HIGH PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP AND IMPORTANCE OF TEAMWORK IN AN ORGANIZATION

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This article analyses the current concepts of leadership and teamwork in an organization. In the conditions of fast-changing environment, both leadership and teamwork should be highly effective and accomplish the company's goals. To achieve that, it is important to understand the notion and advantages of the leadership and teamwork.

Based on the researched theories and the conducted study regarding the practical aspects of the leadership and teamwork at some companies working in Moldova, the article suggests a number of conclusions and recommendations.

Key words*: leadership, high performance leadership, effective leadership, team, cohesion, leadership styles, team types, human potential.*

Introduction

One of the key tasks of the modern companies is, undoubtedly, the development of highly effective leadership and teamwork. In the conditions of the fast-changing world and business environment, the

leadership solutions and teams' relations become especially relevant. Their popularity is also determined by an increased competitiveness, globalization, cultural diversity, informational technologies, and human factors. These factors develop the understanding of managers and employees in an organization regarding the notion, importance, and trends of the leadership and teamwork. The ongoing research and vast literature on management and leadership (see bibliography) lay solid theoretical grounds for making effective leadership decisions and improving the teamwork. Along with this, the literature reflects the different debates on the subject of leadership and teamwork among the scholars, managers, leaders and employees engaged in business.

There is a range of positions and points of view regarding the leadership and teamwork. Those discussions prove the complex nature of analyzed concepts. It is known that the studies in this area mainly concern the individual traits of a leader, situational (situation-based) and functional (behavior-based) theories [6, p. 489-490].

The attempt to clarify the issues regarding the leadership and teams in the complex and diverse situations influences the emergence of new challenges that a leader and his team face. One of such challenges is the achievement of high performance. A number of theories and concepts exists to explain these new challenges and to suggest viable solutions.

Relying on the key theory approaches, we shall examine the concepts that deepen our understanding of the leadership and teams in the changing world, in particular, in the context of their performance. What determines the high performance of leadership and teamwork? This is the main question of this article.

Theory and methodology aspects of the study

Below we shall analyze the theoretical research of famous scholars (see bibliography) that serve as a solid methodological background for the high performance leadership and team cohesion in business organization.

The experience of successful companies, described in that research, derives from the mixture of current theories and art of leadership. Undoubtedly, it could serve as an example and the basis for conclusions and recommendations for different companies, including those operating in the Republic of Moldova. Besides that, the leadership practice in successful companies is already recognized as a part of scholarship and art of effective management.

Basic theories

The scholars Michael H. Mescon, Michael Albert, and Franklin Khedouri define the leadership as "the ability to influence individual and groups to work toward attaining organizational objective" [6, p. 489]. This definition became widely known in academia. Along with seeing the leadership as the ability to influence, there exists another notion, suggested by P. Daft. According to him, "leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes and outcomes that reflect their shared purposes." [2, p. 20]. This synergic approach towards the leadership leads to a high performance of a leader and his team in the conditions of constant changes in internal and external environment of an organization.

Performance is understood as a degree of accomplishment of common tasks of a team or an organization. Relationship between the goals and outcomes lead to the need of setting the performance-based goals. To a larger degree, this is influenced by the ability of a leader to enable and develop the full individual potential.

To achieve that, in his relationship with the team members, a leader follows their motivation as well as focuses their attention on the personal rewards and self-actualization. The latter, according to A. Maslow's hierarchy of needs, is placed at the top of human needs. Besides, the effective leaders focus their attention on material (financial) incentives, moral encouragements, and value creation. These motivation and incentive options for the team members influence the development and fulfillment of their human and individual potential. The latter includes creativity, creative thinking, and critical assessment of changes. These elements of human potential could positively influence the performance of a leader and his followers (team) if they apply their knowledge and skills together with the ethical factors of individual potential.

According to scholars Travin V.I. and Dyatlov V [7, p.10], the potential includes:

- communication potential: the ability to cooperate and interact;
- qualification potential: professional knowledge and skills;
- intellectual potential: intellectual and cognitive abilities;
- creative potential: abilities to creative thinking;
- ethic potential: values and motivation;
- psychophysical potential.

We should emphasize that those leaders, who are able to create conditions that influence the fulfillment of individual potential, – succeed in building up the high performance teams.

In this context, the research of the world-famous scholar Covy St. is relevant. He develops the leadership concept by distinguishing the relationship between mental, emotional, spiritual and physical potential

(intelligences) [4]. They reflect the "eighth habit of a leader" that helps a leader to build up a cohesive effective team. The members' relationships multiply the collective outcome by synergy effect.

To this regard, it is appropriate to compare two social formations: a team and a group (see table 1).

Table 1

Differences between Teams and Groups [3, p. 643]

Group	Team
A strong leader is appointed	The role of a leader is passed on from one team member to others
Individual responsibility	Individual and team responsibility (everyone is responsible to everyone)
Strictly follows the organization's goals	Specific vision of goals
The outcome is individual work products	The outcome is collective work products
Performance assessment is mainly based on the influence on business (for example, on financial indicators)	Performance assessment is based directly on assessment of the collective work
The process includes necessary and sufficient meetings	The process includes time-unlimited meeting discussions that solve all the issues
Every group member has his own social circles, take independent decisions, and carries out particular work tasks	Team is interdependent: it has common social networks, goes through joint decision making and working tasks

The team performance is influenced by different team characteristics such as team size, its personnel, team type, and the stages of team building. For example, according to some scholars [2, 3, 6], the number of participants in a team varies from two to twelve people. In particular, R. Daft believes that the ideal membership number is seven people [2, p. 287]. The considerably higher number of participants could lead to communication problems – the issue that is addressed by formation of sub-teams.

What types of teams could have a synergy effect through fostering of relationship between the team members, their support, complementarity, and cohesion? The most widespread teams are functional teams. They are part of management hierarchy and consist of managers or employees from different functional departments of a company. For example, the team members could come from sales department, financial department, human resources department, marketing department etc. In a management structure, they carry out specific tasks in accordance with the functional division and job specification. Cross-functional teams and their subcategories (matrix, project) as well as self-managing and self-learning teams correspond to innovation-based companies [2, 3]. The tasks, solved by these teams, concern the introduction of new equipment and technologies, entrance to new markets, introduction of new products, and changes of management structure. Such teams are time- and project- based and receive a budged, defined by the innovation project. They have specific starting and ending dates, and after the completion of a project, the team is dissolved or reorganized for the implementation of a different innovation in a company. These teams are distinguished by the open and intense communication, well-developed direct connections and follow-ups as well as by high engagement of team members into the decision making process. The teams are self-managing if their members independently do the following: allocate resources, take decision on accepting new members to a team or exclude the members, who fail to adopt, evaluate the performances and quality of work, and establish the sanctions and rewards. As a rule, depending on a situation – for instance, the introduction of innovations – the person, who is better prepared, most knowledgeable and skilled in a specific issue, could take the lead and become a leader. Therefore, the self-managing teams have the leadership that is changing (passed on from one team member to the other).

In the current conditions of constant changes, it is namely the leadership – "eighth habit of a leader" – that forges the relationship in a team. This relationship is based on the leaders' trainings and development of corporate culture of trust and cohesion, which determine the performance and success of a team and of an organization as a whole. An important role in the teams' good results and success plays the leadership style chosen by a leader and whether it matches to the behavior of members in a team.

This task is especially urgent in the project-based teams during the introduction of innovations. To avoid disbalance between the leader's style and members' behavior, it is suggested to follow the approach of a famous expert Adizes Ichak. According to it, the ideal leader does not exist and so there is no ideal style of a leader. Based on the key management functions, the scholar believes that any team or organization needs four members who play four roles: producer, administrator, entrepreneur, and integrator [1].

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Practical aspects of the study. Proceeding from the theory of leadership and teamwork described in the research of many established scholars, we also analyzed their practical aspects in a number of companies operating in the Republic of Moldova. They included Ltd (SRL): Polimobil, Lingotex, Interior Pro, Risvah, Palex Service, Aptolent Plus, Autocurat, Sigmatur-Com, Ditex, Cart-nord. A sample among managers and employees included 127 people. On each management level, the number of interviewed was not less than 10% out of total number. To conduct the study, methods of observation and interviews were used, and the questionnaire for interviews was developed. The interview was focused on the issues of cognitive leadership in order to reveal whether the employees understand the notions of leadership potential and teamwork.

In pursuing these aims, the model "The 360 Degree Leader" by John Maxwell was used [5, pp. 11-35]. It allowed us to collect the data on the respondents' evaluation of the employees' and mid-level leaders' attitude towards the leadership, and to define the factors that could break the stereotypes (myths) or eliminate biased opinions.

Below, the interview findings among the mid-level managers and employees from the studied companies are presented. This group of respondents was 63,7% of total number. During the study, they shared their understanding on the issue of leadership and team cooperation. To that end, the employees received the statements that reflected the exiting biases, stereotypes or myths regarding the leader or team characteristics. Based on how the respondent shares or rejects (overcomes) any given myth (misconception), it is possible to see the employee's propensity towards leadership and teamwork. In particular, John Maxwell's statement regarding the *Position Myth*: "I can't lead if I'm not at the top", was positively accepted or shared by more than 88,7% of respondents. Accordingly, it was rejected by 11,3%. It follows that, for now, there is only a small part of employees who rightly link their possible leadership and teamwork with the personal choice, and not only with the taken position. The rejection of the *Position Myth*, therefore, consists in the fact that the top position does not make an individual a leader.

Almost the same proportion of employees – 85,8% and 14, 2% of those who shared and rejected, accordingly, the second myth. It is called the *Destination Myth*: "When I get to the top, then I'll learn to lead". The rejection of this myth concerns, after Maxwell, the fact that the art of leadership is mastered in action. To become an efficient leader, one should learn all life-long [5, p. 10]. At the same time, 79,0% of respondents link the chance to influence other people in an organization only with the top level of management. This is called the *Influence Myth*: "If I were on the top, then people would follow me". The myth was rejected by 21% of employees who rightly believe that the leadership trait to influence is not related to a position, rather, it should be earned. In other words, the position does not create a leader, the leader creates the position.

One more stereotypes is linked to the *Potential Myth*: "I can't reach my potential if I'm not the top leader". More than 83,6% of respondents believe that they are not able to fulfill their potential unless they get to the top of corporate ladder. 16,4% of employees reject this myth, thereby linking their motivation to the leadership and teamwork with the climbing to the top of their professional activity, and not just simply with the top of corporate pyramid.

While analyzing the leadership and team characteristics among the mid-level employees at the studied companies, in accordance with Maxwell concept [5], it is possible to conclude the following. It is important to shape the leadership behavior of employees and to link it with the clear understanding of the leadership notion as influence.

The 360 Degree Leaders influence people on all corporate levels (see picture 1).
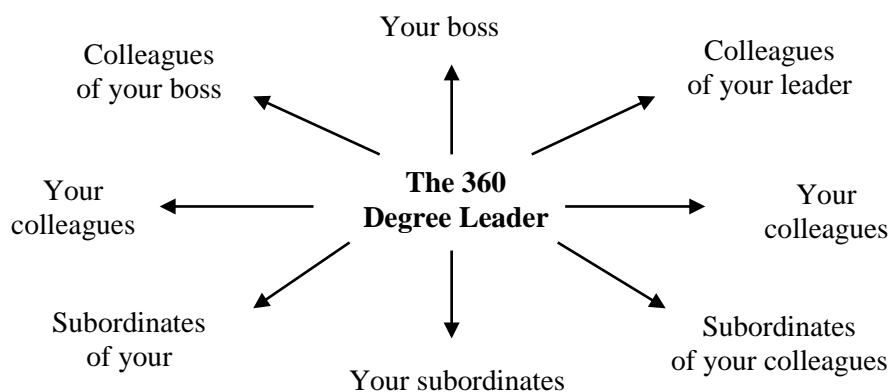
Figure 1. The 360 Degree Leader: influence in all directions [5, p.8]

During the study conducted at the companies, we defined the following leadership traits of managers and employees that foster team potential (their evaluation in the general sample is given in figure 2):

1. Establishment of team relationships based on the individual and position powers (power balance);
2. Independence during decision making in accordance with job description (delegation);
3. Application of optimum scale of permissible variations during control (possibility to learn from the own experience, learn lessons, self-control);
4. Prompt gaining of relevant information regarding the work of related departments for cross-functional problem solving (transparency);
5. Engagement in discussions, decision making, and adoption of strategies (of a department and an organization).
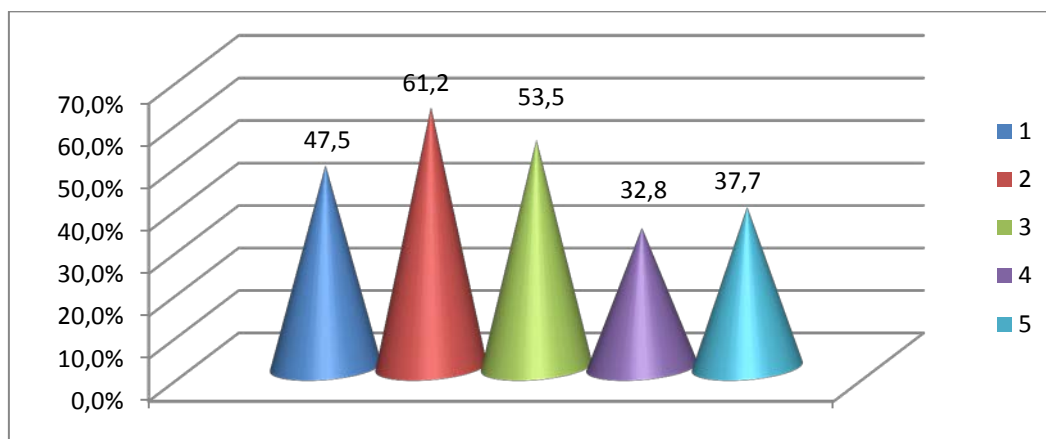
Figure 2. **Respondents' satisfaction of leadership and teamwork (as % of a total respondents' number, general sample)**

To develop leadership and team competences of managers and employees at the studied companies, it is important to conduct staff trainings and organizational development. The programs should create opportunities in organizations to exercise individual powers (expert, personal example, charismatic leadership). The data on respondents' satisfaction of leadership and teamwork is the following: only 47,5% expressed their satisfaction of power balance process; 61,2% expressed their satisfaction with delegation; 53,5% are satisfied with the self-control and opportunity to learn from the own experience, and finally, 32,8% and 37,7% are satisfied with the accessibility and transparency during the cross-functional problem solving and engagement in the discussion of organizational strategies and decisions, respectively.

Conclusions and recommendations

- The study showed that the successful development of business organizations is related to the presence of a leader with a team. The leadership must be effective and must accomplish the set-up goals. The team outcome is synergic and is seen after the shared influence of team members that fosters their joint efforts.
- The system-synergy approach to the leadership and his team is especially important in the conditions of constant changes in internal and external environment of an organization. Together with this, the implementation of such approach requires the ability of a leader to enable and develop the full individual potential. In this context, the research of a recognized scholar, Covy St. is of special importance. Covy develops the leadership concept and emphasizes the interaction of mental, emotional, spiritual and physical intelligences.
- The team performance depends on the different team characteristics and processes, such as team's size, personnel, type, and the stages of teambuilding. The number of team members varies between two and twelve, although the best team size that facilitates its performance is seven members. There are functional, cross-functional, and self-managing teams. They are considered to be the most flexible and innovation-friendly for the companies.
- Functional teams prevail on a number of companies operating in Moldova (studied in this article). They are vertical and correspond to the functional work division and specialization, thereby limiting the synergy. In the conditions of fast changing market circumstances and processes, it is important for business organizations to introduce innovations in technologies, products, and design. To successfully implement the innovations, the companies should use more often the self-managing teams. Deve-

lopment of leadership and teambuilding should come together with the on-going staff trainings, seminars, and personal self-development. To that end, it is important to exercise professional coaching. In addition to that, the studied companies should improve the team functioning and leadership based on the development of delegation, self-control, and staff engagement in the discussions on general organizational strategies and goals.

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