

The Doctrine or Principle of Completed Staff Work

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Military origins completed staff work

- According to record the doctrine of “completed staff work” has its origins the US Military at the beginning of the 20th century.
- According to the classic model the general had a staff officer – this officer was responsible to provide completed staff work, to set the hands of the leader free to focus on his prime responsibilities. The general was to rely completely on his staff officer entrusted with supportive functions.
- “Completed staff work” is the study of a problem, and presentation of a solution, by a staff member, in such form that all that remains to be done for the commander is to indicate approval or disapproval of the completed action.

Completed Staff Work – Historical background

- A memorandum written by Brigadier General George A. Rehm, executive officer for the G-3, Operations section, for General MacArthur's headquarters in the Southwest Pacific Area during World War II dated September 28, 2009 contains one of the first recorded descriptions of the principle of completed staff work.
- It is considered essential to understand the military approach in this regard.

Source:

<https://coupdetodd.wordpress.com/2009/09/28/the-doctrine-of-completed-staff-work/> Obtained on the internet on 21 September 2018

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“ 1. The doctrine of “completed staff work” is a doctrine of this office.

2. “Completed staff work” is the study of a problem, and presentation of a solution, by a staff member, in such form that all that remains to be done on the part of the commander is to indicate approval or disapproval of the completed action.

The words “completed action” are emphasized because the more difficult the problem is, the more the tendency is to present the problem to the commander in a piecemeal fashion.

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- It is your duty as a staff member to work out the details. You should not consult your commander in the determination of those details, no matter how perplexing they may be.
- You may and should consult other staff members.
- The product, whether it involves the pronouncement of a new policy or affects an established one, when presented to the commander for approval or disapproval, must be worked out in a final / finished form.

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3. The impulse, which often comes to the inexperienced staff officer is to ask the commander what to do, recurs more often when the problem is difficult. It is accompanied by a feeling of mental frustration.

It is easy to ask the commander what to do, and it appears too easy for the commander to answer. That impulse must be resisted. You will succumb to it only if you do not know your job.

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4. Do not bother your commander with long explanations and memos. Writing a memo to your commander does not constitute completed staff work. But writing a memo for your commander to send to someone else does.

Your views should be placed before the commander in finished form so that the commander can make them his / her views simply by signing the document.

In most instances, completed staff work results in a single document prepared for the signature of the commander without accompanying comment. If the proper result is reached, the commander will usually recognize it at once. If the commander wants comment or explanation, he will ask for it.

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5. The “completed staff work” theory does not preclude a rough draft, but the rough draft must not be a half-baked idea. It must be complete in every respect except that it lacks the requisite number of copies and need not be neat.

But a rough draft must not be an excuse for shifting to the commander the burden of formulating the action.

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6. The completed staff work theory may result in more work for the staff member but it results in more freedom for the commander. This is as it should be. Further, it accomplishes two things:

- a. The commander is protected from half-baked ideas, voluminous memos, and immature oral presentations.
- b. The staff member who has a real idea to sell is enabled more readily to find a market.

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7. When you have finished your completed staff work the final test is this:

- If you were the commander would you be willing to sign the paper you have prepared, and stake your professional reputation on its being right?
- If the answer is no, take it back and work it over, because it is not yet "completed staff work."

Completed Staff Work

role in the modern day work environment

The Completed Staff Work doctrine principle has an important role to play in the modern-day business management model

Applying the Completed Staff Work approach will

ensure effective support for senior management.

more effective job performances

a positive and progressive work environment with a more professional output – products and service

development of the managerial skills of personnel

What is “completed staff work”

The words “completed action” are emphasized because the more difficult the problem is, the more the tendency is to present the problem to the commander in a piecemeal fashion.

The test for Completed Staff Work

- The test for real completed staff work is whether the leader (boss) will put their signature on your recommendation / proposal – will they be prepared to put their professional reputation on the line with your product?
- If necessary provide the boss with suggestions from which he / she can choose.
- If the boss is not prepared to put their signature on your proposal – go back and find the solutions.

Approach to Complete Staff Work in a regular environment

- You were hired because of your competence (knowledge, experience, skills, aptitude and attitude).
- Unless you work for a authoritarian who makes all the decisions, you are expected to demonstrate competence by fulfilling their requirements
- supporting your boss in making her or his decisions.
- Clear and unambiguous instructions are essential.

Approach to Complete Staff Work in a regular environment

- Make sure that you have a thorough understanding of your task - if possible give a brief description of your understanding of your assignment
- Probing the instructions must focus on the product or service required and not on how to do it – that is your responsibility
- Once you are executing the instructions you want to limit further back and forth questioning of the boss

Complete Staff Work

Sensible and concise questions at the outset to clarify possibly unclear aspects will be advisable

Sharp analytical thinking and effective probing of the instructions are essential

Come back with a list of things you have looked at and then question your boss about what to do next?

Present a handful of solutions and a horde of detail and then consider your work done?

If any of these moves are typical of your approach, you're not doing your job effectively. Your work is not complete.

The quality professional's role in Completed Staff Work

- If you are a quality professional, it is your job to advise your manager on what to do.
- Completed staff work relieves a manager from reading through voluminous data, from rejecting ill-advised suggestions and from accepting the monkey on his or her back.

Completed Staff Work Summary

Define the problem or issue	The way things are. Describe the issue – what needs to be done
Collect and Analyse Data	The way things ought to be. Analyse the issue to determine the needs in detail
Form assumptions	Conditions we can't verify
Develop alternatives	Ways in which the problem or issue can be addressed / solved
Select best alternative(s)	The clinching argument: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outline of pros and cons• Consideration of letdowns• A decision matrix if it will clarify the issue
Submit for approval	Best alternative, recommend to the decision maker along with an explanation of why you chose it above the others. <small>18</small>