

UNITY OF COMMAND

Unity of command means that no individual employee should be subject to the orders of more than one immediate superior. Thus it means that each individual employee shall have only one man as his superior and shall receive orders only from him. If he gets orders from more than one officer it may be difficult for him to discharge his duties. Responsibility can be fixed only if we know where the authority rests and this is not possible if the authority stands divided. Absence of conflict in orders, exercise of effective supervision over the employee and clear fixation of responsibility are the advantages of unity of command.

In the words of Pfiffner and Presthus, "The concept of unity of command requires that every member of an organisation should report to one, and only one leader". According to Fayol, unity of command means "an employee should receive orders from one superior only".

It is a fact that in practice we find significant exceptions to these principles. It is usually seen that an individual employee is subject to a dual command. This can be seen more in the professional fields. There one gets orders not only from the administrative side but also from the professional side. For e.g. a doctor employed in a local body is under the administrative control of the chairman of local body. At the same time professionally he is under the control of the director of public health.

Unity of command has been seriously affected by the increasing number and growing influence of Staff and Auxiliary agencies. The fact that the agencies are manned by experts has added their growing significance. Defenders of the principle of unity of command have tried to save it by pointing out that the technical experts in public administration do not really

exercise independent authority and control. They are of the opinion that they work only as advisors. It is also argued that its violation does not occur when an employee receives orders from more than one superior in one and same matter.

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