

## Day-to-Day Management

Chapter One introduced you to the manager's roles as visionary and leader and as day-to-day manager and administrator. This chapter provides further explanation and detail about the manager's functions in running the market. The functions of a manager, with some overlap, includes analyst, goal-setter, organizer, decision-maker, communicator, and evaluator. Each of those roles occurs to some

extent as you carry out others; for example, in your role as organizer you certainly need to communicate and when you set goals you must analyze and evaluate. In this chapter we bring each of those different roles to the foreground so that you can see how each contributes to your success as a manager.

**This chapter will enable you to:**

- ▶ **Understand the many functions of the farmers market manager.**
- ▶ **Add to the strategies and techniques you use in each function.**

### The Manager as Analyst

As a farmers market manager, you must be able to think critically and, at times, ask difficult questions. Your vision of the ideal farmers market must be grounded in practical and realistic terms. The simplest solution is not always the best so do not be afraid to ask questions and rethink your original plans. Some

questions to keep in mind whenever you are trying to accomplish something new or reflecting on recent events include:

- What can we do to make this situation better?
- What have we overlooked?
- Does everyone have the resources they need to accomplish the task?
- Do we have a backup plan in case something goes wrong?



Taking time to critically analyze and revise your plans will support actions that better fit into your big picture rather than detract from it.

### The Manager as Goal-Setter

Every organization has goals that it is trying to achieve and every manager is responsible in some part for setting them. Well-defined goals are critical for provid-

ing direction and purpose to an organization. You cannot achieve something if you cannot see it, and goals are the lanterns lighting the way. They not only help you see where you are going; they help you measure how far you have come. Goals help clarify individuals' roles in an organization, identify tasks that need to be accomplished, and articulate the vision of the organization to others.

### Setting Goals

Whether you are setting the goals for the entire organization or working with a diverse group of board and community members, setting goals is an important process in determining the future direction of your market. Following are some things to consider when setting goals.



### Keep Your Goals Simple

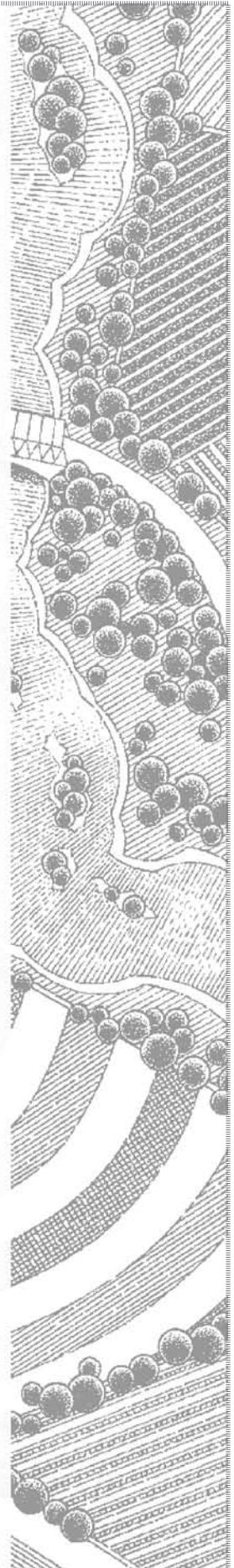
Simple goals can be understood by everyone involved in the organization. They are clear and unambiguous. If the goal you have in mind takes more than one sentence to state, you probably are trying to describe multiple goals. If this is the case, break your idea into single, one-sentence goals. Goals should be specific statements about what you want to achieve. Following are examples of clear, well-defined goals:

- Increase the number of customers at the market by 10 percent by next year.
- Find two new sponsors for our market by Christmas.

Notice that these goals have specific timelines and numbers that can be measured. If your goals are too vague, you will have difficulty working toward them or knowing when they have been accomplished.

### Limit the Number of Goals

Having too many goals is as bad as not having any. An extensive list of goals will only detract energy from the focus of making real progress in your organization. Pick two or three goals that have the greatest relevance to your organization and work on accomplishing those.





### Take Small Steps to Reach Big Goals

It is important to break big goals into small steps. For example, you may want to reach the goal of increasing your number of customers by 10 percent in the next year. That may seem like an overwhelming task without a plan for how to get there. By breaking that goal down into smaller, more easily accomplished steps, however, you can begin to understand your progress toward the goal and know when you eventually will reach it.

### Link Goals to the Roles and Responsibilities of Individuals

It does little good to define goals that no one has the time or resources to achieve. Make sure that the goals you set for your organization fit with the responsibilities of the people working with you. Otherwise, they soon are forgotten or pushed aside.

### Revisit and Revise

Periodically look back to your goals and assess your progress toward achieving them. Goals should be flexible enough that you can modify them as situations and environments change. If the goals you first set do not address the reality of your market, do not be afraid to change them. They should help you, not hold you back.

### Communicate Your Goals

Once you have identified your goals, everyone involved in your organization needs to be made aware of them. Communicating your goals will help get others to commit to them. Have one-on-one meetings with people to inform them of the significance of the goals. Get people excited about what you are trying to accomplish. If a goal requires a team effort, have a meeting with the entire team to plan and discuss the project. Well-defined, relevant goals help create a shared vision of the organization, so use them to your advantage.

If your goals require work to be done by others, assign specific projects with clearly understood timelines. Explaining the overall vision of the project will help get people committed to it. By outlining specific tasks, you help others understand



their roles in making the vision happen in a way that is manageable. Make sure that people are clear about what their responsibilities are before sending them off to do the job. Finally, in subsequent days or weeks, monitor their progress. Provide positive feedback as well as constructive criticism when you can to encourage continued performance on the project.

### The Manager as Organizer

Much of your time is spent organizing—organizing yourself and organizing the work of others.

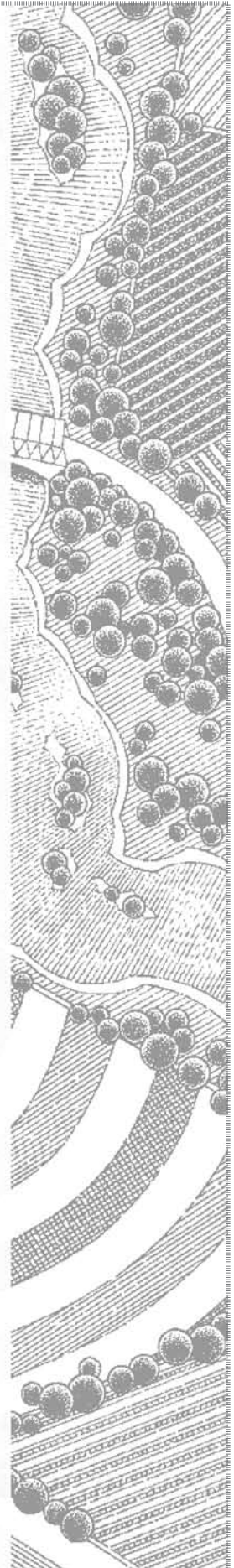
#### Getting Yourself Organized

Before you can effectively organize other people and coordinate something as complex as a farmers market, you must first get yourself organized. Knowing exactly what your roles and responsibilities are—and, more importantly, how you are going to accomplish them—will make your job much easier and make your goals more attainable.

**Manage your time.** One of the most difficult and essential elements of being organized is managing your time. Chances are you spend more time than you realize doing things that are not top priorities for your job: getting interrupted by phone calls, shuffling through endless emails, coordinating parts of an event that other people could do just as easily. If, as nineteenth-century economist Vilfredo Pareto theorized, most people spend 20 percent of their effort accomplishing 80 percent of their job, where does the rest of their effort go? Chapter Thirteen offers some helpful tips for learning to effectively manage your time.

**Prioritize your responsibilities.** Another tool to help you get organized is to prioritize the tasks associated with your job. Which activities are the most important? Which are most urgent? Which ones can wait for a few days until things slow down? Try to identify what must be done and which tasks are just not that important. Remember, someone else's crisis is not necessarily your crisis. Poor planning or lack of foresight on their part may not be your fault. Do not let someone else's problems distract you from what is most important for you to accomplish to effectively do your job.

**Keep your desk organized.** As simple as it may seem, having an organized work space will make it easier for you to get your work done. When the phone rings and someone wants to know who is performing at your





market next week, do you have the schedule nearby? Can you find things easily when you need them? Take time to create a system for filing your paperwork, stacking your bills, and keeping track of appointments. Get a day planner or desk calendar on which you can keep track of meetings and make notes so you know what you have coming up in the near future. Make sure this system works for you—it does no good if you cannot remember how it works or spend more time organizing your desk than doing your work.

**Set clear boundaries.** Because you are responsible for making the market function, you most likely have people coming to you all the time asking you to solve problems and make decisions. It is easy to get distracted from what you are doing to answer a question or do something else that is “more urgent.” To effectively manage time, however, try to keep interruptions to a minimum when you work on a complex project. Make sure that other people know your availability, both while you are in the office and once you leave. It is okay to turn your pager off when you are not at work and not take phone calls at home past a certain hour in the evening. Set clear boundaries on your time and make sure people respect them. This will save your energy for the times you are actually on the clock.

### Organizing Others

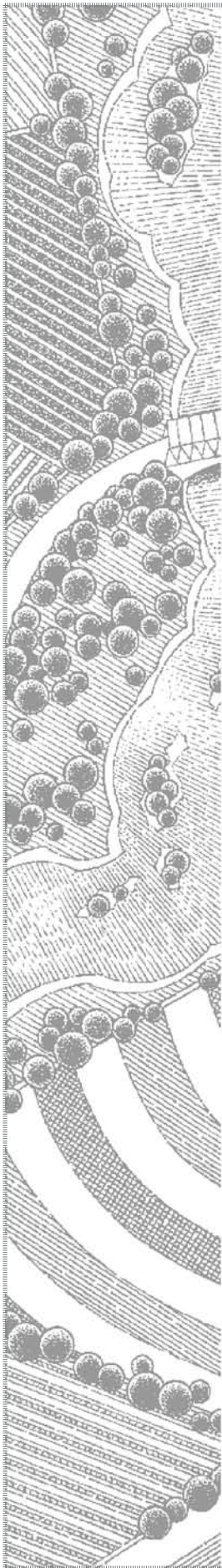
One of your primary roles as manager is to organize the activities and responsibilities of the people with whom you work. Doing this effectively requires strong organizational and planning skills and the ability to see how individual people and available resources fit together to accomplish the goals of the organization. It requires both that “big picture” thinking and critical analysis of little details to make the market a success.

**Determine Tasks.** Before you can lead other people in the direction, you must know what steps need to be taken to accomplish the market’s goals and objectives. You need to have a clear idea of what tasks need to be done and the deadlines for each job. Some will be short-term, one-time projects. Others will be long term and complex. Make lists if this helps you identify everything that must be done.



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The following questions are useful to consider when trying to organize tasks:

- What are we going to do?
- Who will do what? Who does it involve?
- Why must we do it? What will happen if we do not do it?
- When does it start? When does it end?
- Where will it take place?
- How will it take place?

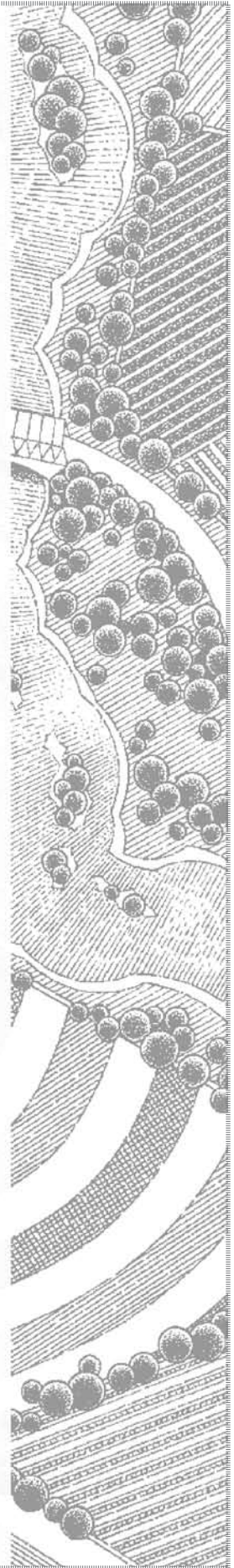


**Assess your resources.** Now that you know what needs to be done, you have to figure out what resources are available to accomplish it. Assessing your resources includes identifying the skills and strengths offered by people with whom you work and determining whether the financial and material resources are available. To do this, think about all the details involved in the project, including:

- How much support does the project require?
- What is the timeline?
- What types of equipment will be needed?
- Who is the best person or group of people to do this job?
- How will the project be coordinated?
- How will the project be monitored?

You may find that you need to modify or scale back a project based on the resources that are currently available. Taking time to assess all the details of a project make it more likely that your goals actually will get accomplished rather than be forgotten or buried under a huge pile of other things to do.

**Set up a structure to accomplish all tasks.** When you are sure that you have the resources to get the job done, set priorities and assign someone to do each of the tasks you have identified. Whether you are the one who will do most of these things or you have a large number of people working with you, you need to be organized about how things get done and keep track of progress along the way. Chapter Fourteen discusses the process of delegating tasks in more detail.





## The Manager as Decision-Maker

As a manager, you make decisions every day. When people have questions regarding the market, they most likely will look to you for answers. Some decisions are easy to make and require little effort on your part. At times, however, you will be faced with the task of making really difficult decisions. Some managers postpone making such decisions for fear of making the wrong decision. Or they wait for situations to work themselves out instead of taking decisive action. But remember, part of the reason you were hired as manager was to make those tough decisions and to facilitate discussion about difficult situations. How you handle this responsibility will affect how you are perceived by those with whom you work. This does not mean you should make instant decisions whenever someone asks you a question so that you seem decisive. Nor does it mean ordering people around and acting like a dictator. Strong managers include other people in the decision-making process and encourage new ideas and different solutions from others.

Take some time to think about the following questions. They will help you reflect on the way decisions are made in your organization.

- Are decisions being made by the people most affected by the decision?
- Are all the major points of view (consumers, vendors, the community, the board) represented?
- How is the decision-making process spelled out?
- Are decision-makers democratically chosen?
- Is the organization hierarchical or more lateral?



At times, the decision-making process can be difficult. It is perhaps one of the biggest challenges managers face. Following are some considerations to keep in mind when faced with making difficult decisions.

### Seek Input

While you may have a great deal of information about a particular problem or circumstance, your perspective is not the only one. Talk to other people who may have different views about the situation. Often there are aspects of a situation that you will overlook or are not aware of. Do not be afraid to tap this resource and ask for opinions from coworkers and others. The fact that their opinions may differ from yours does not mean they are wrong. Ultimately, your decision will more accurately reflect reality when it is based on more input and information rather than less.

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On the other hand, do not procrastinate when it comes to the hard work of making the decision by continuing endlessly to gather information and talk to people about the situation. A good manager knows when enough information has been gathered.



In the end, people will be more likely to support your decision if they were included in the decision-making process and understand the reasoning behind the decision.

### Define the Problem

Once you have all the information you need, define the problem in clear terms. It may be that what seems to be the problem is actually a symptom of a larger issue. For example, if some of your vendors are consistently going home without having sold as much as they expected, you at first think that attendance is low and you need to do more to promote the market. After doing some research, however, you realize that the market has reached the maximum potential of its customer base and is unlikely to gain more customers no matter how much you advertise. In this case, the real problem may be that you have too many growers selling similar products. The problem underlying the symptom in this case, then, may be a lack of communication and coordination at planting time and when recruiting vendors.

### Think about Alternative Solutions

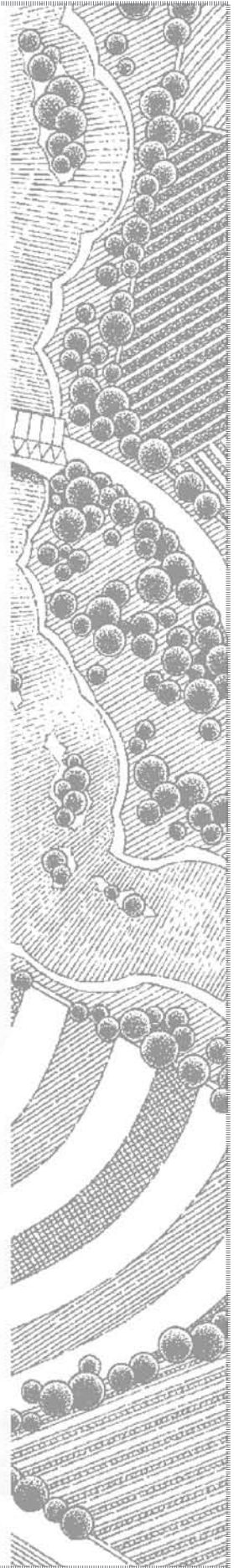
Often there is more than one way to solve a problem or make a decision. Take time to think about various outcomes that will likely result from your decision. Is there a better way to solve this problem? Will this “solution” create a different problem down the road?

### Make a Decision

Once you have clarified the issue, make the decision in a timely manner. Do you remember being frustrated in the past when you asked someone in a position of authority to decide on something and you were kept waiting or the decision was delayed for a long time? People are looking to you for action. If you waffle on an issue, you may be seen as lacking confidence or as not caring about their concerns.

### Explain the Process

If you make a decision that conflicts with another group’s interests, which is bound to happen, make sure that you explain the process you went through to reach





that decision. Just as you may not initially have had all the information required to make a good decision, others may not initially understand the reasoning behind a decision unless you make it clear.

### Evaluate the Results

Finally, do not forget to monitor the outcomes of your decisions. Have you actually solved the problem or just temporarily appeased people? Has the decision-making process itself made other people feel included or excluded? Does something need to be done differently at the next market, next month, or next year to keep the situation from recurring?

### The Manager as Communicator

As the maxim says, "Communication is a two way street." To traverse that street, managers must learn the fine art of listening. Listening means more than simply hearing what other people say. It also entails understanding more subtle signals such as the listener's body language and eye contact. Whether you realize it or not, you listen with more than your ears. A good listener also uses his or her eyes and gut instincts to understand what someone is trying to say. Keep your eyes open, watch peoples' body language, and trust your instincts so you can really hear and, more importantly, understand another.



### Listen

When someone comes to talk to you, stop what you are doing and give them your full attention. Try to put the million other things you have to think about out of your mind. If you continue to work while someone is talking, you send a signal that you are not interested in what they have to say or that they are not worth your time. Do not sit back and yawn as they sit down near you or look around the room while they are talking. Do not answer the phone in the middle of a conversation unless you must. If people think that you are not interested, they will be less likely to talk to you about something in the future. How many times have you heard a manager say, "Why didn't you tell me about this?"

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If you really are too busy at the moment someone wants to talk, say so and establish a time within the next few days to have the conversation. Making a firm appointment shows that you are committed to listening. Do not miss that appointment!

When you listen to someone, look the person in the eye and ask questions if you are not sure about something said. Once you think you understand the person's point, convey it back to make sure that you did not misinterpret what the person said.

### Give Feedback

As the manager of a farmers market, you may feel that the responsibility falls on you to do everything required to make the market work. In reality, however, many people are involved in making the market work. No matter how overwhelmed you may feel at times, particularly on market day, it is important to take time to recognize the contributions of others and to give them feedback on the work they have done.

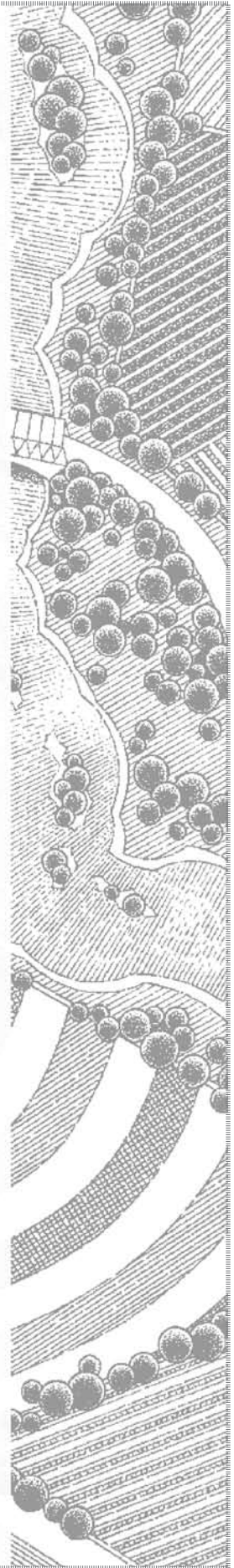
One of the biggest mistakes managers make is failing to recognize the contributions of others. A well-timed "Thanks, that looks great!" or "Hey, Bob, did you see what a good job Linda here did on that sign?" will go a long way toward making people feel valued and appreciated. If you forget to appreciate the people with whom you work, they may just forget to help you next time.

If you have to give negative feedback, which you inevitably will, make it constructive. Do not say "Wow, Joe, that flyer is really ugly. Make another one." Suggest how it could be improved. Encourage the positive aspects of the work and make sure you recognize the effort. Also, resist the urge to take the task away from someone because you think you can do it better. You probably do not have time. A bit of coaching can save you time and get the results you are looking for.

### The Manager as Evaluator

A key step in managing any kind of project or organization is evaluating progress toward the accomplishment of your goals. Big projects are rarely accomplished overnight and they do not happen in one easy step. It is your responsibility to monitor the many activities and individuals that, in total, influence the direction of your market.

Evaluation of programs and people should occur frequently and consistently. This does not mean watching every move that every person makes or calling your volunteers every day to make sure they are doing what you would like. It does mean





checking in with people periodically, asking questions, watching the environment around you, and generally being aware of what is happening.

Following are some questions that you can ask yourself when evaluating your market as a whole or a specific project that is underway to help you monitor progress toward your objectives.

**How much progress has been made toward your goals?** If your organization has clearly defined goals with specific timelines and tasks associated with them, it should be relatively easy to assess the progress that has been made toward meeting them. If you are unable to answer this question, perhaps you need to go back and do some work to better define your goals and initiate a plan to reach them.

**What major problems need to be addressed?** Look around and critically assess the environment. What is not occurring the way you would like? Is morale declining among the vendors? Have you noticed that fewer customers are showing up for the Tuesday market? Keep an eye on things and take note of both subtle and obvious signs of distress or discontent. When you notice something, do not just ignore it and hope it will go away. Address problems early or they will grow.

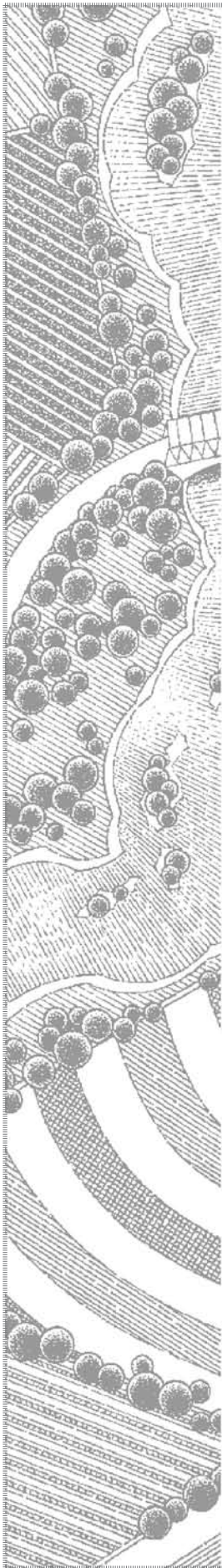


**How are the actual costs comparing to the planned costs?**

Responsible financial management is a key component of running a business. Keep track of how much is being spent on specific projects before you go over budget. Sighting potential financial problems early will help avoid bigger ones down the road.

**What would you do differently if you could?** In addition to looking at the problems or difficulties that your organization faces, you need to be able to offer solutions. If you see something that is not working right, think about how you would improve it and work toward making that happen. If the changes are out of range right now, perhaps because of limited human resources or finances, plan how you can eventually accomplish them.

**What have you learned so far?** Finally, do not forget to take time to learn from your past accomplishments and your past mistakes. You do not need to reinvent the wheel every time you start a project. Being aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your organization will help you to fine-tune the market into a stronger operation.



### Conclusion

This chapter has introduced you to some of the roles and responsibilities of managers as they carry out the day-to-day work of the market. The next section addresses ways to use these and other skills to build relationships with key constituencies of the market—vendors, the board, and customers. Later we provide more detailed descriptions and support for developing specific skills such as communication and time management.

