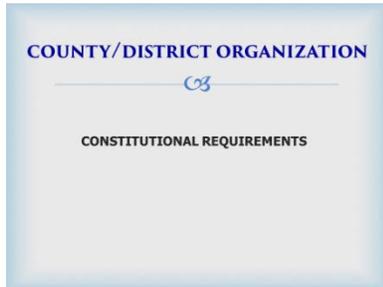


COUNTY/DISTRICT ORGANIZATION



Constitutional Requirement

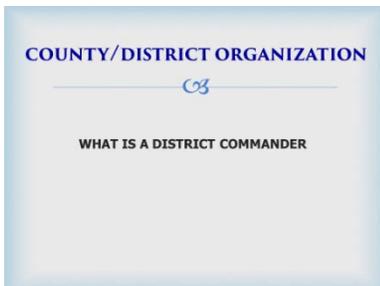
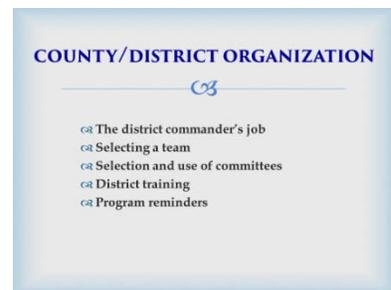


All organizational procedures or structures outlined in this book are suggestive to conform to Article VIII of the National Constitution of The American Legion and should not supersede or conflict with recognized department organizational procedure or department constitutions.

The term “District Commander” is interchangeable with “County or Area Commander.”

ORGANIZING, TEAM BUILDING & GOAL SETTING

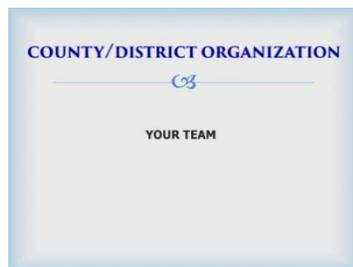
- The district commander’s job**
- Selecting a team**
- Selection and use of committees**
- District training**
- Program reminders**



What is a district commander? - The title “district commander” is interchangeable with county or area commander. Every year, more than 750 Legionnaires across the nation are elected to this position, and very few have experience. As a district commander, you have a unique opportunity to serve The American Legion and in turn serve America. Your term as district commander can be one of the most rewarding and satisfying experiences of your life.

Each American Legion post is a separate and distinct unit, functioning independently of other posts. As district commander, you are the link between individual members, posts and the department. The department, in turn, is the link between districts, and National Headquarters connects the 55 departments. With your leadership, the posts in your district are better able to link their programs and operations to the state and national organization. Much of the Legion’s success depends on posts’ being connected to the larger whole.

A district commander is usually the elected representative of the posts in the district, but with that comes a duty to provide guidance and supervision. Posts are responsible for carrying out the Legion’s objectives and programs, and fully complying with the obligations assumed under the post, department and national constitutions. When a post is inactive, begins to falter or fails, the district commander must be prepared to give direction and take control. Such supervision requires organization.

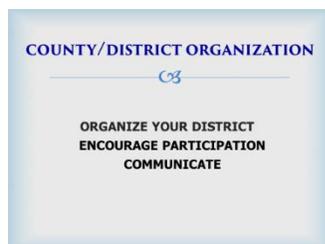


Your team - Your first two months in office can and often do determine success or failure. This is the time to select key people to assist you, set a timetable of events, and encourage posts to get organized. Choose people with whom you can work well and who can best perform the tasks necessary for a successful year.

Here are some tips:

- Advance the most important projects, following a definite timetable.
- Determine the district's long-range and immediate objectives.
- Organize fully and communicate clearly your ideas and your enthusiasm.
- Make sure the lines of communication are open so that information flows quickly and easily to the public, post, district, department and National Headquarters.

If your district has had a successful past few years, by all means carry on. Consult with past district commanders about what worked and what didn't, but if you can identify areas that need attention (i.e., membership, programs, committees), you can make the necessary adjustments to turn them around. You are the commander of your district, and your leadership and skill set could be the key to success.



Organize your district

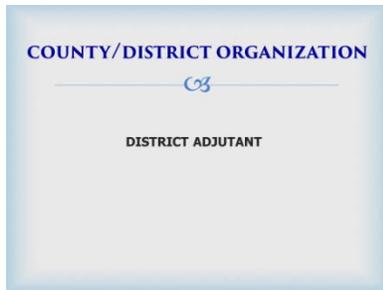
- Know the boundaries and post officers of your district or division.
- Select and use your committee members.
- Set a schedule of events at the start of your year, not in the middle.
- Have frequent communication with your posts.
- Establish deadlines.
- Remember that teamwork is essential, from the post level up to the national commander.

Encourage participation

- Challenge new and long-time members by asking them to serve on committees.
- Appoint proven achievers to more challenging positions.
- Build future leaders through direct mentoring.

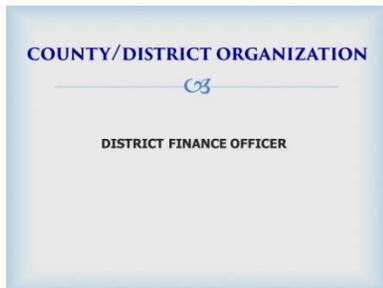
Communicate

- Newsletters, email blasts and social media are excellent ways to get the word out.
- Encourage every post to attend district meetings.
- Personal contact is still the most effective way to communicate.
- Use the Hubmaster system and keep it current.
- Remember that many times you will be the one who makes things happen.



District adjutant - The district adjutant has the same position in the district as the secretary of any other organized body, and maybe a bit more. Just as at a post, an adjutant may provide continuity in the district. While the commander's duties are largely inspirational and executive, an adjutant's duties are administrative, including keeping the minutes of meetings, assisting the work of other officers and committees, and publishing official orders, announcements and instructions.

District finance officer



A finance officer/treasurer must be a person of proven integrity and experience in handling financial affairs. He or she usually serves as chairman of the district finance committee and is in charge of receiving and disbursing all funds.

Accounting forms are designed to meet the requirements of American Legion posts and districts in maintaining a correct and permanent membership and finance record. Because of their simplicity, they require no special knowledge of bookkeeping or accounting.

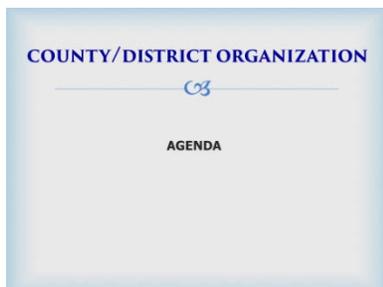
Since districts are not chartered organizations, they must use the department's EIN for all financial accounts.

All account information and funds must be reported to the department headquarters to be included in the department's annual filing of IRS Form 990.



Your first team meeting - A well-prepared agenda will establish a pattern for all future meetings and go far toward getting the district functioning quickly and effectively. Give responsibility to district vice commanders, and see that other district officers clearly understand the duties of their office. Prior to your first meeting, know the past programs and objectives of the district and its posts, and their success or failure. Consult past district commanders. Learn all you can about the district. Assign district officers to regularly attend post meetings on a rotating basis within the district, with someone present at nearly every one.

The agenda



Membership potential, goals, target dates, distribution of posts and the need for more posts

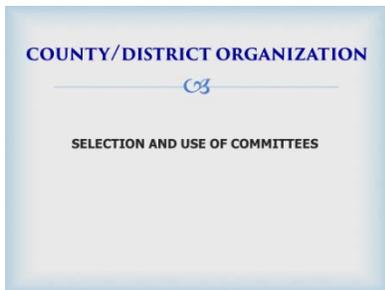
General discussion of programs' status throughout the district

Your personal objectives as district commander

Assignments for officers, chairmen and committees

Initial planning for district meetings

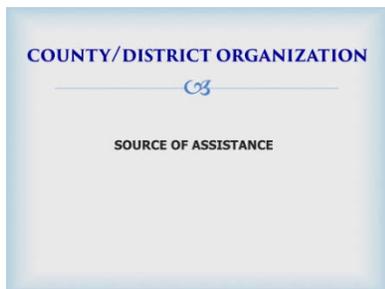
Visitation schedule of the district commander, vice commanders and other officers



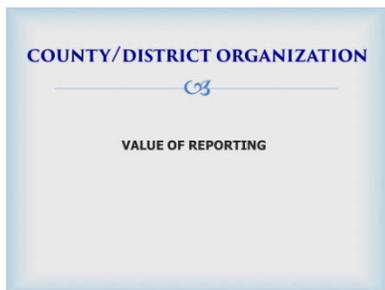
Selection and use of committees - The key to a smoothly functioning district is the selection and proper use of committee chairs and committees. Whenever possible, a chairman should be someone with personal interests in the program at hand, and with enough stature to make effective contacts throughout the community with others of like interests. While it's important to distribute appointments over the entire district, give consideration to where a particular chairman lives and where a job needs be done. Once you have a list of potential committee chairmen,

personally contact each one to determine their willingness to serve.

Arrange a meeting with the key chairs and their committees to establish a program for the coming year. As district commander, you are responsible for seeing that each has the necessary information and materials to do his or her job, which includes building a timetable of events that fits into the overall district program and can offer a projection for the year at the first district meeting. Also, as the year draws to a close, give careful attention to the selection of a nominating committee. This committee will be responsible for finding qualified people to carry on the work you've started.

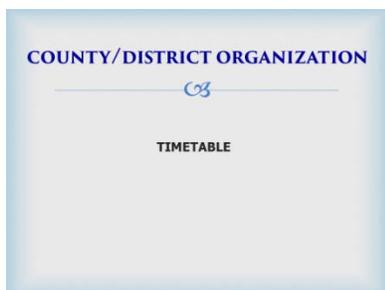


Sources of assistance - Your department adjutant will have information and resources available from the department and National Headquarters. Other valuable sources of assistance are within your own district. Don't be too proud to consult with past district officers. In fact, you may wish to establish an advisory committee of past district commanders. When properly sought and utilized, the experience of this group will help you avoid pitfalls.

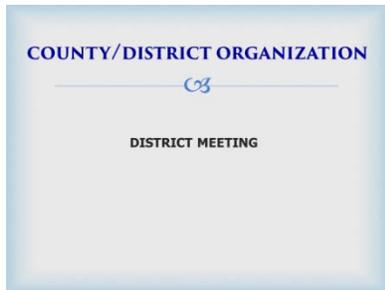


Value of reporting - Preparing reports is rarely pleasant, except when results are favorable. But a district commander's performance is in no small part measured by his or her ability to report favorable and unfavorable situations in the district to department officers, and to report department and national actions to district and post officers. This is a two-way street, emphasizing the importance of the district commander as a link in a chain. You are the key to communication. Check membership results monthly for each of the district's posts. Results will frequently indicate the

need for a visit.



Timetable - Not all programs are handled on a district-wide basis, but such a calendar is necessary. List activities and report dates so post and district chairmen know them well in advance.

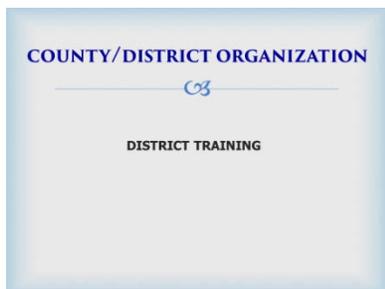


District meetings - The district meeting is the largest American Legion meeting the average member ever attends. Not all Legionnaires attend state conventions, and fewer attend national conventions. Therefore, the district meeting is a special opportunity to impress the average Legionnaire and to highlight the Legion's accomplishments and aims. If your first two months are spent properly preparing, organizing a district meeting is easy. Committee chairs should be ready to make concise reports on their programs, and posts should be alerted so that their officers can outline their plans as

they fit individual communities and relate to the district program.

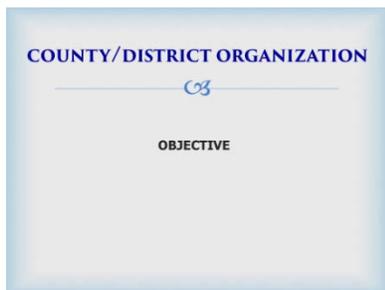
District commanders should meet with the host post's officers to work out the meeting's details, including a banquet and entertainment (if desired). Send notices to all posts well in advance, informing them of the start time, location, whether or not there will be a meal or social hour, and any other information that would make for a better informed district membership. Use the *Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies* to conduct a district meeting in the same way that a post commander follows it to conduct a good post meeting. Be sure to notify all district chairs, and those who are expected to report should receive a follow-up call to confirm they will be present and prepared. Conduct elections carefully, giving all candidates an equal chance to speak.

American Legion or American Legion Auxiliary dignitaries usually attend district meetings. Know how to properly introduce them, and know the proper time for receiving any message they might have. Out of courtesy to them and to those attending the meeting, do not permit competing activities that will only serve as a distraction. Restrict bar activities to social hours. The intent of the business part of a district meeting is to improve post performance and make the Legion more effective in local communities.



District training - Teaching our members how to effectively execute the programs and functions of The American Legion should be a top priority at all levels of the organization. We must mentor new members, whether they are veterans of Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, or fresh from combat operations in Afghanistan. They must know how the nation's largest wartime veterans organization operates and be able to carry on its work.

Thousands of Legionnaires are ready, willing and able to carry on our mission; they just need to be taught how. The responsibility belongs to all of us, not just the top leadership.

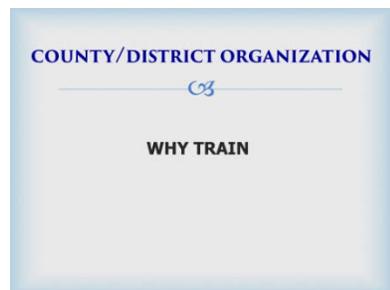


Objective - In a perfect world, members would know the programs of each pillar of The American Legion – Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children and Youth – inside and out. They'd know how to run the programs, recruit participants, conduct PR activities to support them and rally community support. They'd know the organization's legislative positions, year by year, and be fully engaged in lobbying elected officials at every level to support legislation we've championed.

In other words, your average Legionnaire would be a walking encyclopedia of American Legion history and knowledge – able to answer any and all questions that a potential member might ask, able to step directly into any chairmanship or officer position and hit the ground running, able to speak to any community group with authority about The American Legion.

Admittedly, not every member is there – yet. Many are delighted to be their post’s American Legion Baseball coordinator or Americanism chairman and are happy to continue to serve in that job. Yet others relish an opportunity to sharpen their leadership abilities, expand their knowledge and tap into their potential.

Set the bar high. Strive to help members in your district learn the joy of being active Legionnaires. Appoint a district training chairman and use the many educational and training resources available to assist you in conducting ongoing training at your post, district or county.



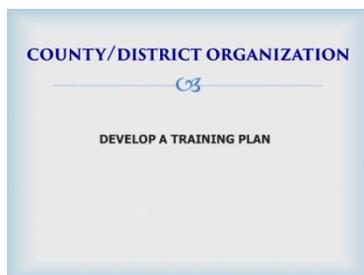
Why train? - A significant amount of the time we spent in the military involved training. From basic training, where we learned how to march and wear the uniform properly and work as a team, to advanced training, where we honed our specialty skills, learning was integral to professional development.

In a nutshell, training made us better at what we did. Likewise, training makes Legionnaires better at what we do. Training guarantees that The American Legion remains able to serve our communities. Only by mentoring new members will we develop in them the expertise to become the next generation of Legion leaders.

Establishing and implementing a well-organized training program in your district will reap dividends that go far beyond the immediate satisfaction of answering questions about how the Legion operates. A well planned curriculum will likely:

- Enhance the quality of programs and post operations
- Offer incentives for new members to learn and sharpen their skills
- Provide new skill sets for long-time members
- Increase social activities at the post centered around training events
- Establish an effective mentoring process
- Standardize execution of post programs
- Motivate members to increase their Legion knowledge

An active post training program can increase membership, lift retention, and provide new opportunities for participation in post activities.



Develop a district training plan - Your training can be as intense and formal or as relaxed and informal as needed. First, assign a training chairman to assess the needs of your district or division. There are basic courses ideal for every Legion member and others that are program or subject specific. The chairman can create an annual schedule, set milestones, and carry out the training appropriate to the post, district, division and community. He or she should be familiar with resources and products currently available

from National Headquarters. Whether it’s a one-hour video about recruiting new members shown at a monthly meeting or a weekend Legion College covering a variety of topics, you can engage members with an exciting and enjoyable learning experience.

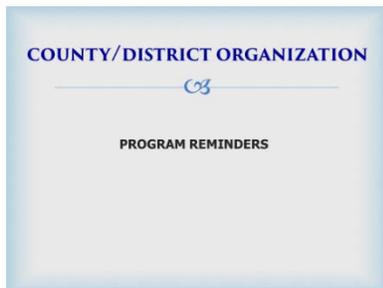
Within The American Legion’s four pillars are many subjects that can be taught, including:

- The job of post service officer
- Membership recruiting

- Post leadership
- Heroes to Hometowns
- Americanism and Children & Youth programs
- Public relations
- Lobbying
- Planning and executing events
- Conducting town hall meetings and public events
- Post disaster preparedness and response
- American Legion resolutions
- Obtaining sponsors for post community events
- Fundraising
- The American Legion Extension Institute (ALEI)



Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) - LEAD is a one-day, eight-hour training session designed to provide professional development training for Legionnaires serving at the post, district, county and department levels. Members of the National Headquarters staff will cover a wide range of topics relevant to the Legion's organization and operation. Lesson plans, handouts and training materials are provided to departments at no expense. Departments are responsible for providing the training facility and audiovisual equipment.



Program reminders - Each year, districts and departments conduct seminars on general post operations and specific American Legion programs. You can help reduce the risk of future leadership problems in your district's posts by encouraging posts to send representatives to these training sessions. Attendance at district and department functions also helps build the esprit de corps that makes for a good Legion post.

JANUARY Initiation ceremonies are good membership stabilizers. Keep working on membership, especially by contacting those who became delinquent Jan. 1. A community service survey can reveal areas where additional effort is needed. This month is also a good time to present flags and copies of the flag code to local schools. Confirm dates for post, district or county, and state Oratorical contests. March is Community Service Month, so now is the time to plan initiatives and projects.

FEBRUARY – Americanism Month Plan school awards with local educators. Sponsor religious emphasis activities. Start planning the upcoming American Legion Baseball season. Local veterans employment representatives make great speakers at post and district meetings. Consider hosting observances of Abraham Lincoln's and George Washington's birthdays. Plan a big American Legion birthday program for March.

MARCH – Community Service Month Give priority to Boys State selection this month, or earlier. Close out the membership campaign, and mail dues and cards to the department. Recognize the anniversary of The American Legion's founding March 15-17. This is an occasion for post and district officers to focus on projecting the proper image of The American Legion in the community, in the programs sponsored and services provided, and also in the appearance of post homes and surrounding grounds. These are often perceived as a reflection of the attitude, initiative and civic

awareness of the post membership. Posts should be pillars of their community, conscious that they represent the national organization to local citizens. Renewed attention to appearance doesn't require a capital improvement project, merely one of attention to detail and routine fix-ups, from signs to inside and outside improvements. This should be included on an annual Post Responsibility Audit. Between January and March, post leaders should consider forming a committee to host a post open house.

APRIL – Children & Youth Month Coordinate Children & Youth activities and recognition with the post's Auxiliary unit. Obtain Children & Youth Guide from department headquarters. Plan election of new officers, summer Scouting activities and Boys State. How about an old timers' night? Community service will elevate posts' standing in their community. Urge posts to put American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Week on their calendars.

MAY This month marks the anniversary of the St. Louis Caucus, where the organization of The American Legion was completed in 1919. Armed Forces Day, Mother's Day and Memorial Day form the basis for good post programs and outreach to U.S. military personnel in communities nationwide. Consider honoring them with a Blue Star Salute. Do your district's posts have uniformed groups? Do they decorate veterans' graves? Present school awards at the end of the semester. Kick off American Legion Baseball and summer athletic programs. Contact school officials to get Legion activities approved and on the calendar for next year: Oratorical Contest, Boys State, school awards, American Education Week.

JUNE Start planning a membership drive for next year, calling on past officers for assistance and guidance. Decide how to go about contacting new veterans. June 14 is Flag Day, so consider surveying people and businesses in the community, asking who flies flags on patriotic holidays. The history of Old Glory would make an excellent program for a post meeting. Summer youth programs need members' support and attendance. Community service is a great activity this month and every month.

JULY Host an old-fashioned community Fourth of July celebration. Certify new officers with department headquarters. Installation of officers makes an impressive ceremony at post meetings. Continue efforts on behalf of summer youth programs.

AUGUST By now, the district's posts should have received next year's membership cards from department headquarters. In many communities, school starts at the beginning or middle of the month. Begin planning a community Veterans Day observance.

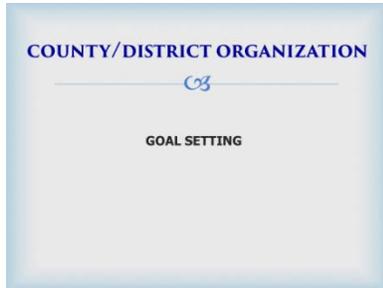
SEPTEMBER – National Disaster Preparedness Month Sept. 2 is V-J Day, so consider asking churches to ring their bells. Encourage the community to recognize Patriot Day, Sept. 11. Celebrate the anniversary of Congress' charter of The American Legion on Sept. 16, perhaps with an event including civic leaders. Sept. 17 is Constitution Day, an ideal time for a citizenship program. Provide schools with copies of "Let's Be Right on Flag Etiquette." The third Friday of the month is National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Obtain ad materials for Veterans Day.

OCTOBER Launch an all-out district membership campaign. Remember that dues for next year are payable by Oct. 20. Organize and participate in Halloween safety programs.

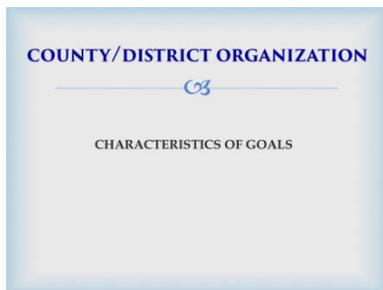
NOVEMBER Continue full speed ahead on the membership campaign by conducting membership roundups. Get them in before Dec. 31. Lead your community in observing Veterans Day and American Education Week. Remind members they need next year's card number when paying American Legion life insurance premiums. The deadline for payment is Dec. 31.

DECEMBER Don't let Dec. 7 go by without an acknowledgment of Pearl Harbor, "a day that will live in infamy." As the holiday season begins, encourage and support activities that bring Christmas cheer to needy families. How about a Christmas party? Work toward an all-time high in district

membership. Keep plugging for renewals and new members. Visit veterans who are ill or in the hospital.



Goal setting - Successful leaders know what they want and devise ways to get it. The secret is their ability to set and achieve specific goals. If you cannot identify and communicate your goals and make a plan to achieve them, you will have difficulty fulfilling other leadership responsibilities.

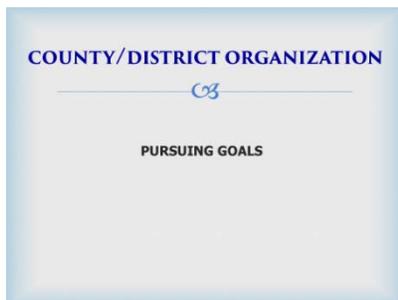


Characteristics of goals - Goals should not be grand or complex. They need only be statements of results you hope to achieve. For example, a district commander's goal may be to visit all posts within his or her district over a two-year period.

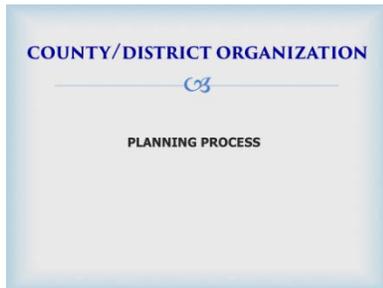
A goal should be:

- Specific** It clearly states what must happen.
- Measurable** Results can be easily validated.
- Action-oriented** It begins with the word "to," followed by a verb.
- Realistic** It is challenging, yet practical and achievable – not too high or low.
- Time-limited** It has a measurable period for achievement.

Pursuing goals



- Involve team members when setting goals. People are more likely to be committed to achieving goals when they play a part in setting them. They feel a sense of ownership and take responsibility for results when they have a personal stake in the process.
- Write out each goal for the best results. This makes them easier to remember and to track your progress.
- Consider what you must do to achieve your goals. What problems or obstacles might you encounter? By identifying and resolving potential conflicts now, you will be able to focus on them.
- Regularly review your progress. Are you where you should be on the path to accomplishing your goals? If not, determine the reason for the delay and take action.



Planning process

- A plan outlines necessary activities, resources to be allocated and task distribution.
- A plan gives guidance and direction to everyone involved in achieving the goal.
- Planning reinforces goals, putting them in the forefront. Since goals are the starting point for plans, leaders always remember their goals.
- Planning makes leaders future-oriented, looking beyond the present to project what could happen.
- Planning helps leaders to make decisions having considered their possible effects.
- Planning ensures that goals will be achieved efficiently and effectively, making the best use of resources.

Without planning, resources are often overused or wasted, straining deadlines and raising stress levels. Leaders who make wise use of manpower and materials have happier workers and higher productivity.

