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LEADERSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS

Leadership Qualities in Project Management

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to present key features that each project manager should have. Furthermore, it describes main tasks performed by a manager in a project. An attempt is also made to resolve the dilemma whether every project manager can also be described as a leader.

Design/methodology/approach: This paper presents a theoretical approach. Analysis is conducted on the basis of literature review.

Findings: This article describes a number of features that a good project manager should have. It should be emphasized that leadership qualities are personality traits represented by project managers. It is worth noting that a leader may not be a manager, but every manager should be a leader. If a manager does not have leadership characteristics, the realization of the project's tasks may be impaired. Certainly, this does not mean that the project will not be completed. However, better results are generally achieved by project teams, which are managed by people showing a high level of leadership qualities.

Research and practical limitations/implications: Conclusions drawn from the analysis can provide practical guidance to managers and project teams and make up a foundation for further empirical research.

Originality/value: The paper provides value for people involved in project management, both managers and project team members.

Paper type: Literature review.

Keywords: leadership, manager, project management.

1. Introduction

The growing importance of project management in recent years has resulted in the emergence of a new specialisation in the labour market, which is a project manager. It is a person of great significance for the project success. Therefore, the profession of a project manager requires people with extensive mental abilities and mature personality. A project manager needs to have a broad range of skills. Moreover, he or she should be a person with deep knowledge in various fields. Substantive preparation will be necessary for accomplishing numerous tasks which belong to the project manager's duties. It is worth noting that the key attributes of a manager, regardless of the industry, are: administrative skills, planning and leadership. These are the features that will ensure that the implementation of any project will not be a problem for a manager.

This article presents desirable competencies of a project manager. It also defines the relationship between a manager and a leader. Such studies provide the basis for finding the answer to the question whether a person, who is responsible for managing projects should be a manager or a leader. It was decided that the best solution is to have both powers to act as a leader and a manager. The balance between required management or leadership qualities will depend on project characteristics and the standard of project management adopted by an organisation.

2. Project management and main tasks of a project manager

There are two types of activities in organisations: operational and project activities. Operational activities include repetitive, everyday activities, such as production or delivering services. In contrast, a project is defined as a unique, one-time initiative, the implementation of which often involves using an increased amount of resources. It is

necessary, therefore, to determine the meaning of the project management concept. In project management, it is important not only to develop a schedule and an action plan, but also to embed them in the specific context taking into account costs and the expected quality of results (Lock, 2013, p. 30). There is also the need to control the effectiveness of the use of funds/resources that were made available for certain actions in order to achieve the defined objectives (Kim, Menches and O'Connor, 2015, p. 6). For the purposes of this study, it is assumed that project management is a set of methods and techniques based on four main functions of management: planning, organising, leadership and control, performed on time and in accordance with the adopted budget and requirements.

In project management literature, there is observed the emphasis on the role of a project manager who is a person dealing with complex projects. Using a set of managerial activities (e.g., job control and scheduling, or the allocation of resources), a project manager leads a project to the successful completion (Wysocki, 2013, p. 32). The skilful use of available techniques, according to the accepted standard, within the given budget constraints within specified time allows them to achieve the planned objectives with high probability. Using available principles, methods, and means for the implementation of the project's tasks is a part of the management activity (Trocki, Grucza and Ogonek, 2009, p. 17). Managing projects is a challenging job and therefore a project manager should have a set of certain characteristics and skills.

A manager performs a lot of tasks in a project, so it is expected from him/her to broaden their knowledge, to have a lot of experience and many skills. A good project manager should have subject matter and project methodology knowledge (Pawlak, 2006, p. 207). The subject matter knowledge is directly linked to the area in which the project is implemented. If a manager is not an expert in a specific field, he/she should make sure that in their team there are professionals, who specialise in this subject area. In such a situation, it is sufficient that a manager will have core competences in this field, so that he/she could effectively communicate with the team. In case of project methodology knowledge, a manager must be an expert and a specialist. He/she should be familiar with all the methods and techniques of project management. Issues such as: process planning, organisational structures planning, evaluation of the project economic efficiency, risk management, resource analysis should be parts of their expertise.

A manager is to perform numerous and various tasks and duties. Usually they are based on four main functions which are assigned to a manager i.e.: planning, organising, directing and monitoring. In addition to these four basic functions, a manager performs the following tasks (Pawlak, 2006, p. 205):

- creates project structure;
- defines project objectives;
- establishes a project team;
- plans deadlines and costs;
- supervises project work to achieve goals;
- ensures good communication;
- leads a project team.

Besides the abovementioned tasks, a manager also performs the following functions (Szych, 2006, p. 32):

- confirms project objectives, user's requirements, and acceptance criteria;
- manages and takes any necessary corrective action;
- provides products for testing and acceptance;
- reports status and progress of a project;
- manages changes;
- manages quality;
- manages risk.

The responsibilities of project managers are also discussed by Young (2006), who pays particular attention to issues related to the project stakeholders and highlights that among their key tasks project managers should (Young, 2006, p. 38):

- identify and maintain the appropriate relationships with stakeholders;
- develop a general description of a project;
- plan activities within the project;
- obtain the approval from stakeholders;
- present to stakeholders information about the work progress.

Project managers have multifaceted responsibilities that significantly affect the success of a project. The previous studies have identified four skills of an effective project managers i.e. conceptual, human, political, and technical skills, along with their skill components. It is important to determine the skill components that influence time, cost, and quality of projects. The analysis of the skill components shows that an interpersonal influence has a positive relationship to the project time

performance. The project cost performance is influenced by four skill components i.e. emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, apparent sincerity, and budgeting. Lastly, the project quality performance is affected by eight skill components, which include: visioning, emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, transformational leadership, interpersonal influence, apparent sincerity, quality management, and document and contract administration. Organisations may use the aforementioned findings as a guideline to appoint project managers with the 'right' skill profile or to focus their human resource development on skills that are important for the success of a project (Sunindijo, 2015, p. 80).

Most of the above-mentioned tasks managers have to do by themselves, for some of them they can count on the support of the project team and the client. There is no doubt that a project manager has a large variety of tasks. In enterprises such activities are carried out with the participation of a large group of specialised staff or the entire organisational divisions. In contrast, a project manager must show his interdisciplinary knowledge and professionally perform the tasks, which are assigned to him/her.

3. Leadership qualities of a project manager

In recent years, the growing importance of project management in organisations has resulted in the emergence of a new specialization in the labour market, which is a project manager. Its profile combines many characteristics of people with extensive mental abilities and mature personality. Undoubtedly, a project manager is a person of paramount meaning for the success of a project. Therefore, a project manager should have a broad set of technical and interpersonal skills. Moreover, he or she should have expertise in numerous fields of knowledge. Such a substantive preparation seems to be necessary for performing many tasks that belong to their duties.

According to Shenhar and Dvir (2008, p. 89), the key attributes of a manager, regardless of the industry, are: administrative skills, planning and leadership. Among the qualities, which are necessary for effective project management, the following attributes are identified: (Huidan, 2008, p. 143):

- thorough technical knowledge;
- managerial experience;

- maturity;
- availability for team members;
- good relationships with top-level managers;
- practice in other departments.

There are four categories of skills that are required from a project manager: credibility, efficiency, resistance to stress, and leadership. It should be noted that possessing these skills is not sufficient. It is important that they are noticed by potential followers. As regards reliability, technical and administrative reliability is distinguished. Technical reliability is based on the possession by a manager sufficient knowledge to be able to communicate and manage a project team, to understand technical foundations of a project, as well as to meet the needs of a project client. Whereas, administrative reliability relates to carrying out responsibilities to leadership and project team members (Ford and McLaughlin, 1992, pp. 312–317). Another category of managerial skills is effectiveness. A manager should be sensitive to the organisation policy and take it into account while implementing a project. Only then he or she will be able to provide the support to the management, and thus keep power balance between the activities of the organisation and the project (Huidan, 2008, p. 144). Managing projects is a very difficult task and a manager should be able to cope with stress. The main sources of stress are: lack of proven methods and management procedures, excessive number of obligations, inability to achieve goals, fear of change (Ford and McLaughlin, 1992, p. 314). Dealing with such difficult situations is related to individual characteristics of a person appointed to a managerial position. This is a very important attribute of each project manager. The last category consists of leadership skills and an appropriate management style (Slevin and Pinto, 1991, p. 40). A manager can achieve specific project goals due to their interpersonal influence on the member of a project team. It is important that a manager properly uses the strengths of their project team, and mitigates weaknesses. A project manager should intuitively decide when to stand on the side, and when to take control of the whole undertaking. They should properly balance rewards and recognition with punishments in order to effectively motivate team members. Above all, a manager should share their involvement in a project with the members of a project team.

The catalogue of leadership features, which each good project manager should have, makes up a summary of the above considerations. The distinguishing features are grouped into the following categories:

- courage – a project team will follow their leader when they will be sure that he/she is brave and knows how to make tough decisions, for the good of the whole group. When a group is led by a courageous leader, then its members show greater courage themselves;
- effective communication – leadership is based on communication. It is a fundamental importance for leaders to pursue their goals. A good leader is characterised by effective communication skills. Good communication inspires people. It creates a real, emotional and personal relationship between leaders and followers;
- generosity – proving trust and distributing enthusiastic praises. A manager cares about their team members' success in the same way as of their own success, not only because it increases effectiveness of the team, but also because a project manager truly cares about the team members;
- self-awareness – high self-awareness of great leaders gives them a clear and accurate view not only on their style of management, but also on their own strengths and weaknesses. They know where they can sparkle and where they fail, and have effective strategies to compensate their weaknesses;
- applying the golden rule – great leaders treat people in a way as employees want to be treated. Great leaders know that their people need their leadership and they try to adapt their behaviours;
- passion – great leaders are fascinated by what they do, and try to infect passion all around;
- authenticity – refers to being honest in every aspect, not only in leader's words and deeds but also in their attitudes and beliefs. When a leader is authentic, their words and actions are consistent with their feeling who they are;
- availability – great leaders clearly show that they are open to challenges, criticism and points of view which are different from their own. They know that the environment in which people are afraid to speak and ask the right questions is doomed to fail;
- responsibility – the best leaders encourage their people. They do not dump guilty on them and do not avoid embarrassment when they experience setbacks. They gain people's confidence by supporting them.

These considerations suggest that the qualities required from a project manager are very diverse and there are a lot of them. It is a great challenge to find a person who will represent all the features and meet all the above-mentioned tasks. A project cannot be not successfully managed if there is no right person appointed as a project manager. This statement is confirmed by studies of Dvir et al. (2009, pp. 36–48) who show that leadership qualities of a project manager have a huge impact on the success of the project (Dvir et al., 2009, pp. 36–48).

Quality of leadership is a real source of successful project management. This paper studies the issue from the perspective of leadership qualities, which is a traditional approach applied to leadership studies in the beginning of the 20th century. Therefore, more recent theories of leadership such as transformational leadership or positive leadership, which are based on positive psychology output, should be included into the study.

Currently one of the most popular leadership concepts is transformational leadership. This trend has been developing since the 1970s. Transformational leadership is characterised as an approach in which a leader motivates their followers to do more than they originally intended. The main tools of a transformational leader are: awakening the sense of value and importance of tasks; indication of the need to raise own needs, such as self-fulfilment. Such a leader can be effective only when uses their own vision and energy to inspire followers (Prochazka, Vaculik and Smutny, 2017, p. 386).

The literature discusses the four basic characteristics of a transformational leader (Obłój, 2001, pp. 134–138):

- creating a clear and captivating vision of a company that will be a driving force to introduce changes;
- analysing the environment, i.e. investigating the consequences of new trends in the company’s immediate surroundings (a transformational leader can see phenomena that are invisible to others and understand their importance and significance better);
- building an organisational culture that is focused on implementing changes that will be a model of good behaviour and an inspiration for employees;
- speed of operation, i.e. achieving the vision in a quick and effective way.

It can be assumed that transformational leadership is a sort of a process which involves exerting a mutual impact between a leader and the

subordinates. This means that these two groups mobilise each other for a greater effort by engaging in and referring to the values which are important to each party. Transformational leaders aim to make their subordinates aware of what should be a priority for them due to the welfare of the group and the welfare of the whole organisation. In addition, they strive to inspire their subordinates, encourage them to engage personally and, above all, to become an inspiration for them. In this regard, they willingly present their achievements, talk about their aspirations and about the activities aimed at their personal development and self-fulfillment.

Transformational leadership is often described on the basis of four key factors. These are (Vecchio, Justin and Pearce, 2008, p. 74): individual approach to every employee, intellectual stimulation in an inspiring way, and creating an idealised model. An individual approach means that a leader pays special attention to individual needs, concerning the development or achievements of each employee. Such a leader is then perceived as a mentor who seeks to create a supportive atmosphere in the workplace and thereby helps the team members to develop their potential. In turn, intellectual stimulation should be understood as motivating subordinates to an intellectual effort, creative and innovative activities by encouraging to question the established assumptions; approaching old problems in a new way. A transformational leader does not publicly criticise the members of the team when they make a mistake. He/she tries to encourage them to engage in the process of formulating the problems and finding solutions to them. Another action of a transformational leader is inspiring motivation. This means that the leader motivates the subordinates by emphasizing the meaning of their work, defining the challenges, stimulating team spirit, and showing optimism and enthusiasm. The leader encourages the subordinates to create attractive but realistic visions of the future. He/she also creates such visions, and therefore motivates the team members to meet higher expectations and efforts in the pursuit of the goal. A transformational leader, apart from the above-mentioned areas of the activities, should also build his/her proper image. The leader must be a person whom the subordinates will admire, respect and trust. Employees willingly identify with such a leader and seek to imitate him/her. Moreover, such a leader places the needs of the team members over his/her own, shares the risk with the subordinates, persistently pursues the

goal, does not avoid taking the responsibility, and primarily behaves in accordance with the ethical standards and values.

Another interesting leadership theory is positive leadership. Positive leadership is a strategy which assumes that an organisation is able to achieve superior results by the use of the strong sides and the capabilities of its employees. The appropriate behaviour of a leader is crucial for this approach in order to be implemented. He/she should create a positive atmosphere for the development of the concept of this leadership. In addition, he/she must support the positive relationships between his/her team members and also help them build the right and effective communication. An important task of a positive leader is also frequent emphasizing how important is the work done by the team, whose he/she manages. It is worth mentioning also some practices described in the literature, whose application can definitely facilitate the implementation of positive leadership in the structure of an organisation. This is even such an activity as passing the negative employees' assessments in a positive way, which at the same time will motivate employees to work harder. An interesting way to implement those principles of positive leadership is also the care of the development of networks characterised by positive energy, setting ambitious goals and building a culture of abundance in an organization (Cameron, Quinn and Caldwell, 2017, p. 61).

The positive psychology and leadership development connect when leaders use their personal talents and strengths in their work and encourage others to do the same. The leaders who understand that their best work is accomplished when all the elements of their well-being are at a healthy level are not only well-balanced, but also often highly successful and happy (Harter and Rath, 2010, p. 23).

Positive leadership has an increasing influence on the shaping processes of changes in organisations and building the participatory relationships between a boss and a subordinate, while building the cohesion and well-established organisational identity, within the existing cultural orientation (Barnes and Larcus, 2015, p. 79). For employees and organisations, the potential benefits of positive leadership are huge. The leaders who engage their employees help them flourish in life. And for their companies they boost productivity, creativity and financial returns.

The use of the positive and transformational concept by the leaders undoubtedly affects the employees. By analysing the above presented concepts, it can be assumed that this is purely a positive impact.

A team led by a leader who follows the strategies of positive or transformational leadership is likely to have a better mood, be less stressed, and be more committed and motivated in achieving the goal of their work. It is worth promoting such leaderships among project managers because the employees' management is not based solely on giving orders, but is the process of a leader influencing the subordinates.

4. Project manager or project leader

In the above-mentioned roles and powers of a person, who manages a project, there can be identified areas that put him/her in the role of a manager or a leader. In order to define better the roles and make unambiguous decision, who should be considered as a manager, and who as a leader, it is worth referring literature about the relationship between management and leadership.

Making distinction between the concepts of 'leadership' and 'management' Selznick (1957) observes that leadership is not the same as running the office, prestige or making decisions. Leadership should not be equated only with activities and behaviours of high-position individuals (Selznick 1957; as cited in Kożusznik, 2005, p. 102). Other researchers involved in the studies on relationship between leadership and management, point to the more detailed differences between them. Zaleznik believes that managers and leaders are two different groups of people with different motives of conduct, curriculum vitae, ways of thinking and acting. Managers usually take impersonal attitude toward goals, treat the job as a controlled process and prefer working together. Leaders have a personal relationship to goals, they are proactive, seek to shape the ideas and take challenges. So, it could be said that the difference between managers and leaders sticks in their nature, in their views on the issue of order and chaos – managers strive to ensure stability and order, while leaders tolerate chaos and lack of structure (Zaleznik, 2004, s. 108).

According to the leadership and management model of Ryan (2008), the course of an action for leaders is the vision and strategic thinking. Leaders should be characterised by foresight and ability to look into the future, but also on the current situation, to be able to

analyse development gaps in a given situation. While leaders focus on vision and strategy, managers focus on implementation of vision and strategy by translating them into concrete plans and projects. Leaders should adapt to each other such components as: vision, goals, values and culture. The measures of leaders tend to determine the value of an enterprise, to create a common culture of behaviours, to create the organisational structure, which is adapted to the future needs, determining the key skills and characteristics, which will be needed in the future.

According to Kahn, leaders turn vision into success by building winning teams, dealing with problems, focusing relentlessly on innovation and taking risks (Kahn, 2003, p. 23). Spitzer wrote in the same journal about an 'energizing leader', who is capable of producing energy in an organisation by creating relationship that will foster the maximum release of the focused energy. He believes that great leaders listen to their employees and insist on employees telling the truth. Leaders seem to instil a sense of significance in the workforce by giving employees the power of their vision and values. Spitzer also believes that leaders need to instil a sense of ownership in employees, allowing them to 'keep score' of how the company is doing and by building confidence and recognizing good work (Spitzer, 2003, p. 43). The third author, Shaeffert wrote in his article "What's Leadership" that "great leaders have vision, honesty, passion, authenticity, great communication skills and competencies." He believes that true leaders seek leadership because they want to make a positive difference in the lives of others. "Bearing the burdens of leadership is worth it both for the impact you have on the lives of others and for the meaning it gives your own life" (Shaeffert, 2003, p. 41).

Talking about leaders is the first part. The second part is turning attention to the manager. Managers are constantly told to deal with opposing ideas. The article entitled "The Five Minds of a Manager" by Gosling and Mintzberg describes what it takes to be a great manager. The authors explain that managers live in a world of paradox and cognitive dissonance. Managers are told to be global and local, collaborate and compete, change perpetually but maintain order, make the numbers and nurture people. Managers have to work in this world of contradictions. These McGill University professors organise these management paradoxes around five tasks: managing self, managing the organisation, managing context, managing relationships, managing change, each with its own mindset. Everything that every effective manager does

is sandwiched between ‘action on the ground’ and ‘reflection in the abstract’. As these authors note, “[a]ction without reflection is thoughtless. Reflection without action is passive” (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2003, p. 47).

Managers should work in their teams to ensure alignment, transfer values and cause that values have been implemented. Furthermore, they should acquire and recruit people with skills that can be useful in the future, and take care of skills development. One of the key differences in management relationship is that leaders who are at a higher level spend more time influencing and persuading other entities over which they do not have power, resulting from their position. Therefore, they are based on personal power. Acting both as a leader and manager needs to have interpersonal skills, and the difference in their behaviour depends on the context in which these skills are used. Considering the last aspect of the model – results, the key difference between managers and leaders lies in the attitude of leaders to make changes, and managers to maintain stability during making changes (Ryan, 2008, pp. 3–5).

An observation of successful companies shows that the key to success and competitive advantage is to use the right balance between the actions of leadership and management, which is skilfully interweaving the role of a manager and a leader. Therefore, in a company there is a necessary parallel presence of management and leadership. In contrast, the relationship between them should reflect a specific situation of an organisation, associated with its economic and financial condition, the level of organisational structure, specifics of organisational culture or a kind of necessary changes.

5. Conclusions

More and more companies develop their business exclusively on projects or they implement organisational changes in a project form. Due to the fact that projects are unique, managing them is a complex and difficult task. A project manager, taking various actions to achieve goals of a project, is responsible for the execution of tasks within specified period of time and budget, while maintaining a high quality product and project team work. Additionally, in order to coordinate the efforts of many people, often from different departments and organisations with different specialties who have not worked together before,

a project manager should have certain powers and qualities that will help him/her successfully complete the project.

Based on the literature analysis it should be considered, that possessing leadership qualities by a person who directs a project is very important and may have a significant influence on the success of the project. The key leadership qualities are: courage that makes a leader to be able to make difficult decisions; careful communication, so that a leader will inspire people; being responsible for actions; large self-awareness that will allow leaders to be critical in relation to themselves; having a passion and infecting it in the project team; being authentic, accessible and open to new challenges; praise project team members and show them trust. Each manager, who is distinguished by such features can be considered as a great leader.

Finding the answer to the question whether each manager is a leader and every leader is a manager is not easy. However, there can be specified some differences between a manager and a leader. Being a project manager means having a high level of competence and a strong focus on efficiency, which allows for seamless integration of material, financial, information and human resources and thanks to that it is possible to reach the project goals. While being a leader of a project involves possessing specific features and intuition and thanks to it, a leader can influence people to get their voluntary commitment to reach the goals of the group, of which they are the members. A leader appoints a framework in which a manager operates, it means that a leader outlines a vision and sets goals for implementation, which a manager operationalises. In addition, a leader has interpersonal skills, focused mainly on the people, while a manager is mainly characterised by technical competence, focused on the tasks. To sum up, it is worth underlining that everyone who manages a project has to deal with both: the project team and tasks, which are executed by a team, and also should have powers to act both as a leader and a manager of a project.

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