

TRAINING OF MANAGERS – SUPPORT FOR EXERTING A STRATEGIC EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT

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Abstract:

Managers are an important component of human resources in a company, bringing a decisive contribution to the establishment and achievement of company's objectives.

In managerial training a special role is played by the change of ideas and experiences with managers from economic environments with different degrees of development, facing with the same type of problems, by holding round tables and seminars. These events may be important opportunities for the Romanian managers to get in direct contact with all the novelties at international level of improving their own knowledge and skills.

In the context of global development of economy the roles and tasks assigned to managers of corporations have changed as well. Consequently, at present the success of an enterprise depends decisively on the managers' quality.

Key words: managers, performance, leadership, development, emotional intelligence

JEL classification: M10, M12

1. INTRODUCTION

Managers are an extremely important component of human resources in a company, their contribution to the establishment and achievement of the company's objectives being obviously essential. In the literature, the definitions given to the manager or managing framework by remarkable specialists differ, two approaches being mainly taken into consideration: (Nicolescu, 2004)

- the first one includes in the category of managers not only the so-called managing staff but also specialized people; this is the approach Peter Drucker opts for;
- the second approach analyzes the functions held by managers within organizations and emphasizes that the area of competences, tasks and responsibilities assigned to managers is higher as compared to that of doers.

Together with the global development of economy, the roles and tasks of managers of corporations have changed as well. Lately, in western economies, competition is focused on corporative strategies and on operational excellence as well, which is based on department managers' promotion who know the company very well and are capable of putting successfully their knowledge into practice. Consequently, at present, the success of an enterprise depends decisively on *managers' quality* (Coates, 1997).

Although there is in the literature a multitude of opinions on the factors influencing the efficiency of management, two approaches draw especially the attention: the strategic-economic conception exposed by Michael Porter, in the work *Competitive Advantage*, and the approach of managerial style made by Peters and Waterman in the work *Search of Excellence*.

Thus, Michael Porter in *Competitive Advantage* considers that industrial profitability is essentially determined by five forces (suppliers, new market competitors, existing competitors, buyers and supplanters) whose power differs at industrial level. Also, this author analyzes the positions held by the companies carrying on their activity in the same industrial areas, by specifying the generic strategies used by managers to obtain the competitive advantage. But the experience of these companies has shown that generic strategies have influence the Western managerial practice as managers were encouraged to develop uni-dimensional strategies and neglected the role of operational excellence as an important means of creating the competitive advantage (Porter, 1990)

Peters and Waterman, in the work *Search of Excellence*, analyze the employees' importance of motivation, managers' role and functioning of real feed-back in an organization. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for department managers to understand the employees' role in the achievement of operational excellence.

The approach of human resources implies giving special attention to the particularities of human resources within modern organizations: (Nicolescu, coord, 2004):

- Human resources are the organization, being one of the most important investments of an organization;
- Human resources are unique as regards their growth potential;
- Managerial decisions on human resources are difficult. Special attention should be given to moral and ethics principles which lead to the understanding and promotion of an ethical managerial behavior so as the managerial decisions in the field of human resources not influence directly the employees' activity. Thus, managers must underlie the decisional process on ethical behavior, which involves in the relationships with the employees the following aspects: correct and equitable treatment, honesty-based communication, responsibility towards the organization, law abidance.
- Human resources are an essential human potential to be determined, motivated and trained to get totally involved in the achievement of organizational objectives;
- Human resources are resistant to change, though in various situations have high adaptability.

2. HIGH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT-MANAGERIAL INSTRUMENT

Performance management is a continuous and flexible process which has in view the continuous growth of performance, by creating a shared vision on the organization's goals and objectives, involving both managers and employees in achieving the results aimed at. (Fletcher, 1993).

The work at high level management has in view a multitude of processes being reciprocally inter-conditioned and having a major impact on the organization individual's performance. „The improvement of skills and the catch of employees' enthusiasm", motivational factors, learning processes that must take place at all levels, have the role of mobilizing the employees towards the achievement of visible progress. (Stevens, 1998).

Modern organizations must conceive and formulate their strategies in such a way that the development of a high performance culture be stimulated. Of the elements defining such a culture we mention:

- Clear defining of the objectives that the employees have to attain;
- Efficient leadership to mobilize the employees;
- Promotion of positive attitude to stimulate the employees;
- Development of continuous learning processes, with special stress on the managing skills of own activity and employees' capacity of team work, at all levels of organizations in view of performance growth;
- Employees' reward and motivation depending on the contribution brought by to the achievement of objectives accordingly to the standards established.

The exerting of highly performing management must turn practically the organization into an "ideal employer", where the employee should be enthusiastic about and dedicated to his work.

Therefore, an essential role is played by managers who due to their position within organizations must be capable of exerting efficient leadership at all levels so as to make employees feel appreciated, productive and listened; offer each employee learning and training possibilities and opportunities; create a productive climate which allows the maintaining of equilibrium between work and personal life.

A component of performance management has in view the planning of performance which involves the informing of employee on the performance standards to comply with, activities and competences specific to the position held within the respective organization.

The success of an organization is decisively determined by „the recruitment of some key-members, capable of bringing significant contribution to the capability of the company of creating value” (Scarborough, Elias, 2002). In this sense, at present more and more companies are aiming at getting the status of ideal employer in order to draw persons capable of acquiring high performances. Therefore, in order to draw and keep highly potential employees an organization has to practice highly performing management, offer its employees interesting activities and freedom of action and provide them with career opportunities.

Assessment of human resources’ performances is based on approaches from the field of cognitive psychology, learning theory, social psychology. In the assessment process, the assessor who is usually the department or compartment manager holds the central position. There is a multitude of factors that may influence the assessor in the assessment process such as: demographical factors, psychological factors and professional factors (Pitariu, 2000).

Demographical factors differentiate the assessor as regards age and sex. Most studies have drawn the conclusion that women as assessors give higher grades in the assessment process as compared with men (Pitariu, 2000).

Psychological factors classify assessors depending on personality and cognitive variables. Assessors who are self-confident according to studies are more authoritarian in assessing their employees, as compared with the assessors who are confident in their own forces. Cognitive variables identify the degree in which assessors are capable of perceiving the multidimensional behavior from the psychological point of view. Specialized studies show that complex assessors from the cognitive point of view are less indulgent.

Professional factors identify assessors depending on their professional features, the assessor’s position, the assessor’s interaction with the person assessed and profession. (Pitariu, 2000). In the assessment process, an important role is held by experience and professional competence as well as by the managing capacity of the grading process. Based on the results obtained from practice, it has been observed that assessors who have high management professional experience know better the professional requirements of a job and the way in which the person assessed complies with the specific demands of a vacancy.

In practice there arises more and more frequently the question regarding the extent to which the level of professional competence influences assessment. Finding the answer to this issue has shown that in the assessment process there is no conformity in the grading system between weakly-trained professional assessors and the highly trained ones from the professional point of view.

The studies in the field have shown that in the assessment process managers are more exigent in grading as compared to the colleagues of the person assessed. Therefore, there can be significant differences in the assessment process determined by the position held by assessors as against the person assessed. It is necessary for the assessor to know well the requirements of the position held by the person assessed their qualities and skills. In this sense, research has highlighted that the most accurate assessment is made by the managers who have collaborated with the person assessed.

At present, performance management is a managerial instrument which helps managers in the management of employees’ activity and it is based on a set of flexible principles aiming at the change of the employees’ behavior, “ freedom of choice in terms of task fulfillment, effort, creativity and productivity”.(Purcell, 2003)

3. MANAGERS’ DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Activities of managers’ development

Managers’ development contributes decisively to the economic success of organizations by their continuous training and retraining. A few directions to be taken into consideration for the managers’ training are mentioned in the literature (Tamkin, 2003):

- Training and stimulation of the employees to get performances in the practical activity;
- Leadership of employees and performance management by maximizing performances;

- Efficient collaboration with colleagues from other departments, application of efficient leadership to increase the capacity of dealing with problems and finding solutions from new perspectives;
- Making partnerships with the organization's internal and external clients based mainly on their needs.

On the whole managers' development is a process coordinated and developed within organizations. Therefore, each organization must decide both the efficient managers' profile to ensure the fulfillment of strategic objectives accordingly to the maximum standards of performance and the modalities in which the managers in question can be attracted. It is required for each organization to be capable of analyzing the present and future managerial needs, assessing its present and future capacity and efficiency regarding the persons assigned to hold the position of manager as against the organization's necessities.

Formal approaches of managers' development have in view the following aspects:

- Development at the working place ;
- Development based on the experience acquired within the organization at the working place;
- Training by participating in various courses inside or outside the organization;
- Self-development by participating in continuous learning programmes which allow managers acquiring new knowledge and labor skills.

Managers' development based on competence requirements aims at the competences the organization decides that managers should have in their endeavor of fulfilling strategic plans such as:

- Strategic capacity involves knowing the economic environment in change, development opportunities of products and markets, evolution of competition, identification of the strengths and weak points in the own company;
- Capacity of change management implies acknowledgement and acceptance of the need of change, reduction of employees' resistance to change;
- Team management involves the practice of efficient leadership, based on team spirit and good collaboration with the employees;
- International management involves good knowledge of cultural diversity, the capacity of carrying on activities in different cultural contexts.

3.2. Emotional Intelligence and leadership qualities

Managers' development must also have in view the concept of emotional intelligence which essentially aims at the following aspects: (Goleman, 1995)

- Correct management of own feelings
- Capacity of self-motivation, creativity and maximum use of own potential to achieve the objectives;
- Capacity of empathizing with the organization members and establishing efficient and collaborative relationships.

A good leader must have a high level of emotional intelligence. In this sense, the following components of emotional intelligence are relevant: (Goleman, 1995)

- *Self-control* refers to the capacity of controlling one's own behavior, the will to pursue the fulfillment of objectives, exigency and dynamism. This component is associated with the following competences: self-control, integrity and honesty, initiative and adaptability, tolerance of ambiguities, change-openness and a strong desire of achievement;
- *Self-consciousness* which involves the capacity of becoming aware of own states of mind, emotions as well as their impact on the people around. This component is associated with three competences: self confidence, correct self assessment and emotional discernment;
- *Social discernment* which implies the capacity of empathizing with the people around depending on their behavior. The competences associated with this component are: empathy, the skill of

attracting talents, organizational discernment, and intercultural sensitivity, respect of diversity and clients' serving;

- *Social skills* which refer to the capacity of initiating and keeping contact networks in order to determine the organization members to get the results wanted, the capacity of building efficient relations. There are five competences associated with this component: exerting of efficient leadership, efficiency in change management, conflict management, influence/communication, team building and management.

Peter Drucker shows that managers should be assigned to support all the employees who work with them and render their self-development efforts productive. (Drucker, 1995). Managers are not inborn but helped by the organization develop. (Mc Gregor, 1960) The role of a company is that of providing optimum conditions for the development acceleration, and these conditions are actually part of the organizational climate and managerial style at the superior hierarchical level.

Successful managers have obvious qualities of efficient use of their knowledge and skills and play a wide variety of managerial roles within organizations (Nicolescu, 2004). A study made by a consulting company in the USA identifies the following essential qualities of a successful manager (Nicolescu, 2004):

- The capacity of establishing a clear direction of action, by defining individual and group performance objectives and standards for employees;
- Availability for open communication with the employees and other managers situated at different managerial levels in order to create organizational cooperation climate;
- Capacity of training and supporting people, fact which involves cooperation attitude, efficiency in problem-solving tactfully;
- Skill in objective appraisal of the employees' performances and establishing rewards depending on real performances of the employees;
- Capacity of making continuous controls to eliminate deviations and fulfill objectives accordingly with the performance standards established; continuous informing of the employees on the requirements that they have to focus on in their activity;
- Potential of selecting the most skilful persons for the organization staff, fact which involves the knowing of the requirements of vacancies and implicitly the behavioral profile and skills of the persons aimed at;
- Capacity of realist assessing of the financial implications of decisions made;
- Open spirit, receptivity to new ideas and flexibility;
- Capacity of communicating the employees clear decisions;
- Ethical integrity, transparency and honesty in the relations with the employees.

The literature in this field has identified other qualities of a successful leader as well: (Constantin, 2002):

- Vitality, physical resistance, enthusiasm for work and passion;
- Intelligence and problem-solving capacity;
- Courage, determination, firmness;
- High self confidence;
- Capacity of adapting the managing styles to situational factors within the organization;
- flexibility, creativity and perseverance in the overcoming of obstacles;
- behavior towards solidarity and collective progress;

The performing functioning of an organization depends also on the managers' managing style. Managing style is „the practical way of assigning a role, so of effective transposition in behavioral plan of the exigencies deriving from the status of leader” (Zlate, 2004)

Many managing styles are framed in the literature. Depending on the manager's personality the following managing styles are determined: authoritarian, democratic and permissive.

The authoritarian style is specific to the manager refusing any suggestion made by his employees. The manager who adopts this style is concerned about the role achievement and the control of the way in which the assigned tasks are carried out; he gives unlimited trust to the organizing measures in view of objective achievement. As consequences, the authoritarian manager

triggers his employees' non-expressed resistance, determines the occurrence of apathy and employees' diminishing of interest. Such a manager has the tendency of exaggerating the critical attitude, leading to the employees' loss of professional interest. The persons having such a managing style are dynamic, active, creating around them a climate of conflicts and tensions. These leaders have generally very good opinions on themselves, high self-confidence degree and are firmly convinced that the superior management positions belong naturally to them, them and only them being skilled and capable of bearing properly these responsibilities. Being convinced of their own superiority, they have the tendency of maintaining their own opinion which they impose in decision making. In case of failure, managers of this style will look for external explanations. They will do their best to reduce their own responsibility, making responsible of it his subordinates. Avoidance of admitting their own responsibility for a failure situation reduces their chances of making a realist image of the events and identifying the corrective measures to be taken for future similar situations. Considering themselves perfect, they do not accept the idea that they can make mistakes and they will not be concerned about identifying the negative effects of their own behavior.

The democratic style is specific to managers who provide participation: to subordinates both when establishing the objectives and task assigning. The democratic style leads to the reduction of inter-personal tensions, the subordinates' active participation and increased interest in task fulfillment.

Permissive style is characterized by avoidance of any intervention in the organizing and coordinating of a group, the stress being laid on the spontaneous intervention. The efficiency of this leading style is significantly influenced by certain situational factors (for example the competences specific to the vacancy, organizational climate, the employees' expectations) which must be taken into consideration by manager in their managing activity (Pastor, 2005)

In this context, in the analysis of the styles of situational leadership, special attention should be given to the employees' development levels (competence and involvement capacity) which are determined by the relation *competence* (which may be superior, limited, weak) – *involvement* (which may be superior, variable and weak) (Pastor, 2005). From this combination of four steps of analysis of situational leadership can be identified: directive style, training style, supporting style and delegating style. (Pastor, 2005)

The directive leadership style specific to the first level (weak competence-superior involvement) is based on the following aspects: (Pastor, 2005)

- it identifies the tasks and objectives to be achieved;
- it defines the subordinates' roles, showing the way in which these various tasks must be fulfilled;
- it communicates the employees the solutions and decisions made;
- Employees are not encouraged or motivated.

The „training” leading style, specific to the second level (limited competence- weak involvement) has in view the following: (Pastor, 2005)

- It keeps the control of decisions;
- It promotes fulfillment of objectives;
- It takes into consideration the suggestions made by subordinates;

The “Supporting” style specific to the next level (superior competence- variable involvement) promotes the following:

- In the process of decision making participate the subordinates as well, the leader being responsible of putting decisions into practice;
- Subordinates' efforts are supported and encouraged;
- The existence of a climate favoring conflict-solving.

Delegating leading style, specific to the last level (superior competence- superior involvement) corresponds to subordinates who get high performances in their work; they identify the problems their organization is facing with and get involved in problem-solving, bearing responsibilities in task fulfillment.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Due to their position, managers play an essential role within the organization; the quality of their performance determines decisively the organization's performances as well. The leadership style differs from manager to manager depending on their temperament, professional training and experience. Therefore, managers must create by an open attitude in their relation with the employees a climate of reciprocal trust, based on team spirit which determines maximum performance. (Nicolescu, 2004)

In managerial training, an important role is played by the exchange of ideas and experience with managers from the West, as well as with those from the East and Central Europe, who are facing the same type of problems, by holding round tables and seminars and which are actually opportunities for the Romanian managers to come into direct contact with the professional issues existing at the international level and improve their own knowledge and skills.

Human resources by their input contribute generally to the achievement of strategic objectives of modern organizations. In this endeavor, managers have the decisive role of managing correctly the labor force within the organizations they manage, of creating a competitive environment which stimulates the continuous increase of individual and organizational performances.

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