

IMPROVING THE MANAGERIAL ABILITIES OF INDUSTRY MANAGERS BY COACHING, IN ROMANIA

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Part of a larger doctoral research, the present paper proposes a model of managerial abilities based upon previous practical research as well as academic literature regarding the subject. It aims to analyse the level of impact that coaching services present upon a set of managerial abilities of the industry managers (in both goods and services production). The final goal of the research is to develop a guiding tool for coaches and clients as well, useful to estimate the optimum duration of a coaching programmes for industry managers, as well as to assess the impact of such programmes (the increased level of the managerial abilities).

Keywords: industry managers, coaching, managerial abilities

1. Introduction

This study is part of a larger doctoral research that started from the need to demonstrate the benefits of coaching programmes on managerial abilities for industry managers in Romania. Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to present the set of managerial abilities and the associated model; to test the model emphasizing the benefits of the coaching programmes on this particular set of abilities for managers in two different types of industries: services and production of goods.

Managerial performance represents a wide area of interest and study. This was largely analysed and discussed and due to its complex constitution it can lead to business performance, company success or failure ([1], [2], [3]).

From the business literature ([3], [4], [5], [6]), one has learnt that managerial performance is dependent, among other issues, on several types of managerial abilities such as personal, interpersonal, technical, cognitive and administrative. Different authors have defined and discussed the meaning of such abilities and their inter-relationship. They have proposed various models of managerial abilities and have evaluated these as opposed to the managerial performance. Based on the previous studies presented in literature ([4], [5], [6]), the authors propose a particular set of managerial abilities: abilities that can be learnt, managed and improved through coaching, in order to raise the managers' level of performance. The level of each type of managerial ability is compared

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between the two types of industries. The improved level of managerial abilities will be determined by comparison between two batches of respondents: the ones that have taken part in coaching programs and the ones that did not participate.

2. The set of managerial abilities: testing the model and main results

Phase I. The initial managerial abilities model proposed for study was constituted in three major categories: personal abilities, interpersonal abilities and administrative abilities. Each category was divided in five or six sub-categories of abilities that were tested through a questionnaire applied to a first batch of 25 respondents, in order to be able to make a reliable decision regarding the complexity of the model. For each subcategory there were defined five items in the initial questionnaire, and the respondents were asked to scale each answer on a 1-to-10-point scale (where 1 is “never” and 10 is “always”). This model was then re-assessed based on a reliability study and the model was readapted and the questionnaire shortened. The items and the subcategories less relevant were discarded. Finally, the present paper aims to analyse the model of managerial abilities (presented in table 1), from the point of view of industry and participation in coaching programmes.

Phase II. The final model was illustrated by three items for each subcategory of abilities, which the respondents had to place on a ten-point-scale as well. The questionnaire was completed by 193 persons with management positions, from top and senior managers to specialists and team leaders. The study will present each group of abilities and will analyse the results obtained by comparing the mean values for each type of managerial ability – by participation in coaching programs and by types of industries.

The data were analysed using the IBM SPSS statistics software (tables and data presented are the respective results).

Table 1

The proposed model: the set of managerial abilities

Personal abilities	Personal stress management
	Communication
	Initiative
	Planning and Organizing
Interpersonal abilities	Building relationships
	Motivating others

	Empowerment and delegation
	Influencing
Administrative abilities	Decision making
	Time management
	Setting objectives
	Goal orientation

According to Whetten and Cameron [4], the set of *personal abilities* includes development of self-consciousness, personal stress management, analytic and creative problem solving and represents mainly elements that do not include others, and simply refer to self-management. In the proposed model this category was defined by the following skills: self-stress management, communication skills, initiative and organizing skills.

Stress and stress management was widely defined ([7], [8], [9]) and the literature presents several mechanisms for coping with stress and stress management ([9], [10], [11], [12]). Roberts and Hunt [13] define communication as gaining, transmitting and attaching a meaning to the information; Mikoluk [14] separates verbal, non-verbal and written communication; Hargie [15] speaks about the elements that represent the basis for communication: the motor impulses, objectives and motivation as well as emotions and thinking. Frese *et al.* [16] state that initiative implies the person to manage actively and persistently the obstacles. Iannarino [17] defines self-discipline as being the first attribute of initiative, and discipline is the ability to maintain the commitments one makes to himself; the second attribute of initiative is optimism, the ability to maintain a positive mental attitude; the third attribute of initiative is competitiveness, initiative being the activity of putting into action the competitiveness.

Forester [18; p.3] states that “planning is the guidance of future action” while Suttle [19] describes the planning and organizing processes as being crucial in an efficient development of activities, adding the importance of programming a particular time frame for a specific type of action, and also the efficient allocation of resources.

Table 2 presents the level for each ability in the personal abilities group, and one can see that for the respondents that had taken part in the coaching programs the level for all the abilities is higher for respondents in the services industry than for respondents in the goods production industry. Also, for all abilities the results obtained after coaching programmes are higher than the values obtained by respondents that did not take part in coaching.

The conclusion section contains a table that summarizes the level of growth for each type of managerial ability.

Table 2

Comparison between means for the abilities constituting the group of *personal abilities* depending on participation in coaching programmes and industry

Participation in coaching programmes	Industry	Stress management	Communication	Initiative	Planning & organizing
YES	Goods Production	Mean 8.0476	8.3651	8.3175	8.5873
		No. of items 21	21	21	21
		Std. deviation .67730	1.06408	.94561	.78106
	Services	Mean 8.1498	8.6618	8.6232	8.5290
		No. of items 69	69	69	69
		Std. deviation 1.40789	.95056	.94612	1.05910
NO	Goods Production	Mean 7.6364	7.9495	8.1818	7.8081
		No. of items 33	33	33	33
		Std. deviation 1.37781	1.29669	1.34910	1.56354
	Services	Mean 7.6190	8.1738	7.9952	7.8738
		No. of items 70	70	70	70
		Std. deviation 1.33609	1.38732	1.37201	1.65416

Table 3 presents the overall growth for the personal abilities group, and it can be observed that, for both industries, taking part in coaching programmes brings an increase in the level of personal abilities.

Table 3

Comparison between means of *personal abilities* depending on participation in coaching programmes and industry

Participation in coaching programmes	Industry	Mean	Number of items	Std. Deviation
YES	Goods Production	8.3294	21	.68641
	Services	8.4909	69	.85136
NO	Goods Production	7.8939	33	1.16467
	Services	7.9155	70	1.15154

Interpersonal abilities refer to building relationships, supportive communication, gaining power and influence, conflict management and motivating employees [4]. Interpersonal abilities focus on the interaction with other people. Katz [20] states that interpersonal abilities refer to the manager's capacity to collaborate efficiently with other people. This means for the manager to understand his employees, to motivate and to lead others individual or by groups. These abilities also include delegation, evaluation and efficient development of personnel. Such abilities are harder to obtain than the administrative ones because it is necessary to consider differences amongst attitudes, emotions and cultural aspects. The present study has aimed to consider the following interpersonal abilities: building relationships, motivating others, empowerment and delegation as well as influencing.

Whetten and Cameron [4] consider that the base for building relationships is interpersonal communication. According to Adler, Proctor and Towne [21], interpersonal communication is described by a high level of personal commitment. Zhu, Nel and Bhat [22] point out that another side of interpersonal communication is that it aims inherent rewards and long term relationships.

Forsyth [23; p.18] says: "Motivation provides reason for people to want to deliver good performance. [...] Motivation works because it reflects something about human nature, and understanding the various theories about this is a useful prerequisite to deploy motivational techniques [...]" Whetten and Cameron [4] present motivation as the mix between desire and commitment, where both components are equally necessary and important, and where motivation does not exist if there lacks one of the two components.

Regarding empowerment there are several definitions of the process. "To empower means to enable; it means to help people develop a sense of self-confidence; it means to help people overcome feelings of powerlessness or helplessness; it means to energize people to take action; it means to mobilize intrinsic motivation to accomplish a task" [4; p.445].

Kay [24] states that empowerment adds the authority to be self-sufficient (to make its own decisions) and building a base for persons to become self-sufficient. This builds the culture of involvement and gives it momentum. Kay [24] also describes the delegation process as the process through which the manager assigns tasks balancing the work load between team members and their abilities, allowing the authority to make decisions regarding the task; he also confirms that delegation is ability as any other, and it can be learnt. Whetten and Cameron [4] assert that delegation involves the allocation of work to other people, and is an activity inherently associated with managerial positions.

For maximized efficiency, it is necessary for managers to mix the two concepts, applying empowered delegation. This delegation can help subordinates to develop their skills and knowledge so that their efficiency can be increased.

The delegation may also be used to prove confidence in the person who receives it. Empowered delegation can be used also to improve the quality of decision making by bringing more current information closer to the source of the problem. Empowered delegation can also increase coordination and integration of work by channelling information and final responsibility through a single source [4].

Table 4

Comparison between means for the abilities constituting the group of *interpersonal abilities* depending on participation in coaching programmes and industry

Participation in coaching programmes	Industry		Building relationships	Motivating others	Empowerment & delegation	Influencing
YES	Goods production	Mean	8.7619	8.8571	8.7143	8.8413
		N	21	21	21	21
		Std. deviation	.83761	.87287	.92066	.94056
	Services	Mean	8.9106	8.7971	8.5652	8.8068
		N	69	69	69	69
		Std. deviation	.78621	.89153	1.26840	.93961
NO	Goods production	Mean	8.3737	8.4040	8.1111	8.4646
		N	33	33	33	33
		Std. deviation	1.16594	1.22406	1.45694	1.23586
	Services	Mean	8.1524	8.3429	8.2143	8.4095
		N	70	70	70	70
		Std. deviation	1.40586	1.17813	1.31391	1.25869

Table 4 presents the levels for *interpersonal abilities* group; it was observed that the level for both industries for respondents that have participated in coaching is higher than the others, but in this case only the *building relationships* managerial ability is higher for the services industry. For this group of abilities the majority of abilities have higher scores for the goods production industry.

The overall scores regarding the interpersonal abilities are presented in table 5, and it can also be observed the increase in the mean value for the ones that participated in coaching as opposed to the ones that did not.

Table 5

Comparison between means of *interpersonal abilities* depending on participation in coaching programmes and industry

Participation in coaching programmes	Industry	Mean	N	Std. deviation
YES	Goods production	8.7937	21	.80434
	Services	8.7699	69	.77130
NO	Goods production	8.3384	33	1.05305
	Services	8.2798	70	1.06116

Administrative abilities refer to such abilities necessary for applied managerial tasks. Greenbank [25] defines *decision making* as the decision action to choose among alternatives. Finucane and Gullion [26] argue that responsible decision making needs to fulfil several key skills such as the ability to understand information, integrating information in a consistent manner, identify the relevance of information in decision-making and inhibition of impulsive responses.

With advancing age people tend to accumulate experience in the areas where they operate and therefore to base their decisions on past experiences ([27], [28]). This can be both advantage by increasing rapidity in making decisions but it can also be a major disadvantage by applying personal preferences faster than data analysis for decision based on the information analysed [29].

Pardey [30] defined time management as the control over how it is spent and taking sensitive decisions regarding how it is used. In time management it is useful reporting to objectives and long- and short-term goals. Adair and Allen [31] pointed out that time is one of the most important resources one has and sadly, most of the individuals do not realize that time is a limited resource. They also state that through time management a manager has the obligation to efficiently manage its own time as well as his team's time.

Whetten and Cameron [4] highlighted that the performance of groups that set goals and objectives is higher than the performance for groups that don not set objectives.

Setting goals is generally associated with performance because it mobilizes effort, aims attention and encourages perseverance and development of strategies [32]. Sue – Chan and Ong [32] also point out that the group performance increases when the group chooses its own objectives than when these are imposed by the group management.

Following the same mechanism as for the other two groups of managerial abilities one can see in table 6 and 7 that also in this case the mean scores are higher for the participants in coaching as opposed to the others. For this group of abilities the overall score is higher for the services industry.

Table 6

Comparison between means for the abilities constituting the group *administrative abilities* depending on participation in coaching programmes and industry

Participation in coaching programmes	Industry	Decision making	Time management	Setting objectives	Goal orientation
YES	Goods production	Mean	8.7143	7.8254	8.5079
		N	21	21	21
		Std. deviation	.87105	1.01445	.87951
	Services	Mean	8.8889	7.9130	8.6232
		N	69	69	69
		Std. deviation	.91227	1.12989	1.10837
NO	Goods production	Mean	8.3838	7.4343	8.0505
		N	33	33	33
		Std. deviation	1.48633	1.57561	1.30203
	Services	Mean	8.1571	7.5167	7.9857
		N	70	70	70
		Std. deviation	1.29501	1.46405	1.33265

Table 7

Comparison between means of *administrative abilities* depending on participation in coaching programmes and industry

Participation in coaching programmes	Industry	Mean	N	Std. deviation
YES	Goods production	8.4881	21	.77383
	Services	8.5604	69	.84946
NO	Goods production	8.0631	33	1.26227
	Services	7.9994	70	1.17467

The study also collected information regarding the duration of coaching programmes and has determined the optimum period for such a programme following the median value obtained for each type of managerial ability.

6. Conclusions

The conclusions of this study are presented in table 8, a table that present the average increase in the level of each type of ability and the optimum duration of time for a coaching programme regarding such managerial ability.

Table 8
The growth coefficients and optimum duration for coaching programmes for goods production and services industries

Groups of managerial abilities	Managerial ability	Industry			
		Goods production		Services	
		Growth coefficient	Optimum duration	Growth coefficient	Optimum duration
Personal abilities	Stress management	0.4	1 month	0.53	3-6 months
	Communication	0.4	1-3 months	0.49	1-3 months
	Initiative	0.1	1 month	0.63	1-3 months
	Organising	0.77	1 month	0.65	3-6 months
Interpersonal abilities	Building relationships	0.39	3-6 months	0.76	3-6 months
	Motivating others	0.45	3-6 months	0.45	> 6 months
	Empowerment and delegation	0.6	1 month	0.35	> 6 months
	Influencing	0.37	1 month	0.39	1-3 months
Administrative abilities	Decision making	0.33	1 month	0.73	1-3 months
	Time management	0.39	1 month	0.39	1-3 months
	Setting objectives	0.45	1-3 months	0.64	1 month
	Goal orientation	0.33	1 month	0.47	1-3 months

Table 8 can be used as a tool for coaches and for coaching clients as well because it provides actual data regarding the benefits of coaching and measures the impact of such programmes, and thus answers the studies' objective and offers applications in helping interested parties in the process of contracting coaching programmes and services.

The growth coefficients are expressed on the 10 points scale used in the survey questionnaire. The present study has the limits of a self-efficacy type of study and expresses the data used only from the point of view of the respondent.

This study could be further expanded using the 360 degree evaluation method, and also it can be expanded as a correlation of data between industry, managerial ability and level of management position.

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