

CHARACTERISTICS OF MANAGERIAL WORK – CHANCES AND RISKS

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Abstract

The paper discusses important characteristics related to working tasks and personality features of a manager. In order to do his/her job successfully, it is crucial for a manager to have efficient management of resources. Resource management has to correspond with the increasingly complex and demanding market both the organization and the management are part of. Such a dynamics requires continuous life-long development of professional skills and personality features of a manager. The paper deals with the opportunities and benefits arising out of professional development and improvement of the existing managerial skills and acquisition of new ones, as well as the risks typical for this job, with the most significant factor being stress caused at working place, i.e. the job related stress. In other words, the paper aims to identify what job related stress is, its causes and symptoms, and how to manage it.

Keywords: *managerial work, self-development management, job related stress.*

JEL Classification: M1, G32, D81

1. INTRODUCTION

“Most important characteristics of leadership are visions, ideas and determination of direction; it has more to do with inspiring people through guidance and aims than with day to day management” (Bennis, 1989).

One of the key tasks of manager is to manage resources encompassing a whole range of managerial work, like e.g. finances management, human resources management, knowledge management, equipment and infrastructure management... The nature of all these tasks is versatile, complicated and elaborate, while the changes occurring in organizational structures, dictated by the pace and dynamics of the market, as well as aspiration to reach a vision and the desired aim and make profit are all the more complex and demanding. Successful manager is expected to make the organization more flexible and have higher market competitiveness. Apart from professional competencies, a successful manager should own and develop a variety of other business skills. They refer to resource management skills, business communication skills, management styles, all significantly influencing stimulating corporative working climate and success of functioning of an organization as a whole. On the one hand, the work of a manager is closely related to risks and responsibilities, on the other, it involves a feeling of great satisfaction when success is achieved. For managers to be able to adequately respond to constant demands for change of strategies and ways of functioning of an organization (in accordance with complex, dynamic and changing market conditions) it is necessary to continually plan their own self-development as well as the development of an organization (enterprise) as a whole.

2. CHANCES – SELF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Any manager who wants to promote his/her style of management and work with other people (with both those who are at the same hierarchical level in an organization and those are their subordinates and/or their superiors) should

permanently improve one's own management skills and aspire for one's own self-development. Only when a person is ready and successful in establishing one's own inner harmony and balance can he or she make purposeful and decisive steps in successful creation of a balance with other people and with the environment he or she lives and works in. The benefits of this process have at least twofold effect – both for the manager him/herself and for his/her (private as well as working) environment. In other words, management processes start in the manager himself to be subsequently directed and transferred to others implied in the organization. In accordance to such a standpoint, the way according to which a manager fulfils his/her managerial role is based on the style and way of his/her own self-development management (Oljača, 2004, 225). Self-development management is a dynamic process of changes occurring in a man (manager) him/herself, opening up possibilities for him or her to establish contact with the outer world, turning back to personality and along the way changing both the personality and the environment. Individuals who are successful in self-development management are characterized by the following features: they assess themselves in a positive way; they evaluate themselves as more realistic and more accurate; they are more ready to accept both themselves and others in the way they really are; they express readiness to identify with other people at a higher level; they have more developed empathy and more objective perception of reality; they own more expressed independence and self-reliance; they have more meaningful and highly qualitative interpersonal relations with other people at a higher level of connectedness and closeness; they have democratically structured characters and show readiness to cooperate with others; and, last but not least, they have good sense of humour.

In his search for specific personality features of leaders, Mann has found 7 personality features typical for leaders (managers) correlating with successful organization management (Mann, 1957, 253). These are the following: superiority of *intelligence* (not higher than 30 IQ units as compared to the average), having in mind that such a difference would produce great differences in interests and aspirations between leaders (managers and other members of an organization); highly developed *self-confidence* and expressed feature of being sure of oneself and self-reliant; *dominance* – manifested in a desire for prestige and power encouraging him or her to aspire for the position of a leader; *adaptability* (flexibility) guarantying that a leader will not get confused in new situations; emphasized *extraversion* – manifested through more expressed open-

ness for new experiences and easily establishing of contacts with other people; *interpersonal sensitivity* – highly developed ability to accurately assess motives, intentions and standpoints of others; poorly expressed *conservativeness* of attitudes and viewpoints.

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY MANAGE ONE'S OWN SELF-DEVELOPMENT? IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITIES – TIME MANAGEMENT

According to Rogers, a scientist who is considered to be the founder of research on the problem issue of self-development and management of this process, the first task imposed on a person striving for improvement of self-development management refers to and is inseparable from understanding of dynamics of time and ability to manage one's own time (Rogers, 1961, 268). In the time, dynamics and pace of contemporary life, time is not a resource which is of *indefinite capacity*; as a consequence, it is crucial for an individual to know how to spend it. Time (current moment, an hour, a day, a year...) is unique, unrepeatable and irreparable, just as the life itself is unrepeatable and irreversible. Consequently, parallel can be made and it could be claimed that time management is in a way management of life, with the implications of being more successful both at work and in private life, to reach greater number of one's own personal aims and aspirations with optimal use of physical energy and mental efforts preserving (or at least not jeopardizing) one's own psychophysical health.

"How to find time" actually means how to indisputably establish one's own priorities. Management of available time is planning of maximum of time for what is most significant to us. According to Oljača (Oljača, 2004, 228), time management refers to identification and establishment of priorities; they arise out of predetermined life aims, desires and tasks; establishment of tasks is planning; planning means control; to control means to work on one's own self-development; people who work on their own self-development manage their time successfully.

3. RISK – JOB RELATED STRESS

Everyday life permeated by life problems not possible to easily overcome condition inner tension caused by neuroendocrine systems. Long lasting expo-

sure of an organism to influence and effects of hormones (adrenaline and cortisol) can manifest in changes in behaviour and disharmony in communication. Cortisol and adrenaline are in natural conditions secreted when an organism faces a new task or in circumstances of more intense physical efforts. In such situations these biochemical substances increase neural and muscular activity of an organism, intensify blood flow through organs, especially through central nervous system, preparing an organism for a new response. If the mentioned hormones are secreted at daily basis with increased intensity due to life situations an individual cannot subjectively or objectively overcome, their constant presence can damage certain systems of an organism, leading to occurrence of chronic disease (Nedimović & Stanojlović, 2012, 100).

Stress can be determined as an emotional or physiological process appearing when people try to adjust or cope with circumstances which disrupt (or threatening to disturb) their everyday functioning (Taylor, 1995). Various events imposing the need on people to adjust (e.g. job demands, examinations, personal tragedies or annoying disturbing at daily basis) are called *stressors*. Body, psychological or behavioural reactions (like e.g. accelerated heartbeat, anger, impulsiveness) are called *stress reactions*.

It can be noticed that in the literature in the domain of psychology, as well as in formal and informal communication in which experts are involved, stress is most often understood in one of two ways. Within each of the two ways of defining stress there are two different ways. The first way of defining stress determines it as *an event* occurring in an external setting, i.e. (1) an event which is a threat or a loss (or, less frequently a challenge) for *majority of people*; or (2) an event which is a treat or a loss (or challenge) for *an individual* person. Another standpoint is that stress is a *reaction* to an event in an external setting, i.e. (1) activation of intensive feelings (most often unpleasant ones); and/or (2) a whole range of characteristic body reactions (Zotović, 2002, 4). A definition suggestion by Aldwin (Aldwin, 1994) encompasses both the above mentioned standpoints, while in the scope of the first stated determination of stress (as an event), subjective evaluation of a person is emphasized, due to which certain events are seen as threats, losses or challenges.

Burn out syndrome is a state of excessive stress, i.e. high level of stress and a complex human reaction to long-lasting and continuous exposure to stress. Signs are similar to those appearing in the case of stress, but burnout involves

emotional exhaustion and increasing negative attitude towards work, and even life. Some of the symptoms of burnout are similar to psychosomatic diseases: headaches, heart attacks, high blood pressure, fatigue. A person who is at the edge of a burnout feels: weakness, lack of strength, hopelessness, frustration, separation from people, i.e. lack of contact with people and things surrounding him or her, little satisfaction with work, anger appearing due to the lack of time for working tasks, irritation, anxiousness, uncertainty... Prevalence of this syndrome is highest in the case of ambitious people with high potentials (and these are most common characteristics of successful managers).

3.1. JOB RELATED STRESS

Stresses experienced by people at work are classified within the category of so called job related stresses. Some of the most common symptoms of job related stress (there are other expressions used in the English language referring to the same phenomenon: organizational stress, occupational stress, job stress, stress at work, work stress, work place stress...) are as follows: dissatisfaction and being unadjusted to work, and they can also be related to the difficulty and content, i.e. nature of work (Pajević, 2006).

Research carried out in the North America in the last decade have shown that even up to 40% of those employed experience their job as highly stressful. In the studies by Sonnentag and Frese (Sonnentag, & Frese, 2003) conducted in Europe, the percentage is slightly lower, i.e. 30%. The approach to research on job related stress has undergone a whole range of developmental phases, just like the study and explanation of stress in general context (Popov & Popov, 2011, 180), based on *stimulus-reaction* approach according to which stressful reaction has been understood as a consequence of a stressful event – stressor. It is beyond dispute that various people do not react in the same way to the same stressor and this fact has imposed the need for further research on this relation, as well as the introduction of different moderating variables in the examination of the relation between a stressor and a stressful reaction (Hart & Cooper, 2001).

Sources of work related stress are numerous and different authors have classified them into various categories Ivančević i Mejson (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993) have classified sources of stress into three categories: a group of personal ones, a group of interpersonal ones and a group of organizational stress sources.

The category of organizational, i.e. job generated stresses is dominant in the case of managerial work; thus, it could be said that managerial jobs are professions which are more subject to stress as compared to other professions.

For an employed person job related stress is a whole range of harmful, physiological, psychological and behavioural reactions to the situations in which job demands are not in accordance with person's abilities, skills and needs. Work related stress is manifested through specific patterns of emotional, cognitive, behavioural, physiological of organism occurring as a response to a variety of harmful influences arising out of contents and organization of work and working environment. The notion of job related stress refers to the changes which are consequences of accumulating influences of stressors appearing in a working place for longer period of time.

The significant of research on stress in modern conditions and work related demands is manifold. As a bio-psycho-social problem, stress can endanger psycho-physical health and reduce working capability. The consequences in health domain can lead to liability to various psychosomatic diseases and injuries at work. Furthermore, consequences referring to working ability can lead to reduction of working performance, increase of fluctuation, absence from work, etc. At emotional plan consequences can lead to apathy, anxiety, aggressiveness, and at cognitive plan they can lead to a decrease in thinking capacity, memory and problem solving.

Modern models of work related stress involve to various degrees elements of transactional model of stress research, viewing stress as a dynamic relation between a person and his/her environment, putting emphasis on the dynamics of mechanism of cognitive evaluation of stressful events by the person (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) as well as coping mechanisms as strategies of overcoming stress. Generally speaking, researchers have identified two clusters of factors generating stressful reactions at work, one referring to characteristics of a job and organization, another to individual characteristics of the employee. Having in mind that stress indicators can be considered at individual (e.g. cognitive, physiological and behavioural) and organizational level (e.g. low productivity, absence from work, etc) there is in the research on work related stress a great heterogeneity in the selection of variables according to which the phenomenon is operationalized. Stress indicators, as well as stressors perception are more often measured according to measures of self-evaluation (Cooper, et al, 2001).

Having all the above mentioned in mind, it could be concluded that consequences of stress can be highly unfavourable both for an individual (manager and other members of an organization) and for organization as a whole. According to this standpoint it is rather significant to operationalize and define measures and programs of work related stress prevention (Stanojević & Milošević, 2011). Two preventive approaches can be applied individually or simultaneously: at the level of an individual (work on self-development of an individual through education and trainings dealing with stress management) and at the level of an organization as a whole (work on introduction of change of work organization in order to create better working conditions and working climate, leading to reduction of potential stressors).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Managerial job is rather demanding and complex. It implies dealing with a broad spectrum of jobs: ranging from management of human resources to achieving of a desired aim and making profit at the level of organization as a whole. For a manager to successfully do his/her job he/she has to be prepared for lifelong learning and permanent (self)development of his/her own professional abilities and skills. In other words, self-development is seen as a dynamic process implying positive change.

Only when a manager develops these competencies to a satisfactory degree and learns how to efficiently determine priorities and manage his/her own time can he or she create successful cooperation with other people and maximally realize his/her own potentials. Benefits of such (not always easy) work on oneself belong not only to the manager him/herself, but also to other people he or she works or cooperates with.

Studies have shown that successful managers, compared to those who are not so successful, are characterized by the following: positive self-image (they assess themselves as more realistic and more accurate than others), emphasized manifestation of certain personality features (intelligence, self-confidence, flexibility, interpersonal sensitivity, empathy), as well as certain abilities (to start dealing with a work task immediately, to be always ready for cooperation, to accept themselves and those surrounding them as they really are, to easily identify with other people).

It is beyond dispute that a job of a manager is conventional; on the contrary, it can be rather exciting, it can be a source of great satisfaction; at the same time, it can also be a source of anxiety and stress. Research conducted in individualistic cultures (like ours) have shown that between 30 and 40 percentages of the employed population experience their job as highly stressful. Having in mind that these data refer to all professions, it can be assumed that when the job of a manager is in question, which is understood as extremely exciting and dynamic, these percentages can only be significantly higher. The paper has pointed to negative consequences of stress, especially working place generated stress, i.e. job related or organizational stress. This type of stress can have negative consequences for working efficacy, dissatisfaction and the lack of adjustment to work, as well as increased level of absence from work. Even though there are great individual differences in the way one experiences stress (the same event will never be equally stressful for two different persons), it is crucial for managers to learn how to cope with stressful events through permanent and dedicated work on self-development of their own stress management mechanisms and their own perception of these events.

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