
- It reduces the need for repeated corrective action.

Limitations of Preventive Control

- It requires careful planning and preparation.
- Training and preventive measures may involve initial costs.
- It may be difficult to predict every possible problem.
- Excessive rules and procedures may reduce flexibility.
- Unexpected situations can still occur despite preventive measures.

Example

A manufacturing company provides safety training, installs machine guards and conducts equipment inspections before production begins. These measures help prevent workplace accidents and machine failures.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DIRECT CONTROL AND PREVENTIVE CONTROL

BASIS	DIRECT CONTROL	PREVENTIVE CONTROL
Meaning	Supervising and monitoring work directly.	Preventing problems before they occur.
Main focus	Observing performance and correcting deviations.	Identifying risks and avoiding deviations.
Timing	Usually during work or when performance is reviewed.	Before the activity begins or before a problem occurs.
Approach	Supervision and corrective action.	Planning and precautionary action.
Responsibility	Managers and supervisors.	Managers, planners and employees involved in prevention.

Cost	May require continuous supervisory effort.	May require initial investment in training and planning.
Example	A supervisor checks the quality of products on the production line.	The company trains workers and maintains machines before production.