

# LEDA LAGOM MÅNGA

**Om struktur, kontrollspann och organisationsideal**

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## Leading just the right number

On structure, span of control and organisational ideals

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This book is about the first line managers in care having too many subordinates, too wide a span of control. In connection with reorganisations and economic cutbacks, the public sector has taken on many of the working methods and forms of control that are known to be successful within the private sector. Among other things, flat organisations with few management levels have been sought after. This is understood as improving effectiveness through predetermined paths of decision-making and increased opportunities for the subordinates to assume responsibility and influence in their work. A large number of studies, however, show that both first line managers and their subordinates in flat care organisations think that the managers have far too many subordinates. This applies in particular within care for the elderly and home help services, which is why first line managers in home help services have been selected as the object of study.

The aim of this study is to identify the factors that significantly affect how many subordinates a first line manager within home-help service can manage and thus give a deeper insight into and development of earlier span of control theory. Earlier span of control theory says that functional multitude, time and stability, size and room, as well as production system affect the number of subordinates a first line manager can manage.

The study shows that the sought-after new organisational ideal with flat organisations, predetermined paths of decision-making and opportunities for the subordinates to assume individual responsibility and influence in their work does not work within home-help service. Neither the organisations nor the subordinates are prepared for this. The superiors demand that the organisations should be flat but home-help service is still directed and controlled through hierarchical structures. The new organisational ideal also builds upon another rationale, the technically limited rationale, compared with the work in home-help service that builds upon the responsibility and care rationale. The new ideal presupposes that the first line managers should be leaders and that their subordinates should be co-workers with individual responsibility. The first line manager's should, according to the new ideal, motivate and affect their subordinates to assume increasingly greater responsibility for the development of the organization. The subordinates, however, are not aware that they should assume greater responsibility; instead they expect that the first line manager should direct and lead the work. The organisation is not prepared for the new ideal. Nor are the subordinates prepared for the individual responsibility that is expected of them. They are more group-oriented than individual-oriented. The individual responsibility they are ready to accept is directed toward the care recipients and not toward the organization.

The conclusion of the study, therefore, is apart from the factors that were the subject of earlier research, the subordinates' expectations of the manager's leadership style, the readiness in the organisation and the rationale that the activity builds upon are also factors that affect how many subordinates a first line manager can manage.

**Key Words:** Span of control, first line manager, subordinate, work organisation, organisation structure, organisation ideal, flat organisation, public administration, elderly care, home help service