Leaders and Projects – Common Issues

This article is a small part of a long empirical and practical research and it began from the necessity of models to be followed in organizations and the way they can generate that expected behavior from others. Nowadays, projects seem to be the modern way of doing things in organizations because of their advantages. The article tries to present common issues between leaders and projects, both of them being as determinant factors for organizational success.

Keywords: leader, project, change, manager, employee.

Introduction

These two subjects are very much discussed these days. Leaders are outstanding persons that influence others about doing the right things at the right time and projects are the new way of implement change in organizations because of their characteristics.

According to Nicoloscu [4] leadership is known as the process by which a person establishes a purpose or direction for one or more people and motivate them to act with competence and full dedication to achieve it. Also, leadership is one of the defining elements of successful people and is linked to the leader’s personality, his ability to influence others, to generate interest, expectations, emotions, to attract the interest of those around him. This involves creating a vision, setting goals, determining the values and principles of action and much effort from all involved. In other word, modern leader succeed in making the transition from dependence to interdependence and support the professional development of those around him [3].

A good leader stimulates creativity and initiative, emphasizes cohesion within the group, builds opportunities and knows how to harness the potential of those around him. At the core of leadership is teamwork, so it is imperative to build trust in team members by encouraging openness between team members, delegating simple and routine tasks, training for new leaders through support, advice and encouraging new initiatives.

In the opinion of Nastase [3], leader’s common traits are: vision, courage, competence, credibility, creativity, communication, transparency, honesty, openness to learning and working with others. All these are considered to be the characteristics of successful leaders.

On the other hand, a project can be defined as a set of activities performed for a fixed period of time which
contribute to achieving a common goal and generally requires and investment of resources in order to meet specific objectives [1].

In the opinion of Ogrean and Troanca [5], project's common traits are: working with people, every project is in its own way unique, the project has a limited life, every projects promote change, it requires well-defined targets and in achieving of a project there are necessary a variety of resources.

From these perspectives given above and from others we can say that leaders and projects are determinant factors for organizational success by their characteristics.

Leaders have and know how to use the ability to influence others in order to obtain certain goal, they also know how to use the resources of the organization, and they are proactively. They are agents of change in organizations, giving direct solutions to the problems. Their special characteristics are empathy, authenticity, originality, taking risks, good communicator. The leader emphasis on relationship with people and building a strong and united team.

Projects have also involved resources, are the way of implementing change in organizations, have specific goals and targets in a specific period of time, it involves working with different people, they are unique, and communication is essential in the process of conducting the team.

In order to observe the use of projects in Romania there were interviewed employees from Romanian organizations through an online research to notice their opinion about operationalization and implementation of change in organizations where they work in. The investigation was accomplished at national level with the aid and assistance of a market research company with national coverage and the inquiry form were filled using the Internet. The research shows that of the 103 analyzed employees, more than half of those surveyed were female (70%) and in terms of age it was found that most of them are aged between 20 and 25 years (47%). Most of the respondents are university graduates, faculty level (49%), followed by those with master degrees. Most of the companies to which the respondents belong, are active in service, followed by commerce, the two areas dominating the market with a total share of 55% and most of these companies had in 2011 a turnover of over 10 million lei [11].

The results of the research

Below are given the results of the research conducted at national level, in order to capture the reality of Romanian companies about the way the use or not these concepts analyzed and to see if there are several common issues between them. From the hole research were extracted only some results in this article.

Building on experience gained in time but also understanding the concept of leadership as the role of leader exerted by one person with major influence on other people, according to the results of the research, the majority of managers and employees interviewed (over 78%) consider that leaders are agents of change (Fig. 1).

As theoreticians consider leaders as agents of chance, this research proves the same thing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you consider that leaders are agents of change?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1. The recognition that leaders are agents of change in organizations by respondents

Source: authorial results

Once known the fact that leaders are determinant figures in implementing change in organizations, the respondents were requested to indicate which of the following actions will mobilize employees for change according to the realities from the organizations they work in. After interpreting the research results according to both managers and employees, the results are similar, highlighting the same point of view among the two target groups analyzed.

The majority of respondents consider that an effective way of determination and mobilization of employees in favor of change would be "the preparing people to adapt the changes that will come" (over 64% of respondents), followed by action "communicating the progress in the change process" (over 48% of respondents), and then "empowering people to implement change" (over 29% of respondents), results presented in Fig. 2.

An important fact to mention is that from the options offered for analysis respondents pointed as most important the non-financial elements that can be used to motivate and determine change in organizations, rather than financial motivation that obtained only 4% in the present research. This result is extremely important because leaders, through their informal position in the organization, are able to mobilize the team they work with to act in favor of change, and not through financial rewards.
Thinking to the realities of the organization you work in, which of the following actions would mobilize employees to change?

![Fig. 2. Actions used in favor of change in organizations, from the perspective of respondents](image)

Source: Authorial results

Specifically, change may take the form of projects in organizations. To understand the reality on the use of project management by organizations, projects known as the main element of operationalization and implementation of change, it is important to know the number of projects managed by Romanian organizations within one year.

In a significant majority, over 50% of analyzed respondents did not provide information about the number of projects managed within one year. There might be various reasons about this fact, either they were not aware of exact data about the topic or unwilling to provide the answer or did not understand the importance of the question in the whole research. Dealing with the other part, most managers and employees indicated that in organizations where they work in, were managed on average between 1 and 10 projects per year (Fig. 3).

![Fig. 3. The projects undertaken in organizations within one year, according to respondents](image)

Source: Authorial results

In the analyzed organizations, the majority of respondents, both managers and employees, consider that are enough encouraged actions of project organizing. This is very important because in this way the organization can adapt to changes in the environment, the project is known as a way of implementing change (Fig. 4.)
Do you think that in your organization actions of organizing projects are enough encouraged?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of managers and employees who think actions are encouraged.]

Fig. 4. Encouraging organizing projects actions in organizations, according to respondents

Source: authorial results

According to the research, in organizations there is a significant share of people who attended training courses in project management, over 50% of all personnel (Fig. 5).

Are there trained personnel about project management in your organization?

![Bar chart showing the share of trained personnel.]

Fig. 5. The share of trained personnel in project management, according to respondents

Source: authorial results

From all managers interviewed, 75% of them were involved at least in one project and from all employees, only 41% of them were part of a project team as a member (Fig. 6).

Have you been part of a project team so far?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of managers and employees who have been part of a project team.]

Fig. 6. The share of respondents that were part of a project team

Source: authorial results

Knowing that a project implements an idea, a plan or a strategy, in respondents opinion either managers and employees, the main reason that determined projects is the necessity, as the continuous need of organization to adapt...
to the constantly changing environment in which it operates, and not only for survival but to achieve superior organizational goals regarding efficiency and effectiveness. The second factor that causes projects is the opportunity, as the favorable situation from the external environment that managers must take advantage in order to achieve specific goals. The third place in the ranking of causes that are generating projects is the management of the organization, through ideas, plans, and strategies for implementing change in organization (Fig. 7).

Knowing that projects are change determinants, which do you think is the main reason that causes them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislation</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The management of the organization</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The necessity</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 7. Causes that generates projects in organizations, according to respondents

Source: authorial results

Knowing the specific methods and techniques of project management and the stages of implementing a project, the majority of respondents (over 80%) consider an indispensable factor the planning of all activities of the project from the very beginning of it, before it starts (Fig. 8).

When do you consider useful the detailed planning of the project activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After the project is completed</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After starting the project, in the development phase</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During project implementation</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before implementation of the project, in the initiation phase</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 8. The moment of detailed activities in a project, according to respondents

Source: authorial results

From all specific methods and techniques of project management, the most commonly used among Romanian organizations are: cause and effect diagram, provisional budget, brainstorming technique, SWOT analysis, decisional tree method and Gantt chart (Fig. 9).
Choose from the following methods, techniques and tools useful for planning, implementing and controlling of projects, the ones that apply to your organization.

Fig. 9. Methods, techniques and tools used in organizations to manage projects, according to respondents

Source: authorial results

The main causes identified by respondents, either managers and employees that let to reduced use or even no use of specific methods of project management are: the lack of financial resources, the lack of employee's interest, the lack of plans and long-term strategies, the lack of theoretical knowledge about project management, the lack of time for organizing projects because of the reduced number of employees in the organization and the lack of project management specialists in organization (Fig. 10).

Choose from the following list the main causes that lead to a reduced or even no use of specific project management methods in the process of implementing change in your organization.

Fig. 10. The causes that lead to a reduced or even no use of specific project management methods in organizations, according to respondents

Source: authorial results

Conclusion & Discussion

The purpose of the present article was to observe the use of projects in Romania and there were interviewed employees from Romanian organizations through an online research to notice their opinion about operationalization and implementation of change in organizations where they work in.

To this point we can state that the majority of the interviewed managers and employees from this research consider that leaders are agents of change in organizations, and in order to determine change in organization leaders have
to consider the following steps as very important: preparing people to adapt the changes that will come, communicating the progress in the change process and then empowering people to implement change.

In the organizations where interviewed managers and employees work, on an average run between 1 and 10 projects per year, and the majority of respondents consider that organizing project actions are enough encouraged, fact that is very important for an organization in order to react promptly to the changes in the external environment, and because the project is one of the well-known method of implementing change in the organization.

Between interviewed respondents, over 50% of the personnel are trained in project management, 75% of managers where involved in at least one project and 41% of employees were part of a project team as a member. The most common used project management methods in Romanian organizations are cause and effect diagram, provisional budget, brainstorming technique, SWOT analysis, decisional tree method and Gantt chart.

Although, the project management isn't used in Romanian organizations at its highest potential due to the lack of financial resources managers have to face with, the lack of employee's interest and this is generated by low interested manifested by managers to their employees and their needs. Then, another cause of reduced use of project management is the lack of plans and long-term strategies that should be given from the top management according to the direction in the next period of time that all personnel should be aware off, and another reason might be the lack of time for organizing projects because of the reduced number of employees in the organization.

References