



## PLANNING – BASIC FUNCTION OF LEADING

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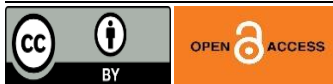
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### ABSTRACT

*The role, place, and necessity of planning are unequivocally extremely important in the context of today's operational environment. Analyzing and transforming information gathered and lessons learned into realistic, workable, concrete planning products leads military managers and commanders to make unquestionable decisions. Sometimes the limits of planning can be determined by the insufficiency of technologies or the incompatibility of planners, a fact that can be corrected by finding very simple strategies and directions for improvement. The success of an action, or military activity is not the merit of a military or civilian leader but the sum of creations, of comprehensive approaches, of the interpretation of information gathered, and last but not least, the capacity of those who value the prepared plans.*

### KEYWORDS

*Planning, planning process, decision, courses of action, strategies.*



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### INTRODUCTION

Approaching a topic based on the impact of planning on decision-making process as the main attribute of the exercise of leadership is extremely sensitive due to the complexity of the activities performed within the process of forecasting, analysis, dissemination, and the effect produced by the decision, whether it is in the civil environment or the military field. Action planning has been intensively debated since ancient times, becoming today a collection of vital activities for the accomplishment of successful actions.

Considering the analysis of some fundamental concepts, I will present aspects related to the role and necessity of planning as a basic function of management by analyzing the activity of civil organizations oriented towards economic and social activities as well as that of military structures. It is very important to know the objectives of planning because it quickly places us in the general context of finding strategies focused on efficiency, to ensure the right conditions for decision-making.

Planning, regardless of the sphere of manifestation, civil or military, has become a process as a result of the need to ensure legality, proper functionality, surprising technological evolution, and the increase in threats in the current operational environment. Comparing how planning is done in these two areas is a subject that seizes attention in its complexity, although the stages of achievement are relatively identical.

Planning processes have limits and constraints due to the technologies used, the adaptability of specialists, the material resources and equipment used, which determines an analysis regarding the impact of the changes we wish to implement upon the efficiency of the resulting products.

In the military system, expertise in planning is intrinsically linked to modeling and simulation. However, this expertise is arduously acquired by specialists through the execution of exercises grounded in simulated realities and modeled resources, which determines the realization of the most daring plans to achieve the objectives, according to the needs.

In the private sector, organizational leadership has the capability to verify, plan, organize, and manage subordinates, as well as to utilize resources, through the results achieved in pursuit of the proposed objectives.

Therefore, the current concerns of leaders in this complex field of planning are focused on the introduction of emerging and disruptive technologies, with the goal of increasing labor productivity and reducing the time allocated to activities.

Recognizing the importance of the goals set by the leadership of various structures, it is time to establish directions and strategies for improving planning, in line with present needs. Initially, it is necessary to analyze lessons learned, and study both past and present, so that civilian and military leaders, become aware that power lies in the structure they lead, and the results of the entire personnel's work brings benefits to both planners and executors.

The management of military or civilian structures involves specific activities that must be carried out according to certain characteristics regarding the location, specificity, and context in which they are employed. It heavily depends on the leaders' capabilities, the personnel's motivation, and the experience of each individual. There are some differences in leadership execution between those two domains. Thus, starting from these scientific premises, the article aims to spark an interest in understanding these essential aspects of the planning process and decision-making.

## **1 THE ROLE AND NECESSITY OF PLANNING IN THE EXERCISE OF LEADERSHIP**

To understand the role of planning in military activities and beyond, it is necessary to go through a cyclical and continuous process, as well as to analyze it as a component of leadership, which stands as the means of functioning for military structures, civilian

companies, or any type of currently existing organization. Why might civilian leaders' conception of planning differ from that of military leaders?

Why is civilian leaders' conception of planning different from that of military commanders? When analyzing planning from the perspective of socio-economic activities, it can be seen as an action that ensures the understanding of the future, through forecasts based on social or individual needs and the desire to know or understand. In addition, due to the rapid evolution of technology and techniques of all kinds, military planning is conducted based on very well-founded prognosis. These forecasts are made through extremely meticulous documentation, addressing lessons learned from the past, contemporary strategy and tactics adapted to modern needs, and, most importantly, the evolution of scientific research developed rationally and consciously towards goals that serve the interests of society.

Another analyze of differences can be made based on the writings of Henry Fayol – an author of exceptional thesis about planning -, who tried to scientifically determine the functions of management, and he managed to lead private companies in difficult times of recession and world crisis (VAN VLIET, 2010). So, Henry Fayol defined planning as: the first function of management, very necessary for evaluating the future and predicting trends in the evolution of actions and when he assumed the responsibility for the restoration of Decazeville Company, he declared that *“I did not rely on my technical superiority...I relied on my ability as an organizer and my skill in handing men”* (MindTools, 2024).

In the context of planning, decision-making is an action that managers utilize for the future of organizations, ensuring that the resulting profit sustains the successful functioning of activities. In addition, planning is the primary tool through which managers address ongoing challenges and ensure the efficient coordination of individuals and groups, being the ones who *“decide what must be done, when it must done, how it must be done and who must do it”* (STEINER, 2017).

In the domain of defense, planning occurs within a broad process, executed according to a schedule specific to NATO member countries, involving complex phases and stages, designed to develop military options in response to any kind of crises or threats. Activities are conducted in accordance with the planning practices of the armed forces of the United States, the United Kingdom, or France, countries with proven combat experience throughout history.

The military aim of the planning process is to provide information to the decision-structures and *“is carried out in order to develop detailed operational plans that incorporate all the relevant factors necessary for the efficient and successful conduct of a military operation”* (Defense, 2016). It is carried out as a result of a threat to the integrity and sovereignty of the state or as a necessity to take an important decision that affects the fulfillment of organizational objectives. Defense planning is *“an attribute of defense system*

*leadership, which is an essential component of defense and national security policy” (CHIŞ, 2023).*

Usually, in the planning process, there are military employees with extensive professional experience, well trained in the art of planning, who can manage information about the enemy and his possibilities of engaging military technique in battle, as well as issue their own operational plans that include measures of rhythmic, integral fulfillment and demanding control over the achieving of the established tasks.

Based on the definitions provided, I believe that - for a planning process to be valued, whether in a civilian or military environment - it must avail analytical and forecasting methods, computer based/IT means of calculating the possible alternatives, and specialists who can effectively leverage this information to develop actions that ensure decision-making with minimal risk of losing human, material, or financial resources. Therefore, the role and necessity of the planning process requires the use of straightforward methods, together with contemporary computational algorithms, so that planners can transform information into actionable plans, based on effective decisions, whether they are national laws with an impact on a state's social, political or military systems, or simple choices without significant impact.

## **2 TRANSFORMING PLANNING INTO DECISIONS**

As I have shown in the first part of the article, planning, regardless of the field in which it manifests itself, is necessary and sufficient to cause civil or military leaders to make important decisions.

In a private company, leadership is always a decision-making process, and the means through assure the organization and integration of the staff in order to accomplish the objectives is the decision function. A decision is an action chosen from a multitude of possibilities, aimed at fulfilling one's vision or perspective. In order for the decision to be appreciated, it must meet certain requirements: it must be scientifically well-founded, effectively taken by the appointed leader must be precise, taken in time, and it must be characterized by clarity, simplicity, logical sequence of ideas, and conciseness. So, in order to make a proper decision, a planning process is needed that issues long, medium or short term plans.

Planning entails, among other things - what needs to be done, which are the deadlines for completion, where it should be done, who should do it, how it should be done, and what resources are necessary? Having answers to these questions, the decision becomes a matter of intuition, experience, and even luck. In an organization, making the decision involves selecting a course of action that is adequate for achieving the desired objectives. Also, *“planning is nothing but thinking before the action takes place. It helps us take a peek into the future and decide in advance the way in which we are going to deal with*

*possible situations, which we are going to encounter in future. It involves logical thinking and rational decision making". (Jargons, 2024).*

For military science, the components of planning, such as: prognosis, computer modeling, simulation, and programming, have created the possibility that, artificially, various stages of combat and military operations can be studied under different conditions of use. Having a well-defined picture of military planning, we can assume that- at the strategic level- it is carried out to harmonize the activities at the political level with those at the operative and tactical level. In the army, the planning process was divided into phases, stages, and steps, so as to respond to the needs of knowledge and analysis of the specific security environment in the area of operations and to find proper solutions in achieving actual plans of action.

The military hierarchical levels are very important in carrying out planning for the correct establishment of tasks, so that the commanders of structures do not assume duties that belong to other entities or to avoid task overlap. The hierarchical pyramid of the army is made so that at the tactical level, there is the largest number of fighters, but at the same time the smallest number of planners, while at the strategic level, it is exactly the opposite.

The organizational structure of the military units is made in such a way as to allow promptness and speed in the decision-making process, with low costs and the maximum use of every available resource. Depending on the endowment with modern equipment, techniques, and technologies, military structures are adjusted in order to eliminate the problems determined by excessive load on personnel.

Considering that planning represents for military structures a third of the given time for the achievement of combat objectives, most subunits and units have been modeled so that the officers have the possibility of displaying knowledge for making high-quality decisions, creating compartments and management positions with great responsibility, which can only be occupied based on the completion of certain stages and mandatory criteria to be followed in the military career.

Therefore, the complex organization of the military structures of the NATO member countries, has determined, through the lens of the size of the current conflicts, the reshaping of the planning and decision-making process, depending on the new weapons systems introduced in the endowment, as well as the requirements permanently imposed by the operational environment in a continuous change. Also, *"the deepening of the general framework for the conduct of recent wars, the way of planning and execution, determines the necessary conditions for finding and using in practice the lessons learned, which, in the end, ensure the development of the training level of the forces"* (STANCIU, 2016). Thus, planning has become a process that is developing based on previous experiences and also upgraded whenever necessary, depending on the level of threats and considering the past events.

By analyzing both civilian and military domains, we observe a series of similarities in the planning and decision-making processes, despite different objectives. Effective planning ensures the future of private companies by enhancing and achieving substantial financial revenues, while for military institutions, assuring the proper human and material resources for conducting military operations stand for winning the war.

The plans resulting from planning help define performance standards, because they provide the decider the time needed to focus on specific goals and actions. The time horizons of the plans, regardless of their purpose, are defined as follows: long-term plans—those applicable for more than 5 years; medium-term plans—up to 3 years; and short-term plans—up to 1 year (SECARĂ, 2019).

Transforming decisions into real activities is, also, a crucial part of planning and requires managers and military leaders, to evaluate scenarios that lead to the achievement of objectives and identify solutions to mitigate risks. The effectiveness and limitations of planning are essential when the objectives are significant, and the need for experienced planners makes the difference in any situation.

### 3 EFFICIENCY AND LIMITS OF PLANNING

Planning is a necessity in private companies and is an indispensable activity, in peace or war, in the domain of defense. Whatever the aim of the activity, none of them can be carried out without following well-established steps. The success of planning consists in making brilliant decisions that lead to the fulfillment of the proposed objectives.

Many times, planning can be wrong for various reasons, such as: the lack of communication and IT technologies or their maladjustment to the needs of the present, the insufficiency of specialists in the fields of planning, the wrong choice of developing strategies or courses of action, establishing some unrealistic goals that cannot be achieved through predictable actions, the mistake of not being pragmatic, rational, or trusting the real possibilities, not knowing the field or area of action or the competence of the leaders who put the plans into practice, following predetermined patterns, and others.

Today, the challenges determined by the accelerated emergence of technologies and fierce competition for any type of resource carry military and civilian leaders to size organizations and structures to ensure survival and performance. In order to achieve a proper environment for planning, it is essential to ensure an adequate organizational climate that provides modern working conditions, new technologies to exploit, and people who know how to expand these opportunities.

Another direction to pursue regarding judicious planning is *"to establish real, identical goals at all levels of decision-making process, taking into account political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information tools"* (KOTT, 2016). Reviewing plans from the bottom up, and especially the other way around, is necessary and increases everyone's

interest to ensure ongoing rigor and foresight. Also, perhaps one of the most important characteristics necessary for the favorable development of planning is the creation of an organizational structure that, through the specific roles of each department, ensures performance.

A clear and precise plan is achieved by objectively establishing the human, material, and financial resources for each stage of action. Assessment of needs is difficult to achieve considering that most of the time expectations are higher than possibilities. However, reality determines predictable actions and gives leaders a real picture of the quality of operations.

Additionally, the appointment of key leaders at all levels of commercial companies and military structures is extremely important, in order to ensure the rapid understanding of strategies, tactics, and objectives and, at the same time, the hierarchical uprise of the decisions made.

Planning must adapt to current challenges by accepting new technologies, taking conscious attitudes towards inherent change and the need for progressive development, and forecasting skills.

Many courses of action can be established to achieve exceptional planning. Civilian and military leaders are the ones who can achieve these requirements, depending on the specifics of the structures they command. Thus, creating an environment adapted to understanding the information collected, creating a climate of stability that ensures the prosperity of subordinates and leaders, establishing a set of rules to be respected during planning, including lessons learned, ensuring the predictability of actions by creating a synchronization matrix, enabling the integrity of new, young people among those with experience, and ensuring leniency in the case of inherent failures or the action of external laws on the interests of organizations are some ideas that can lead to the success of modern management.

#### **4 DIRECTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING CIVILIAN OR MILITARY LEADERSHIP PLANNING**

Achieving performance is realized by perfecting the planning, starting with the particularities of the environment in which it is used. In the civilian domain, management functions are similar to those specific to the military domain and consist of organization, coordination, planning, motivation, control, and evaluation. The particularities of the performance of the functions are based on the knowledge of the leaders, the experience of the planners, and the objectives to be achieved.

Planning is the main tool that ensures the strategic approach of the actions carried out to gain a favorable position and identify the ways to reach an advantage. Improving the planning process aims at developing viable strategies, respecting the sequence of planning phases, stages, and steps, using planning methods to ensure clarity, visibility, and

applicability, as well as providing an evaluation of the effectiveness of the resulting plans. The failure to fulfill the tasks resulting from the plans can show us that the leaders did not organize the planning process well, did not constitute a team of capable planners, or did not take into account external factors such as the communication network, IT, or the time allocated for each activity. Thus, once this process has failed, it must always be restarted to mend deficiencies and ensure the fulfillment of the planned objectives. It is clear that in all organizations, planning adapts to the specifics of the activities carried out and follows the requirements and steps necessary to perfect it so that the resulting action plans are viable and easy to implement.

One of the important requirements of effective planning is *"ensuring that the strategies developed over a period of time are appropriate to each other"* (PURCĂREA A., NICULESCU C., CONSTANTINESCU D., 2015). To fulfill this requirement, it is necessary to realistically review the policies and strategies for products or services, for marketing, for production, for finance, and for personnel. Also, establishing measurable and precise objectives, allocating a reasonable amount of time, and orienting planning towards the result, can represent the directions of action for improving the management of some organizations. On the other hand, the ability of planners to draw up action plans that ensure the understanding of the established activities as well as the realization of logical prognosis that are easy to understand for subordinates is the key to the success of any operation to be executed.

One course of action for improving planning is to allow employees to contribute with suggestions and actively participate in setting harder-to-achieve goals. Usually, the reasons why organizations fail are precisely due to a misunderstanding of the proposed goals. Thus, scientists such as Ringbakk K. have defined the factors that slow down the planning process, highlighting that managers are mainly, those who do not fit the position because they do not understand the process, do not have a vision, did not give the necessary guidance, or failed to look at the problems to be solved as a whole.

On the other hand, in an organization, *"the manager is that person who is directly responsible for the work performance of employees and specific enterprises"* (NICOLESCU O., VERBONCU I., 2007), therefore, it is essential that choosing the leader must be done with great responsibility. An interesting interpretation of the qualities necessary for a manager is that of Tânjeleu I., who states that he must be like a sun *"that supports the efficient exercise of management functions and the use of management methods compatible with the field managed"* (TÂNJELEU, 2016).

Another possibility to improve the management of organizations is by conducting complex market studies and having advanced discussions with producers, consumers, and financiers to help improve the planning stages. The steps that must be followed to ensure success are simple to define but extremely complex to achieve and are aiming for correctly establishing the goals, analyzing the current situation, predicting future situations, finding



alternative options, establishing practical directions for implementing plans, and performing control of results. Although there are a number of studies regarding performance assurance in planning, it is observed that managers have a surprising resistance to stimulating creativity, which will always decrease the quality of the decision-making process.

In the sphere of defense, a series of laws, rulings, and provisions provide the legal framework for the planning process, which leads us to realize that there can be no syncope unless the predetermined phases and stages are respected. It is difficult to establish other directions for improvement because the documents for planning, organizing, and carrying out activities of any kind, including military or civilian scientific research, are developed at the level of each structure in accordance with the specific regulations in force. Still, objective-based operational planning is a traditional planning method provided in the doctrines and strategies of modern armies.

Management for the military field, in general, is defined a little differently than in the civilian field, being considered a set of principles, methods, and techniques used by military commanders in order to fulfill the missions assigned to a specific structure (a military unit, for example) with minimal loss of human resources, materials, and equipment. Military management has several forms of manifestation, classified according to the hierarchical level at which it is exercised, as follows:

- a) strategic management, exercised at the level of the General Staff of the Defense and/or at the level of the General Staff of the Armed Forces Categories;
- b) operational management, at the level of operational and territorial commands;
- c) tactical management, at the level of units and large units that actually act, more precisely at the level of actual execution (CORNEȘCU V., MIHĂILEȘCU I., STANCIU S., 2003).

In an army, as an institution of the rule of law with broad attributions in the field of defense and national security, and not only that, the specificity of military management consists in the organization and carrying out of activities strictly oriented towards ensuring the freedom of the country. These attributes are imprinted on the characteristics of military management and implicitly on the planning and decision-making process.

Within the military system, *"command encompasses the authority and responsibility of a commander and aims at the effective use of available resources for the planning, organization, direction, coordination, and control of forces in order to accomplish assigned missions"*. (STANCIU, 2017). When military structures participate in the execution of missions outside the national territory, the management will take into account the specifics of these activities, the context in which they take place, the duration of the mission, and the fact that only professional soldiers should participate in them. Therefore, planning adapts to this purpose at this level by acting, as a rule, coherently and concertedly in the direction of developing the leadership qualities of any military commander, because he must behave as such on the future battlefield and in the theaters of operations where the structure it

commands executes missions to maintain or impose peace or missions to fight against international terrorism.

The process of training, maintaining, developing, and perfecting the leadership qualities of any military commander, is achieved by taking courses in educational institutions, through the experience gained in leading military structures, and through self-development. On the other hand, the professional and civic training of the military personnel is done in accordance with the nature and content of the future missions that the army will carry out, considering Romania's dual status as a member of NATO and the European Union.

The improvement of the planning depends on the ways in which the army personnel are motivated for active and responsible involvement in the execution of the assigned tasks and missions, both individually and collectively. In an army made up of professionals, military management motivates by appealing to the status and freely assumed commitment of army personnel, by educating and empowering each one within the structure of which he is part of, and by attracting them in making decisions that directly concerns them. Modern military planning involves combining and correcting the proposals resulting from this process, both at the tactical level of execution and the strategic level of analysis. Thus, elite planners from the upper echelons have the opportunity to identify solutions to accomplish missions based on the objectives established at all hierarchical levels.

The current operational environment is characterized by constant and unprecedented uncertainty, which requires a careful analysis of the situation to determine the centers of gravity of the enemy and its own forces. Hence, perfecting the way of decision making is particularly complex, and most of the time it creates critical moments that are difficult to manage and sometimes cause practice errors. Planning, as a distinct function of leading, can create forecasts as they lead to new analysis processes. It is the management of the unit that analyzes reality and sets objectives regarding resources, time, and space. To be comprehensive, planning involves a process that establishes the optimal way to accomplish the mission by going through an on time algorithm of analysis of the actions, as well as those carried out during the conduct of the battle, and also for those to come.

In order to improve the planning process, we have identified the fundamental elements that must be established with priority, namely: the centers of gravity of the forces, the decisive points, the directions of effort, and the critical points. Responsibly establishing this data is strictly necessary to determine the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* of the planned mission.

Also, for a comprehensive approach to planning, both in the civil and defense domains, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is used, which involves consideration of strengths, weaknesses, and inherent dangers. It is vital that these are carefully analyzed in order to have the expected results.

Another course of action to improve the planning process is to create possible courses of action that lead to mission accomplishment and cover possible developments in the situation. Analyzing each course, comparing the advantages and disadvantages of each, and discovering the critical moments of the forecasted actions, can put one's own strengths to advantage, this after all representing the art of the attack. Comparing courses of action is basically an action that leads to the completion of a plan of action that answers to the received order.

The decision to choose the best course is part of the decision-making process that highlights management operations. Thus, analyzing the entire situation will lead to the removal of surprises and will contribute to choosing and applying the best solution.

By carefully comparing the courses of action to improve planning in both civilian and military organizations, we can see certain similarities that lead to predictive analytics that are extremely useful for decision-making of any kind.

The planning process, regardless of the place or institution for which it is carried out, remains one of the key elements necessary for leadership.

## **CONCLUSION**

The planning and decision-making process described in this article, is analyzed in its own way, being considered a mechanism that can be improved based on one's own experience and the in-depth study of the available bibliography, both from the online environment and from various books and theses found in libraries.

Planning, organizing, and ensuring human, material, and financial resources are the keys to the success of an organizational activity and the success of a military operation. This fact can only be achieved by assuring a high degree of development of the planning staff and decision-making by leaders. Perhaps the most important quality step would be to implement a performance evaluation system at all levels of planning structures.

For the time being, it is difficult to establish a set of performance criteria based on which the entire staff involved should be controlled and appreciated. However, through this approach and by studying the documents that are the subject of management and leadership, it will be possible to change the mentality of managers, rethink structures, and approach planning from other directions.

Likewise, as it emerged from the analysis of planning, regardless of the field in which it is manifested, it is necessary to stimulate creative thinking and permanent collaboration between bosses and subordinates so that the decision is optimal for the fulfillment of the established objectives. The similarities observed in the organization of civil and military structures, as well as in the stages and steps followed in the planning process, stimulate creative behavior and a high capacity to manage these unique situations. Establishing priorities related to the activities to be carried out in the future is one of the most important

events that must be taken into account in crisis situations. In a civilian organization, the level of relational development is determined by the leader of the organization through all sorts of welfare activities, benefits granted outside the program, keeping a close relationship with the employees by knowing some personal problems or issues that they might encounter, and even extra monetary benefits associated with a climate of calmness and tranquility within the organization.

The technological progress due to the emergence of technologies is rapidly leading human intelligence to the idea that it is time to establish clear rules for the use of artificial intelligence algorithms. Nevertheless, without availing the benefits given by it, we cannot face the new challenges of the operational environment. Planning is depending on knowing all the information that appears on the market and the characteristics of the existing equipment in the world, which does not excuse anyone from using them in the best conditions.

In conclusion, the strategies and directions for improving planning that can be carried out by military managers and commanders are unlimited and can be relevant in leading to the achievement of objectives. In my opinion, giving partial decision-making power to subordinates to decrease the inherent absenteeism, empathy and curiosity of leaders will determine the success of planned operations. Also, it is time to realize that power consists in maintaining a balance, a verticality that ensures the personal development of employees who can absolutely overcome fundamental barriers to advance in their careers. The ideas of subordinates should be accepted, motivated, and verified so that any type of organization must reflect trust and mutual respect.

More often, managers who consult with subordinates are highly valued and spread a state of affairs that benefits the institutions, leads to lifesaving solutions, unexpected material and financial resources, or reduces risks. From the thorough study of the documents related to management or leadership, it follows that empathy with is the most valued quality of a leader, and the proof of clear, safe, studied or self-experienced based on decisions attracts the subordinates and encourages them to work in the best interest of the organization.

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