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**GENERAL MANAGERS IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC: Managerial
Behaviour and the Impact of Culture on Decision Making in the
Island Nations of the South Pacific**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management, University of Auckland, New Zealand, 1991.

Abstract

This research is concerned with the way in which general managers work in the island nations of the South Pacific: what they do, how they make policy decisions and manage the various resources of their organization. It looks particularly at the impact of their culture on management decision making. A literature review revealed that until recently most of the research work on managers was done in the west. In recent years there has been a proliferation of research on Japanese management practices and the decision making styles of Japanese managers. However, there is little research on managers and management in developing countries, and hardly any on managers and management in the South Pacific island nations. This was dramatically evident when a computer search was completed early in this study. There were thousands of references available on managers and management. As more key words were included the number of references declined. Eventually when 'the South Pacific' was added there was a blank. The South Pacific is very much virgin territory when it comes to research information and data on managers and management. The question 'what do managers do?' appears simple but is difficult to answer. The traditional view of the manager's job comes from the classical school of writers who describe their work in terms of a composite of functions. Fayol defined it in terms of five basic managerial functions- planning, organizing, coordinating, commanding and controlling. In the 1930s Gulick introduced the concept of POSDCORB. Among later empirical works one of the most comprehensive studies on managers has been by Mintzberg who defines a manager's job under its distinguishing characteristics, the working roles, the variations in the manager's job, and the scientific nature of work. In this study the general manager's work has been examined by gathering data from in-depth interviews and observations of twenty general managers/chief executives from the South Pacific region. Four general managers each from Fiji, Western Samoa, Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Tonga were observed and interviewed for a week each over a seven month period and the results of the study are reported in this thesis. The study revealed that the work of general managers in the South Pacific islands is fragmented and they are engaged in a lot of activities

with short duration. Furthermore routine administrative functions consume much of the chief executive's time, while little time and attention is devoted to planning and development work. The various indigenous South Pacific cultures are not supportive of managers, management and businesses in their endeavour to be successful and progressive. The cultures are conservative and generally do not want change, at least rapid change, and wish to preserve and maintain their culture and way of life.

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Abbreviations

A\$	Australian dollar (currency for Kiribati)
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
F\$	Fijian dollar
GNP	Gross National Product
MNC	Multinational Corporation
SPARTECA	South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement
S\$	Solomon Island dollar
T\$	Tongan dollar (pa'anga)
USP	University of the South Pacific
US\$	United States dollar
WS\$	Western Samoan dollar (tala)
WSTEC	Western Samoa Trust Estate Corporation