



# WORLD OF WORKING WOMEN

## Carrying Out Orders When You're In the Middle

As a manager, you may sometimes find yourself caught between your staff on the one hand and your boss on the other. Where do your loyalties lie? Who deserves your support and effort more? No situation more clearly or more frustratingly illustrates this than when your own boss gives you an order to carry out that, in your opinion, shows poor judgment.

You don't agree with that order, but if you refuse, you'll be in trouble. On the other hand, if you do carry it out, you'll get trouble from below. Your staff will always recognize when an order doesn't make good sense. Worse, if it appears to come from you or you carry it out blindly, they'll transfer their feelings about the injudicious order into a personal assessment of you. To leave that kind of impression uncorrected can only spell management disaster.

The repercussions of this awkward situation can travel upward as well. If you carry out an order that has a negative impact on your organization, not only will your staff think less of you, but so will your boss's boss—and

other higher-ups you may want to impress. They may see the situation as a test of your judgment, your diplomacy, and your innate survival skills.

So what's a manager to do?

Your best role is one of intermediary. Put some distance between yourself and the order, but remain neutral in your attitude. Don't badmouth your boss as the source. Also make it clear that, however you may question the order, you don't have the power to either change or ignore it. Talk at length to your boss to find out his or her reasoning, then convey these reasons to your people. In return, get your staff's reactions and suggestions and pass these along upward.

In the end, the order may still not be one you're entirely comfortable with, and you may still have to see it carried out. But at least you'll have emerged with your dignity, reputation, and managerial authority intact.

(Source: *Women As Managers*,  
The Economics Press, Inc.)



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## Plan Your Week In 30 Minutes

Experts say that you need only 30 minutes to plan your entire week. How to do it? Follow the OATS formula.

- O: Objectives.** What results do you want to see by the end of the week? Write them down and rank them.
- A: Activities.** What do you have to do to achieve your goals? List the necessary activities, and put them in sequence.
- T: Time.** How much time will each activity require? To plan realistically, allow yourself more time than you think you will actually need. This gives you flexibility if unexpected problems develop.
- S: Schedule.** Look at your calendar and decide when you can do each activity. Most people underestimate the power of a schedule, but you won't get anything accomplished if you don't schedule time to do it.

(Adapted from *President's Newsletter*)



## The Role of Secretary Through the Ages

The word "secretary" ultimately comes from the same Latin word that gave us "secret." Originally, it meant "one entrusted with the secrets and confidences of a superior."

In Middle English it was *secretarie* and in Middle Latin it was *secretarius*. The word "secretary," in something close to its present meaning, has been with us for at least 500 years.

**In France, from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century:** The word "*secrétaire*" meant a confidant. It also became an administrative term meaning "someone who transcribes or arranges for another."

**Earliest use:** Probably the earliest use of the word was in relation to those people who acted for a king. A king would have his trusted agents handle correspondence on private or secret matters, particularly matters of state.

**18<sup>th</sup> century:** The English lexicographer Samuel Jackson, in his 1755 dictionary, quotes Shakespeare, who wrote in early 17<sup>th</sup> century, "Call Gardiner to me, my new secretary." There is also a quotation from the English philosopher Francis Bacon, a contemporary of Shakespeare: "That which is most profitable is acquaintance with secretaries and employed men, of ambassadors." Johnson described a secretary as "one entrusted with the management of business; one who writes for another."

**By 1806:** Noah Webster succinctly described a secretary as "one who writes for another."

(Source: *First Draft*, April 2009, Lawrence Ragan Communications, Inc.)