

## CHALLENGES FOR LEADERSHIP IN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this paper is to debate the concept of leadership considering several coordinates like the traditional and present philosophy, the past and present business environment, the former and actual type of employees and also the future perspectives. The theory and practice of leadership have a long history and yet it has much to evolve also. The discrepancies might reside in the fact that the theory builders can't be ahead of the market developments and thus is difficult to create futurist theories. Nowadays, all over the world there is much talking about leadership and the need for leaders. There is a growing interest on the impact of management, leadership and entrepreneurship practices on achieved performance. In recent years, organizations have undergone significant changes, becoming powerful and effective, with a strong desire to have intelligent leaders of emotion with vision and character. Throughout the sections of the paper we present several aspects which help the projection of a comparison between the classic paradigm of leadership and the new philosophy of leadership. Within the introduction section we refer to some of the issues which changed the perception of leadership, like emotional intelligence or leading teams. In order to emphasize what are the coordinates of leadership in today's organizations we decided to present a series of best-practices of well-known global companies which we consider as modern organizations because they are always updated and implementing the latest methods and techniques. The section about leadership of work-teams contains brief argumentation about the most well-known five stages of: training, agitation, normalization, running and discontinuing operations. At this point we discussed the effectiveness of a specific type of teams, actually the virtual teams. Following we focused the debate upon the future of organizations and which might be the upcoming challenges to be faced mainly by business companies.*

**Keywords:** *leadership, strategic management, teams, vision, emotional intelligence.*

### Introduction

Nowadays, all over the world, there is a growing interest in the impact of management, leadership and entrepreneurship practices on achieved performance in various domains. When companies manage to perform significantly from one year to the next, they mean that all three categories of managerial practices are well developed. Managerial and entrepreneurial practices have a great impact on profitability and market share, while leadership helps develop the organization (Baesu & Bejinaru, 2013a, 2013b, 2015). Although in reality, such a three-to-one management profile is more difficult to meet, the leader's mission is to build a team to complement their competencies and develop organizational capabilities (Bejinaru & Baesu, 2013, 2015, 2017). Only with such a team, success can be achieved. Such a construction can be done by shareholders and investors, who should keep in mind that teamwork and collaboration make the difference. A valuable organizational context does not mean that

the one who is at the top makes the difference but how he manages to build the team. Involuntarily, such a construction leads to a less charismatic and more integrity-based model of leadership (Adair, 2005; Armstrong & Stephens, 2008; Zhang, Zheng & Darko, 2018).

Thus, a future leader must know to focus on building a trustworthy and efficient management team, and last but not least, to have the necessary motivation and experience to lead. In order to predict future performance, knowledge and behavior are not enough; managerial skills, technical skills, and self-refinement may be sufficient to create a picture of potential but insufficient to predict its performance. Therefore, it is considered that the most difficult issue for current organizations is choosing the leadership model that they want for their future (Bolden et al., 2011; Bratianu & Bejinaru, 2016, 2017; Goleman et al., 2008; Tracy, 2018).

In recent years, organizations have undergone significant changes, becoming powerful and effective, with a strong desire to have intelligent leaders of emotion with vision and character. Emotional intelligence as the ability to sense, understand and apply the power of emotions as a source of energy, information, creativity, trust and relationship and includes four elements: -better understanding of your own emotions; -effective management of your own emotions; -a better understanding of others; -creating better relationships with others and increasing your own image (Goleman, 2004).

Perspectives about the leadership concept were introduced by Adair (2005), who is considered to having a triple contribution to shaping this domain, which consists of the following: -was the first author to demonstrate that leadership does not necessarily imply an innate skill but can be acquired as any other quality; -helped to transform the concept of management into a broader leadership concept, with which we associate decision-making, communicate and manage time; -defined leadership as "an ensemble made up of target, team, and individual, subject to load-oriented education." Through the argumentation of these leadership missions, Adair (2005) actually updates Maslow's model of needs hierarchy and the management functions of H. Fayol. It is shown from this presentation of leadership missions that in fact, we are dealing with management processes, but with a greater emphasis on their human side. By sharing his wisdom and experience in the business field, Koestenbaum (2006) reveals a series of fundamental missions and principles that someone who wants to become an authentic leader should meet. The basic idea of his philosophy is that managers should implement the "leadership diamond model" in order to be able of embracing change and challenges in an effective manner that would lead to positive results (Bratianu & Anagnoste, 2011; Bratianu & Orzea, 2014).

### **Leadership of work-teams**

Work teams are considered the core of the organization of the future. The most well-known model of team evolution is Tuckman's 1965 team, which involves five stages: training, agitation, normalization, running and discontinuing operations (Armstrong & Stephens, 2008). *The formation* is the stage of a considerable degree of anxiety. Thus, team members address questions that reflect an interest in the assigned roles, but especially in the nature of the leadership role and the resources that are at their fingertips. Team members search for information about other members, especially about their background and the type of task the team has to perform. It is likely that they

are curious about the team's external expectations and ask for information about the rules that will influence the working methods. In this early stage, participants can be relatively cautious about the information they disclose. Initial considerations about others will, therefore, be based on limited knowledge.

The *agitation* stage is the one that delimits the constraints that may occur between individuals and subgroups. The choices, authority and/or powers of the coordinator are targeted, and members do not accept any attempts to dominate the leadership. Members of the group question the relevance and practicability of the imposed task. Also, latent tensions surface, as individuals manifest themselves strongly advocating opposing opinions. This stage is also characterized by honesty and openness in solving divergences. The leader should encourage the settlement of misunderstandings to get the focus of all participants on common goals. They also need to create trust, set up team roles and conflict resolution strategies.

*Normalization* is the stage during which conflict resolution takes place and the team starts to tackle the task from the perspective of positive co-operation. Plans are drawn up and standards established. Members easily share their opinions and feelings, developing a network of mutual support. The coordinator must allow the team to assume greater responsibility for planning and processes, allowing them even some mistakes and encouraging their subsequent reflection. It is important to impose rules in line with the needs of the organization as teams can also set rules against effective functioning (for example, tolerance of lack of punctuality at work or absence at meetings).

*Running* stage starts when team members begin to see the results of the constructive concentration of energy on the common task. An effective work structure is set up, in which individuals feel good and start to work together more relaxed. The leader no longer has to intervene on any given day, members realizing and accepting this change. Regular review systems should be organized at this level so that the team can continue to yield and be in touch with the environment in which it operates. *Closing* the activity. At this stage, as a rule, not all teams arrive, but, over time, important members will leave the group, and the projects will be finalized or discontinued. It is important that the effects of these changes on team existence are recognized as some teams may regress at earlier stages depending on the level of maturity and the rate of change (Armstrong & Stephens, 2008).

Exceptional performance in modern organizations is achieved only if the members of the organization act as a team in the sense that: stimulate each other to learn and improve professionally; will show trust, respect and honesty to each other; promote the principles of ethics and deontology specific to their profession; cherish diversity and encourage its manifestation; will stimulate change, because what is good today, tomorrow needs to be improved; recognize the qualities and merits of others; induce the feeling of security, camaraderie and solidarity among others, according to the "everyone for one, one for all"; will ensure that the workplace, discipline, order, environment is as pleasant and conducive as possible to quality work (Mainemelis et al., 2015).

Performance appraisal is the process of estimating the results of an individual in order to identify his needs and development potential and to determine the directions and

ways in which achievements need to be improved. Assessments can also document performance decisions or salary increases associated with the contribution, usually through a calibration system. The individuals work better when they know what they have to do, how well they expect them to act and how well they did. Performance appraisal aims to ensure the dissemination of this information between managers and their team members (White, 2004).

The evaluation focuses on two aspects of performance. The first aspect refers to the results obtained in the form of "outputs" (measurable or observable results) and "effects" (the general contribution made by the individual occupying the post in achieving the objectives of the team, the department and the company). The second aspect relates to what the individual brings to his post from the point of view of knowledge, skills, and behavior. The performance assessment cycle, as illustrated in Figure 1, consists of three steps: 1. Planning: it is agreed by mutual consent what to do and how to do it. 2. Preparation: it is decided how to conduct the evaluation discussion. 3. The official evaluation discussion: the balance sheet of what was done and the way it was done during the period that leads to the preparation of a plan agreed for the next period.



*Figure 1. The performance assessment cycle  
(Source: adaptation after White, 2004)*

### **The future of organizations**

Inside an organization, it is considered that the answer to every problem encountered is management. There are situations when employees do not devote their flesh and soul to their work and when their loyalty decreases and when the growth programs in which thousands of euros are invested do not give any result (Prelipcean & Bejinaru, 2016).

When teams and whole organizations face their collective emotional reality, they begin a necessary reconsideration of common customs that create and perpetuate that reality. In fact, for leaders to reflect their emotional intelligence on their teams and organizations, they need to start looking seriously instead of concentrating first on the ideal vision. This reverses the sequence of reflection and self-discovery, as it was at an individual level (Goleman, 2008). Several studies (Barnett, 2004; Morris, 2002) show that the only problem is insufficient trust in those who lead and in some companies, there is even an organizational discrepancy between customers, employees, and leaders.

Because of incompetence and mediocrity, managers fail to create a consensus between these levels and all this results from the way managers look at their employees.

We consider that one of the most relevant differences between a company with high performances and those with lower performances lies in the functioning of the ecosystem man, organization, community, which highlights the contribution of professional life to improving the lives of others in the community. No matter what the future of today's organizations will be, the progress of the modern world cannot be seen without the concept of freedom and equality. Modern organizations have largely succeeded in balancing work, material gain and creativity (Bejinaru, 2017; Drucker, 2000; George, 2003; Hage, 1999).

Armstrong and Stephens (2008) outlined the contrasting leadership styles as charismatic or non-charismatic, autocratic or democratic, enabler or controller, and transactional or transformational. As Armstrong and Stephens (2008) explained, charismatic leaders, rely on their personality and inspirational qualities, the non-charismatic leaders, mainly rely on their know-how. Autocratic leaders also impose their decisions on others by using their positions, while the democratic leader encourages people to participate in decision making. Similarly, the leader who is an enabler inspires people with a vision of the future and empowers them to achieve goals, and the controller leader manipulates people to obtain their compliance. The transactional leader exchanges money, jobs, and security for compliance while the transformational leader motivates people to work towards greater-level objectives (Armstrong & Stephens, 2008).

Over time, specialists have analyzed the causes of failure at the top of organizations, focusing on the psychological side, referring to executives and the features of their failure or success. Also, the economic side was also considered by analyzing the economic and financial performance indicators, defining a set of methods and processes that ensure success. Among the different perspectives on the causes of failure at the top of organizations, we recall (Morris, 2002): -the inability to form and maintain a team together, arrogance, differentiation from others, desire to be at the center of attention, manipulation, and desire to please are just a few factors leading to failure; -lack of continuous improvement; when a manager thinks he is performing better than he is, his leadership potential is greatly affected. As a conclusion, it can be said that management is a process of personal development and self-knowledge. Failure stems from the inability to manage your own ego in superiority, which prevents others from affirming.

The difference between performing and mediocre organizations is given by the long-term business priorities, and building and maintaining efficient and trustworthy management teams. In other words, the difference is not given by personal skills or traits, but by the values and motivations for achieving the organizational ideal. The organization of the future is based on flexibility, it is committed to acting, adapting and changing according to the changes that take place in its environment. Flexibility must become an integral part of organizational culture. Organizations need to adapt to the requirements of the external environment and be prepared to meet all customer needs (Drucker, 2000). Specialists describe the organization of the future as an organization that teaches and promotes and pursues the development of human resources (Harrington-Mackin, 2002). For leaders to be effective in the future, it is imperative that they are perceived by the subordinates as credible. Overall, human capital can be

developed through organizational credibility. The permanent success of some companies is due largely to the culture they have. Culture is the one that influences the employee's individual performance and decisions: to stay or leave the company.

### **Leader or manager?**

One of the questions that emerges today is: How can leaders succeed in adapting their behavior and demonstrate the flexibility they need to meet the challenges of future organizations? (Goleman, 2018) Leadership complements management does not replace it (Kotter, 2008). Most companies seek to have leaders at all organizational levels, and the recruitment and selection process is centered on leadership skills. To these two elements, namely management and leadership that ensure the success of companies, there is also added entrepreneurship that has remarkable effects on the performance of a business. The reality shows that companies that manage to achieve significant performance and sustainable organizational development currently have well-developed leadership in all three categories of practice (management, leadership, and entrepreneurship) (Reardon et al., 1998).

Nowadays, in leading organizations leaders are primarily and most of all managers. There are seven key roles of the manager, which acknowledgment can help managers become fully aware of their leadership potential (Tracy, 2018).

1. Planning is the process of accurately determining the objectives to be achieved in perspective. An efficient manager must: -write down all the things he thinks, each goal of the identified goals, and implicitly the steps to be taken to reach them; -be aware of the evolution of things, including the financial situation; -determine the true measure of planning ability for the plan to lead to the desired performance;
2. Organization: is the process of coordinating human resources to achieve the goals. A manager who meets leadership needs to: -make a list to help him implement the plan and finalize it within budget limits; -organize things identified in sequential order and priority; - accept and assign responsibilities for each identified task or activity.
3. Choosing the staff: is the process of attracting and retaining the human resource that has the necessary skills to carry out the plan and achieve the desired results. In this sense, the ability to attract and motivate performers leads to success in leadership. Therefore, a leading manager must: -select the right people, invest time and effort to make effective employment; -analyze vacancies' responsibilities in order to know exactly what additional features a person should have for the post; -to conduct effective interviews to find out relevant details about the job's previous performance and his / her greatest achievements in the professional field.
4. Delegation of tasks: is the ability to identify the right person for the right function. Therefore, a competent manager must: -analyze carefully the tasks, and think exactly the result he wants to achieve; -establish performance standards that lead to the proper performance of tasks; -choose the right person, capable of performing delegated tasks; -to clearly explain to employees what they need to do to achieve the desired results.
5. Surveillance of the execution of the tasks: is the process by which the manager can be sure that the tasks are resolved on time and within the allocated budget. A manager who has leadership qualities must: -plan the work to ensure that the most efficient resources are used; -define performance so that employees can recognize and work to achieve it; -be friendly with the staff, give them time and be respectful with them; -to manage human resources just as they would like their own contribution to be managed in the reverse situation.

6. Evaluation: consists in establishing an appropriate system of indicators for each component of the work. In this respect, the Lead Manager must: -establish numerical indicators by which the quality of the desired results can be measured; -check on a daily basis how employees are approaching the achievement of indicators that quantify individual performance; -give rewards, bonuses and promote according to the achievement of indicators defining performance.

7. Reporting: consists in constantly informing the human resource involved in achieving the objectives. Therefore an efficient manager must: -manage human resources at all levels, including relationships with superiors; -to inform all employees about the issues that define their work, to organize weekly meetings to ensure that employees are well informed; -choose a suitable means of communication; -establish an information reporting program, encourage employees to ask questions and ensure that employees understand the message correctly; -have persuasion skills and make people around him feel important. The best leaders know everything about their own companies, the competitive customers and the business environment in which they work; are deeply involved in business and know how to identify the most effective solutions that define performance (Sousa & Moco, 2017).

The manager is the most important factor in motivating an employee to have exceptional achievements. All that a manager needs to do to make it possible is to be good, modest, with proper motivation, have principles and values and have ideals to build something valuable. Therefore, all who are or will become managers must understand that people work with pleasure if there is a quality relationship with their manager and whether the organization is defined by correct rules and rules with realistic goals. All managers should be aware that the main cause of employee dissatisfaction is the "incompetent manager", mediocrity and self-confidence by showing that he is superior and arrogant. This only leads to the blocking of professional development and of self, but also of the whole organization (Yukl, 1998).

There are a lot of leadership models that emphasize different skills and competences. Leadership involves a very complex set of interpersonal, technical and intellectual skills. A leader may also need leadership training to form a wider picture of the issues on which his success depends (Drucker, 2000). The following profiles are just an attempt to break down the multiple aspects of leadership into a more basic, accessible, and easy-to-understand range of skills. These profiles can provide a starting point in the discussions with the client, indicating to the two interlocutors what leadership issues should be addressed and improved (Koestenbaum, 2006). Burns (2003) presented, on the basis of analyzes made previously by Max Weber, the difference between transactional leadership and transformational leadership. He found that if transactional leadership is represented by bureaucracy and money-making work, in contrast, transformational leadership is based on charismatic leaders and convincing by their attitude towards collaboration.

The approach proposed by Hersey (2009) shows that effective leaders are able to adapt their leadership styles. The main criterion leaders follow in adapting their style is, in this model, the maturity of the followers. This maturity is given by two criteria: the ability to accomplish the tasks and the confidence that they will succeed. This theory was formulated in 1969 and did not escape criticism, some authors questioning the clarity of the concept of maturity of subordinates. However, we must not lose sight of the fact

that the theory of the two authors opened the way for a better surprise of leadership and group relations in the act of leadership. The theory also emphasizes that the leader's sacrifice is to create favorable conditions for subordinates to increase their maturity. Following we shall provide a brief description of the four leadership styles. *Delegating style* - which allows the group to make decisions on tasks, it is a style of behavior that emphasizes both the task and the human relationships. *Participatory style* - the leader transmits ideas and makes decisions about the direction of tasks, this is a style with a low emphasis on task and a great emphasis on interpersonal relationships. *Sales agent style* - implies that the leader explains the tasks in a convincing way and supports the employees, it is a style with an important emphasis on the task and on the inter-human relations. *Ordinal (imperative) style* - involves the transmission of tasks; this is a style in which the realization of the task is important, while the less human relationships. The leader's work is to solve the complex problems and to achieve the change, influencing the specific activities (Hersey, 2009).

The leader, however valuable and experienced, cannot personally include all the activities that the organization is currently running. In fact, as the practice of leadership proves, the performance leaders are competent people, with a strong personality and proven skills, with skills and habits specific to joint work. Behind a decent man - says a Chinese proverb, there are always other decent people. This is one of the explanations for achieving remarkable results by leaders: building a homogeneous team, deeply and consistently involved in the major issues of the organization (Bejinaru, 2010).

## Conclusions

The complex issue of leadership has been a point of interest for more than a century, with specialists wishing to find out who they are capable of impressing their organizations and influencing their important activities. Leadership targets group work and team creation. Groups tend to have leaders, and leaders strive to create groups. In fact, if a person takes up a manager position, he is considered the leader only when his position is received as such by those who work with him in the company. Adair, shows that the concept of leadership can be explained by three needs of the working group: (1) to carry out a common task, (2) to manifest and function as a team and (3) to manifest as an individual.

Organizations require teams to set and then achieve their goals so that they can achieve their own goals. An increasingly widespread phenomenon is the use of multifunctional teams that bring together individuals from different teams to improve communication and decision-making. Organizations require teams to be agents of renewal, change, and even revolution. In order to change organizational goals and strategies, a team must have a clear plan of what it intends to achieve, and the plan must be articulated clearly and coherently, it must be flexible in terms of the opinions of others. In the case of teams, perseverance and participation are essential, but organizational conflict may also arise, in some cases the promotion of organizational change. The performance of virtual teams depends on a number of factors that are influenced by technology, such as the quality of communication relationships, task planning and group projects, coordination, development of a common understanding of the task, trust, team commitment and satisfaction, team identity development and conflict management.



Forming and asking teams to solve the core tasks of the organization proves essential in promoting a modern leadership. Today teamwork is increasingly seen as a major requirement for effective leadership as "leadership involves the team" (Kostenbaum, 2006). Finally, the leader must have a special ability to combine aggressive personal ambition, independence of thought and individual ingenuity with always cooperative thinking, communication, caring for others, joint efforts, people's motivation, desire to develop, and evaluation of the help given by each individual.

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