

Sylwia GOŁĄB

COMPETENCIES OF A MANAGER AS A DETERMINANT OF ORGANISATIONAL SUCCESS

KOMPETENCJE MENEDŻERA JAKO DETERMINANTA SUKCESU ORGANIZACJI

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Streszczenie. Artykuł dotyczy kompetencji menedżerskich oraz ich znaczenia w skutecznym kierowaniu personelem. Badania, których wybrane wyniki zostały zaprezentowane w niniejszym artykule, zostały ukierunkowane na identyfikację kompetencji polskich menedżerów, które odgrywają kluczową rolę w budowaniu i realizacji procesów przemian w przedsiębiorstwach.

Key words: managerial competencies.

Słowa kluczowe: kompetencje menedżerów.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalisation processes and economic changes, the need occurs for a new approach to the management function and adaptation to changes in a wider, global aspect. A modern-day enterprise must meet a number of requirements, such as new human resource management practices, greater flexibility and innovativeness. The changes observed, many of which are unprecedented, lead to increased expectations towards managers, in particular their competencies.

Reference books include a number of definitions of competence. According to a fairly frequently quoted definition, "Competence is a set of features of a given person comprising such characteristic elements as motivation, personality traits, skills, self-esteem related to being a group member and job relevant knowledge acquired by the person (Boyatzis et al. 2003). While G. Filipowicz points out that competencies are predispositions towards knowledge, abilities and attitudes that allow to fulfil professional tasks (Filipowicz 2004). In the light of different definitions of competence it was agreed that managerial competencies comprise: abilities, knowledge and attitudes, as well as personality traits that characterise high-performing managers (Rakowska 2007).

It is pointed out that a modern manager must possess both formal and informal authority based on power, professional skills (competence) and rational behaviour (creativity). In order to manage modern enterprises managers must be talented and daring, achievement-oriented, focused on improving organizational management, able to quickly respond to changes in the environment and to use them as opportunities for taking actions for the good of the organization

(Penc 2010). It is worthwhile to point out that to really be effective, the decision maker must be convinced of their purposefulness and the strategy adopted by the organisation must be concurrent with his/her personal objectives, enabling to fulfil his/her personal aspirations (Jurkowski 2008). According to Bratkowiak (2003), managerial competencies comprise "individuals' perception of goals, attitudes and motivations, knowledge of social structures (technological and social environment, organisational culture) and effective achievement of objectives, social skills (communication, motivating others, performance appraisals for teams of employees), as well as the ability to apply knowledge in practice".

The main task of each manager is to work with people and through people, to create desired attitudes and behaviours, as well as inspire efficient collaboration, including its principles. Since nowadays human resources are the most important asset of each organisation, they must be properly motivated to commit themselves to the organization and excel intellectually so that optimum use can be made of the other assets. Therefore, proper approach to people and more effective human resources management may translate into increased organizational efficiency (Penc 2010). It turns out that the long-term success of thriving companies is not the result of funding opportunities, but rather achieved the ability to attract and make best use of more talented and able staff than the competitors (Penc 2007).

METHODOLOGY

The article presents research findings on managerial competencies. The purpose of the research was to establish what a Polish manager is like, what attitude he/she adopts and what knowledge and abilities he/she has. The main research method applied was the diagnostic survey, which was used to probe into social phenomena, and the opinions and attitudes of certain groups. A background survey was also conducted. Another research tool was a requirements profile questionnaire compiled on the basis of literature on management team competencies and addressed to social services managers. Respondents were asked to assign weights to individual competencies which members of management team should have, where 1 means the highest level of competence and 5 the lowest. Then, the respondents were asked to self-evaluate themselves.

An important aspect of the research focuses on indicating those areas where improvement is needed in order to cope with requirements of the environment and modern day reality. Only part of the research results is presented in the study.

The model of managerial competencies employed herein is based on typology of managerial skills created by Robert L. Katz.

In his typology, Katz emphasises the importance of social skills of managers. He differentiates three basic groups of competencies which are essential for a successful management process. The first one are technical skills, i.e. use of methods, knowledge of processes, procedures and techniques needed to carry out specialist actions, as well as ability to use them in specific cases. The second category are human and interpersonal managerial skills, comprising of the understanding of motives of human behaviour, ability to cooperate and communicate effectively. The third group consists of conceptual skills presenting a manager's ability for abstract thinking, such as ability to identify problems and cause-and-effect relationships, to formulate concepts and anticipate changes, to think critically and broadly across categories, and solve problems in a creative way (Korzeniowski 2011).

Katz indicated the relationships that exist between the position of a manager in an organisation and types of skills needed for effective management. At the lowest levels of management, the most essential are technical skills whose importance decreases as one climbs the structural ladder. Conceptual skills gain in importance the higher the hierarchical position and are indispensable for top management. The social competencies, on the other hand, are very important at all levels of the hierarchy, in line with the principle that managers continuously impact and inspire other members of an organisation (Stoner 1996) – Table 1.

Table 1. Competencies of managers

Technical skills	Social skills	Conceptual skills
knowledge and skills of human resources management (planning and head-hunting, motivating employees, employee monitoring and appraisal)	ability to resolve conflicts	ability to formulate strategies
ability to shape organisational structure	communication skills (giving feedback, conducting performance appraisal interviews, conducting meetings, negotiations)	ability to think analytically
knowledge and skills related to the operation and specific character of a given organisation	team-working skills	ability to anticipate changes and their consequences and to adapt to changing conditions
knowledge of legal aspects of enterprise operation, including labour law	ability to build relationships and attach employees to their work establishment by involving them in a goal setting process	ability to coordinate and integrate actions of an organisation
ability to plan one's own and subordinates' work (ability to properly allocate tasks, coordinate the work of subordinate employees)	ability to motivate employees and exert social influence	ability to pose and solve problems

Source: own elaboration based on: Rakowska and Sitko-Lutek (2000), Rakowska (2007), Korzeniowski (2011).

RESULTS

On the basis of the research conducted, the author is able to conclude that typically, an average manager is a female aged 40+, working at middle management level. Respondents perform managerial functions at social service providers, which undoubtedly impacts the distribution of results.

The research subjects were 40 managers from the West-Pomeranian and Pomeranian voivodeships, 72% of them were women. Most respondents were aged 40 and older (54%). Managers aged up to 30 constituted 28% of the sample, whereas the smallest group consisted of people over 50. Most respondents, i.e. 64% were representatives of middle management level, 11% of top management and 25% of low management levels.

Respondents were asked to enumerate features that a manager should have¹. Technical skills were given the highest priority. Respondents held an opinion that above all a manager should be familiar with the specificity of a given organisation. Because of the decentralisation and specialisation of social services, dependency on the society and changing client needs, good knowledge of how to function in such organisations was given priority. Knowledge of legal regulations that govern day-to-day operations was found equally important which is

¹ Scale 1–5, where 1 means the highest competency, and 5 indicates the lowest.

understandable, since the organizations are institutions of social policy. Similarly, the ability to perform one's work properly and supervise the work of subordinates was considered equally important. In the technical competencies group, was the ability to shape an organisation was the least appreciated, since the organisational structure of social services is regulated by law.

According to respondents, communication skills were the most important in the interpersonal skills group. Managers must have good communication skills to be able to give feedback, motivate employee and conduct appraisals, or simply to communicate with challenging customers. The ability to handle conflict situations is important as well as social welfare organizations are especially conflict prone. Therefore, good conflict management becomes an essential element of human resources management.

Out of the three groups of competencies conceptual skills were rated by respondents as the least important, although these are exactly the skills that will gain special significance in near future. Thanks to them social service institutions will be able to keep up with the nature and pace of social, economic and cultural changes (Table 2).

Table 2. Competencies of managers

Group	Specification	1	2	3	4	5
Technical skills	ability to shape organisational structure	17.5	15.0	62.5	5.0	0
	knowledge and skills of human resources management	40.0	52.5	5.0	2.5	0
	knowledge and skills related to the operation and specific character of a given organisation	80.0	20.0	0	0	0
	ability to plan one's own and subordinates' work	72.5	27.5	0	0	0
	knowledge of legal aspects of enterprise operation	75.0	22.5	2.5	0	0
Interpersonal skills	communication skills	60.0	20.0	17.5	2.5	0
	ability to resolve conflicts	25.0	35.0	30.0	10.0	0
	team-working skills	20.0	17.5	40.0	22.5	0
	ability to motivate employees and exert social influence	35.0	25.0	17.5	17.5	5.0
	ability to build relationships and foster employee loyalty	17.5	45.0	20.0	15.0	2.5
Conceptual skills	ability to formulate strategies	25.0	37.5	20.0	17.5	0
	ability to think analytically	32.5	40.0	7.5	12.5	7.5
	ability to identify and solve problems	40.0	42.5	10.0	7.5	0
	ability to coordinate and integrate actions of an organisation	32.5	57.5	10.0	0	0
	ability to anticipate changes and their consequences, and to adapt to changing conditions	45.0	35.0	20.0	0	0

In the second part of the research respondents were asked to self-assess their competencies affecting the organisation's management.

Knowledge of legal aspects of enterprise operation was regarded as the most essential in the technical skills group. All employees are required to know the Act on social assistance and numerous other acts and provisions.

Respondents rated equally highly the knowledge and skills related to the operations and specific nature of a given organisation, as well as the ability to plan one's own and subordinates' work. It is undoubtedly the result of having clearly defined job descriptions in place. Ability to shape organisational structure was again regarded as the least important.

Communication skills were deemed most important in the interpersonal skills group. Managers emphasised that these skills are of key importance because of specific character of their work. Ability to resolve conflicts was deemed the least important, although the

respondents claimed that they frequently had to deal with conflict situations. Such situations mostly occur in employee-client contacts in connection with claims raised by clients, triggered predominantly by their lack of knowledge of welfare regulations.

Respondents also highly valued their conceptual skills. In order to think conceptually, create a balanced vision of the organisation's performance and work out a strategy, directors need knowledge, although priority was given to experience and long-term planning (Table 3).

Table 3. Self-assessment of managerial competencies

Group	Specification	1	2	3	4	5
Technical skills	ability to shape organisational structure	20.0	35.0	25.0	17.5	2.5
	knowledge and skills of human resources management	47.5	37.5	15.0	0	0
	knowledge and skills related to the operation and specific character of a given organisation	85.0	15.0	0	0	0
	ability to plan one's own and subordinates' work	80.0	17.5	2.5	0	0
	knowledge of legal aspects of enterprise operation	95.0	5.0	0	0	0
Interpersonal skills	communication skills	62.5	25.0	12.5	0	0
	ability to resolve conflicts	45.0	17.5	12.5	12.5	12.5
	team-working skills	57.5	17.5	20.0	5.0	0
	ability to motivate employees and exert social influence	40.0	17.5	37.5	5.0	0
	ability to build relationships and foster employee loyalty	47.5	40.0	10.0	2.5	0
Conceptual skills	ability to formulate strategies	30.0	32.5	47.5	7.5	7.5
	ability to think analytically	47.5	37.5	12.5	2.5	0
	ability to identify and solve problems	52.5	27.5	20.0	0	0
	ability to coordinate and integrate actions of an organisation	72.5	25.0	2.5	0	0
	ability to anticipate changes and their consequences and to adapt to changing conditions	40.0	35.0	20.0	5.0	0

CONCLUSIONS

Every organisations' future depends to a great extent on effective management based on human capital – employees' knowledge, qualifications and commitment to the organisation. Therefore, if organisations are to be effective, managers must possess specific competencies enabling them to cooperate with employees, exchange opinions, jointly set goals and decide how to achieve them.

This is especially important in social welfare organisations. Because of the very nature of this sector, the legal regulations that govern its operations and challenging customer service scenarios, people who manage such organisations must have specific competencies. Technical skills are a must owing to a plethora of legal regulations and changes taking place in the field. However, interpersonal skills are equally important, and in particular the conflict-resolving capability as, in this line of work, conflict situations are unavoidable. Another important skill is the ability to motivate employees since social workers are among professionals especially susceptible to burnout.

Organisational success is determined by effective leadership – in other words, competent managerial personnel – and thus it hugely depends on the quality of management. Therefore, developing a habit of continuous lifelong learning and professional development is among many challenges faced by organisations. It is worthwhile to emphasize that this is a consequence of dynamics of socio-economic changes and requirements set for managers who have to evolve towards greater innovation, creativity and cooperation.

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Summary. The article focuses on managerial competencies and their role in effective personnel management. It presents selected results of research conducted with the aim of identifying those competencies of Polish managers that play a key role in the development and implementation of the change process in enterprises