

Human resource management (A Level)

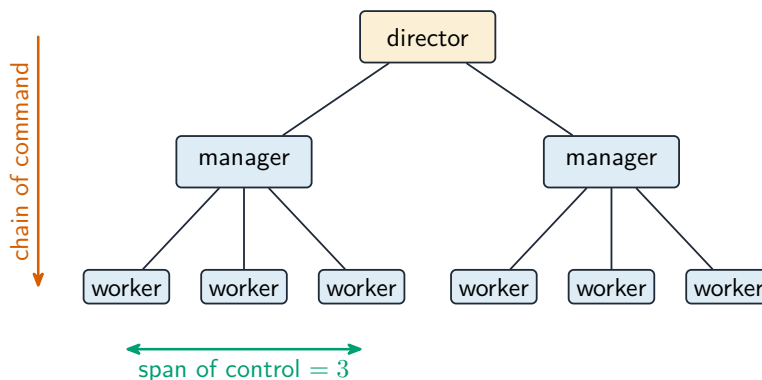
A-Level Business

Organisational structure

An **organisational structure** 组织结构 shows how a business arranges its people: who reports to whom, and who does what. A good structure makes roles clear and helps the firm meet its objectives. It is often drawn as an organisation chart.

Key terms in structure

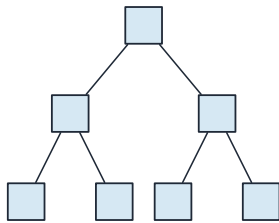
- a **hierarchy** 层级 is the set of levels in a firm, from the top managers down to the shop-floor workers. A “tall” structure has many levels; a “flat” structure has few.
- the **chain of command** 指挥链 is the line along which orders pass down, from the top to the bottom.
- the **span of control** 管理幅度 is the number of staff one manager is directly in charge of. A wide span means many staff per manager; a narrow span means few.



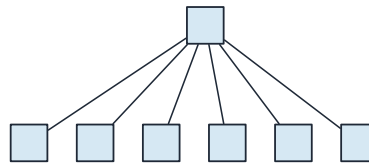
An organisation chart shows the chain of command and each manager's span of control

A tall structure has narrow spans and a long chain of command, so messages travel slowly. A flat structure has wide spans, so managers must trust staff more.

tall
many levels, narrow span



flat
few levels, wide span

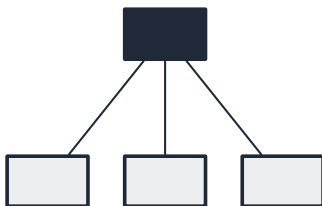


Tall structures have many levels and narrow spans; flat structures have few levels and wide spans

Centralisation and decentralisation

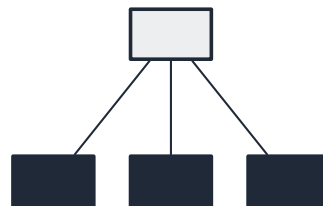
- **centralisation** 集权 — most decisions are made at the top. This gives strong control and quick, consistent decisions, but ignores local knowledge.
- **decentralisation** 分权 — decisions are shared out to lower levels and local branches. This speeds up decisions and motivates staff, but control is weaker.

Centralised



top decides

Decentralised



branches decide

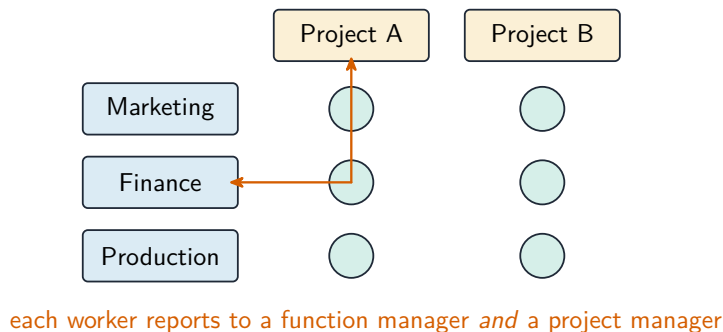
Centralised: the top decides. Decentralised: branches decide

Most firms sit somewhere between the two.

Delayering and matrix structures

Delayering 精简层级 means removing one or more levels of management. It cuts cost and shortens the chain of command, but it gives the remaining managers more to do.

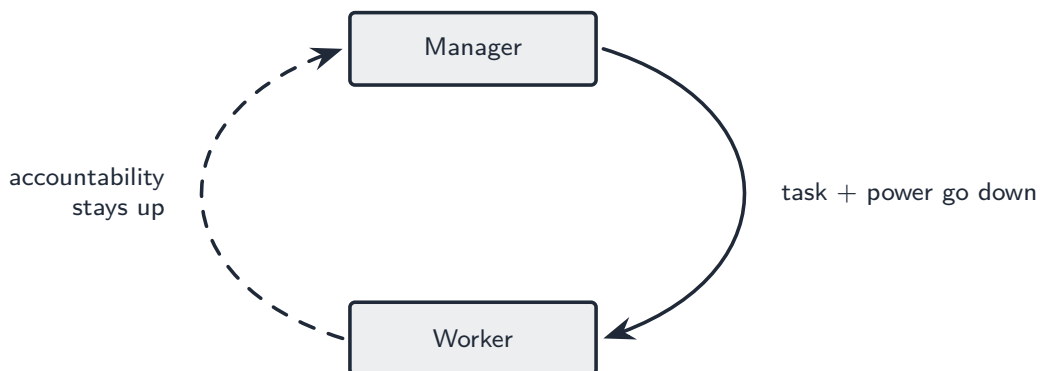
A **matrix structure** 矩阵结构 groups staff by both their department and the project they work on, so a worker may report to two managers. It is good for teamwork across departments, but the two-boss system can cause confusion.



In a matrix structure a worker reports to two managers — a function manager and a project manager

Delegation and accountability

Delegation 授权 means a manager gives a task, and the power to do it, to a more junior worker. It frees the manager's time, develops staff, and motivates them.



Delegation passes the task and authority down; accountability stays up

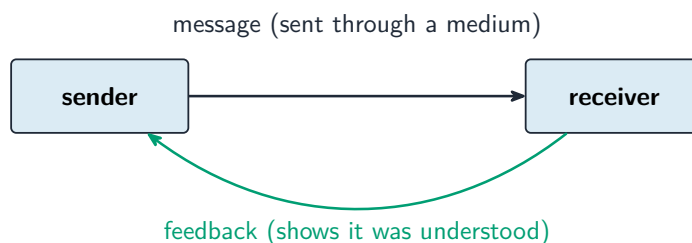
But a manager who delegates is still **accountable** — the **accountability** 问责 for the result stays with them. So managers must delegate to people they trust, and still check the outcome.

Worked example. A firm has 5 levels of hierarchy and a span of control of 4. It delays to a span of 8. What changes, and what is the risk? A **wider** span means each manager handles more subordinates, so **fewer managers** are needed at each level and the structure becomes **flatter and wider**. Communication improves, because a message now passes through fewer levels, and the wage bill falls. The risks are real too: each manager now supervises 8 people instead of 4, so there is **less time per subordinate** and weaker control; workloads rise; and the staff who remain lose **promotion rungs**, which can demotivate. Link the span of control to the **number of levels** - for the same workforce, a wider span always gives a flatter structure - and present the trade-off as speed and cost against control and supervision.

Business communication

Communication 沟通 is the passing of a message from one person to another. Effective communication follows a clear path:

- a **sender** 发送者 has a message.
- the message is sent through a **medium** 媒介 (e.g. a meeting, email or notice).
- a **receiver** 接收者 takes in the message.
- **feedback** 反馈 shows the message was understood.



The message flows from sender to receiver, and feedback confirms it was understood

Good communication raises motivation, cuts mistakes, and speeds up decisions. Methods can be verbal (spoken), written, or visual; the best method depends on the message, the cost, and the need for a record.

Barriers to communication

A **barrier** 障碍 is anything that stops a message getting through clearly. Common barriers are:

- a message that is too long or unclear.
- a poor medium (e.g. a noisy phone line).
- too many levels in the hierarchy, so the message is changed on the way.
- language or cultural differences, and lack of trust.

To improve communication, a firm can shorten the chain of command, choose the right medium, keep messages short and clear, and always ask for feedback.

Leadership styles



Leaders set direction and motivate people, which shapes the whole organisation.

A **leadership style** 领导风格 is the way a **leader** 领导 makes decisions and treats staff. Four styles are:

Style	How decisions are made
autocratic 专制型	the leader decides alone and tells staff what to do
democratic 民主型	the leader asks staff for ideas before deciding
paternalistic 家长式	the leader decides, but in what they see as the staff's best interests
laissez-faire 放任型	the leader gives staff freedom to decide for themselves



The styles form a continuum: autocratic keeps all control with the leader, while laissez-faire gives staff the most freedom

No style is always best. The right one depends on the task, the staff, and the time available — an urgent crisis may need an autocratic style, while skilled staff may work best under a democratic or laissez-faire one.

Emotional intelligence and leading change

Emotional intelligence 情商 is a leader's skill in understanding their own and other people's feelings, and managing them well. Leaders with high emotional intelligence build trust and handle conflict better.

This matters most when **leading change**. People often resist change because they fear losing their job or status. A good leader explains why the change is needed, involves staff, and supports them through it.

Hard and soft HRM

There are two broad approaches to **human resource management** 人力资源管理 (HRM):

- **hard HRM** 硬性人力资源管理 treats staff as a resource like any other — to be used at the lowest cost. It uses tight control and short-term contracts.
- **soft HRM** 软性人力资源管理 treats staff as the firm's most valuable asset — to be developed and motivated. It uses training, involvement and long-term careers.

Both link to **workforce planning** 人力规划: working out the staff the firm will need, and how to get them.

Employer-employee relations and trade unions

The **management of change** 变革管理 works best when **employer-employee relations** 劳资关系 (the link between bosses and workers) are good.

A **trade union** 工会 is an organised group of workers that speaks for its members. Through **collective bargaining** 集体谈判, the union and the employer negotiate pay and conditions for the whole group, instead of one worker at a time. If talks fail, workers may take **industrial action** 劳工行动, such as a **strike** 罢工 (stopping work). Good relations and fair negotiation avoid this and keep the business running.

Exam tips

- Read an **organisation chart**: span of control, chain of command and levels of hierarchy.
- Compare **tall vs flat** structures and **centralisation vs decentralisation** (tight control vs local responsiveness).
- Distinguish **hard vs soft HRM** (workers as a cost versus as an asset).
- Explain how **trade unions** and good communication shape employer-employee relations.