



THE TIMES 100

BUSINESS CASE STUDIES

Roles of managers – British Gas

British Gas is a British-owned energy supplier. British Gas is the UK's leading provider of energy and has over 16 million customer accounts. It employs over 20,000 people and was voted one of the £25 Best Big Companies to Work For by The Sunday Times in the UK in 2011. All organisations have employees working at different levels of responsibility. At the bottom, a business depends on its operatives to produce the products or services. Team leaders perform the day-to-day management role, with operational and senior managers setting direction and strategy for the business as a whole.

Theorist Henri Fayol identified the key areas of managers' work. He proposed that the five key functions of management are:

- planning
- organising
- commanding
- coordinating
- controlling.



Within British Gas, each individual operates as a member of a team, which is led by a team manager who has a range of supervisory duties. These include monitoring the performance of their team members. At British Gas the team managers are referred to as service managers. Service managers of electrical and technical service engineers need to organise routines in order to meet the needs of customers. They must also positively promote British Gas and its products. Their expert knowledge helps them to provide customers with sound advice that opens up opportunities to create new business. Occasionally, they have to deal with customer complaints. This is why customer service and good communication skills are of great importance to this role. As leaders of a team, all service managers within British Gas set personal and group targets for employees within their span of control. They also communicate their ideas and thoughts to members of the team, to other service managers and to operational managers. At all times they need to maintain good working relationships with team members. Being able to communicate effectively and keep focused on strong customer relations helps them to manage their workload effectively. Some of the benefits of being a service manager include a competitive salary, performance related bonuses and good pension provision.

In many cases an individual who started at British Gas as an apprentice, trainee or qualified engineer or electrician can advance to become a service manager. Career progression may eventually enable them to become an operational manager. The operational managers are responsible for making **strategic decisions**. To make such decisions operational managers require a range of key skills. These include skills and knowledge of customer service, teamwork, communication, IT and finance. As individuals progress from a service manager to operational managers within British Gas they need to **up-skill**. This helps them to adapt and develop as they undertake further senior responsibilities within the organisation. For example, they now have to take responsibility for customer satisfaction for a large part of the business. They do this by monitoring that work has been completed to the satisfaction of customers. Operational managers also have to monitor standards and set targets for improvements. They are responsible for managing **budgets** and have to ensure that their part of the business meet its budget objectives. At all times they must try to improve **best practice**. By doing this they can identify areas where costs can be reduced to improve profitability and efficiency. It is the vision of the operational managers that keeps the business moving forward, vital in such a highly competitive market.



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Questions

1. According to Fayol, what are the five key functions of management?

2. Give some specific examples of tasks carried out by managers at British Gas?

3. Using the case study for guidance, explain the skills required by managers at British Gas.

4. Analyse whether an operational manager at British Gas would make a successful manager at another organisation.

Task

Research . find the job description for a current vacancy for a management position. An online job site might be the best place for this. Categorise all the tasks outlined in the job description into Fayol's five key functions of management. Are there any others that do not fit into these categories?

What have you learned?

Hangman . play hangman of the different roles and skills of managers. When each of the terms is guessed, the guesser must explain the term and give an example.