Center for Strategy & Leadership

11. Control Panel

How can I control what people in my organization do?

Key Definitions

To be *in control* is to have the ability to steer the organization in any desired direction. The *controls* are the specific mechanisms used to do the steering. Some controls are formally assigned to certain people (*hard controls*), while other controls can be informally acquired over time by personal effort (*soft controls*).

Controls give someone power over others, reducing the others' autonomy to do as they see fit. In other words, the more control, the less others are empowered to steer themselves. This tension between steering and self-steering is called the *paradox of control and empowerment*.

Conceptual Model

The *Control Panel* summarizes the four main hard controls available to managers to steer the behavior of others. For each of these levers of control, the model suggests that a manager can decide how much control to exert, somewhere along a continuum between high control and high empowerment. All four controls have been brought together in one control panel to visualize that managers need to take an integrated view of how they use their hard controls, as the people being controlled will feel the cumulative pressure of all four slides impinging on their autonomy to make their own decisions.
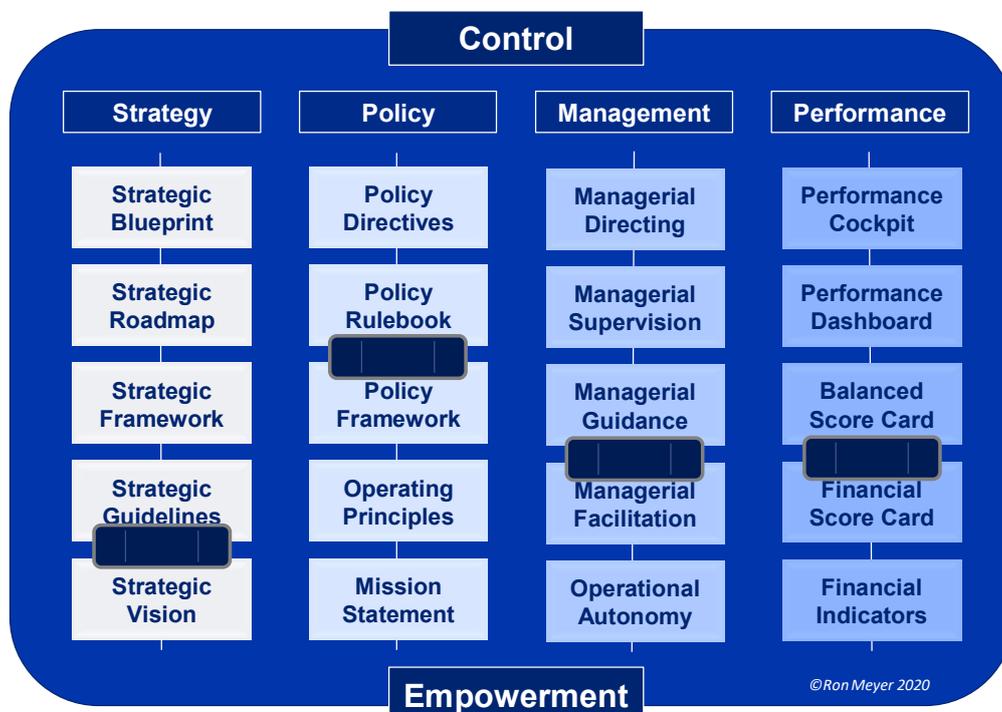
Key Elements

The four slides of the Control Panel can be found on the following dimensions:

1. ***Strategy***. Control can be exerted by determining the strategy that needs to be followed. This strategy can range from very broad (high empowerment) to very specific (high control):

a. *Strategic vision.* Only giving a rough sketch of a desired long-term future.

b. *Strategic guidelines*. Offering general strategic principles to give people guidance.

c. *Strategic framework*. Determining a broad outline of objectives and initiatives.

d. *Strategic roadmap*. Specifying a general plan with targets, actions and roles.

e. *Strategic blueprint*. Imposing a comprehensive plan detailing almost all activities.

2. **Policy**. Control can also be exerted by establishing the policies to which people must comply. These rules of engagement can again range from very broad to very specific:

a. *Mission statement.* Only outlining the organizational purpose, values and beliefs.

b. *Operating principles.* Setting general ground rules to give people guidance.

c. *Policy framework*. Stipulating an organizational constitution for all to live by.

d. *Policy rulebook*. Spelling out regulations to which people need to adhere.

e. *Policy directives*. Laying down detailed protocols for people to strictly follow.

3. **Management.** While control can be exerted ahead of time by setting strategy and/or policy, control can also be maintained in real time by direct managerial intervention:

a. *Operational autonomy.* Deciding to fully empower and not intervene at all.

b. *Managerial facilitation.* Indirectly steering by creating helpful conditions.

c. *Managerial guidance.* Giving occasional coaching, feedback and suggestions.

d. *Managerial supervision.* Determining which activities to do and following progress.

e. *Managerial directing.* Instructing what needs to be done and how.

4. **Performance**. Control can also be exerted by setting performance objectives and checking whether they have been met. The key performance indicators employed can differ widely:

a. *Financial indicators.* Only setting a few financial targets to be reached.

b. *Financial scorecard.* Outlining a broader range of financial indicators to be met.

c. *Balanced scorecard*. Defining key indicators in a number of core areas.

d. *Performance dashboard*. Establishing key indicators for all activities.

e. *Performance cockpit*. Detailing extensive indicators for all activities.

Key Insights

- **Control is about steering**. Management control is about the power to steer other people. Managers must consider where and how much they need to steer to achieve their aims. There is no right or wrong type or level of control, but only controls that are fit for purpose.

- **Managers have four hard controls**. Due to their formal position, managers have four types of control at their disposal: They can set strategies to follow, determine policies to comply with, define performance to be achieved and intervene on a day-to-day basis.

- **Each control comes with a slider**. On each of the four control dimensions, managers can choose for tight or loose control, by moving an imaginary slider up or down. The choice of how tight to control will depend on the person and the situation, and can change over time.

- **Control comes at the expense of empowerment**. Yet, tighter control leads to a loss of empowerment of the other. Managers must therefore consciously weigh how they want to strike a balance between control and empowerment.

- **Controls are experienced cumulatively**. The Control Panel visualizes that management control must be considered from an integrative perspective, because for the person being controlled it feels like the four dimensions are being stacked on top of one another, creating a heavy weight to carry. For managers this means picking their controls selectively.

Meyer's Management Models
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Publication Schedule

July 2019	*Mind the Gap Model*	*Change Management*
August 2019	*Digital Platform Map*	*Digital Strategy*
September 2019	*Interaction Pressure Gauge*	*Interpersonal Interaction*
October 2019	*Revenue Model Framework*	*Revenue Model Typology*
November 2019	*House of Engagement*	*Organizational Engagement*
December 2019	*Confidence Quotient*	*Trust Building*
January 2020	*Competition Tornado*	*Competitive Strategy*
February 2020	*11C Synergy Model*	*Corporate Synergy Management*
March 2020	*Leadership Fairness Model*	*Leader-Follower Interaction*
April 2020	*Strategic Agility Model*	*Strategy Process Approach*
May 2020	*Control Panel*	*Corporate Control Dimensions*
June 2020	Rising Star Framework	Talent Management
July 2020	Strategy Development Cycle	Strategy Process Steps
August 2020	7I Roles of the Corporate Center	Corporate Organization
September 2020	Deft Dialogue Model	Interpersonal Communication
October 2020	Digital Business Model Dials	Digital Strategy
November 2020	Fruits & Nuts Matrix	Priority-Setting
December 2020	Story-Telling Scripts	Leadership Communication
January 2021	Corporate Value Creation Model	Corporate Level Strategy
February 2021	Innovation Box	Innovation Approaches
March 2021	Empowerment Cycle	Employee Empowerment
April 2021	Partnership Distance Model	Interorganizational Relations