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MANAGER – REQUIRED SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES IN EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF A COMPANY

Summary: Manager is a person occupying a managerial position at different levels in a company hierarchy, who participates in the implementation of basic functions of the company, such as planning, organizing, leading, motivating and controlling as well. This is a person with broad knowledge and skills in the management of organization resources. Taking many decisions, on one hand may contribute to the development, growth of the company but on the other it may lead to weakness or even to company fall. This article aims to give some insight into manager position, a person who is able to manage enterprise resources effectively and efficiently. The author presents among others a definition and types of manager, his basic characteristics, required skills and tasks performed by him.

Keywords: manager, manager in the enterprise, manager's skills, manager's characteristics, contemporary manager.

1. Introduction

Every organization operating on the market has set some business objectives to be pursued, for example: increased profit, the increase of market share, improving technology, gaining competitive advantage, ensuring high level of customer service and reducing costs. In order to fulfil these plans and so to make a company function effectively its staff is required to appropriately plan, organize, coordinate and lead the activities of employees so as to effectively manage the enterprise. The staff are managers who are present on different organization levels of company management.

Managers are usually associated with people who manage and therefore who have certain power. These are people employed in managerial positions, having comprehensive knowledge and skills in the management of organization's resources, including human resources in different types of environment. These are individuals who may contribute to the development and growth of the company on one hand but on the other they may contribute to weakness or even to company's fall. This article aims to give some insight into manager position, a person who is able to manage enterprise resources effectively and efficiently. The author presents among others a definition and types of manager, his basic characteristics, required skills and tasks performed by him.

2. The concept and characteristics of a manager

In the literature of the subject there can be found many definitions of manager, which, like in case of management, has never had a clear-cut definition. Most commonly this word is associated with management entity that has an impact on setting objectives, the scope of activities and an internal organization. It is also identified with the management of subordinates work, the assignment of tasks and with being responsible for the accomplishment of specific activities. In everyday language this word is associated with a person who manages the entire enterprise or its part. Following Anglo-Saxon authors, managers are all members of the organization who have taken over the functions of superiors, starting from the position of a master and reaching the position of the president of the management board¹.

In English “manager” may mean director, superior, supervisor, leader, boss, administrator or just managing person. In Polish the word most often occurs in conjunction with other words that are associated with different spheres of business. This gives a much wider range of meanings and allows to distinguish e.g. general manager, commercial director, financial director, logistic director, economic director, human resources director, production manager, marketing manager etc., depending on the managed area and management net across the company.

The simplest but very accurate definition was formulated by R.W. Griffin. He explains that the manager is primarily a person who is responsible for implementing management process regardless of his position. This is someone who plans and makes decisions, organizes, leads people and controls human, financial, material and information resources of the organization and therefore participates in the implementation of basic management functions². Of course all these tasks must be dealt properly, i.e. all resources must be used wisely, without wasting and decisions must be taken effectively, which means that the manager makes and implements concrete decisions. Given the management functions the manager takes different part in their implementation. With reference to the management level planning can be strategic – long-term, tactical – medium-term, operational – short-term. The main task of a manager is to determine the strategic goal and specific objectives at each level of management. The main task of a manager related to organizing a function is to determine who, how and what should be done to achieve the goals. In order to achieve them necessary organizational structures are established, there is a recruitment process, training for the staff or so called transferring duties to other employees. The process of guiding and motivating the company workforce is the third important element in which managers create the right atmosphere, incentive system and

¹ U. Ornarowicz, *Menedżer XXI wieku. Definicja. Identyfikacja. Edukacja*, Szkoła Główna Handlowa, Warszawa 2008, p. 15.

² R.W. Griffin, *Podstawy zarządzania organizacjami*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2005, p. 7.

encourage to perform tasks in efficient and effective way in order to achieve common organization goals. The last key function – monitoring – primarily requires from managers to ensure that operations that are carried out are in accordance with planned ones. For this purpose they define evaluation methods and indexes of implementation of specific tasks, systematically observe, identify the causes of deviations and if necessary take corrective actions to improve business operations and secure targets realization set at the beginning.

Another author P.F. Drucker, a famous professor of management, American adviser to many governments, corporations, public institutions, “the father-founder” of management, defines manager as the person who manages work of others at every level, to begin with that who occupies the highest position and end at the level of leaders, shift leaders, office administrators or production supervisors. The most important, special task of every manager regardless of his position in an organization is making decisions, because it affects the effectiveness of business and results of the organization. According to P.F. Drucker a manager is effective only if he takes the right decisions in a specific order. The author also notes that every manager should start from what is right rather than what is acceptable just because at the end a compromise will be needed³. In his numerous works P.F. Drucker mentions two important tasks that no one apart from a manager does in the company and says that any person who performs them can be regarded as a manager.

The first task says that a manager must create greater entirety than the sum of all its components, his job is to create efficient production which produces more than the sum of resources which are included in it⁴. Thus, the task of a manager is to get and assign efficiency to human capital, to motivate to work and to eliminate weaknesses. To explain this relationship the author compares a manager to a composer and a conductor of a symphony orchestra. He says that the manager acts as a creator, composer of activities, strategies implemented by the company, who can predict the next steps which are the same as in the music notes of a symphony. This is a composer who later sets tasks for individuals, harmonizes work and consequently creates entirety which is greater than the sum of individual units included in it. Thus, a group of people, a team coordinated under the leadership of a manager, can achieve more, can be more efficient and effective and can contribute to better results. In order to do this, however, there is another feature of a manager saying that he must harmonize three major business functions, such as business management, management of lower level managers and management of employees and work. Even if one of these functions reveals weaknesses, it will certainly move to other levels, what in turn will affect in a negative way the entire enterprise⁵.

³ P.F. Drucker, *Zawód menedżer*, MT Biznes, Warszawa 2004, p. 56.

⁴ P.F. Drucker, *Praktyka zarządzania*, MT Biznes, Warszawa 2005, p. 502.

⁵ Comp.: ibidem.

The second specific feature mentioned by the author says that a manager should plan every action, must act in different timeframes, take into account both short distance and long-term perspective. He must, figuratively speaking, hold the nose to the ground, while raising his gaze to the summits⁶.

3. The types of managers

In a company, depending on the organizational structure and different management levels, managers have variety of positions. In some companies, especially international ones, managers' positions apply to determine certain level of management, intermediate in between first-line managers so-called supervisors and senior managers so-called executives⁷. In this group so-called functional managers can be most often found who are responsible for the specific type of business in the organization, such as production, logistics, marketing or sales. Nevertheless, depending on the level of management in the organization one can usually distinguish three types of managers, such as⁸:

- senior managers (called top managers, executives),
- middle-level managers (called middle managers),
- low-level managers (called supervisory managers, first-line managers, supervisors).

Senior managers are a small group of executives who are responsible mainly for the overall management of the organization and have decisive influence on directions where the company aims. It is top staff which includes presidents, vice presidents, managing directors, sometimes their deputies, the general meeting of shareholders, board of directors and even their deputies. The main tasks are to establish a mission and goals for the organization and overall strategy or operational policy of the organization. Senior managers are responsible for the overall management of the organization and represent the organization in external relations. Having so many tasks to carry out they do not have influence on the quality of work of all the staff and on the ways of achieving the goals. Therefore they try to supervise the work of middle managers. Senior managers have basically conceptual competence and thus the ability of covering all tasks and goals of the organization, their implementation and chances in specific environment conditions and the ability to perceive the complexity of implemented tasks and objectives in the organization⁹.

Middle-level managers are usually the most numerous group of managers. They are mostly responsible for the realization of plans of top management, making operational decisions and supervising and coordinating work of managers at lower levels. We can include here basic and supporting department managers, functional parts managers, main engineers and chief accountants who are subject to the authority

⁶ Ibidem, p. 503.

⁷ A. Pochtowski, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, PWE, Warszawa 2007, p. 180.

⁸ R.W. Griffin, op. cit., p. 12-14.

⁹ A. Wajda, *Podstawy nauki o zarządzaniu organizacjami*, Difin, Warszawa 2003, p. 60.

of senior managers. This group usually has high degree of freedom in action, in choosing the collaborators, it also significantly affects the rules and the implementation of principles and following the main directions of the organization activities, thus affecting the work on other levels¹⁰. Due to high level of independence proper qualifications and skills are essential in this group, for example in solving difficult, ongoing problems of the organization.

Managers at the lowest level are mainly leaders, foremen and masters, heads of offices, managers of various activities performed such as transport manager, warehouse manager, etc., who manage and supervise work of different teams that carry out certain handling or routine operations. The main task of this group is that all decisions taken at senior management levels are realized in the most efficient way. From the first line managers, as they are often called, technical skills are required together with experience and knowledge of the methods and techniques of implemented processes. People in such positions must often raise confidence of senior managers, but also of their subordinate employees mostly because they connect the channel representing the needs and requirements of subordinate employees.

4. Skills and qualifications of a manager

A manager dealing with management has decisive influence on the development or failure of any organization. Properly set objectives, the right choice of business strategy, high effectiveness, greater efficiency, coordination and harmonization at work, solving problems directly or indirectly depends on managers located at various levels of management. Good managers ensure the long-term business development, strive to achieve goals including profit, properly plan, skillfully use corporate resources and create strategies and appropriate structures by choosing relevant staff. An effective manager can make a strong, competitive organization out of weak company and make it beneficial for the country. Bad managers, in turn, without sufficient qualifications, can change a thriving organization into a company of no worth, generating losses, wasting company resources, thus condemning workers for dismissal and worsening competitive strength of the economy.

Given these relationships, regardless of the level of management all managers who want to achieve the best results in their actions, on smaller or greater scale should have knowledge, follow common sense and should have certain ability recognized as relatively stable capability of application of professional knowledge in a practical way to achieve the desired effect in a given situation¹¹. In other words, these should be professionals in their field with appropriate qualifications. There are various skills valued among managers which are theoretical and practical as well as different character traits.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 61.

¹¹ J. Penc, *Role i umiejętności menedżerskie: sekrety, sukcesy i kariery*, Difin, Warszawa 2005, p. 67.

One of the authors, on the basis of numerous studies on the effectiveness of managerial work, formulated the concept of six leadership behaviours which should have a manager. One of them is primarily the ability to track changes in the environment and respond to them, to organize and coordinate relationships around the tasks performed, to use information and adequate communication, to create a climate of learning and self and employees development, to motivate employees and resolve conflicts and to take the responsibility for own decisions and decisions of subordinate employees¹². If a manager in the organization has these skills then the principal goals and specific objectives of the organization are achieved, which means that the organization reaches high level of efficiency and thus obtains fully satisfactory results.

In the literature of management there are usually four basic types of manager's skills which are technical, interpersonal, conceptual and diagnostic or analytical. A professional manager should achieve them and effectively carry out his managerial functions such as planning, organizing, motivating and controlling. The studies also draw attention to the fact that not all skills have the same significance for managers at different levels. Interpersonal skills are important for every manager at every level and conceptual, diagnostic and analytical dominate at the highest and middle level, mostly due to the functions performed at this level, i.e. planning and organizing. At the lowest level, in turn, the most important are technical skills that allow the realization of basic operations through an appropriate motivation and control of activities. R.W. Griffin in his works extends those skills for an additional three, such as communication, decision-making and appropriate time management¹³.

The first type of skill is the technical skill. It is primarily aimed at facilitating the understanding of the methods, technology and operation of a particular job in the organization. A manager who has this skill knows what his subordinates' job is and therefore it is easier for him to enforce an appropriate action. The second skill – interpersonal, is based on cooperation and making contacts with other members of the company or external entities. This feature allows to better understand the emotions and feelings of others, make a person more trustworthy and motivate individuals or groups. The third, a conceptual skill, depends primarily on the ability of abstract thinking and the intellectual potential. Considering a problem a manager must take into account different points of view and ensure the coordinated implementation of activities in various organizational units of the company. He must treat the company as a whole because only then he can think strategically and make good decisions for the benefit of the organization as a whole.

Another skills of a manager are diagnostic and analytical skills that allow him to make an appropriate diagnosis of the situation identifying causes, react in the most appropriate way and select the best solution. The fifth skill is the ability to communicate

¹² A. Poczowski, op. cit., p. 179.

¹³ Manager's skills described based on e.g.: R.W. Griffin, op. cit., p. 19-22.

well with subordinates as well as with senior managers. This feature allows to transfer ideas to subordinates in a clear, legible way, helps to listen to what others say and understand the importance of various verbal or written communications in the organization. The sixth skill is the ability of decision-making, which is the ability to identify properly and define the relevant problems and opportunities and then to select the desired mode of operation in order to solve the problems and take the opportunities¹⁴. In case of a wrong decision, he quickly corrects a mistake by making a good decision. The last skill is the ability of appropriate time management. It means that every manager knows how to prioritize work, how to focus on the main issues, while others should be transferred to subordinates.

Another attribute that is also important is the competence of a manager to be able to counteract stress¹⁵. Henry Mintzberg writes in his book on the work of management that a manager can never forget about work and never experiences a moment of joy that is connected with doing nothing. In addition, managers are still persistently suspected that they could do a little more and hence they impose on themselves relentless pace of work¹⁶. Such behaviour and attitude often bring stress, which is neither influencing effectively the actions performed, nor the entire company.

It is known that the work of every manager, whether it is a President, a Vice President, a General Director, heads of middle or low levels, as argued by many well-known authors and practitioners in the field of management, is exhausting, demanding and stressful. Various elements may have influence on stress in manager's working life, such as the excess of tasks to be performed, work in a hurry, continuous time pressure, increased sense of responsibility, barriers in the implementation of tasks arising from subordinates or superiors, or simply a sense of helplessness. Moreover, different situations in a company may interfere with a proper functioning of a manager. Lack of trust from superiors' side, too slow or too fast pace of development, unsatisfied ambitions, underestimated results or bad relationships with subordinates can make a manager at each level feel stressed. Thus, a good manager should demonstrate his ability to cope with stress, for only then he can reasonably carry out his activities and delegate tasks to his employees in different situations in the organization.

In order to counter stress a good manager must be able to plan and organize work, which among others will eliminate haste. Furthermore, he should take care of such important elements in life as e.g. starting a day with optimistic attitude, what has later a major impact on positive thinking throughout the working day and afterwards and on the inner development of tolerance and kindness. An important factor which should not be overlooked, because it inhibits most of stress is of course

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 21.

¹⁵ P. Wachowiak, *Profesjonalny menedżer, umiejętności pełnienia ról kierowniczych*, Difin, Warszawa 2001, p. 16.

¹⁶ J.R. Schermerhorn Jr., *Zarządzanie*, PWE, Warszawa 2008, p. 32, after: H. Mintzberg, *The Nature of Managerial Work*, Harper&Row, New York 1973, p. 30.

a healthy lifestyle, which means sufficient number of sleeping hours as well as active recreation.

Another author, A.K. Koźmiński, examining the characteristics of a manager in an international environment, apart from high professional skills, lists the following features: the ability to adapt to cultural changes, language skills, knowledge of foreign languages, independence and ability to deal with difficult situations by oneself, physical and mental health, energy, high success orientation and supportive family easily adapting to changing conditions¹⁷. To sum up his reflections the author further claims that during his lifetime and professional career a good manager, working across the national boundaries in a multicultural environment, should have among others a solid professional education (e.g. in engineering, economics or law), finished postgraduate studies in management in one of the renowned international schools of management and also should have many long missions abroad holding independent managerial positions¹⁸.

5. Tasks of a manager and the most common mistakes

In every company a manager has to fulfil certain tasks depending on his position and the level of hierarchy. According to P.E. Drucker, the most common tasks that a manager has, are¹⁹:

- setting objectives – both these with the highest priority for the entire enterprise and objectives for the groups of employees or individuals; a manager decides what should be done to achieve them;
- organizing – examines the actions, decisions and relationships, manages the division of work, brings together organizational units, creates jobs to which assigns specific tasks;
- motivating and informing – forms a team with persons responsible for specific tasks, ensure full share of information and mutual communication, provides incentives for more effective work, rewards for successful work, enables promotion;
- assessment – determines the measures of assessment, analyzes and evaluates the performance of employees, draws conclusions, communicates them to subordinates and superiors;
- developing people – gives a direction in which the employees are going, emphasizes their certain features and suppresses others, allows to develop.

Unfortunately, these tasks cannot be always achieved. In spite of good competence of managers, appropriate skills and comprehensive knowledge, a manager is only

¹⁷ A.K. Koźmiński, *Zarządzanie międzynarodowe*, PWE, Warszawa 1999, p. 223.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 223.

¹⁹ P.F. Drucker, *Praktyka zarządzania...*, p. 505-506.

a human being, and like everyone else he can make mistakes. The most common mistakes committed by managers include²⁰:

- inability to delegate – this mistake is the most common cause of failure among managers who cannot delegate tasks to their subordinates, which means that on the one hand they do not provide opportunities for employees' development and on the other hand they focus on minor issues;
- lack of continuous learning – only those managers who continually learn and have the required skills and care of the same status for their subordinates are able to be successful;
- underestimate the impact of interpersonal skills – management means achieving goals through work of others, so managers need well-developed cooperation skills, interviews with employees inside and outside the company; managers should be able to control their emotions;
- lack of responsibility – good managers take risks and take responsibility for their performance and for the team, learn from mistakes and do not search for a scapegoat;
- talking A, doing B – if managers develop beautiful visions and then do not seek to implement them, they unfortunately lose credibility; every manager, if he says something he should then implement it because he is an example for others;
- lack of knowledge of the organization and the industry – technical knowledge is not enough, managers must also possess knowledge about their enterprise business activities, industry, competition, market, therefore be familiar with the environment and have strategic overview;
- lack of communication skills – if managers, regardless of possessed skills do not have communication skills, then they are unfortunately not be able to communicate simple objectives to their subordinates;
- lack of vision - managers must have a vision of the future organization and strive for it constantly, capturing others minds to follow them;
- inability to build teams – managers must be team orientated players who are able to create and develop diverse teams, which are characterized by the highest efficiency;
- inability to make decisions – nowadays organizations require from managers determination and willingness to take risk; manager's job is mainly decision-making and not making it means not performing basic functions, which they are expected to do.

²⁰ M. Książdźyna, *10 największych błędów managera*, <http://www.topmenedzer.pl/2008/12/10-najwiekszych-bledow-managera>.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, one can say that managers are assigned to different skills, different characteristics. It is difficult to clearly determine which skills are more important and which less. It all depends on the managerial position held and on controlled functions in the process of business management. J. Penc believes that the model manager must have both formal and informal authority based on power, professional skills (competencies) and rationality in action (creativity)²¹. Given the dynamic growth of many companies, the competitive struggle for survival – it should be recognized that a contemporary manager should possess broad knowledge and at the same time should in the best possible way adjust his decisions to changing environment conditions. Regardless of the fact whether it is high-level, middle-level or low-level manager, he must have interpersonal skills as well as depending on the position held, technical, conceptual, diagnostic and analytical skills or others. Every manager should have clearly defined objectives in order to make the right decisions, passing over duties to his subordinates respectively. Thus, the model manager can also tackle the problems, motivate employees accordingly and finally manage properly enterprise resources planning and the work of subordinate employees. To achieve all these tasks and be successful, as it was previously mentioned, the important thing is also the ability to counteract stress, endurance, patience, openness to change, flexibility and assertive behaviour which is firm, confident, but is still the manager's own behaviour.

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²¹ J. Penc, op. cit., p. 69.

MENEDŻER – WYMAGANE UMIEJĘTNOŚCI I CECHY W SKUTECZNYM ZARZĄDZANIU PRZEDSIĘBIORSTWEM

Streszczenie: Menedżer to osoba zajmująca stanowisko kierownicze na różnym szczeblu hierarchii przedsiębiorstwa, która bierze udział w realizacji podstawowych jego funkcji, takich jak: planowanie, organizowanie, przewodzenie i motywowanie oraz kontrolowanie. Menedżer posiada wszechstronną wiedzę i umiejętności w zarządzaniu zasobami organizacji. Podjmując wiele decyzji, z jednej strony może przyczynić się do rozwoju i wzrostu firmy, ale z drugiej może doprowadzić do jej osłabienia, a nawet upadku. Celem artykułu jest przybliżenie postaci menedżera jako osoby, która skutecznie i sprawnie potrafi zarządzać zasobami przedsiębiorstwa. Autor prezentuje m.in. definicję i typy menedżera, podstawowe jego cechy i wymagane umiejętności oraz wykonywane przez niego zadania.