

North International Conference on Economics

NICE 2016, September 23 – 24, 2016, Baia Mare, Romania

Department of Economics and Physics, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania



PROCEEDINGS

of

North International Conference on Economics

1st Issue / 2016

<http://econ.cunbm.utcluj.ro/nice2016>

Edited by:

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ISSN 2537-317X, ISSN-L 2537-317X

DO ROMANIAN MANAGERS SUPPORT THEIR EMPLOYEES? AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

The vast majority of companies, regardless of their size or location, agree that the employees are their most valuable asset. Thus, great efforts are put into the constant development and support of employees with the intent of increasing their productivity and by doing so, becoming more valuable to the companies. The present paper wishes to provide a better understanding of how Romanian managers support their employees, by offering a detailed image on how the behaviour and leadership style adopted by managers influences the behaviour of employees. It is extremely important for managers not only to offer their support to others but also to provide them with guidance and offer their expertise with the intent of facilitating the constant professional development of individuals and to ensure that the employees are using their specific abilities and competencies in the most suited manner for the organization in which their work. At the same time employees need to be clearly shown the outcomes both of their general work and also their specific activities together with the rewards that they will gain as a direct result of their work. These elements are crucial in ensuring an objective motivation of individuals and in making them understand that they are a small part of a greater mechanism and that their work is paramount in ensuring the overall success. Not last, managers should state, in a clear manner, the work standards expected from the employees in order to allow them to better organize their work towards meeting these standards.

KEYWORDS: *leadership, human resource management, strategy, organizational culture.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *M14, M 54, O15*

1. INTRODUCTION

The management of human resources can be defined as a strategic and coherent approach towards the organization's most valuable assets – the individuals working in that organization, each of them bringing their own contribution to the overall success. Efficient human resource management operate with the help of well-designed human resource systems that bring together in a coherent way (Armstrong, 2008):

- *HR philosophies*, that describe the values and guiding principles that for the base of the human resource systems;
- *HR strategies*, that for the general direction in which the human resource systems are intended to go;
- *HR policies*, that form the specific manner in which the strategies are mean to apply in specific areas of human resource management;
- *HR processes*, combining the methods and procedures necessary to successfully implements the HR strategies and policies into quantifiable effects;
- *HR practices*, that consist of the informal approaches used to manage individuals;

- *HR programmes*, that gather strategies, policies and practices with the intent of implementing that according to the plans and strategies previously formulated.

Recent times have shown a close interaction between corporate governance and human resource management, with particular concerns being expressed towards the companies' trend to focus on shareholder value to the detriment of other stakeholders. One of the direct consequences of this approach is the constant restructuring of operations with the intent of increasing performance, often leading in employment cuts, while the remaining employees are required to work more in order to compensate the personnel reduction. When it comes to employees, performance management represents the process designed to enable individuals to perform their daily activities within the organization to the best of their abilities with the set aim of exceeding established targets and standards. The common view of most performance management systems is based on the assertion that all work performance is driven from the corporate objectives. These objectives are broken into functional or departmental objectives, which in turn are divided into individual objectives that are monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis (Collings & Wood, 2009). The stages of a typical performance management can be represented in the following manner:

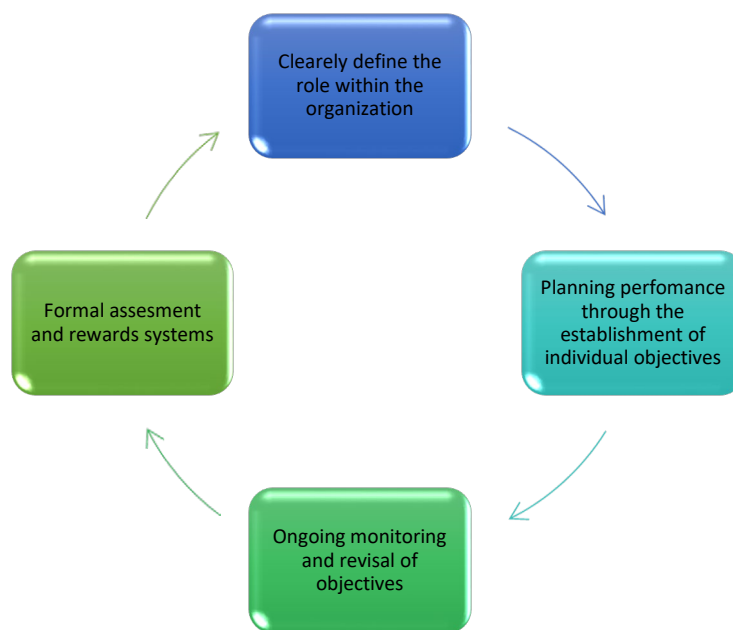


Figure 1. A typical performance management model

Source: adapted from Collings and Wood (2009: 192)

It is imperative that organizations clearly share their goals and values to the employees. An employee's performance objectives must always be aligned with those of the organization as a whole. These employee performance objectives need to be integrated in an individual performance plan. The plan must not only include the desired objectives, but it also needs to orientate towards helping the individual improve his or her own performance. Another key aspect is the designing of a system aimed at monitoring, measuring and evaluating performance. This system needs to be discussed with the employees directly involved in the evaluation process in order for them to know how they will be monitored and evaluated and also agree on

the type of reward available in case of success. Not last, employees need to receive assistance through the form of internal or external courses, monitoring and coaching or work shadowing from senior colleagues (Stredwick, 2005).

A series of practices have been considered ‘best practices’ throughout the years in order to ensure high levels of performance in human resource management.

These refer to (Armstrong, 2008):

- Employee security;
- Selective hiring;
- Self-managed teams;
- High compensation contingent on performance;
- Training to provide a skilled and motivated workforce,
- Reduction of status differentials,
- Sharing information.

Also, organizations need to pay attention to the careful selection of individuals based on their abilities to make a significant contribution for the organization, to ensure the necessary training to employees, but also to ensure flexibility, commitment and motivation and to ensure that there is an efficient communication between all levels of the organisation.

Another key aspect of strategic human resource management is the implementation of an efficient reward system that encourages performance and personal improvement. It is believed that (Beaumont, 1994) individual – based performance schemes perform better than group schemes as they create the perception that pay is tied to performance. Also, these individual – based performance schemes are considered to be best accepted by employees as they reduce the manner in which employees depend on each other.

2. HOW DOES MODERN ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP LOOK LIKE?

Organizational leadership is paramount in ensuring the long term development of an organization. It has the main purpose of conferring strategic direction, stability and survival of the company.

At the same time the organization’s leadership has the responsibility to develop and communicate values, culture and ideology throughout the organization (Morden, 2007). But, first of all we must see what type of leadership are in use in organizations.

According to experts, there are two types of leadership, when it comes to the relationship between the leaders and their followers: *transactional and transformational leadership*. Transactional leadership is based on a trade-off relation between leader and followers.

This type of leaders use rewards and punishment in order to encourage the followers to cooperate and allow them to act in their own interest as long as the leaders achieve their own personal goals.

Transformational leaders, on the other hand, have as a central point in their leadership the creation of a vision for change. For this vision to be shared by followers it is necessary to reflect the common values and aspiration that they and the leader have. When this is achieved a powerful sense of purpose is created which encourages followers to forget their own self-interest and to focus on fulfilling greater ideals.

This vision basically acts as a powerful motivator encouraging followers to focus on certain key goals and to align individual efforts. Transformational leadership has four dimensions, namely charismatic influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation.

With the help of charismatic influence leaders embed faith, pride and respect and transmit a sense of mission to followers that enables them to be aware of the most important things. Individualized consideration has the aim to focus on the individuals' own development needs and helps satisfy these needs by delegating work activities in a manner that helps the individual improve his or her abilities and competencies.

Through inspirational motivation, leaders use the values and beliefs within the organization to encourage individuals to achieve more than they would have through their own powers. Finally, with the help of intellectual stimulation, the leader motivates followers to think in new ways and to develop their problem solving skills and to think outside the box in order to encourage innovation and creativity. (Leadership and Management in Organizations, 2007; Boca, 2010; Cheung & Wong, 2011, Vele *et al.*, 2014).

The most challenging activity a 21st century leader needs to undertake is the efficient managing of human capital, including here the ability to manage knowledge and create and commercialize innovation. In this context, transformational leadership is considered to be the most efficient due to its ability to motivate employees to do more than expected, to continuously enhance their capabilities, and to place the interests of organization above their own interests (Hitt *et al.*, 2007).

Regardless of style, the first step in fulfilling the leadership role is the establishment and promotion of an appropriate organizational climate and culture. The leader must display confidence and enthusiasm and use both words and actions in order to drive employees towards the desired goals (Alkhafaji, 2003).

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH

The main purpose of this paper is to analyze several key elements that together build an image over the manner in which Romanian managers support and encourage employees to surpass their limits and expectations.

The research methodology used for this paper is based on the answers provided by over 200 companies from the North – Western part of Romania. In order to offer an image on how managers support their employees, a questionnaire containing several variable was administered, the answers provided being later on statistically analyzed.

First of all, as we can see in Figure 1, a large percentage of managers offer support to employees but expect, in exchange, full involvement and active participation from them. In total more than 76% of the questioned managers stated that they help employees and offer them support in order to ensure the successful meeting of the set goals by employees.

This shows a willingness from the managers' part to help others to improve themselves and to overcome their limits.

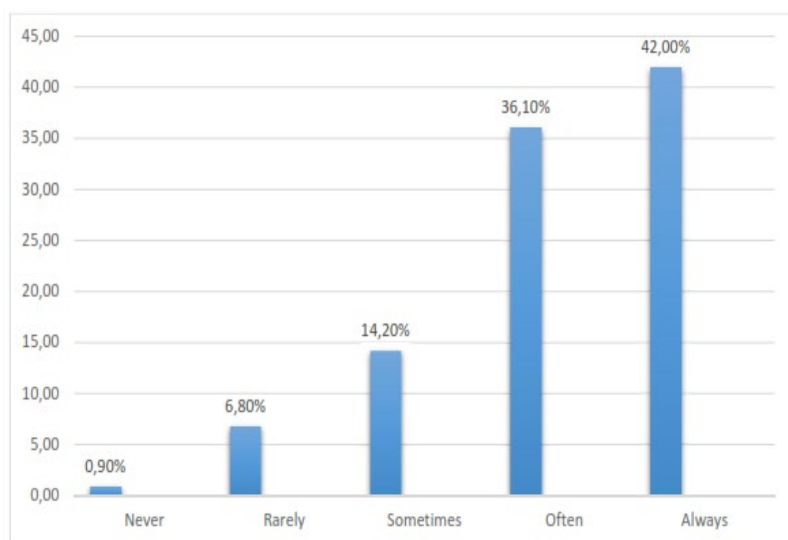


Figure 1. How often managers help employees in exchange for their efforts

Source: self-representation

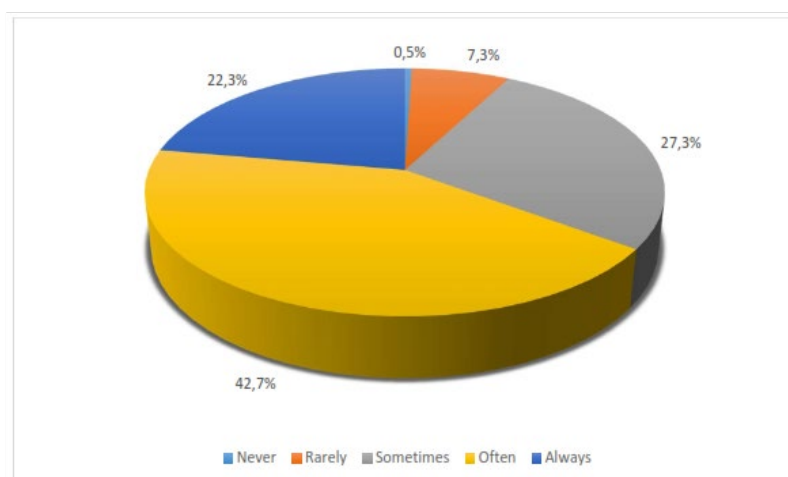


Figure 2. How often managers communicate to employees their most valuable values and beliefs

Source: self-representation

Communicating to others the most valuable values and beliefs is a very important part of a manager's daily activity and has the main purpose of sharing to others their personal expectations and to ensure that all employees have a common goal and work together towards meeting the set objectives.

As it can be seen in Figure 2, almost half of the questioned managers (42,7%) stated that they often spend communicate to employees their values and beliefs and almost a quarter of them (22,3%) do this on a regular basis. What is interesting, in this case, is that almost a third of the questioned managers (27,3%) stated that only sometimes communicate the values and beliefs. This, could prove to be problematic on a long term basis, due to the fact that employees might not know what their manager is expecting from their behalf and thus failing to meet the standards imposed to them or efficiently perform their responsibilities.

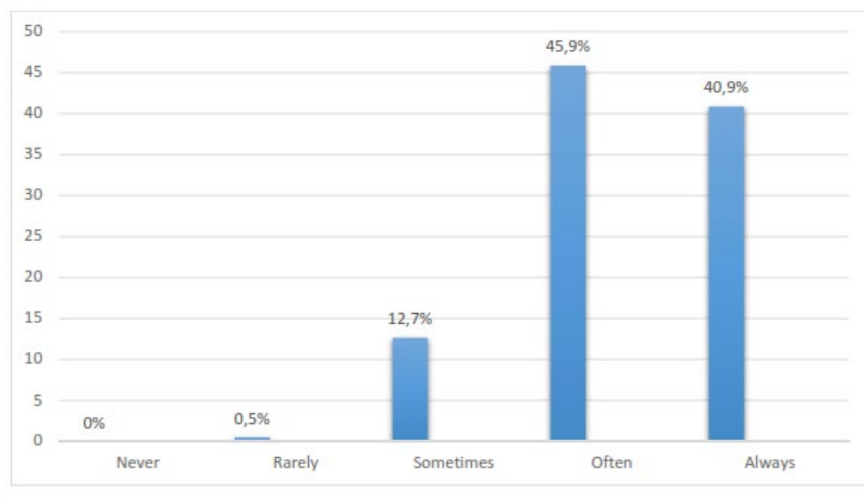


Figure 3. How often do managers spend time to offer professional guidance to others?

Source: self-representation

Another important aspect of the research is related to the time spent by managers offering guidance to other. The results have shown that Romanian managers often and always spend time offering guidance to employees in improving their work, gaining new abilities or towards personal development.

This shows that Romanian managers are actively involved in the professional activity undertaken by others and feel the need to somehow influence and control the employees' work. In this case, however it is necessary to perform addition research in order to clearly identify the reasons behind this involvement. It is possible that managers simply want their employees to evolve and develop constantly, but on the other hand it is possible that managers are underqualified and need that constant guidance in order to perform their daily activities and responsibilities.

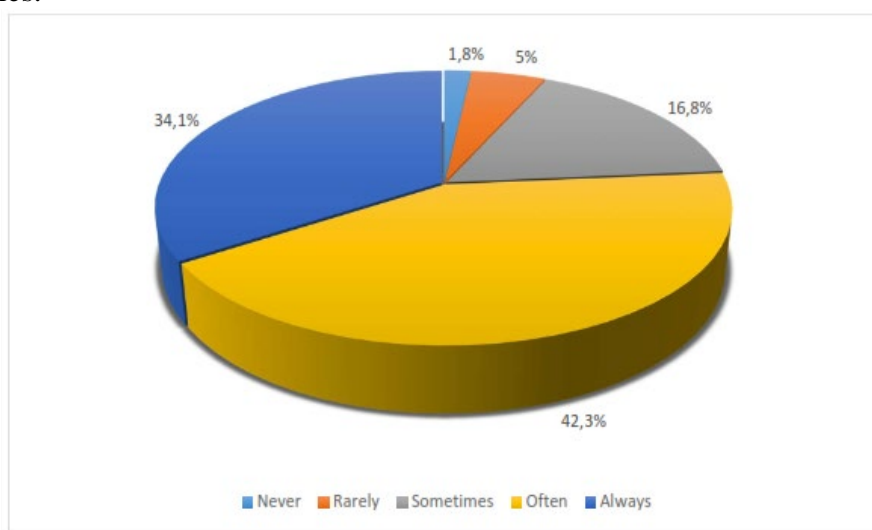


Figure 4. How often managers clearly communicate the rewards given for meeting the performance objectives by employees

Source: self-representation

As we could see in this article, employee motivation represents one of the most crucial elements that influence the company's success or failure.

Thus, creating an appropriate reward system is a must have structure of an organization. But this system must not only contain the rewards that employees could receive if they meet the performance standards, it must also contain an efficient process of transmitting to everyone both the performance standards and also the rewards associated with these performance standards.

The research revealed that almost 80% of the questioned managers communicate the rewards given for meeting the performance objectives on a regular basis. In this manner the employees constantly know what to expect as a direct result of their work.

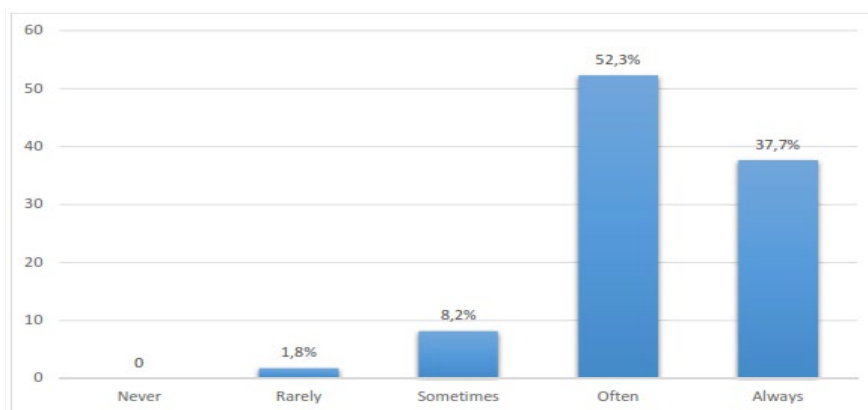


Figure 5. How often do managers encourage employees to analyse situations from different perspectives

Source: self-representation

Analysing a situation from a different perspective allows individuals to better anticipate the results of their actions, but also to discover and implement new and more efficient solutions to different problems.

Getting employees to look and analyse situations from different perspectives can prove to be extremely valuable on a long term basis as it encourages creativity and innovation. But, in order for this to happen, managers need to implement an organizational culture that stimulates employee creativity and allows them to take initiative without fear of negative consequences.

This research shows that a large percentage of Romanian managers (90%) encourage employees to be creative and initiative at their work place and to find alternative solutions to problems.

This also shows high confidence in the employees' abilities to overcome mind barriers and to be open to other solutions in order to find the most suitable manner of meeting the performance standards.

Overcoming one's limits represents a constant milestone in individual development and is the key element that leads to progress. For this reason employees need to look for new ways to become better and to go beyond their own boundaries.

But, in order for them to succeed the organization needs to create a work climate that is favorable for this approach and to actively support employees in their efforts to overcome their personal limits.

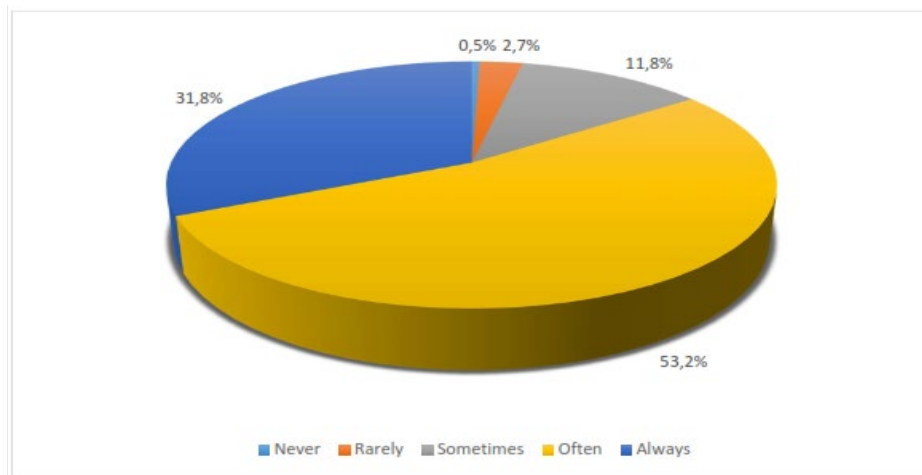


Figure 6. How often do managers encourage employees to surpass their limits?

Source: self-representation

This work climate is set primarily by the managers that oversee employees and is their responsibility to make sure that the employees feel encouraged to surpass their limits. The research has shown that almost 90% of the questioned managers actively encourage employees to go beyond their limits and to become better, more efficient and to increase the value that they generate for the organization.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The main goal of the present research is to provide a better understanding of the manner in which Romanian managers support the employees in their efforts to become a valuable asset to the organization.

The main aspect that were researches are related to the support received by employees in exchange for their efforts, the active communications of the managers' values and beliefs, the degree in which managers offer professional guidance and support to others, the clear communication of the rewards that individuals can receive if they meet the performance standards, the encouragement of employees to look at situations from different perspectives and the support in overcoming one's personal limits.

The findings have shown that Romanian managers support employees and encourage them to become better, but expect full implication from their part and commitment to achieving the organization's strategic goals.

This support comes with a clear and constant communication of the most valuable values and beliefs that have the purpose of creating a common goal and vision throughout the organization and to ensure that every employee understands the environment in which he / she is part of. Being aware of the fact that the simple communication of the values and beliefs is not enough to ensure strategic success, managers take enough time to offer careful professional guidance to others and to ensure that their personal and professional expertise is made available to others with the intent of helping them to constantly improve.

Although ensuring a climate favorable for professional development represent an efficient way to motivate employees, organizations need to make sure that an appropriate reward system is implemented and that the rewards and performance standards are made widely available.

As we could see, the vast majority of managers make sure that they communicate the rewards for meeting the performance standards to employees in order to ensure that everyone has equal chances to gaining such rewards. At the same time, we can see that the majority of managers make efforts to encourage employees to overcome their limits and to overpass personal barriers in order to ensure a constant personal and professional development and they do this also by supporting employees to choose different perspectives over responsibilities or problematic situations and to find the most efficient solutions.

From a managerial perspective the results of the study show that there is an active communication and support between managers and employees and that organizations consider important for their members to be encourage and motivate to become more productive and to constantly improve themselves.

As future recommendations to improve this study I consider that it would be appropriate to extend the research and to perform detailed analysis in order to best identify the link between the variables that were presented in this paper and the organizations' performance levels and also the employees' expertise and professional development.

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