



## **Conducting: Resource Management; Another Approach**

*By: Dr. Wayne Applewhite*

No matter if you are looking in the public or private sectors of conducting business, you are sure to find leaders and or managers working in the realm of *Resource Management*. If you took a step back and watched over a period of time, you would most assuredly observe the leaders and managers attempting to maximize ‘these’ resources, effectively and efficiently develop ‘those’ processes, and you would also encounter the leaders and managers of their respective organizations involved in a myriad of resource management genres such as finance, human capital, information technology, and the dreaded bottom line.

Taking a closer look at resource management, it simply means getting the ‘right’ product to the ‘right’ customer on time and at a price the customer is willing to pay. Anything on the long side of that is frankly, unacceptable, in the world of resource management.

To be sure there are a plethora of articles and books speaking to process improvement, just in time delivery, quality, Six Sigma, and the list goes on. This is not one of those articles...well, maybe not, depending on your perspective.

In business, we take and use terminology from many sources. By now I am sure most of us are quite fluent in the terms of ‘strategic’ and ‘tactical’ which we have used for years thanks to the military. We have adapted to the use of ‘surgical precision’ taken from our colleagues in the medical profession and all of us have ‘struck out’ at one time or another. (Did you notice the title of this article? It started with a word taken from our friends in the music industry.) Today, however, I want to focus on a central theme of what many of us have said (and I heard it again just yesterday) about the fact that, “I have to orchestrate this mess...”

The first time I heard the term orchestrate used in this context, I was not quite sure what was meant. Surely we were not in the band room back at school; clearly we were in the boardroom of a mid-sized business...orchestrate.... As I let the term resonate within myself for the next few weeks, I came to see and notice something different about the organization in which I was a part. Yes, it (the organization) had many departments and bosses, and teams, and leaders, and projects, and managers, and divisions, and products to produce. We certainly needed someone to manage these resources. Could this collision of resources be orchestrated? Is this the hidden secret of resource management? Maybe.

Resource management should be strategically positioned within the organization. Resource management should be the purpose that binds an organization from the lowest levels to the highest. It should be the watchword, the standard of excellence, the golden ring that we all strive to capture as we conduct business day-in and day-out. Again the

first word from the title of this article is used, did you notice it? Conduct. So then am I suggesting that our resource managers might be conductors, is that the hidden secret of resource management? Maybe. Let's ponder that thought for a moment.

Imagine the resource manager (conductor) has just raised a hand as if to capture our attention. All is quiet. Then comes a beckoning gesture from the conductor (resource manager) directed to the group in the back of the organization and a definition is presented (defining the problem) by the group in the back. Now the conductor (resource manager) looks to the group to his right and beckons a response (possible solutions). Now she turns to her left and with her left hand points to the group on the left front side as if to say, "What say you?" (alternate solutions). Now with one finger over his lips the conductor quiets the organization and begins ever so slowly to raise the volume of the group. First the conductor points to the group in the middle and raises his hand from low to high as if to say, "begin." Now she looks to the group on the back right and completes a similar motion of engagement. Then, to the left, now to the front, over to the right...and now hushing the organization ever so slightly but not totally, she listens (testing the possible solutions). Now he smiles brightly. Having gathered the best information at his disposal, collaborating with everyone on the team and some outside of the team, gathering all the experience, knowledge and best practices to date, he raises his hands and starts a new rhythm from within the organization. It starts very low and gathers greatness and momentum as she artfully 'orchestrates' all of the players towards the strategic goal. At this point in time it is quite loud, as you can imagine, as everyone plays from the same page (best alternative). Finally, the conductor gestures swiftly and firmly at the group in the back right and a very loud boom is heard throughout the building (product delivered). She raises her arms as if to suspend the sound for eternity and then...she quickly brings her arms crashing down to her waist with one solid motion. All sound has stopped and for just a brief moment nothingness; then an eruption of applause is heard (audit). Profits and moral are high; job well done!

Is there a secret to resource management? It depends on who you ask. However, to be sure, some do it better than others. I suggest the secret is in leadership and management. It is about knowing the people you work for and the people you work with. It is about knowing the organization and the organization's strategic goals and what part you play. It is about collaboration within an organization, not competition. It is about defining the problem and bringing the best solution to the forefront without any hidden agendas. Where do we find most of the answers to our everyday challenges? From individuals. Yes people are our best assets. Respect them. Value them. Challenge them. Hold them accountable. And when the music stops, thank them.

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*Thank you!*