

# Tools for Planning and Decision Making

## OUTLINE

- **Forecasting**
  - Sales and Revenue Forecasting
  - Technological Forecasting
  - Other Types of Forecasting
  - Forecasting Techniques
- **Other Planning Techniques**
  - Linear Programming
  - Break-even Analysis
  - Simulations
  - PERT
- Decision-Making Tools**
  - Payoff Matrices
  - Decision Trees
  - Other Techniques
- **Strengths and Weaknesses of Planning Tools**
  - Weaknesses and Problems
  - Strengths and Advantages

This appendix discusses a number of the basic tools and techniques that managers can use to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of planning and decision making. We first describe forecasting, an extremely important tool, and then discuss several other planning techniques. Next we discuss several tools that relate more to decision making. We conclude by assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the various tools and techniques.

## ■ Forecasting

To plan, managers must make assumptions about future events. But unlike wizards of old, planners cannot simply look into a crystal ball. Instead, they must develop forecasts of probable future circumstances. **Forecasting** is the process of developing assumptions or premises about the future that managers can use in planning or decision making.

**forecasting** The process of developing assumptions or premises about the future that managers can use in planning or decision making

### Sales and Revenue Forecasting

As the term implies, **sales forecasting** is concerned with predicting future sales. Because monetary resources (derived mainly from sales) are necessary to finance both current and future operations, knowledge of future sales is of vital importance. Sales forecasting is something that every business, from Exxon to a neighborhood pizza parlor, must do. Consider, for example, the following questions that a manager might need to answer:

**sales forecasting** The prediction of future sales

1. How much of each of our products should we produce next week? next month? next year?
2. How much money will we have available to spend on research and development and on new-product test marketing?
3. When and to what degree will we need to expand our existing production facilities?
4. How should we respond to union demands for a 5 percent pay increase?
5. If we borrow money for expansion, when can we pay it back?

None of these questions can be answered adequately without some notion of what future revenues are likely to be. Thus, sales forecasting is generally one of the first steps in planning.

Unfortunately, the term *sales forecasting* suggests that this form of forecasting is appropriate only for organizations that have something to sell. But other kinds of organizations also depend on financial resources, and so they also must forecast. The University of South Carolina, for example, must forecast future state aid before planning course offerings, staff size, and so on. Hospitals must forecast their future income from patient fees, insurance payments, and other sources to assess their ability to expand. Although we will continue to use the conventional term, keep in mind that what is really at issue is **revenue forecasting**.

**revenue forecasting** The prediction of future revenues from all sources



Several sources of information are used to develop a sales forecast. Previous sales figures and any obvious trends, such as the company's growth or stability, usually serve as the base. General economic indicators, technological improvements, new marketing strategies, and the competition's behavior all may be added together to ensure an accurate forecast. Once projected, the sales (or revenues) forecast becomes a guiding framework for various other activities. Raw-material expenditures, advertising budgets, sales-commission structures, and similar operating costs are all based on projected sales figures.

Organizations often forecast sales across several time horizons. The longer-run forecasts may then be updated and refined as various shorter-run cycles are completed. For obvious reasons, a forecast should be as accurate as possible, and the accuracy of sales forecasting tends to increase as organizations learn from their previous forecasting experience. But the more uncertain and complex future conditions are likely to be, the more difficult it is to develop accurate forecasts. To offset these problems partially, forecasts are more useful to managers if they are expressed as a range rather than as an absolute index or number. If projected sales increases are expected to be in the range of 10 to 12 percent, a manager can consider all the implications for the entire range. A 10 percent increase could dictate one set of activities; a 12 percent increase could call for a different set of activities.

### *Technological Forecasting*

**technological forecasting** The prediction of what future technologies are likely to emerge and when they are likely to be economically feasible

**Technological forecasting** is another type of forecasting used by many organizations. It focuses on predicting what future technologies are likely to emerge and when they are likely to be economically feasible. In an era when technological breakthrough and innovation have become the rule rather than the exception, it is important that managers be able to anticipate new developments. If a manager invests heavily in existing technology (such as production processes, equipment, and computer systems) and the technology becomes obsolete in the near future, the company has wasted its resources.

The most striking technological innovations in recent years have been in electronics, especially semiconductors. Home computers, electronic games, and sophisticated communications equipment are all evidence of the electronics explosion. Given the increasing importance of technology and the rapid pace of technological innovation, it follows that managers will grow increasingly concerned with technological forecasting in the years to come.

### *Other Types of Forecasting*

Other types of forecasting are also important to many organizations. Resource forecasting projects the organization's future needs for and the availability of human resources, raw materials, and other resources. General economic conditions are the subject of economic forecasts. For example, some organizations undertake population or market-size forecasting. Some organizations also attempt to forecast future government fiscal policy and various government regulations that might be

put into practice. Indeed, almost any component in an organization's environment may be an appropriate area for forecasting.

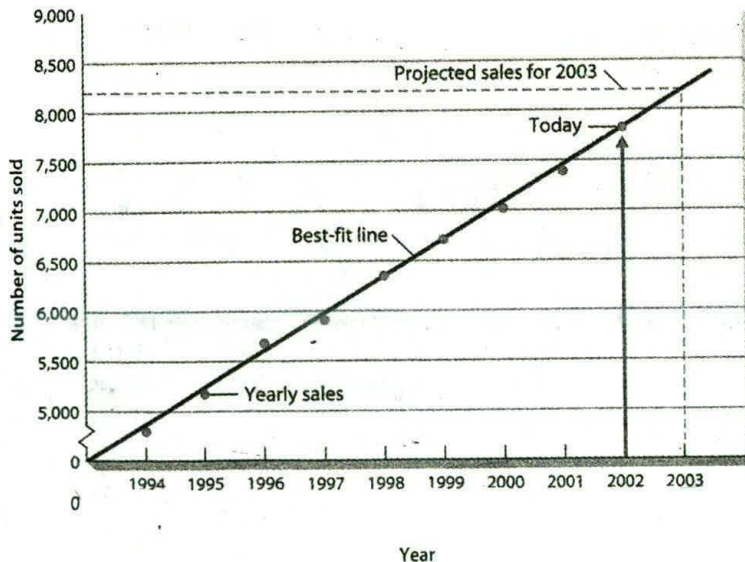
## Forecasting Techniques

To carry out the various kinds of forecasting we have identified, managers use several different techniques.<sup>1</sup> Time-series analysis and causal modeling are two common quantitative techniques.

**Time-Series Analysis** The underlying assumption of **time-series analysis** is that the past is a good predictor of the future. This technique is most useful when the manager has a lot of historical data available and when stable trends and patterns are apparent. In a time-series analysis, the variable under consideration (such as sales or enrollment) is plotted across time, and a "best-fit" line is identified.<sup>2</sup> Figure A.1 shows how a time-series analysis might look. The dots represent the number of units sold for each year from 1994 through 2002. The best-fit line has also been drawn in. It is the line around which the dots cluster with the least variability. A manager who wants to know what sales to expect in 2003 simply extends the line. In this case the projection would be around eighty-two hundred units.

Real time-series analysis involves much more than simply plotting sales data and then using a ruler and a pencil to draw and extend the line. Sophisticated mathematical procedures, among other things, are necessary to account for seasonal and cyclical fluctuations and to identify the true best-fit line. In real situations, data seldom follow the neat pattern found in Figure A.1. Indeed, the data points may be so widely dispersed that they mask meaningful trends from all but painstaking, computer-assisted inspection.

**time-series analysis** A forecasting technique that extends past information into the future through the calculation of a best-fit line



**Figure A.1**

### An Example of Time-Series Analysis

Because time-series analysis assumes that the past is a good predictor of the future, it is most useful when historical data are available, trends are stable, and patterns are apparent. For example, it can be used for projecting estimated sales for products like shampoo, pens, and automobile tires. (Of course, few time-series analyses yield such clear results because there is almost always considerably more fluctuation in data from year to year.)



**causal modeling** A group of different techniques that determine casual relationships between different variables

**regression model** An equation that uses one set of variables to predict another variable

**Causal Modeling** Another useful forecasting technique is **causal modeling**. Actually, the term *causal modeling* represents a group of several techniques. Table A.1 summarizes three of the most useful approaches. **Regression models** are equations created to predict a variable (such as sales volume) that depends on several other variables (such as price and advertising). The variable being predicted is called the *dependent variable*; the variables used to make the prediction are called *independent variables*. A typical regression equation used by a small business might take this form:

$$y = ax_1 + bx_2 + cx_3 + d$$

where

$y$  = the dependent variable (sales in this case)

$x_1$ ,  $x_2$ , and  $x_3$  = independent variables (advertising budget, price, and commissions)

$a$ ,  $b$ , and  $c$  = weights for the independent variables calculated during development of the regression model

$d$  = a constant

To use the model, a manager can insert various alternatives for advertising budget, price, and commissions into the equation and then compute  $y$ . The calculated value of  $y$  represents the forecasted level of sales, given various levels of advertising, price, and commissions.<sup>3</sup>

Econometric models employ regression techniques at a much more complex level. **Econometric models** attempt to predict major economic shifts and the potential impact of those shifts on the organization. They might be used to predict various age, ethnic, and economic groups that will characterize different regions of the United States in the year 2010 and also to predict the kinds of products and services these groups may want. A complete econometric model may consist of hundreds or even thousands of equations. Computers are almost always necessary to apply them. Given the complexities involved in developing econometric mod-

**econometric model** A causal model that predicts major economic shifts and the potential impact of those shifts on the organization

**Table A.1**

**Summary of Causal Modeling Forecasting Techniques**

Managers use several different types of causal models in planning and decision making. Three popular models are regression models, econometric models, and economic indicators.

<b>Regression models</b>	Used to predict one variable (called the dependent variable) on the basis of known or assumed other variables (called independent variables). For example, we might predict future sales based on the values of price, advertising, and economic levels.
<b>Econometric models</b>	Make use of several multiple-regression equations to consider the impact of major economic shifts. For example, we might want to predict what impact the migration toward the Sun Belt might have on our organization.
<b>Economic indicator.</b>	Various population statistics, indexes, or parameters that predict organizationally relevant variables such as discretionary income. Examples include cost-of-living index, inflation rate, and level of unemployment.

els, many firms that decide to use them rely on outside consultants specializing in this approach.

**Economic indicators**, another form of causal model, are population statistics or indexes that reflect the economic well-being of a population. Examples of widely used economic indicators include the current rates of national productivity, inflation, and unemployment. In using such indicators, the manager draws on past experiences that have revealed a relationship between a certain indicator and some facet of the company's operations. Pitney Bowes Data Documents Division, for example, can predict future sales of its business forms largely on the basis of current GNP estimates and other economic growth indexes.

**economic indicator** A key population statistic or index that reflects the economic well-being of a population

**Qualitative Forecasting Techniques** Organizations also use several qualitative techniques to develop their forecasts. A **qualitative forecasting technique** relies more on individual or group judgment or opinion rather than on sophisticated mathematical analyses. The Delphi procedure, described in Chapter 9 as a mechanism for managing group decision-making activities, can also be used to develop forecasts. A variation of it—the *jury-of-expert-opinion* approach—involves using the basic Delphi process with members of top management. In this instance, top management serves as a collection of experts asked to make a prediction about something—competitive behavior, trends in product demand, and so forth. Either a pure Delphi or a jury-of-expert-opinion approach might be useful in technological forecasting.

**qualitative forecasting technique** One of several techniques that rely on individual or group judgment rather than on mathematical analyses

The *sales-force-composition* method of sales forecasting is a pooling of the predictions and opinions of experienced salespeople. Because of their experience, these individuals are often able to forecast quite accurately what various customers will do. Management combines these forecasts and interprets the data to create plans. Textbook publishers use this procedure to project how many copies of a new title they might sell.

The *customer evaluation* technique goes beyond an organization's sales force and collects data from customers of the organization. The customers provide estimates of their own future needs for the goods and services that the organization supplies. Managers must combine, interpret, and act on this information. This approach, however, has two major limitations. Customers may be less interested in taking time to develop accurate predictions than are members of the organization itself, and the method makes no provision for including any new customers that the organization may acquire. Wal-Mart helps its suppliers use this approach by providing them with detailed projections regarding what it intends to buy several months in advance.

Selecting an appropriate forecasting technique can be as important as applying it correctly. Some techniques are appropriate only for specific circumstances. For example, the sales-force-composition technique is good only for sales forecasting. Other techniques, like the Delphi method, are useful in a variety of situations. Some techniques, such as the econometric models, require extensive use of computers, whereas others, such as customer evaluation models, can be used with little mathematical expertise. For the most part, selection of a particular technique depends on the nature of the problem, the experience and preferences of the manager, and available resources.<sup>4</sup>



## ■ Other Planning Techniques

Of course, planning involves more than just forecasting. Other tools and techniques that are useful for planning purposes include linear programming, breakeven analysis, and simulations.

### Linear Programming

**linear programming** A planning technique that determines the optimal combination of resources and activities

Linear programming is one of the most widely used quantitative tools for planning. **Linear programming** is a procedure for calculating the optimal combination of resources and activities. It is appropriate when there is some objective to be met (such as a sales quota or a certain production level) within a set of constraints (such as a limited advertising budget or limited production capabilities).

To illustrate how linear programming can be used, assume that a small electronics company produces two basic products—a high-quality cable television tuner and a high-quality receiver for picking up television audio and playing it through a stereo amplifier. Both products go through the same two departments, first production and then inspection and testing. Each product has a known profit margin and a high level of demand. The production manager's job is to produce the optimal combination of tuners ( $T$ ) and receivers ( $R$ ) that maximizes profits and uses the time in production (PR) and in inspection and testing (IT) most efficiently. Table A.2 gives the information needed for the use of linear programming to solve this problem.

The *objective function* is an equation that represents what we want to achieve. In technical terms, it is a mathematical representation of the desirability of the consequences of a particular decision. In our example, the objective function can be represented as follows:

$$\text{Maximize profit} = \$30X_T + \$20X_R$$

where

$R$  = the number of receivers to be produced

$T$  = the number of tuners to be produced

The \$30 and \$20 figures are the respective profit margins of the tuner and receiver, as noted in Table A.2. The objective, then, is to maximize profits.

However, this objective must be accomplished within a specific set of constraints. In our example, the constraints are the time required to produce each product in each department and the total amount of time available. These data are also found in Table A.2 and can be used to construct the relevant constraint equations:

$$10T + 6R \leq 150$$

$$4T + 4R \leq 80$$

(that is, we cannot use more capacity than is available), and of course,

$$T \geq 0$$

$$R \geq 0$$

**Table A.2**

**Production Data for Tuners and Receivers**

Linear programming can be used to determine the optimal number of tuners and receivers an organization might make. Essential information needed to perform this analysis includes the number of hours each product spends in each department, the production capacity for each department, and the profit margin for each product.

Department	Number of Hours Required per Unit		Production Capacity for Day (in Hours)
	Tuners (T)	Receivers (R)	
Production (PR)	10	6	150
Inspection and testing (IT)	4	4	80
Profit margin	\$30	\$20	

The set of equations consisting of the objective function and constraints can be solved graphically. To start, we assume that production of each product is maximized when production of the other is at zero. The resultant solutions are then plotted on a coordinate axis. In the PR department, if  $T = 0$  then:

$$10T + 6R \leq 150$$

$$10(0) + 6R \leq 150$$

$$R \leq 25$$

In the same department, if  $R = 0$  then:

$$10T + 6(R) \leq 150$$

$$10T + 6(0) \leq 150$$

$$T \leq 15$$

Similarly, in the IT department, if no tuners are produced,

$$4T + 4R \leq 80$$

$$4(0) + 4R \leq 80$$

$$R \leq 20$$

and, if no receivers are produced,

$$4T + 4R \leq 80$$

$$4T + 4(0) \leq 80$$

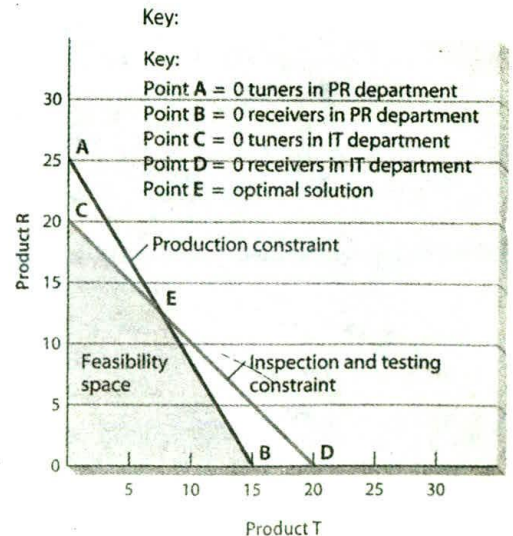
$$T \leq 20$$

The four resulting inequalities are graphed in Figure A.2. The shaded region represents the feasibility space, or production combinations that do not exceed the capacity of either department. The optimal number of products will be defined at one of the four

**Figure A.2**

**The Graphical Solution of a Linear Programming Problem**

Finding the graphical solution to a linear programming problem is useful when only two alternatives are being considered. When problems are more complex, computers that can execute hundreds of equations and variables are necessary. Virtually all large firms, such as General Motors, Texaco, and Sears, use linear programming.





corners of the shaded area—that is, the firm should produce twenty receivers only (point C), fifteen tuners only (point B), thirteen receivers and seven tuners (point E), or no products at all. With the constraint that production of both tuners and receivers must be greater than zero, it follows that point E is the optimal solution. That combination requires 148 hours in PR and 80 hours in IT and yields \$470 in profit. (Note that if only receivers were produced, the profit would be \$400; producing only tuners would mean \$450 in profit.)

Unfortunately, only two alternatives can be handled by the graphical method, and our example was extremely simple. When there are other alternatives, a complex algebraic method must be employed. Real-world problems may require several hundred equations and variables. Clearly, computers are necessary to execute such sophisticated analyses. Linear programming is a powerful technique, playing a key role in both planning and decision making. It can be used to schedule production, select an optimal portfolio of investments, allocate sales representatives to territories, or produce an item at some minimum cost.

### Breakeven Analysis

Linear programming is called a *normative procedure* because it prescribes the optimal solution to a problem. Breakeven analysis is a *descriptive procedure* because it simply describes relationships among variables; then it is up to the manager to make decisions. We can define **breakeven analysis** as a procedure for identifying the point at which revenues start covering their associated costs. It might be used to analyze the effects on profits of different price and output combinations or various levels of output.

**breakeven analysis** A procedure for identifying the point at which revenues start covering their associated costs

#### Figure A.3

##### An Example of Cost Factors for Breakeven Analysis

To determine the breakeven point for profit on sales for a product or service, the manager must first determine both fixed and variable costs. These costs are then combined to show total costs.

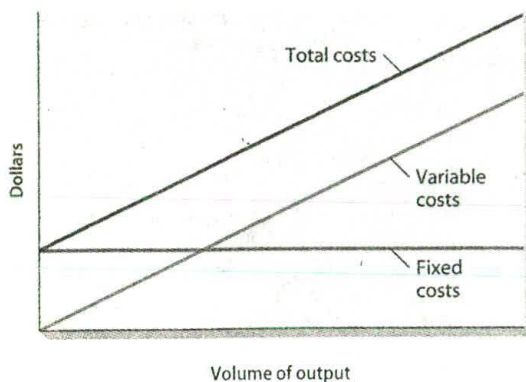
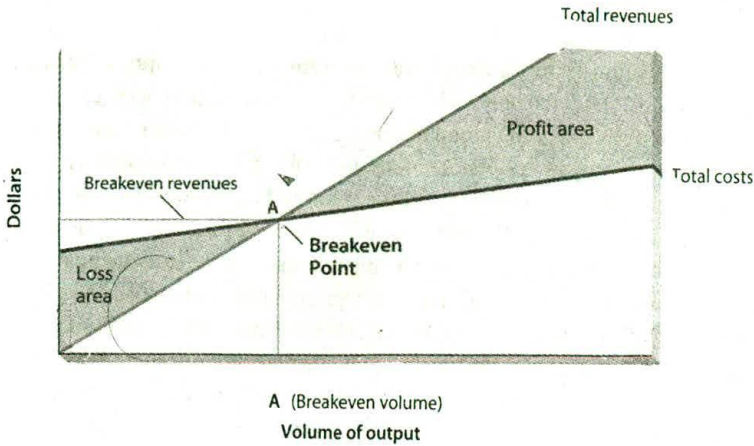


Figure A.3 represents the key cost variables in breakeven analysis. Creating most products or services includes three types of costs: fixed costs, variable costs, and total costs. *Fixed costs* are costs that are incurred regardless of what volume of output is being generated. They include rent or mortgage payments on the building, managerial salaries, and depreciation of plant and equipment. *Variable costs* vary with the number of units produced, such as the cost of raw materials and direct labor used to make each unit. *Total costs* are fixed costs plus variable costs. Note that because of fixed costs, the line for total costs never begins at zero.

Other important factors in breakeven analysis are revenue and profit. *Revenue*, the total dollar amount of sales, is computed by multiplying the number of units sold by the sales price of each unit. *Profit* is then determined by subtracting total costs from total revenues. When revenues and total costs are plotted on the same axes, the breakeven graph shown in Figure A.4 emerges. The point at which the lines representing total costs and total revenues cross is the breakeven point. If the company represented in Figure A.4

**Figure A.4****Breakeven Analysis**

After total costs are determined and graphed, the manager then graphs the total revenues that will be earned on different levels of sales. The regions defined by the intersection of the two graphs show loss and profit areas. The intersection itself shows the breakeven point—the level of sales at which all costs are covered but no profits are earned.

sells more units than are represented by point A, it will realize a profit; selling below that level will result in a loss.

Mathematically, the breakeven point (expressed as units of production or volume) is shown by the formula

$$BP = \frac{TFC}{P - VC}$$

where

$BP$  = breakeven point

$TFC$  = total fixed costs

$P$  = price per unit

$VC$  = variable cost per unit

Assume that you are considering the production of a new garden hoe with a curved handle. You have determined that an acceptable selling price will be \$20. You have also determined that the variable costs per hoe will be \$15, and you have total fixed costs of \$400,000 per year. The question is, How many hoes must you sell each year to break even? Using the breakeven model, you find that

$$BP = \frac{TFC}{P - VC}$$

$$BP = \frac{400,000}{20 - 15}$$

$$BP = 80,000 \text{ units}$$

Thus, you must sell eighty thousand hoes to break even. Further analysis would also show that if you could raise your price to \$25 per hoe, you would need to sell only forty thousand to break even, and so on.



The state of New York used a breakeven analysis to evaluate seven variations of prior approvals for its Medicaid service. Comparisons were conducted of the costs involved in each variation against savings gained from efficiency and improved quality of service. The state found that only three of the variations were cost effective.<sup>5</sup>

Breakeven analysis is a popular and important planning technique, but it also has noteworthy weaknesses. It considers revenues only up to the breakeven point, and it makes no allowance for the time value of money. For example, because the funds used to cover fixed and variable costs could be used for other purposes (such as investment), the organization is losing interest income by tying up its money prior to reaching the breakeven point. Thus, managers often used breakeven analysis as only the first step in planning. After the preliminary analysis has been completed, more sophisticated techniques (such as rate-of-return analysis or discounted-present-value analysis) are used. Those techniques can help the manager decide whether to proceed or to divert resources into other areas.

## Simulations

Another useful planning device is simulation. The word *simulate* means to copy or to represent. An **organizational simulation** is a model of a real-world situation that can be manipulated to discover how it functions. Simulation is a descriptive, rather than a prescriptive, technique. Northern Research & Engineering Corporation is an engineering consulting firm that helps clients plan new factories. By using a sophisticated factory simulation model, the firm recently helped a client cut several machines and operations from a new plant and to save over \$750,000.

To consider another example, suppose the city of Houston was going to build a new airport. Issues to be addressed might include the number of runways, the direction of those runways, the number of terminals and gates, the allocation of various carriers among the terminals and gates, and the technology and human resources needed to achieve a target frequency of takeoffs and landings. (Of course, actually planning such an airport would involve many more variables than these.) A model could be constructed to simulate these factors, as well as their interrelationships. The planner could then insert several different values for each factor and observe the probable results.

Simulation problems are in some ways similar to those addressed by linear programming, but simulation is more useful in very complex situations characterized by diverse constraints and opportunities. The development of sophisticated simulation models may require the expertise of outside specialists or consultants, and the complexity of simulation almost always necessitates the use of a computer. For these reasons, simulation is most likely to be used as a technique for planning in large organizations that have the required resources.

## PERT

A final planning tool that we will discuss is PERT. **PERT**, an acronym for Program Evaluation and Review Technique, was developed by the U.S. Navy to help coordinate the activities of three thousand contractors during the development of the

**organizational simulation** A model of a real-world situation that can be manipulated to discover how it functions

**PERT** A planning tool that uses a network to plan projects involving numerous activities and their interrelationships

Polaris nuclear submarine, and it was credited with saving two years of work on the project. It has subsequently been used by most large companies in different ways. The purpose of PERT is to develop a network of activities and their interrelationships and thus highlight critical time intervals that affect the overall project. PERT follows six basic steps:

1. Identify the activities to be performed and the events that will mark their completion.
2. Develop a network showing the relationships among the activities and events.
3. Calculate the time needed for each event and the time necessary to get from each event to the next.
4. Identify within the network the longest path that leads to completion of the project. This path is called the critical path.
5. Refine the network.
6. Use the network to control the project.

Suppose that a marketing manager wants to use PERT to plan the test marketing and nationwide introduction of a new product. Table A.3 identifies the basic steps involved in carrying out this project. The activities are then arranged in a network like the one shown in Figure A.5. In the figure, each completed event is represented by a number in a circle. The activities are indicated by letters on the lines connecting the events. Notice that some activities are performed independently of one another and that others must be performed in sequence. For example, test production (activity a) and test site location (activity c) can be done at the same time, but test site location has to be done before actual testing (activities f and g) can be done.

Activities	Events
	1 Origin of project.
a Produce limited quantity for test marketing.	2 Completion of production for test marketing.
b Design preliminary package.	3 Completion of design for preliminary package.
c Locate test market.	4 Test market located.
d Obtain local merchant cooperation.	5 Local merchant cooperation obtained.
e Ship product to selected retail outlets.	6 Product for test marketing shipped to retail outlets.
f Monitor sales and customer reactions.	7 Sales and customer reactions monitored.
g Survey customers in test-market area.	8 Customers in test-market area surveyed.
h Make needed product changes.	9 Product changes made.
i Make needed package changes.	10 Package changes made.
j Mass-produce the product.	11 Product mass-produced.
k Begin national advertising.	12 National advertising carried out.
l Begin national distribution.	13 National distribution completed.

**Table A.3**

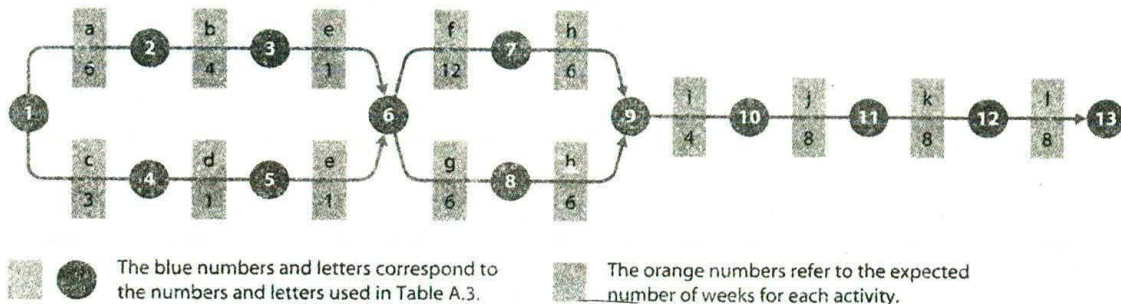
### Activities and Events for Introducing a New Product

PERT is used to plan schedules for projects, and it is particularly useful when many activities with critical time intervals must be coordinated. Besides launching a new product, PERT is useful for projects like constructing a new factory or building, remodeling an office, or opening a new store.



**Figure A.5**

**A PERT Network for Introducing a New Product**



The time needed to get from one activity to another is then determined. The normal way to calculate the time between each activity is to average the most optimistic, most pessimistic, and most likely times, with the most likely time weighted by 4. Time is usually calculated with the following formula:

$$\text{Expected time} = \frac{a + 4b + c}{6}$$

where

- $a$  = optimistic time
- $b$  = most likely time
- $c$  = pessimistic time

**critical path** The longest path through a PERT network

The expected number of weeks for each activity in our example is shown in parentheses along each path in Figure A.5. The **critical path**—or the longest path through the PERT network—is then identified. This path is considered critical because it shows the shortest time in which the project can be completed. In our example, the critical path is 1-2-3-6-7-9-10-11-12-13, totaling fifty-seven weeks. PERT thus tells the manager that the project will take fifty-seven weeks to complete.

The first network may be refined. If fifty-seven weeks to completion is too long a time, the manager might decide to begin preliminary package design before the test products are finished. Or the manager might decide that ten weeks rather than twelve is a sufficient time period to monitor sales. The idea is that if the critical path can be shortened, so too can the overall duration of the project. The PERT network serves as an ongoing framework for both planning and control throughout the project. For example, the manager can use it to monitor where the project is relative to where it needs to be. Thus, if an activity on the critical path takes longer than planned, the manager needs to make up the time elsewhere or live with the fact that the entire project will be late.

## Decision-Making Tools

Managers can also use a number of tools that relate more specifically to decision making than to planning. Two commonly used decision-making tools are payoff matrices and decision trees.

### Payoff Matrices

A **payoff matrix** specifies the probable value of different alternatives, depending on different possible outcomes associated with each. The use of a payoff matrix requires that several alternatives be available, that several different events could occur, and that the consequences depend on which alternative is selected and on which event or set of events occurs. An important concept in understanding the payoff matrix, then, is probability. A **probability** is the likelihood, expressed as a percentage, that a particular event will or will not occur. If we believe that a particular event will occur seventy-five times out of one hundred, we can say that the probability of its occurring is 75 percent, or .75. Probabilities range in value from 0 (no chance of occurrence) to 1.00 (certain occurrence—also referred to as 100 percent). In the business world, there are few probabilities of either 0 or 1.00. Most probabilities that managers use are based on subjective judgment, intuition, and historical data.

The **expected value** of an alternative course of action is the sum of all possible values of outcomes from that action multiplied by their respective probabilities. Suppose, for example, that a venture capitalist is considering investing in a new company. If he believes there is a .40 probability of making \$100,000, a .30 probability of making \$30,000, and a .30 probability of losing \$20,000, the expected value (*EV*) of this alternative is

$$EV = .40(100,000) + .30(30,000) + .30(-20,000)$$

$$EV = 40,000 + 9,000 - 6,000$$

$$EV = \$43,000$$

The investor can then weigh the expected value of this investment against the expected values of other available alternatives. The highest *EV* signals the investment that should most likely be selected.

For example, suppose another venture capitalist wants to invest \$20,000 in a new business. She has identified three possible alternatives: a leisure products company, an energy enhancement company, and a food-producing company. Because the expected value of each alternative depends on short-run changes in the economy, especially inflation, she decides to develop a payoff matrix. She estimates that the probability of high inflation is .30 and the probability of low inflation is .70. She then estimates the probable returns for each investment in the event of both high and low inflation. Figure A.6 shows what the payoff matrix

**payoff matrix** A decision-making tool that specifies the probable value of different alternatives, depending on different possible outcomes associated with each

**probability** The likelihood, expressed as a percentage, that a particular event will or will not occur

**expected value** When applied to alternative courses of action, the sum of all possible values of outcomes from that action multiplied by their respective probabilities



**Figure A.6****An Example of a Payoff Matrix**

A payoff matrix helps the manager determine the expected value of different alternatives. A payoff matrix is effective only if the manager ensures that probability estimates are as accurate as possible.

		High inflation (probability of .30)	Low inflation (probability of .70)
Investment alternative 1	Leisure products company	-\$10,000	+\$50,000
Investment alternative 2	Energy enhancement company	+\$90,000	-\$15,000
Investment alternative 3	Food-processing company	+\$30,000	+\$25,000

might look like (a minus sign indicates a loss). The expected value of investing in the leisure products company is

$$EV = .30(-10,000) + .70(50,000)$$

$$EV = -3,000 + 35,000$$

$$EV = \$32,000$$

Similarly, the expected value of investing in the energy enhancement company is

$$EV = .30(90,000) + .70(-15,000)$$

$$EV = 27,000 + (-10,500)$$

$$EV = \$16,500$$

And, finally, the expected value of investing in the food-processing company is

$$EV = .30(30,000) + .70(25,000)$$

$$EV = 9,000 + 17,500$$

$$EV = \$26,500$$

Investing in the leisure products company, then, has the highest expected value.

Other potential uses for payoff matrices include determining optimal order quantities, deciding whether to repair or replace broken machinery, and deciding which of several new products to introduce. Of course, the real key to using payoff matrices effectively is making accurate estimates of the relevant probabilities.

**Decision Trees**

**decision tree** A planning tool that extends the concept of a payoff matrix through a sequence of decisions

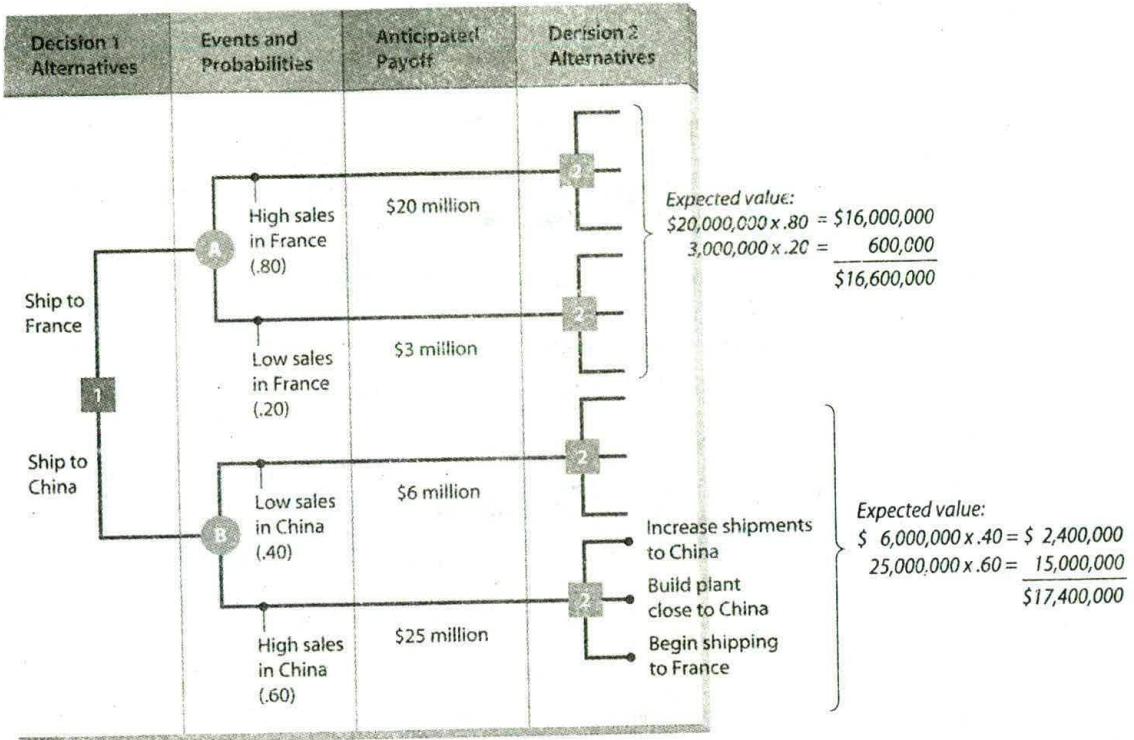
**Decision trees** are like payoff matrices because they enhance a manager's ability to evaluate alternatives by making use of expected values. However, they are most appropriate when there are several decisions to be made in sequence.

Figure A.7 illustrates a hypothetical decision tree. The small firm represented wants to begin exporting its products to a foreign market, but limited capacity re-

**Figure A.7**

**An Example of a Decision Tree**

A decision tree extends the basic concepts of a payoff matrix through multiple decisions. This tree shows the possible outcomes of two levels of decisions. The first decision is whether to expand to China or to France. The second decision, assuming that the company expands to China, is whether to increase shipments to China, build a plant close to China, or initiate shipping to France.



restricts it to only one market at first. Managers feel that either France or China would be the best place to start. Whichever alternative is selected, sales for the product in that country may turn out to be high or low. In France, there is a .80 chance of high sales and a .20 chance of low sales. The anticipated payoffs in these situations are predicted to be \$20 million and \$3 million, respectively. In China, the probabilities of high versus low sales are .60 and .40, respectively, and the associated payoffs are presumed to be \$25 million and \$6 million. As shown in Figure A.7, the expected value of shipping to France is \$16,600,000, whereas the expected value of shipping to China is \$17,400,000.

The astute reader will note that this part of the decision could have been set up as a payoff matrix. However, the value of decision trees is that we can extend the model to include subsequent decisions. Assume, for example, that the company



begins shipping to China. If high sales do in fact materialize, the company will soon reach another decision situation. It might use the extra revenues to (1) increase shipments to China, (2) build a plant close to China and thus cut shipping costs, or (3) begin shipping to France. Various outcomes are possible for each decision, and each outcome will also have both a probability and an anticipated payoff. It is therefore possible to compute expected values back through several tiers of decisions all the way to the initial one. As it is with payoff matrices, determining probabilities accurately is the crucial element in the process. Properly used, however, decision trees can provide managers with a useful road map through complex decision situations.

### Other Techniques

In addition to payoff matrices and decision trees, several other quantitative methods are also available to facilitate decision making.

**inventory model** A technique that helps managers decide how much inventory to maintain

**Inventory Models** Inventory models are techniques that help the manager decide how much inventory to maintain. Target Stores uses inventory models to help determine how much merchandise to order, when to order it, and so forth. Inventory consists of both raw materials (inputs) and finished goods (outputs). Polaroid, for example, maintains a supply of the chemicals that it uses to make film, the cartons it packs film in, and packaged film ready to be shipped. For finished goods, both extremes are bad: excess inventory ties up capital, whereas a small inventory may result in shortages and customer dissatisfaction. The same holds for raw materials: too much inventory ties up capital, but if a company runs out of resources, work stoppages may occur. Finally, because the process of placing an order for raw materials and supplies has associated costs (such as clerical time, shipping expenses, and higher unit costs for small quantities), it is important to minimize the frequency of ordering. Inventory models help the manager make decisions that optimize the size of inventory. New innovations in inventory management such as **just-in-time**, or **JIT**, rely heavily on decision-making models. A JIT system involves scheduling materials to arrive in small batches as they are needed, thereby eliminating the need for a big reserve inventory, warehouse space, and so forth.<sup>6</sup>

**just-in-time (JIT)** An inventory management technique in which materials are scheduled to arrive in small batches as they are needed, eliminating the need for resources such as big reserves and warehouse space

**queuing model** A model used to optimize waiting lines in organizations

**Queuing Models** Queuing models are intended to help organizations manage waiting lines. We are all familiar with such situations: shoppers waiting to pay for groceries at Kroger, drivers waiting to buy gas at an Exxon station, travelers calling American Airlines for reservations, and customers waiting for a teller at Citibank. Take the Kroger example. If a store manager has only one check-out stand in operation, the store's cost for check-out personnel is very low; however, many customers are upset by the long line that frequently develops. To solve the problem, the store manager could decide to keep twenty check-out stands open at all times. Customers would like the short waiting period, but personnel costs would be very high. A queuing model would be appropriate in this case to help the manager determine the optimal number of check-out stands: the number that would balance personnel costs and customer waiting time. Target Stores uses queuing models to determine how many check-out lanes to put in its retail stores.

**Distribution Models** A decision facing many marketing managers relates to the distribution of the organization's products. Specifically, the manager must decide where the products should go and how to transport them. Railroads, trucking, and air freight have associated shipping costs, and each mode of transportation follows different schedules and routes. The problem is to identify the combination of routes that optimize distribution effectiveness and distribution costs. **Distribution models** help managers determine this optimal pattern of distribution.

**Game Theory** **Game theory** was originally developed to predict the effect of one company's decisions on competitors. Models developed from game theory are intended to predict how a competitor will react to various activities that an organization might undertake, such as price changes, promotional changes, and the introduction of new products. If Wells Fargo Bank were considering raising its prime lending rate by 1 percent, it might use a game theory model to predict whether Citicorp would follow suit. If the model revealed that Citicorp would do so, Wells Fargo would probably proceed; otherwise, it would probably maintain the current interest rates. Unfortunately, game theory is not yet as useful as it was originally expected to be. The complexities of the real world combined with the limitation of the technique itself restrict its applicability. Game theory, however, does provide a useful conceptual framework for analyzing competitive behavior, and its usefulness may be improved in the future.

**Artificial Intelligence** A fairly new addition to the manager's quantitative tool kit is **artificial intelligence (AI)**. The most useful form of AI is the expert system.<sup>7</sup> An expert system is essentially a computer program that attempts to duplicate the thought processes of experienced decision makers. For example, Hewlett-Packard has developed an expert system that checks sales orders for new computer systems and then designs preliminary layouts for those new systems. HP can now ship the computer to a customer in components for final assembly on site. This approach has enabled the company to cut back on its own final-assembly facilities.

**distribution model** A model used to determine the optimal pattern of distribution across different carriers and routes

**game theory** A planning tool used to predict how competitors will react to various activities that an organization might undertake

**artificial intelligence (AI)** A computer program that attempts to duplicate the thought processes of experienced decision makers

## ■ Strengths and Weaknesses of Planning Tools

Like all issues confronting management, planning tools of the type described here have several strengths and weaknesses.

### **Weaknesses and Problems**

One weakness of the planning and decision-making tools discussed in this appendix is that they may not always adequately reflect reality. Even with the most sophisticated and powerful computer-assisted technique, reality must often be simplified. Many problems are also not amenable to quantitative analysis because important elements of them are intangible or nonquantifiable. Employee morale or satisfaction, for example, is often a major factor in managerial decisions.



The use of these tools and techniques may also be quite costly. For example, only larger companies can afford to develop their own econometric models. Even though the computer explosion has increased the availability of quantitative aids, some expense is still involved and it will take time for many of these techniques to become widely used. Resistance to change also limits the use of planning tools in some settings. If a manager for a retail chain has always based decisions for new locations on personal visits, observations, and intuition, she or he may be less than eager to begin using a computer-based model for evaluating and selecting sites. Finally, problems may arise when managers have to rely on technical specialists to use sophisticated models. Experts trained in the use of complex mathematical procedures may not understand or appreciate other aspects of management.

### *Strengths and Advantages*

On the plus side, planning and decision-making tools offer many advantages. For situations that are amenable to quantification, they can bring sophisticated mathematical processes to bear on planning and decision making. Properly designed models and formulas also help decision makers “see reason.” For example, a manager might not be inclined to introduce a new product line simply because she or he doesn’t think it will be profitable. After seeing a forecast predicting first-year sales of one hundred thousand units coupled with a breakeven analysis showing profitability after only twenty thousand, however, the manager will probably change her or his mind. Thus, rational planning tools and techniques force the manager to look beyond personal prejudices and predispositions. Finally, the computer explosion is rapidly making sophisticated planning techniques available in a wider range of settings than ever before.

The crucial point to remember is that planning tools and techniques are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. Just as a carpenter uses a hand saw in some situations and an electric saw in others, a manager must recognize that a particular model may be useful in some situations but not in others that may call for a different approach. Knowing the difference is one mark of a good manager.

## *Summary of Key Points*

**M**anagers often use various tools and techniques as they develop plans and make decisions. Forecasting is one widely used method. Forecasting is the process of developing assumptions or premises about the future. Sales or revenue forecasting is especially important. Many organizations also rely heavily on technological forecasting. Time-series analysis

and causal modeling are important forecasting techniques. Qualitative techniques are also widely used.

Managers also use other planning tools and techniques in different circumstances. Linear programming helps optimize resources and activities. Breakeven analysis helps identify how many products or services must be sold to cover

costs. Simulations model reality. PERT helps plan how much time a project will require.

Other tools and techniques are useful for decision making. Constructing a payoff matrix, for example, helps a manager assess the expected value of different alternatives. Decision trees are used to extend expected values across multiple decisions. Other popular decision-making tools and techniques include inventory models,

queuing models, distribution models, game theory, and artificial intelligence.

Various strengths and weaknesses are associated with each of these tools and techniques, as well as with their use by a manager. The key to success is knowing when each should and should not be used and knowing how to use and interpret the results that each provides.

## APPENDIX NOTES

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# Name Index

- Abrahamson, Eric, 414n12  
Abramson, Patty, 308  
Abresch, Chad, 707n1  
Adams, Henry, 215  
Adams, J. Stacy, 516n18  
Adams, Marc, 190n15  
Adams, Scott, 56  
Adorno, T. W., 485n9  
Aepfel, Timothy, 526n  
Ahearne, Michael, 610n20  
Ahlvarsson, Ola, 542  
Ahuja, Manju K., 707n17  
Akin, Gib, 414n12  
Alderfer, Clayton P., 516n10  
Alexander, Jeffrey A., 415n27  
Alfarabi, 38  
Allen, Joseph, 581n32  
Allen, Kent, 324  
Allen, Michael G., 257n31  
Allen, Oliver E., 65n16  
Allen, Robert, 601  
Allio, Robert J., 257n31  
Alfred, Brent B., 32n9  
Alonso, Ramon L., 727n6  
Ambrose, Maureen L., 516n2  
Ambur, Sonja, 426  
Amihud, Yakov, 256n21  
Anders, George, 32n  
Anderson, Erin, 645n27  
Anderson, Henry R., 645n14, 645n17, 645n19  
Anderson, Jerry W., Jr., 129n18  
Anderson, Julie, 277  
Andrews, Fred, 374n  
Andrews, Gerald, 414n16  
Andrews, Kenneth, 256n2  
Ansoff, Igor, 256n2  
Archibald, Nolan, 558  
Armenakis, Achilles A., 414n2  
Armour, Stephanie, 182n, 426n, 451n18, 509n, 599n  
Armstrong, J. Scott, 727n4  
Aronoff, Craig E., 581n29  
Ash, Mary Kay, 310  
Ashmos, Donde P., 65n31  
Atkinson, Anthony A., 99n25  
Austin, James T., 414n18  
Austin, Nancy, 581n23  
  
Babbage, Charles, 39, 64n10  
Bacharah, Dnaiel G. G., 485n33  
Bahls, Jane Easter, 190n16  
Bailey, Diane E., 610n8  
Baily, Martin Neil, 677n10  
Baker, Douglas, 382n16  
Baldes, J. J., 516n20  
  
Ball, Jeffrey, 361n, 707n  
Ballmer, Steve, 15  
Baloff, Nicholas, 285n27  
Bamesberger, Ann, 82  
Barnard, Chester, 41, 42, 43, 65n19  
Barnett, Megan, 374n  
Barney, Jay B., 98n4, 190n4, 256n9, 256n10, 257n24, 383n24  
Baron, Talila, 190n, 450n  
Barrett, Amy, 462n  
Barrick, Murray R., 484n6, 610n13  
Barry, Bruce, 611n26  
Barry, David, 33n15  
Barry, Norman, 128n2  
Bartlett, Christopher A., 32n3, 65n29, 161n6, 161n11  
Baskin, Otis W., 581n29  
Bass, Bernard M., 550n10  
Bass, R. E., 65n31  
Bate, Paul, 415n24  
Baum, Joel A. C., 99n16  
Bazerman, Max H., 129n27  
Beach, Dennis, 552  
Becker, Thomas E., 580n3  
Beckhard, Richard, 415n31  
Bedelian, Arthur G., 353n22, 414n2  
Bednar, David, 677n17  
Beebe, Andrew, 311  
Beeman, Don R., 551n41, 551n44  
Beer, Michael, 414n5  
Beeson, John, 450n6  
Behling, Orlando C., 677n21  
Beinhocker, Eric D., 98n3, 256n17  
Bell, Cecil H., Jr., 415n33  
Benfari, Robert C., 550n9  
Bensaou, M., 677n13  
Berenson, Alex, 83n  
Berger, Warren, 542n  
Bergmann, Thomas, 610n23  
Berman, Ronald W., 431n  
Berner, Robert, 352n  
Berrando, Luis, 76  
Bethune, Gordon, 486-487, 585  
Bettis, R. A., 257n31  
Bezos, Jeff, 6, 21, 31-32, 240, 299  
Bhide, Amar, 320n13  
Bich, Marcel, 300  
Bies, Robert J., 551n42  
Bigley, Gregory A., 516n2  
Bildman, Lars, 106-107  
Bishop, David, 404  
Bishop, James Wallace, 610n18  
Blackburn, Joseph D., 677n11  
Blackburn, Richard J., 353n35  
Blake, Robert R., 528n, 550n15  
  
Blake, Stacy, 190n18  
Bluedorn, Allen C., 99n14  
Blum, Terry C., 485n31  
Bobocel, D. Ramona, 285n22  
Boeker, Warren, 414n6  
Bogdanov, Vladimir, 699  
Bogosian, Brian, 74  
Boisot, Max, 451n24  
Bond, Michael Harris, 485n11  
Bordry, Isabelle, 341  
Borrus, Amy, 108n  
Boudette, Neal E., 267n  
Bourgeois, L. J., 610n22  
Bove, Courtland L., 581n28  
Bowen, David, 677n22  
Brady, Diane, 591n  
Brady, Mike, 617n  
Bravin, Jess, 698n  
Breague, James A., 450n10  
Breazeal, Cynthia, 657  
Bretz, Robert, 551n39  
Brews, Peter J., 224n3  
Bridges, William, 382n10  
Brief, Arthur P., 415n23  
Bristow, Nigel J., 64n4  
Brodsky, Norm, 342-343, 353n31  
Bromiley, Philip, 285n24  
Brooker, Katrina, 224n1, 450n, 550n  
Brown, Eryn, 516n7  
Brown, John, 581n13  
Brown, Leonard, 74  
Brown, Nicola J., 284n11  
Brown, Shona L., 353n2  
Brown, Tom, 382n13  
Bruns, William, J., Jr., 707n5  
Brynjolfsson, Erik, 414n13  
Buchana, Leigh, 707n1  
Buckley, Reid, 581n8, 581n11  
Buckley, Walter W., III, 462  
Bulkeley, William, 299n  
Burke, W. Warner, 415n32  
Burnham, David H., 516n14  
Burns, James MacGregor, 551n35  
Burns, Lawton, 383n28  
Burns, Tom, 363, 382n11  
Burt, H. E., 550n14  
Bush, George W., 6  
Butler, Brian, 707n15  
Butler, Timothy, 33n20  
Butterfield, D. Anthony, 190n10  
Byrne, John A., 256n  
  
Cage, Jack H., 551n27  
Caggiano, Mike, 509  
Caldera, Louis, 573

- Caldwell, James C., 645n14, 645n17, 645n19  
 Calloway, Wayne, 35  
 Campbell, Andrew, 225n24  
 Campion, Michael, 610n12  
 Capell, Kerry, 160n  
 Capellas, Michael, 14  
 Carley, Kathleen M., 707n17  
 Carlton, Jim, 299n  
 Carnegie, Andrew, 37  
 Carneville, Anthony, 191n33  
 Carone, Christa, 182  
 Carp, Daniel A., 465  
 Carreño, Lisa Gueda, 679  
 Carroll, Stephen J., 33n15  
 Cartwright, Dorwin, 550n5, 610n3  
 Case, Steve, 15, 226, 346  
 Cashman, J. E., 551n28  
 Cavanagh, Gerald F., 110n, 129n9  
 Cavanaugh, Teresa, 312-313  
 Chakravathy, Balaji S., 99n20, 224n16  
 Challenger, John, 617  
 Chambers, John, 244, 312, 727n1, 727n4  
 Chan, Alice P., 707n15  
 Chandler, Alfred, 256n18, 256n21, 256n22  
 Charan, Ram, 33n14  
 Chemers, M. M., 551n19  
 Chen, Christine Y., 129n16, 232n  
 Cheng, Mei-Lin, 277  
 Chiat, Jay, 542  
 Chickering, William J., 47  
 Childs, Ted, 189  
 Choi, Thomas Y., 677n21  
 Chouinard, Yvon, 100-101  
 Chowdhury, Neel, 407n  
 Christensen, Clayton M., 391, 414n11  
 Christensen, Sandra L., 191n24  
 Churchill, Winston, 37  
 Cinader, Arthur, 337  
 Clancy, John J., 485n13  
 Clark, Greg, 275  
 Cleary, Charles, 216  
 Clifford, Mark, 564n  
 Coch, Lester, 415n21  
 Cohen, A. R., 517n29  
 Cohen, Alan, 484n  
 Cohen, Susan G., 610n8  
 Cohn, Laura, 42n  
 Coleman, Henry J., Jr., 383n30  
 Collins, Jim, 224n5, 550n2  
 Collins, Judith M., 610n14  
 Collins, Paul D., 284n8  
 Colvin, Geoffrey, 22n, 33n14, 450n  
 Conger, Jay A., 551n32  
 Conlin, Michelle, 173n, 484n  
 Conlin, Robert, 707n  
 Coons, A. E., 550n13  
 Cooper, C. L., 484n2  
 Cooper, Robin, 677n4  
 Coppole, Brandon, 64n  
 Corbett, Charles J., 677n11  
 Corner, Patricia, 284n19  
 Correll, A. D., 387-388  
 Cosier, Richard A., 285n32  
 Covey, Stephen, 56  
 Cox, Taylor H., 184n, 190n18, 191n35  
 Cramer, Stuart, 57n  
 Cramton, Catherine Durnell, 33n15  
 Cronin, Mary, 707n10  
 Crowston, Kevin, 353n34, 382n16  
 Cullen, John, 382n16  
 Cummings, Larry L., 485n10  
 Cummins, Robert, 581n12  
 Curie, Irene, 474-475  
 Curie, Pierre and Marie, 474-475  
 Curry, Lynne, 516n  
 Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Joel, 414n4  
 Daft, Douglas, 275, 579-580  
 Daft, Richard L., 353n18, 353n28  
 Dalton, Dan R., 353n24  
 Dansereau, Fred, 538, 551n28  
 Danzig, Richard, 573  
 Dash, Darien, 492  
 Daus, Catherine S., 191n34  
 D'Aveni, Richard, 382n19  
 David, Fred, 224n9  
 Davis, Chuck, 495  
 Davis, James H., 33n18  
 Davis, Keith, 569n, 581n19  
 Davis, Luke, 26  
 Davis, Ralph C., 337, 353n21  
 Davis, Stanley M., 383n25, 383n27  
 Dawley, Heidi, 160n  
 Day, David V., 551n29  
 De Geus, Arie, 98n2  
 De Mersan, Clothide, 341  
 Deal, Terrence E., 190n2  
 Dean, James, 677n22  
 Dearlove, Des, 57n  
 Dechant, Kathleen, 190n8  
 DeFrank, Richard S., 485n26  
 Delany, John Thomas, 382n4  
 Delbecq, Andre L., 285n28  
 Dell, Michael, 570  
 DeMarie, Samuel, 677n16  
 Deming, W. Edwards, 677n18  
 DeNisi, Angelo S., 65n36, 450n2, 451n1-,  
 517n30, 517n34, 581n21  
 Desmond, Edward W., 707n4  
 Dess, Gregory, G., 550n3  
 Dickson, William J., 65n24, 516n6  
 Digh, Patricia, 129n6  
 D'Innocenzio, Anne, 337n  
 Dion, Celine, 83  
 DiSanzo, Frank J., 707n16  
 Disney, Walt, 167, 310, 327  
 Dixon, Gregg, 510  
 Doebele, Justin, 516n  
 Doherty, Elizabeth M., 285n27  
 Donaldson, Bill, 283-284  
 Donaldson, Lex, 33n18  
 Donaldson, Thomas, 128n3, 129n10  
 Dooner, John J., Jr., 465  
 Dorf, Michael, 304  
 Douglass, Frederick, 475  
 Dowling, William F., 382n6  
 Drake, Edwin, 215  
 Dreyfuss, Joel, 173n, 677n20  
 Drucker, Peter F., 64n2  
 Duell, Charles, 215  
 Duffy, Daintry, 475n  
 Duhaime, Irene M., 256n20  
 Duimering, P. Robert, 414n3  
 Dumaine, Brian, 580n1, 587, 610n7, 610n8,  
 667n  
 Duncan, R., 415n39  
 Dunfee, Thomas W., 128n3  
 Dunning, John H., 161n6  
 Dunny, Jim, 215  
 Dutt, James, 523  
 Eaton, Robert, 361  
 Echikson, William, 237n, 302n, 542n  
 Edison, Thomas, 475  
 Edmunds, Gladys, 315  
 Egelhoff, William G., 383n34  
 Eisenberg, Eric M., 581n35  
 Eisenhardt, Kathleen M., 65n33, 256n2,  
 257n26, 353n2, 610n22  
 Eisner, Michael, 15, 130  
 Elbing, Alvar, 284n9  
 Elkind, Peter, 611n29  
 Eloffson, Greg, 284n20, 581n16  
 Elsbach, Kimberly D., 284n20, 581n16  
 Elston, Mark, 672  
 Emerson, Harrington, 40, 41, 42  
 Espinoza, Luis, 296  
 Ettlle, J. E., 415n39  
 Evans, Martin G., 534, 551n21  
 Fain, Richard, 223-224  
 Farrell, Greg, 352n  
 Favre, Brett, 598  
 Fayol, Henri, 41, 42, 43, 65n17  
 Feldman, Daniel C., 610n16  
 Feldman, Steven P., 415n44  
 Ferguson, Kevin, 314n  
 Ferguson, Marilyn, 6  
 Fernandez-Araoz, Claudio, 450n9  
 Ferracone, Robin A., 500  
 Festinger, Leon, 485n12  
 Fiedler, Fred E., 531-534, 535, 550n17, 551n19,  
 551n20  
 Field, R. H. George, 551n27  
 Fielding, Gordon J., 353n24  
 Fields, Debbie, 6  
 Fierman, Jaclyn, 451n17  
 Finney, Martha L., 64n6, 285n26  
 Fiol, C. Marlene, 191n23  
 Fiorina, Carly, 6, 11, 12, 14, 25, 168, 529, 530  
 Fiorito, Jack, 382n4  
 Firstenberg, Iris R., 64n12  
 Fisher, Anne, 32n7, 414n9  
 Fisher, George, 261  
 Fishman, Charles, 224n, 450n1, 610n  
 Flanary, David, 295  
 Fleishman, Edwin A., 550n14  
 Follett, Mary Parker, 44, 45  
 Fondas, Nanette, 64n7



- Ford, Henry, 288, 297, 310, 327  
 Ford, Robert, 353n14  
 Forehand, Joe W., 396  
 Foreman, Peter O., 610n13  
 Forest, Stephanie Anderson, 320n  
 Forrester, Russ, 517n27  
 Forward, Gordon, 552-553, 554  
 Fossum, John A., 451n23  
 Fouts, Paul A., 129n32  
 Fox, Justin, 581n31  
 Fox, Kenneth A., 462  
 France, Mike, 108n  
 Fraser, Cline W., 727n6  
 Fredrickson, James W., 285n30  
 Free, Jerry, 292-293  
 Freeman, Bertha, 425  
 Freeman, R. Edward, 129n10  
 French, John R. P., Jr., 415n21, 550n5  
 French, Wendell L., 415n33  
 Frenkel-Brunswick, E., 485n9  
 Friedman, Milton, 115, 485n24  
 Frink, Dwight, 610n19  
 Frohman, Alan L., 414n7  
 Froot, K. A., 225n18  
 Frost, Peter, 610n4  
 Fuller, R. Buckminister, 215
- Gabarro, John J., 580n2  
 Gabor, Andrea, 353n7  
 Gadon, H., 517n29  
 Galbraith, Jay R., 353n36  
 Galpin, Timothy, 190n7  
 Galunic, D. Charles, 65n33, 257n26  
 Galuszka, Peter, 649n  
 Galvan, Arturo, 139  
 Galvin, Christopher, 4-5, 6, 9, 25  
 Galvin, Paul, 4  
 Galvin, Robert, 4  
 Gandz, Jeffrey, 551n40, 551n43  
 Gantt, Henry, 40, 41, 42, 48  
 Gardner, Donald G., 485n10  
 Gardner, William L., 551n42  
 Gardner family, 312  
 Garicunas, A. V., 336  
 Garnett, Katrina, 312  
 Garvin, David A., 663n  
 Gates, William (Bill), 15, 215, 289, 3\*0, 600  
 Gatewood, Robert, 450n7  
 Gault, Stanley, 526  
 Gavin, Mark B., 485n19  
 George, Jennifer M., 485n19  
 Georgopoulos, B. S., 99n23  
 Gerloff, Edwin, 581n12  
 Gersick, Connie J. G., 414n15, 610n11  
 Gerstner, Charlotte R., 551n29  
 Gerstner, Louis V., 108, 189  
 Ghoshal, Sumantra, 32n3, 65n29, 161n6,  
 161n11, 645n24  
 Gibara, Sam, 526  
 Gilbert, Jacqueline A., 190n18  
 Gilbreth, Frank, 40, 41, 42  
 Gilbreth, Lillian, 40, 41, 42  
 Gilson, Lucy L., 485n31
- Gist, Marilyn E., 485n8  
 Givens, David, 581n26  
 Givens, Tongula, 113  
 Glaister, Keith W., 284n11  
 Glaser, Milton, 542  
 Glew, David J., 516n25  
 Goldberg, Beverly, 98n2  
 Goldberg, L. R., 484n5  
 Goldman, Seth, 229  
 Goleman, Daniel, 550n4  
 Goodnight, Jim, 416, 418  
 Gopinath, C., 580n3  
 Gordon, Joanne, 396n, 658n  
 Gowan, Mary, 450n7  
 Graen, George, 538, 551n28  
 Graham, Baxter W., 517n28  
 Graham, John, 284n  
 Graicunas, A. V., 353n20  
 Grant, Linda, 129n14  
 Greco, Susan, 320n25  
 Green, Heather, 108n  
 Greenberg, Herb, 299n  
 Greenberg, Jerald, 353n5  
 Greenemeier, Larry, 396n  
 Greenfeld, Karl Taro, 299n  
 Greenwald, Bruce, 677n34  
 Griffin, Ricky W., 65n28, 65n36, 98n7, 151n,  
 161n2, 161n4, 161n17, 161n18, 161n26,  
 353n5, 353n8, 353n11, 383n34, 450n2,  
 485n29, 516n25, 517n30, 517n34, 610n2
- Grints, Keith, 550n4  
 Gross, Neil, 649n  
 Grossman, Robert J., 190n  
 Grove, Andrew, 37  
 Grundy, Steven and Andy, 304-305  
 Gumbel, Peter, 495n  
 Gunn, Eileen P., 161n20  
 Gustafson, David H., 285n28  
 Gustafson, Loren, 677n16  
 Guth, Robert A., 83n  
 Guzzo, Richard A., 415n23
- Hackman, J. Richard, 285n29, 331n, 353n15  
 Hadary, Sharon, 314  
 Haga, W. J., 551n28  
 Hagedoorn, John, 98n10  
 Hager, George, 672n  
 Hall, Edward J., 581n27  
 Hall, W. K., 257n31  
 Hamel, Gary, 33n19, 56, 57, 256n6, 320n1,  
 374n  
 Hamilton, David P., 530n  
 Hamilton, Ian, 337, 353n21  
 Hamm, Mia, 598  
 Hammer, Michael, 383n29  
 Hamner, Ellen P., 516n23  
 Hamner, W. Clay, 516n23  
 Hanlon, Dan, Dave, and Jennie, 298  
 Hannan, Edward, 727n5  
 Harding, David, 284n1  
 Harper, Charles M., 63  
 Harrington, Ann, 275n  
 Harris, Bill, 22
- Harris, E. F., 550n14  
 Harris, Elana, 429n  
 Harrison, E. Frank, 284n5  
 Harrison, Jeffrey S., 129n10  
 Hartke, Darrell D., 551n20  
 Hartmann, Joseph, 646  
 Harvey, Michael, 645n9  
 Hedley, Barry, 257n29  
 Heffernan, Paul, 384  
 Heifetz, Ronald A., 550n2  
 Heilman, Madeline E., 551n27  
 Helft, Miguel, 32n  
 Heller, Jenny, 682n  
 Helliher, Kevin, 352n  
 Hempel, C. G., 65n31  
 Henderson, Bruce, 257n29  
 Henderson, Lisa, 314  
 Henkoff, Ronald, 677n27  
 Herschlag, Judith K., 551n37  
 Herzberg, Frederick, 353n13, 493-494, 516n11  
 Heuper, W.C., 215  
 Hewlett, Bill, 167  
 Hickman, Jonathan, 232n  
 Hickson, David J., 382n14  
 Higgs, A. Catherine, 610n12  
 Highsmith, Duncan, 678  
 Hildebrand, Karen, 191n30  
 Hilliger, Tommy, 78  
 Hill, Charles W. L., 224n13, 256n5, 320n20,  
 382n17, 645n10  
 Hill, Diane, 189  
 Hill, Sam, 57  
 Hills, Frederick S., 517n34  
 Hills, Roderick M., 614  
 Hippel, Eric von, 415n22  
 Hitt, Michael A., 33n17, 414n5  
 Hoag, Anne, 707n15  
 Hochwarter, Wayne A., 224n7  
 Hodgkinson, Gerard P., 284n11  
 Hofer, Charles W., 250n  
 Hoffinan, James, 383n24  
 Hofstede, Geert, 150-152, 161n29, 161n31  
 Holloway, Michael, 295  
 Homer, 37  
 Hornstein, Harvey A., 551n27  
 Horowitz, Bruce, 113n, 382n  
 Hoskisson, Robert E., 383n24  
 House, Robert J., 516n12, 534, 541, 551n21,  
 551n32  
 Hower, Roger J., 415n35  
 Hu, Jim, 130n  
 Huber, George P., 65n31, 284n7, 284n9  
 Huber, Richard, 283  
 Hulin, Charles, 485n14  
 Hunt, J. G., 551n28, 551n32  
 Hunt, Michelle R., 224n3  
 Hunter, John E., 450n11  
 Hutheesing, Nikhil, 404n  
 Hyder, Barbara, 203
- Iacocca, Lee, 56  
 Iaquinto, Anthony L., 285n30  
 Idei, Nobuyuki, 527

- Iger, Robert A., 15  
Ivancevich, John M., 190n18, 485n26  
Ivester, M. Douglas, 579
- Jackson, Phil, 541  
Jacob, Karl, 311  
Jaffe, Greg, 573n  
Jago, Arthur G., 536, 550n2, 551n23, 551n25, 551n26  
James, Robert M., 225n20  
Jamison, Gail, 646  
Janis, Irving L., 285n33, 285n34  
Jarley, Paul, 382n4  
Jassawalla, Avan R., 610n11  
Jenkins, John, 582, 584  
Jermier, John M., 551n30  
Jobs, Steve, 406  
John Paul II (pope), 6  
Johnson, Celeste, 312  
Johnson, Craig, 707n1  
Johnson, Ross, 677n17  
Johnson, Roy S., 190n14  
Jonas, H., 65n31  
Jones, Del, 42n, 625n  
Jones, Gareth R., 99n21, 99n24, 224n13, 256n5, 320n20, 353n3, 382n2, 382n7, 382n17, 485n19  
Joplin, Janice R. W., 191n34  
Judge, Timothy A., 484n6, 551n39  
Judge, William Q., 224n2
- Kahn, Jeremy, 128n5  
Kahn, Robert L., 610n13, 610n15  
Kahn, William, 353n29  
Kahwajy, Jean L., 610n22  
Kanigel, Robert, 65n16  
Kantrow, Alan M., 64n8, 458  
Kanungo, Rabindra N., 551n32  
Karnitschnig, Matt, 361n  
Kasi, Stanislav, 485n22  
Kast, Fremont E., 65n31, 65n34  
Katz, David, 610n13  
Katz, Robert L., 32n11  
Keats, Barbara, 284n19  
Keeler, Andrew, 483  
Keenan, Bill, 495  
Keil, Mark, 285n23  
Kelleher, Herb, 24, 166, 549-550  
Kelley, H. H., 485n21  
Kelly, James, 10  
Kelly, John M., 485n28  
Kelvin, Lord, 215  
Kendall, L. M., 485n14  
Kendrick, John W., 677n29  
Kennedy, Allan A., 190n2  
Kerlinger, Fred, 727n3  
Kerr, Steven, 551n30  
Kerschlag, Judith K., 551n27  
Kettinger, William J., 707n3  
Khan, Raza, 415n24  
Khurana, Anil, 677n3  
Kiechel, Walter, III, 33n21, 581n14, 581n17  
Kierlin, Bob, 635
- Kilbridge, M. D., 353n10, 353n12  
King, Neil, Jr., 698n  
Kinicki, Angelo, 284n19  
Kirkland, Richard I., Jr., 225n17  
Kirkman, Bradley L., 610n1, 610n5  
Kirkpatrick, David, 64n3, 415n26  
Kirkpatrick, Shelley A., 550n11  
Klein, Joel, 106  
Kluger, Avraham N., 451n16  
Knight, Charles, 425  
Knight, Philip, 6, 384-385, 386  
Knook, Pieter, 407  
Knosp, Bob, 290  
Koch, James, 286-287, 288  
Koch, Louis, 286  
Komansky, David H., 168  
Komarow, Steven, 160n  
Kondrasuk, Jack N., 225n25  
Konopaske, Robert, 485n26  
Konovsky, Mary, 485n34  
Korn, Helaine J., 99n16  
Kossek, Ellen Ernst, 414n4  
Kotter, John P., 32n8, 56, 414n10, 521n, 550n4  
Kram, Kathy, 353n29  
Kramer, Michelle, 74  
Krantz, Michael, 32n  
Kraut, Robert, 707n15  
Kreitner, Robert, 516n22, 516n23  
Kripalani, Manjeet, 564n  
Krishnan, M. S., 677n17  
Kroc, Ray, 81, 303  
Kroll, Mark, 645n7  
Kulik, Carol T., 516n2  
Kurland, Nancy B., 581n22  
Kutner, Harold, 68
- Labich, Kenneth, 284n15, 551n36  
Lachman, Ran, 33n25  
Lado, Augustine, 450n4  
Lafley, A. G., 20  
Lam, Simon S. K., 484n7  
Lamont, Bruce, 383n24  
Landers, Peter, 264  
Landy, Frank, 485n22  
Lane, Vicki R., 98n8  
Langreth, Robert, 369n  
Larsen, Ralph, 369  
Larson, L. L., 551n28, 551n32  
Latham, Gary P., 285n27, 516n20  
Laudon, Jane P., 707n7, 707n8  
Laudon, Kenneth C., 707n7, 707n8  
Laurie, Donald L., 550n2  
Lautenschlager, Gary, 450n7  
Lawler, Edward E., III, 285n29, 382n13, 498, 499, 516n17, 517n31, 517n32, 645n10, 677n23  
Lawrence, Paul R., 353n37, 363, 382n12, 383n25, 383n27, 415n20  
Lay, Kenneth, 97  
Leana, Carrie R., 353n30  
Leavell, Hadley, 645n7  
Lee, Gregg, 457  
Lei, David, 383n33
- Lengelle, Christian, 595  
Lenway, Stefanie Ann, 551n45  
Leonard, Bill, 517n33  
Leonard, Dorothy, 415n43  
Leonard-Barton, Dorothy, 727n7  
Lev, Baruch, 256n21, 631  
Levering, Robert, 450n  
Levin, Gerald, 15, 226  
Levinson, D. J., 485n9  
Levy, Stuart, 495  
Lewin, Kurt, 389, 414n14  
Liden, Robert, 451n12  
Lieber, Ronald B., 320n1  
Liemandt, Joe, 292  
Lientz, Bennett P., 581n32  
Liker, Jeffrey K., 677n11  
Likert, Rensis, 358-360, 382n5, 526-527, 550n12  
Lincoln, James R., 485n16, 485n17  
Lindsay, Greg, 129n16  
Liska, Laurie Z., 551n22  
Liu Chuanzhi, 515  
Lo, Selina Y., 522  
Locke, Edwin A., 285n27, 516n19, 550n11  
Lohse, Deborah, 128n  
London, Herb, 215  
Long, Jim, 329  
Loomis, Carol J., 190n5, 450n  
Lorange, Peter, 224n16, 645n24  
Lorenzo, Nicole, 173  
Lorsch, Jay W., 32n6, 353n37, 363, 382n12, 580n2  
Louie, Gilman, 312  
Love, Susan, 523  
Low, Murray B., 320n4  
Lowry, Richard, 516n8  
Lucas, George, 231  
Ludewig, Eric, 293  
Lundegaard, Karen, 682n  
Lusch, Robert, 645n9  
Luthans, Fred, 32n2, 516n22, 516n23, 516n24  
Lynch, Edmund, 168  
Lyness, Karen S., 190n11  
Lyons, Nancy J., 320n17
- MacDonald, Elizabeth, 396n  
Machiavelli, Niccolo, 37, 463  
MacKenzie, Scott B., 485n33, 610n20  
Mackey, John, 295  
MacMillan, Ian C., 256n13, 320n4  
Maddi, S. R., 484n4  
Maier, Norman P. R., 285n29  
Main, Jeremy, 161n14, 677n24  
Maney, Kevin, 87n  
Manz, Charles C., 551n31  
Marchand, Donald A., 707n3  
Marek, Pat and Joe, 296  
Markham, Steven E., 517n34  
Markides, Constantinos C., 256n10, 257n28, 415n38  
Marriott, Bill, 569  
Martin, Christopher, 451n12  
Martinez, Michelle Neely, 190n19, 517n29



- Martini, Neal, 530  
 Martocchio, Joseph J., 484n6, 610n19  
 Maslow, Abraham H., 46, 48, 65n25, 490-492, 495, 496, 516n8  
 Massengill, Matt, 14  
 Mathews, John A., 383n30  
 Mathys, Nicholas J., 224n7  
 Matsunaga, Mari, 534  
 Matusik, Sharon F., 284n8  
 Maule, A. John, 284n11  
 Mausner, Bernard, 516n11  
 Maxwell, Wayne, 16  
 May, Jeff, 369n  
 Mayo, Elton, 45, 46, 48, 53, 65n24, 516n6  
 Mays, L. Lowry, 319-320  
 McCall, H. Carl, 269  
 McCause, Anne Adams, 528n  
 McCaskey, Michael B., 581n25  
 McClelland, David C., 494-495, 516n13, 516n14  
 McCutcheon, Carl, 625  
 McDonald, Marci, 314n  
 McFarlin, F. Warren, 707n5  
 McGrath, Rita Gunther, 256n13  
 McGregor, Douglas, 46, 48, 65n26  
 McGuire, Jean B., 129n18  
 McKay, Betsy, 580n  
 McKim, Alan, 315  
 McMahan, Gary, 353n5, 353n11, 450n3  
 McNamara, Gerry, 285n24  
 McNealy, Scott, 414  
 Medsker, Gina, 610n12  
 Mehrabian, Albert, 581n24  
 Mehta, Stephanie N., 404n  
 Menzies, Hugh D., 550n6  
 Merrill, Charles, 168  
 Messick, David M., 129n27  
 Meyer, John, 285n22  
 Meyers, Bill, 314n  
 Miceli, Marcia P., 129n29  
 Middlehoff, Thomas, 346  
 Mieszkowski, Katherine, 484n  
 Miles, Grant, 383n30  
 Miles, Raymond E., 32n9, 234, 235-237, 238, 256n15, 383n30  
 Miles, Robert H., 382n15  
 Miller, Alex, 224n2  
 Miller, David W., 284n9  
 Miller, Scott, 361n  
 Milliken, Robert, 215  
 Milliman, John, 451n15  
 Millman, Joel, 76n  
 Mindell, Mark G., 415n35  
 Miner, Anne S., 353n9  
 Ming, Jenny, 162-163  
 Minor, Halsey, 22  
 Mintzberg, Henry, 17-19, 21, 32n10, 225n20, 256n7, 580n4, 580n5, 581n7, 581n10  
 Mitchell, Terence R., 485n8, 551n21  
 Mitchell, Vance, 610n4  
 Mjoen, Hans, 161n15, 645n26  
 Moberg, Dennis J., 110n  
 Mohajer, Dineh, 288  
 Mohr, L. B., 415n39  
 Mohrman, Allan, 451n15  
 Montealegre, Ramiro, 285n23  
 Montoya, Benjamin, 232  
 Moorhead, Gregory, 65n28, 610n2  
 Morgan, Peter, 166  
 Morito, Masao, 83  
 Morrison, Elizabeth Wolfe, 484n3, 551n42  
 Morrow, Paula C., 677n28  
 Morton, Michael F. Scott, 645n24  
 Moskowitz, Milton, 450n  
 Mount, Michael K., 484n6  
 Mouton, Jane S., 528n, 550n15  
 Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, 474  
 Mullane, John, 677n16  
 Muller, Joann, 361n  
 Mullick, S. K., 727n1, 727n4  
 Munsterberg, Hugo, 44, 45, 46, 65n22  
 Murphy, Chris, 294  
 Murray, Matt, 450n  
 Murray, Victor, 551n40, 551n43  
 Nadler, David A., 65n21, 353n4, 551n34, 591  
 Nasser, Jacques, 16, 518-519, 520-521  
 Nathan, Barry R., 451n15  
 Near, Janet P., 129n29  
 Needles, Belverd E., Jr., 645n14, 645n17, 645n19  
 Neider, Linda L., 551n29  
 Nelson, Emily, 649n  
 Nemetz, Patricia I., 191n24  
 Neubert, Ralph L., 129n18  
 Newmann, Peter G., 649  
 Newstrom, John W., 569n  
 Nicholas, John M., 415n37  
 Nishi, Kazuhiko, 600  
 Nobel, Barbara Presley, 451n22  
 Nocera, Joseph, 15n  
 Nohria, Nitin, 414n5  
 Nord, Walter, 610n4  
 Northcraft, Gregory, 611n24  
 Nottle, Judith N., 431n  
 Nussbaum, Bruce, 475n  
 Nussey, Bill, 465  
 Nutt, Paul, 284n4  
 O'Donnell, Jayne, 106n  
 Ohmae, Kenichi, 161n13  
 Oldham, Greg R., 331n, 353n15  
 O'Leary-Kelly, Anne M., 516n25, 610n19  
 Olson, Ken, 215  
 Ono, Yumiko, 264  
 O'Reilly, Brian, 10n, 98n, 285n25, 516n1  
 Organ, Dennis W., 485n34  
 Orth, Charles D., 550n9  
 Orwall, Bruce, 15n  
 Osborn, Richard N., 98n10  
 Ostrom, Charles, 727n2  
 Ouchi, William G., 56, 98n4, 257n24, 383n24, 645n22  
 Overdof, Michael, 414n11  
 Overton, Rick, 484n  
 Owen, Robert, 39  
 Packard, David, 167  
 Paine, Julie Beth, 485n33  
 Paine, Lynn Sharp, 129n25  
 Palmer, Ian, 414n12  
 Parsons, Charles, 451n12  
 Parsons, T., 65n18, 382n3  
 Pasternick, Bruce A., 465n  
 Patterson, Carla, 702  
 Patterson, Gregory, 320n21  
 Patz, Alan, 415n40  
 Pearce, John A., II, 224n9  
 Pearman, Alan D., 284n11  
 Pedhazur, Elazar, 727n3  
 Pelled, Lisa Hope, 190n22, 285n31, 581n22  
 Penney, James Cash, 167  
 Pennington, Malcolm W., 257n31  
 Perot, H. Ross, 167, 343  
 Perroni, Amedeo G., 64n15  
 Perry, James L., 33n25  
 Pervin, Lawrence, 484n4  
 Peters, Lawrence H., 551n20  
 Peters, Thomas, 56, 581n23  
 Petersen, Andrea, 130n  
 Pfeffer, Jeffrey, 65n29, 516n3, 551n38  
 Pfeiffer, Eckhard, 20  
 Pfluger, William, 564  
 Phan, Khai Minh, 165  
 Phillips, Nelson, 581n13  
 Pickens, Joseph C., 550n3  
 Pierce, Jon L., 485n10  
 Pillai, Rajnandini, 551n35  
 Pinchot, Gifford, III, 415n45  
 Pinder, Craig, 516n4, 516n9  
 Pinkley, Robin, 611n24  
 Pinsky, Drew, 305  
 Pitino, Rick, 6  
 Pitts, Robert A., 383n33  
 Plato, 37, 38  
 Podsakoff, Philip M., 485n33, 550n9, 610n20  
 Pohlmann, John T., 551n20  
 Pollock, Ellen Joan, 74n  
 Poon, Dickson, 627  
 Port, Otis, 649n  
 Porter, Linda, 558  
 Porter, Lyman W., 285n29, 353n24, 484n4, 498, 499, 516n2, 516n17  
 Porter, Michael E., 56, 57, 85, 99n16, 233, 234-235, 256n2, 256n11, 256n12, 369, 382n22  
 Post, James, 581n15  
 Powell, Gary, 190n10  
 Power, Robert, 87  
 Prahalad, C. K., 33n19, 677n17  
 Prakash, Aseem, 129n12  
 Pratt, Michael G., 610f13  
 Presley, Elvis, 215  
 Preston, Lee E., 129n10  
 Priem, Richard, 284n2  
 Prietula, Michael J., 285n28  
 Prince, Linda S., 429  
 Pritchard, Beth, 200  
 Puffer, Sheila, 516n1