

## The New Skills of the Modern Manager

Alin-Adrian DINCĂ<sup>1</sup>, Ion STEGAROIU<sup>2</sup>,  
Bianca-Cristina (VOICULESCU) PROCOPIU<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ph. D. Student, <sup>2</sup> Ph. D., <sup>3</sup> Ph. D. Student, "Valahia" University of Târgoviște, Romania

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**Abstract:** The trends in modern management endow today's manager with new characteristics or skills, which are constantly practiced to achieve a degree of perfection as close as possible to the desired one. Skills in modern management involve a series of skills derived from group social qualities, new techniques for motivating staff through non-financial values, communication adapted to the typology of the individual, decision-making power based on consultation and feed-back. The manager's performance is quantified including through a self-evaluation, managed through self-awareness as well as one's own qualities and flaws.

**Key words:** communication, motivation, decision making, self-awareness, modern management.

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### Introduction

Generally speaking, today's manager should possess the following "list" of skills considered essential: leadership, communication, critical thinking, collaboration, financial skills and project management.

In 2005, Carol W. Ellis proposes a practical guide for future managers through which they should strengthen other skills: defining their own role, effective communication, performance management, learning phases, delegating, motivating and coaching for performance.

Forbes magazine identifies in 2008, 10 potential skills of the modern manager expressed as follows: the ability to request and receive feed-back, the ability to understand how the function of manager is found in the organization, self-reflection, managing one's own career, the ability of looking at things from the perspective of the employee, encouraging and recognizing the merits of employees, building lasting trust, communicating with different people, developing the human side in the relationship with other members of the organization.

MindTools is a company with 27 million customers that provides solutions in management development. This company considers the following list of manager skills to be important: selecting and developing employees, understanding team dynamics, delegating, developing relationships among organizational members, managing conflict and discipline, motivating employees, planning, communicating, problem solving, and transparency in decision making .

If we consider only the founders of the field, then for Peter Drucker, the important skills of a manager are the following: personnel selection, communication inside and outside the organization, control and measurement of the organization's performance and goals, planning, use of tools and information technology, efficiency in making decisions.

An innovator at the time, but still valued today, Robert L. Katz publishes in 1974 in the Harvard Business Review, an article that causes a paradigm shift regarding the effective manager. If until then, the effective manager was considered that person with special personal traits, the researcher "shifts the focus" to those traits that can be practiced and improved. It is thus trying to change the concept of "innate management" with that of "learned management". Thus, Katz believes that the manager must possess several skills, but they are grouped into three typologies: technical, human and conceptual.

Another renowned researcher who classifies manager skills is David A. Whetten, professor of organizational leadership and strategy at the Marriot School of Management. In his understanding, the manager needs 4 categories of skills:

- **Personal skills:** developing personal awareness, solving problems through creative and analytical methods, managing stress and focusing on personal well-being;
- **Interpersonal skills:** exercising influence and obtaining power, motivating organization members, building interpersonal relationships through communication, preventing and managing conflicts;
- **Group skills:** working in teams and building them, delegating, provoking changes in the organization;
- **Specific communication skills:** interviewing, written and oral presentation skills, meeting and meeting management.

Note the importance Whetten gives to communication skills, a tool that underlies all skills in the researcher's view, except for personal skills. In his research, he considers the teaching of manager skills to be a method based on social learning theory:

- *Presentation of behavioral principles;*

- *Demonstration of behaviors with the help of case studies, films, transcripts;*
- *The opportunity to practice the skill through role-playing and exercises;*
- *Feedback from colleagues, instructors or experts.*<sup>1</sup>

Whetten's research identifies the need to associate manager skills with a number of distinct components. One component would be that not all behavior is appropriate, only that which has been scientifically verified and validated. Another component refers to the awareness of the manager's level of competence and thus, his need to "grow" permanently. And last but not least, it is essential that the new skill can be put into practice and not remain at the "theory" stage. At the same time, abilities are distinguished by their links to behavior. Skills are not like personality traits because they can be controlled, practiced and improved, and with their development comes managerial performance.

## 1. The new skills of the modern manager

### 1.1. Developing self-awareness

"*Self*" can be defined as a mental characteristic, possessed only by humans and a few species of mammals, that allows us to think about ourselves. By focusing attention on our own self, we can consciously think about ourselves, self-evaluate, control our behavior, talk to ourselves, set goals for ourselves to pursue. Simultaneously with self-awareness come the consequences that, in other words, differentiate the human race from other races: planning, decision-making, self-control, self-representation, self-evaluation, introspection, broadening of perspective.

*Planning* may be the most important consequence of the self. The ability to plan basically leads to the ability to think about ourselves, about possible future events of which we are a part, as well as about our actions and their consequences. For a manager, planning is of major importance, because by becoming aware of the motivating situation as a result of successful planning, he thinks about the actions and objectives necessary to achieve that motivating situation. By practicing a method, the manager can train his mind, and thus he can put himself in some possible situations, which when he encounters, he will make a decision more easily. Moreover, it can act in order to prevent difficult situations, by taking intermediate steps.

*Decision making.* The power of the self refers to people's ability to make preventive decisions in order to control their own behaviors. When we have a real motivation, the activities that bring us closer to that achievement are desirable, to the detriment of the other activities that are not related to that motivation. In other words, present actions, which depend on present decisions, are the path to future consequences.

*Self-control* is correlated with decision-making. Self-control is a restraint of automatisms that, without depending on us, develop in our own genes. The human race has the ability, unlike the rest of the animal kingdom, to control automatisms based on mental simulations and an awareness of the consequences of our actions or non-actions.

*Self-representation* consists in the ability to create an image of our own self, but also of our traits, values, behaviors. This is of major importance in our actions, because everything we do is influenced by our beliefs about ourselves, in other words, how we represent ourselves.

*Self-evaluation* is also a result of self-awareness. When we evaluate ourselves positively, we are satisfied, on the other hand, when we evaluate ourselves negatively, we have the ability to imagine a different future, and start the process of change. Another situation is, when establishing an objective or desire, based on self-evaluation, we propose changes in behavior, or the development of new skills to bring us closer to the desired hypothetical situation.

*Introspection* is the only way people can reflect on their own thoughts, experiences or emotions. We can think about the quality of life, and in this way we can focus our actions on improving it. Introspection also has a negative side, where it makes us aware of our personal limits, thus creating a dissatisfaction that we cannot overcome those limits.

*Broadening the perspective.* Through self-awareness, people can imagine themselves in other people's shoes, even see themselves from other people's positions. A broader perspective allows us to empathize with other people, to develop a culture of equity and reciprocity.

To have self-awareness is to have the capacity or ability to see ourselves. Self-awareness can be divided into two approaches, the first of evaluating ourselves and the second of knowing how others evaluate and perceive us. Developing self-awareness leads to improved performance in all environments, both professionally and personally. It makes us a better parent, son, husband, friend, or employee or manager. A manager with a developed self-awareness has a high development potential which allows him to improve his own qualities and achieve performance in the organization.

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<sup>1</sup>Oprea M., (2023), *Dream Management*, EdituraCartex, București, pg. 152

Another approach to self-awareness is to build it from three parts, namely: emotional awareness, self-confidence and correct self-evaluation. In other words, self-awareness means knowing your own emotions, positioning yourself correctly on a scale of values, and knowing your weaknesses and strengths. Developing self-awareness is being aware of your own emotions, their causes and the actions that can be positive but also negative, in achieving your goals. Self-awareness develops emotional availability, which is a precursor to our dreams, desires and goals. The correct self-evaluation brings to the surface the positive traits that you must exploit to be successful, but also the negative ones that you must improve. More than that, it means knowing what you are, without feeling complex about the long road to achieving your goals, or without being arrogant about achieving success. By being aware of what you lack, you can start working on what you don't have and decide on the areas that need improvement. Self-confidence is an essential ingredient in building a successful career, because simultaneously with self-confidence comes the ability to express opposing or different opinions from others, when perceptions are not the same or individual goals are different. Self-confidence can make us express opinions different from those of the majority, without thinking about how we will be judged.

Tasha Eurich says in her research that "unicorns of self-awareness" are those people with a highly developed self-awareness, and who have several types of self-understanding: values, passions, "fit" (environmental type), aspirations, patterns, reactions, impact (effect on others).

The development of self-awareness is a skill of the modern manager, because the starting point on a path of performance is the awareness of one's own person, with everything that signifies the self: self-evaluation, planning, decision-making, self-confidence.

### **1.2. Motivation**

A new trend in motivation claims that people have ineffective motivational perspectives and do not know what really motivates them. Or they choose the convenience of protecting themselves from failure through inaction and capping. Motivation is at the heart of the manager's activity if we understand that one of the functions of management is to influence others to do things in order to finally achieve the desired results. Motivation can be classified into several types: disinterested motivation, extrinsic motivation, imposed motivation, aligned motivation, integrated motivation, and intrinsic motivation.

Selfless motivation is what "kills dreams", people governed by this motivation will have nothing to lose, but nothing to gain either. To get out of this type of motivation a person must find what really excites them, because commitments to oneself must be motivated by things that are really desired. External motivation is generally due to rewards that do not belong to one's own person, generally material or non-material rewards, which motivate us "from the outside". This motivational perspective is very often practiced nowadays, with performance often being correlated with rewards. Imposed motivation is nothing but the result of external factors that exert pressure on us. Often this type of motivation develops from the fear or desire not to fail rather than to succeed. Aligned motivation is motivation based on personal values and principles and is the most powerful and difficult to change. This type of motivation provides a state of well-being through personal conviction that it is good, through alignment with personal values and principles, whose positive value is curative. Aligned motivation does not aim at material values, but rather at high personal value satisfactions. Integrated motivation is generally based on noble goals, identifiable with oneself, sometimes the motivation becomes an end in itself. Motivational values become so personal that they "integrate" into the depth of the self. Intrinsic motivation provides real enjoyment for what we do. This type of motivation generally takes up a lot of time and emotional and mental space, sometimes at the expense of other important things.

An important aspect that must be perceived is that we must look for the type of motivation that directs us to a motor side of our state. In other words, we need to find the motivation that best suits us and not hide behind the motivations that put us in a comfort zone. Subsequently, the identification of personal goals, values and principles that govern our lives, also gives us a solid motivational sphere with solid foundations. The last step in changing motivation is to want the change, to create new goals, based on goals and desires springing from values in which we believe.

The members of a group can be motivated, through a behavioral "control", but only within the limits of the perceptions and values that they appreciate. This control of behaviors has focused on two different directions: encouraging desirable behaviors and discouraging undesirable behaviors. Also, motivation can be individualized, because not all members of the organization adhere to organizational motivational factors, being sensitive only to individual factors.

### **1.3. Communication**

A manager's role is to communicate as well as possible with employees and convey the organization's mission and goals. A general aspect valid in the communication between the members of a group is passing the obstacle of accepting the need to ask for help from the person next to you. And an equally important aspect is to

accept the feed-back offered by the person next to you and to accept the opinion of others. Another benefit of communication is the coalition of several people who have the same thinking and adhere to the same goals.

"Managerial communication is a fundamental process of mutual interaction based on feed-back, in which managers at any level transmit ideas, feelings, decisions to subordinates, with the possibility of checking the manner of reception of the message by them"<sup>2</sup>. The importance of mastering this skill of the manager is reflected in several aspects concerning the organization: it creates cohesion between the group members, it creates a healthy climate, it dynamizes the managerial activity, it gives the manager the status of a participant alongside others.

The obstacles to effective communication can be multiple, and they (the obstacles) can also be raised by the way we choose to communicate. Obstacles to communication "have their origin in the psychological characteristics of the sender and the receiver, in the manner of communication, in their needs, aspirations and motivations, as well as in the characteristics of the concrete situations in which the communication takes place"<sup>3</sup>.

When we communicate important things, especially those that directly concern ourselves, we need to do it with enthusiasm. Enthusiasm emanating by all means to those around, can also infect others, finding reserves in the realization of their own dreams. An important role of communication is that it develops social connections, bonds friendships and forms groups. To increase success in communication, it must be appropriate in terms of purpose, establishing ideas in advance of starting communication, choosing the right moment for communication. It should also not introduce ambiguity, but should be clear and concise. Last but not least, communication is contextualized: spatial, physical, sensory, temporal, normative and relational.

Communication is closely related to influence, being more effective as we wield greater influence, and wielding influence leads to power in the organization. Also, communication is based on interaction, and fundamentally, communication is the solid foundation of a system, on which an organizational edifice is built. It is important to put ourselves in the place of the receiver, having a special role in his perception, especially in interpersonal communication. The manager's performance depends on this ability to communicate, because simultaneously with efficient communication, authority is also maintained in the organization, without which its coordination is much more difficult.

#### **1.4. Problem Solving**

The common feature in management activity is the problems that the manager faces, and his talent and skill is reflected in his ability to solve problems.

The first step in solving a problem is to define it and the difficulties it generates. The definition of the problem must be as detailed and comprehensive as possible, identifying other problems that may arise from not solving the initial problem.

The next step is to identify similar situations in the past and what actions you followed in those situations. Focusing on what didn't work in solving the problem helps us understand what causes the problem to persist. The choice of solution to a problem depends very much on the context and the situation, because a viable solution may not work in a certain context, and a solution that has little chance of succeeding may work in another context.

Another element in solving a problem is "making it worse." In this way we seek to understand the effects of the problem or the dimension of an unsolved problem. This somewhat paradoxical way makes us identify all non-solutions and avoid situations where things can go even worse. Through this method, spontaneity is encouraged, also creating a black list or a "not to do list".

Imagining desired outcomes makes us think about what our present would be like without those problems. Imagining and mentally fixing the desired result, always having the fixed objective, creates greater premises to find solutions and solve problems. In other words, problems are solved with the right attitude.

The last step in solving problems is the construction of a strategy, which must then be applied. The strategy thought in this way, respecting the previously detailed steps, must be put into practice with great precision so that it can easily get us out of the problematic situation in which we find ourselves. Having a strategy makes us behave more relaxed, because we go our own way and there is no need to keep looking for solutions, but only to apply the strategy that has been approved within ourselves.

Solving problems in the case of a manager is included in the scope of the decision-making process, which involves diagnosing and delimiting the problem, documenting it in order to make the decision, processing the collected data, identifying the determining factors of the problem, identifying the objectives, establishing the decision options, evaluating and comparing the options with the advantages and disadvantages of each, choosing

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<sup>2</sup>Cornescu V., Mihăilescu I., Stanciu S. (2001) *Management General*, Editura Actami, București, pg. 242

<sup>3</sup>Nicolescu O., Verboncu I.(1999) *Management, Ediția a III-a revizuită*, Editura Economică, București, pg. 469

one of the options based on the evaluation, transposing the decision by implementing the solution, checking the results obtained and evaluating them, restarting the process if the results are far from expectations. In the problem-solving process and implicitly the decision-making process, two criteria can be considered: optimality and satisfaction. Decision-making is, in the end, the most important feature, and what gives the manager uniqueness within an organization, through the power given by his formal decision-making position.

### 1.5. The ability to seek for help

An essential skill of the manager is the ability to ask for help, starting from the totally true idea that no one knows the absolute truth. In a group of people, where principles and values are common, they each contribute a part of the overall goal. When we want help, we have to signal it, which can be uncomfortable, because asking for help can be associated with inferiority. Before asking for support, we will first have to get used to receiving feedback, because if giving feedback is somewhat widespread, receiving feedback is viewed with reluctance and often equated with an accusation, then when opinions are negative. Even more important is that when feedback is clearly malicious, we know the difference between constructive and destructive feedback.

Asking for help is often abandoned by finding more or less rational reasons or by fear of being refused. Another fear in asking for help is the lack of confidence in the ability of those around us to solve the problem that we cannot solve by ourselves. There are also people willing under any circumstances to offer help, at the slightest request. This type of person often invests time and energy in helping others, often to their detriment, and if the problem is not resolved as expected, frustration arises from the gap between expectations and results. Another aspect worthy of consideration is the relief of the person requesting help, who, by sharing his problem, is also relieved of his responsibility. In addition to the actual knowledge of the problem, its solution is also shared, and if the problem is known only to two people, this "secret" creates a relationship of dependence between the two. Another aspect in the request for help may be the need for confirmation of the solution, which is already taken by the applicant but still needs validation, or why not, encouragement, validation or praise.

## 2. Conclusions

These "worldly" skills of the manager can be assimilated as mandatory necessities of the manager to achieve the level at which he is on the path he has proposed, in achieving his objective. These skills that are linked together, and can be practiced and trained, ultimately lead to the type of manager we want to be. They develop simultaneously, given the almost symbiotic relationship between them, starting from self-awareness and our level of competence, to communication both with ourselves and with those around us. Motivation, which is also emphasized through better communication, is based on an essential principle, namely equity, but it must be correlated both with organizational values and with the very different values of individuals. Feedback both given and received is essential in motivating the choice of decisions, and giving group members the opportunity and sense of participation in decision-making. Once receiving feedback is natural and without resentment, asking for support will no longer seem inconceivable to a manager. Last but not least, the manager must solve problems, combining qualities, processes and methods, but also skills, so that they are reflected in the performance of the organization.

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