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Leadership Typology and Employee Engagement

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Abstract

Purpose: The paper is a contribution to research on managers / leaders performance influencing employee engagement.

The manager has a major impact on the level of employee commitment. There is no unified, complete, empirically verified model of managerial activity leading to employee engagement in the subject literature. The available studies indicate numerous connections between the different aspects of the leader's performance and employee engagement.

Based on the findings of the literature review, the authors defined the concept of employee engagement and the importance of a leader's role in engagement building. Significant managers' actions affecting employee engagement have been identified. Due to the complex nature of the leader's activity, the following classification identifying four model profiles has been proposed: a classical leader, a change leader, a discreet leader and a holistic leader. Each of the profiles has been characterised by the tasks performed.

Design/methodology/approach: The results of the quantitative research on a representative sample of professionally active Poles conducted by the Institute of Human Capital at Warsaw School of Economics in the autumn of 2016 identified the prevalence of employees opinions about model behaviours of managers

It was measured which patterns are the most common. Both fully and partially saturated behavioural patterns have been tested (how many managers meet the patterns in full, in 75% and in half), as well as pure and mixed variants of models.

Findings: On the basis of the analyses it was determined that the most beneficial, considering employee engagement, is the model combining the behavioural characteristics of all three patterns. Further research on leadership should take into account the complexity of a leader's role, particularly in the context of management through engagement.

Research and practical limitations / implications: The analyses reveal that managers have a major impact on employee engagement. In order to maximise efficiency, managers should apply comprehensive skills appropriate in the given stage of team management.

Originality/value: The paper is a contribution to the discussion on the nature of engagement, leadership and the relationship between these two constructs. Based on the analysis of the leadership paradigms, the authors' original classification of key behavioural patterns of engaging leaders has been proposed.

Paper type: Research paper.

| **Keywords:** engagement, leadership, manager's responsibilities. |

1. Introduction

Employee engagement has a positive effect on work efficiency. It is related, inter alia, to: customer loyalty, profitability, productivity, turnover increase, security, limitation of rotation and lack of absenteeism. Deficit of engagement can result in serious consequences in practice. The theme of engagement research is often found in consultancy firms publications. Rarely, though, is this issue tackled in the scientific literature. The shortcomings with regard to research connecting the leadership role with employee involvement are particularly evident. The literature on the relationship between leadership importance and engagement is limited. The existence of the relationship was confirmed by scholars at the end of the last century (Kahn, 1990). Yet, there is no empirical analysis of the direct impact of particular leadership aspects on employee engagement.

The aim of this paper is to illustrate the relationship between employee engagement and the leadership style. Based on the literature

review, a classification reflecting the work essence of engaging leaders has been developed. Four model profiles have been identified: a classical leader, a change leader, a discreet leader and a holistic leader. Each of them has been characterised by the tasks performed. The incidence of the distinguished types of leadership among Polish superiors was examined in the subordinates survey on superiors carried out by the Institute of Human Capital at Warsaw School of Economics in 2016.

2. Employee Engagement

The concept of employee engagement is popular in the management consulting industry (AON Hewitt, 2017; Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008). Despite great interest of the practitioners, relatively limited precise scientific research was conducted (Juchnowicz, 2010). In the subject literature, numerous definitions and methodologies of research in the field of engagement can be found (Wefald and Downey, 2008; Shuck and Wollard, 2010). Researchers agree that engagement is a multidimensional concept. It can be considered as a motivational construct consistent with positive organisational psychology (Jeung, 2011). When deciding on engagement, individuals address the question on the meaningfulness of work, safety, and their own physical, emotional and psychological readiness to engage in a particular situation (Kahn, 1990). The question of the meaningfulness is considered in three aspects. The first one concerns the fulfilment of existential needs of an individual through the accomplished tasks and the importance of work and life. The second one refers to perceiving oneself through the prism of relationships. The third component – relations at work – refers to recognition, respect and positive feedback coming from co-worker interactions that contribute to strengthening the sense of dignity, recognition and self-esteem (Kahn, 1990).

Engagement has been conceptualised in numerous ways (Kinowska, 2009; Hughes and Rog, 2008; Simpson, 2009; Shuck and Wollard, 2010; Christian, Gaza and Slaughter, 2011). Researchers agree that it includes three interrelated factors: cognitive, emotional and behavioural (Frank, Finnegan, and Taylor, 2004; Gibbons, 2006; Shuck and Wollard, 2010). The cognitive aspect refers to the awareness of the role in work

environment. The essence of the emotional factor is to create relationships with other people (co-workers and colleagues) and to experience empathy and concern for others (Luthans and Peterson, 2002). In the literature, there are three most frequently mentioned elements of the behavioural component: positive feedback about the organisation, the desire to continue work despite opportunities to work elsewhere, and undertaking extra effort and initiative for the organisation (Looi Maruszarz and Baumruk, 2004; Baumruk, Gorman, Gorman, and Ingham, 2006; AON Hewitt, 2017).

On these grounds it can be assumed that commitment is a kind of attitude toward work (Juchnowicz, 2012). Engagement requires knowledge of the concept of attitude, positive or negative feelings toward the organisation, in particular the company values and objectives, leaders code of conduct, the forms and methods of acting and the specific behaviour toward the company. The committed employee displays a high degree of concentration on the tasks performed, is passionate and enthusiastic, has a positive attitude towards the organisation and / or work and shows a high degree of professional activity in the workplace (Juchnowicz, 2012).

3. Influence of the superior on employee engagement

A direct superior is a person who oversees the daily work of subordinates. There is strong consensus that a superior is crucial for employee engagement (Baron, 2012; Frank et al., 2004; Gibbons, 2006; Jones, Wilson and Jones, 2008; Tims, Bakker and Xanthopoulou, 2011). Researchers identify common characteristics of management and leadership (Yukl, 1989). Both constructs are combined in the superiors' performance, which includes integrating organisations with followers. In order to perform their tasks properly, they must have leadership and managerial skills. There are studies confirming that relationships with superiors are the most influential factors affecting engagement (Buckingham and Coffman, 1999). Direct superiors also have an indirect impact on engagement through shaping communication, trust, organisational coherence, and tasks attractiveness (Towers Perrin, 2003; Robinson, Perryman and Hayday 2004; Baumruk et al., 2006).

4. Leadership classification

The notion of leadership is a phenomenon that has been of interest since the dawn of civilization. Plato wrote about the leaders. Since antiquity, leaders have received proper education and experience, preparing them to play the role, for instance, Aristotle made a significant contribution to the education of Alexander the Great. For millennia, leadership has remained the most frequently studied and least understood phenomenon in the social sciences (Bennis and Nanus, 1985).

Despite the extensive interest of scholars, there is a high degree of ambiguity in the definition of leadership. The lack of conceptual clarity does not affect the fact that it is one of the most important factors shaping employee engagement (Macey and Schneider, 2008).

Contemporary leadership researchers introduce classifications to capture the essence of the phenomenon. Many leadership typologies can be found in the subject literature (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009; Drath, McCauley, Palus, Van Velsor, O'Connor and McGuire, 2008; Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2002; Avery, 2004). The division into transactional and transformational leadership is prevalent (Bass, 1997). Transactional leaders negotiate contracts with their followers. A transaction results in satisfying the employees' needs and generating motivation to act. Transactional leaders focus on: supervising, organising, controlling, and evaluating the performance of subordinates, i.e. executing traditional managerial functions. They seek errors and deviations from the defined ways of behaviour. In exchange for: financial incentives, recognition, access to scarce resources, and the possibility to avoid penalties, they receive the indispensable employees' effort to increase efficiency (Bass, 1997; Avery 2004). Transactional leadership does not require followers to share the vision of the organisation. It is effective for tasks that need to be done in a specific way. Transactional approach is juxtaposed with transformational leadership. Already in the eighties of the last century it was established that the best leaders combine transactional leadership with transformational one (Bass, 1997). A transactional leader operates within the principles designated by the organisation. In well-organised companies, their activities bring positive business results. Conversely, in crisis situations, both transformational and transactional leaders achieve positive outcomes (Bass 1997).

Transformational leadership, also described in literature as visionary or charismatic, focuses on managing change. It requires emotional

engagement of employees (Soane, Butler and Stanton, 2015). Leaders indicate a higher-level goal, related to the followers' needs and motives (Avery, 2004). They create an attractive vision of the future and show the way forward. By attracting followers to realise the vision, they gain motivation to perform tasks and achieve goals that exceed expectations. Positive relationships with followers affect leadership efficiency (Zhang, Avery, Bergsteiner and More, 2014b).

The essence of differences between managers and leaders was described in the seventies of the twentieth century (Zaleznik, 1977). Managers are required to be consistent, possess analytical, problem solving and managerial skills. Goals for managers do not result from their desires, but from the needs of the organisation. Managers perceive work as a process. Their job is to facilitate it, to ensure proper co-operation, to ease tension and to manage controversy. Managers must show flexibility in their actions. They have at their disposal the following forms of pressure: rewards or penalties that help them keep the process under control. Management is about planning and budgeting, organising and prioritising. It gives power and possibilities to solve problems (Kotter, 2001). The essence of leadership is to set directions, connect people and foster motivation. Leaders are needed in companies where owners expect the managers to additionally have the vision of the future, the ability to inspire and awaken passion among subordinates – the managerial tool kit is insufficient. The leader's duty is to face change (Kotter, 1996). Competitiveness, technological progress, globalisation, market deregulation and the dynamics of the environment force the organisation to continually transform itself. Durability, solidity, and generating regular but modest profits has ceased to be a recipe for success. The task of the leader is to set the right direction of action, in response, and sometimes against the odds, to turbulence (Kotter, 2001).

Coping with complexity and change distinguishes management from leadership. For the efficient functioning of the enterprise, both forms are needed in the real world. An organisation must have a decision-making system that will guide it in action. Employees' networks, structures, and relationships are essential to turn ideas into specific actions that will give the company the desired effect. Managers are to ensure that the plan is executed by controlling processes and solving ongoing problems. It is necessary to monitor the results, compare them with the plan, correct the *ad hoc* deviations, both by verifying the initial assumptions and the work outcomes. Managers have developed a wide

range of tools that are helpful in achieving the intended goals: feedback system, reporting, presenting data, more or less formal team meetings. Leaders are not interested in tiny cogs driving the process. Their domain of activity is to inspire and motivate people – often by referring to their needs, values, and emotions – to act in the pursuit of vision, regardless of obstacles (Kotter, 2001).

Managers are responsible for creating the company's favourable conditions to carry out complex plans. The activities consist of a number of steps with varying levels of complexity: forming the right team of executives (both in terms of quantity and competence), designing processes, organising work, providing the necessary resources, delegating responsibility for achieving goals, and developing control and feedback systems. The right tools provide the organisation with efficient management, but it is the leader who generates employee motivation to achieve a vision / strategy. Companies to survive cannot be limited to one type of leadership. They need both managers and leaders (Zaleznik, 1977).

Mintzberg argues that 'covert leadership' is essential in a coherent management of specialists' team (Mintzberg, 1998). There is no need for internal procedures and systems analysing the working time to enhance professionals engagement. Occupational activity of professionals is performed in small groups and task teams, with a great deal of informal communication. They perform some of the tasks by themselves, without the need to consult their colleagues, co-workers or superiors. Most professionals require little direct supervision. Leading such a team is complicated due to the fact that most of its members have a higher level of expertise than a leader. In such conditions, overt leadership can only work in the short term. In the long run discretion is a more efficient solution.

A 'covert leader' is focused on the final result of work, not on the specific path that leads to it. Collins uses the term a 'Level 5' leader, a person who can blend personal humility with exceptional strength and determination to achieve goals. These are the leaders who feed their ego not by branding themselves but by building a great company (Collins, 2001).

Although motivating and coaching are important components of the 'covert leaders' work, a leader is not responsible for parenting the team members to develop their skills during the task performance (Mintzberg, 1998). Development is prompted by their own needs. A leader's

task is to coordinate the skills of group members to achieve the intended goal. Professionals achieve good results when they themselves treat a leader with respect and the leader accepts the individuality of each member of their team. A job of a leader is to build openness, support employees in case of conflict and build unofficial relationships. The leader is to face an important task outside the team he leads. The leader must establish and maintain relationships with key stakeholders so that they do not interfere with the work of professionals. The leader creates a protective umbrella over the team and counteracts any social pressure. Professionals and specialists do not need constant control. They expect protection and support outside the team and organisation.

In summary, complex classifications of leadership covering a broad spectrum of phenomena can be found in the subject literature. There is, however, no taxonomy on the diversity of leadership that engages employees. The following is an example of complex classification of four leadership paradigms by Avery (2004): classical, transactional, visionary and organic. According to the classical paradigm, the leader manages the group so as to achieve a common goal. The followers carry out the autocratic commands, without the possibility of undermining them. They are motivated by fears of the consequences of disobedience. The essence of a transactional paradigm is managing through the creation of a suitable working environment. Followers know the rules and receive rewards in return for expected behaviour. The visionary leaders inspire their followers who share a vision and pursue it. In the organic paradigm, vision and leadership come from the team. They are not elements of a top-down process, but are happening between the formal leaders and team members. There can be multiple leaders in one team (Mehra, Smith, Dixon and Robertson, 2006). The above classification does not provide the basis for research into the essence of leadership of the engaging leader. The analyses show that only the last two paradigms affect employees involvement (Zhang, Avery, Bergsteiner and More, 2014a).

In order to systemise the research on the nature of the work of the leader influencing the followers via engaging, the authors' original classification has been developed. Four types of involving leaders have been identified on the basis of the subject literature review: classical manager, change leader, discreet and holistic leader. The concept of a classical manager is derived from a transactional leadership model. According to it, a leader is focused on the proper implementation of

four traditional leadership functions. Commitment is built through appropriate application of managerial tools. Leaders are efficient when followers perceive them as individuals who play fair. A change leader is a transformational leader who focuses on creating a vision and efficiently manages changes. A discreet leader manages through respect and trust. Thanks to the right division of responsibilities and cooperation rules discreet leaders do not need to constantly interfere in the tasks performed by the team. A discreet leader is active in crisis and conflict situations. Relationships with people outside the team are essential. Via their contact network discreet managers promote their followers' work outcome and obtain the necessary resources. The last type is a holistic leader, who combines the features of all the above mentioned three paradigms. The concept is derived from the doctrine of holism. It assumes that leadership is a greater phenomenon than the sum of its parts. The concept cannot be fully understood by concentrating only on selected elements (Drath et al., 2008). A summary of behavioural characteristics for each of the four types of involving leaders is presented in the table below.

Table 1. Work essence for four types of involving leaders

Classical leader	Change leader	Discreet leader	Holistic leader
Plans properly, organises fairly, motivates, and appropriately controls the work of the subordinated team	Creates a vision of the future and manages change	Evokes respect, is focused on team work outcome, supports cooperation, resolves conflicts, pays attention to and promotes individuality of employees, manages network of connections	Depending on the situation, displays the behaviour of a classical manager, change leader, or discreet leader

Source: the authors' original research.

5. Types of leadership of Polish superiors – research results

The purpose of the study was to gather information about subordinates opinions on their supervisors in the areas covered by the questionnaire. The survey was conducted from 7th to 16th October

2016, with the application of CAWI method, on a sample of 800 professionally active respondents. The representativeness of professionally active Polish Internet users was achieved with the help of a random sample of random variables: gender, age, education and size of the place of residence. The structure of the sample is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Survey Sample Structure

Gender	female	51%
	male	49%
Age	below 25	9%
	26–35	24%
	36–45	22%
	46–55	20%
	above 55	25%
Education	primary/ vocational	5%
	secondary	30%
	higher	65%
Position	managerial	17%
	non-managerial	78%
	owner	5%
Sector	private	55%
	public	43%
	other	2%
Company size	micro company	15%
	small company	27%
	medium company	27%
	big company	31%
Job tenure	up to 1 year	4%
	1–5 years	15%
	6–10 years	15%
	11–15 years	11%
	16–20 years	9%
	21–25 years	10%
	26–30 years	10%
	over 30 years	26%

Source: Author's original study based on survey report on opinions of subordinates about their superiors.

The survey consisted of 59 questions related to the opinions on many aspects of the superiors' work, in particular: goal setting, decision making, feedback, networking, employee evaluation, reward allocation, delegation, communication, staff development, and supporting team spirit.

For the purposes of this article, responses to questions about the key aspects of the distinguished types of leadership have been selected and analysed. Questions about the nature of the work of a classical manager, change leader and discreet leader have been chosen. Subsequent analysis of respondents' replies was then conducted to determine the incidence of behavioural characteristics of each type of engaging leaders.

Three levels of matching behavioural characteristics for the specified types of leadership were examined. The relative frequency of the superiors who matched each model was calculated: in 100% (subordinates answered all questions positively about a particular type), over 75% (positive answers to the $\frac{3}{4}$ questions about the model above) and in 50%. Other superiors who failed to match any of the described types were at least in 50% classified as undefined.

The negative responses of subordinates were also analyzed. Superiors whose subordinates stated that they do not exhibit any behavioural characteristics of the described types of leadership have been selected. The results of the analyzes are presented in the table below.

Table 3. Frequency of particular types of engaging leadership among Polish superiors

Type of superior	Matching the model in 100%	Matching the model in the range of over 75% to 100%	Matching the model in the range of over 50% to 75%	Total
Classical manager	6%	1%	3%	10%
Change leader	3%	2%	1%	6%
Discreet leader	5%	8%	6%	19%
Holistic leader	7%	3%	0%	10%
Classical manager and change leader	1%	1%	0%	2%
Classical manager and discreet leader	4%	3%	1%	8%
Change leader and discreet leader	2%	5%	1%	8%

Table 3.
continued

Type of superior	Matching the model in 100%	Matching the model in the range of over 75% to 100%	Matching the model in the range of over 50% to 75%	Total
Leaders in total	28%	23%	12%	63%
Unspecified superiors		29%		
Negative superiors		8%		

Source: Author's original study based on survey report on opinions of subordinates about their superiors.

The conducted surveys show that over 60% of superiors display leadership behavioural characteristics of at least one of the specified categories. Superiors, who in the opinion of subordinates, fail to show any of the characteristics of the described types of leadership account for only 8%. Taking into account the influence of the superiors on employee commitment, it can be concluded that there is a potential in managers' behaviour, which adequately applied, should stimulate passion for work. A factor that limits the managers efforts to increase engagement may be shortcomings in the completeness of the supervisor's profile. Holistic leaders represent only 10% of the sample, but 18% are managers combining the characteristics of two out of three of its components.

The most representative type of a leader among Polish superiors was the discreet leader (this type accounts for 35%, including mixed models). It means that Polish employees notice, that their managers know how to apply tools to manage self-reliant professionals. Taking into consideration the growing percentage of workers with higher education in Poland, the development of leadership skills compliant with the model of discreet leadership seems to be the right direction.

The least representative type of superiors is the change leader – this type accounts for just 16% of the sample, including mixed models. Taking the dynamics of the business environment into account, the ability to lead a team through transformation seems to be crucial to the functioning of the organisation. The lack of competence in change management can have a negative influence on the business success of companies operating on the Polish market for a longer period of time.

The preliminary nature of empirical analysis did not allow to determine the level of correlation between particular types of leadership and

the level of engagement of subordinates. Taking into consideration the importance of engagement and leadership for the functioning of organisations in Poland, it seems adequate to carry out the in-depth research into the relationship between the types of leadership presented in the article and their consequences within the area of employee engagement.

6. Conclusions

The research proves that leadership behaviours are key factors in employee involvement. In spite of this fact, the topic remains mainly in the scope of interest of consultants conducting research without the rigorous nature of scientific work. The rising pressure on the business environment requires from organisations the rational use of the human capital they have at their disposal. They must not sacrifice the potential of involvement due to inappropriate leadership behavioural patterns.

The complexity of the two issues i.e. leadership and engagement requires comprehensive tools. Leaders, who care about the long-term performance of their teams, present a wide scope of behavioural patterns adapted to complex business circumstances. Depending on the situation, the behaviour of the classical manager, the change leader, or the discreet leader, should influence the engagement.

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