

## **THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of the present research paper is to highlight and go deeply into the role and manner of action of project management in carrying out the position of leader of the project, by taking into consideration the advantages which the practice of leadership carries, through the influence exerted over the project team in order to conduct actions towards accomplishing the specific and general objectives of the project. The present research is a theoretical one and is aimed to specialists and economic organisations interested in developing their own business, which is to be realised with the help of the human resources, as the main factor generating the expected effects.*

**Key words:** *leadership, project, project management.*

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The reality of today's world demonstrates the fact that the only thing that is certain is that nothing is certain, thus change becoming the key word in the life and activity of each unit – socio-economic system. From a general economic point of view, change is reflected in the globalisation processes of business and of the internationalization of companies, whose emergence has been helped and empowered by processes like the transition towards the society, the company and the management based on knowledge; the revolutions in the information technology and communications field; the liberalization of international exchanges by foreign direct investment, international trade, international monetary-financial relations, the circulation of labour force and of information, etc. Between these evolutionary

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coordinates, characterised by the growth in the volatility of the business environment and the intensification of competition on the global market, resorting to projects, as tools of effective and efficient management, becomes more and more necessary.

One can notice an intensification of the preoccupations for the development of the human side of management worldwide, which widely depends on the talent, imagination and the capacity of synthesis and analysis of the manager, as well as on the inborn qualities of the leader. If there has ever existed a moment in history when a global strategic perspective of leadership was necessary, not only for a few people in managing positions, but also for any team or group leader, no matter the domain of activity, this is the moment. Warren G. Bennis și Burt Nanus in "Leaders: the strategies for taking charge" asserted that leadership is the endorsement behind successful organisations and "to create vital and viable, leadership is necessary to help them develop a new vision over what they may become, then make them work and finally help them materialise the vision. The new leader is the one who encourages people to take action, who transforms supporters into leaders and who can transform leaders into agents of change".

In specialised literature there are few books that describe in a direct and committed way the effect of using leadership in the practice of project management. From the existing bibliographical studies we can notice that this issue has not been dealt with in a direct and insistent way from the perspective of the importance of leadership in project management in particular, in view of the efficiency and effectiveness of the actions taken by the manager, the leader of the project team respectively.

The topic of the present research is contemporary, especially in the economic, political and social context of our days. It is well known that management does not only refer to economic organisations, but to any economic-social system that functions according to the principle of self adjusting. A correlation applied to an element of the system generates chain reactions in all the system, modifying its structure, relationships, strategic objectives, necessary resources and finally the result in the macrosystem in which it evolves. Thus, self-adjusting in and through management is essential.

Work on each project takes place in a team that is created especially for this, so that conducting a project always implies team management too. The leader is the one who sets the strategic direction of the organisation, through the vision that he has over the future and then elaborates and puts the

strategy into practice. Then, the leader lets the team know the direction, resorting to the emotions, needs and values of the team members. For the message transmitted by the leader to be understood and believed by the team, the leader needs to be an honest person and with a good reputation in front of the members.

Reflecting on the economic, political and social situation around us, it is becoming more and more necessary in all domains to have strong leaders and managers, able to bring about change and more than that to determine others to follow them. If someone does not understand himself, he can not guess the impact over the others. A good manager, and especially a good leader, must learn to live and manage with diversity. In order to succeed, he must take his time and look carefully at other people, understand and help them to develop. Most managers concentrate on achieving goals and do not have time to understand and communicate with the members of the team. In the short run, they manage to make big profits but, in the long run they lose the talents and the effects will be felt in the profitability of the business.

That is why there appears the need to approach leadership, known as the process of influencing the activity of another person, by achieving the goals of the organisation. Leadership is a little more than authority or power. It entails a certain degree of voluntary support from the members of the group. The leaders do not lead in a simple manner, by giving orders, but by persuasion, motivation and empowerment. They identify and win the involvement of the team for a stimulating or challenging vision. Leaders do not manage individual performance, but group performance.

In modern organisations, to make the activity more effective, to successfully manage the projects and implement them, managers use methods, techniques and practices specific of management and especially of project management. This way, one can notice the growth in the preoccupation for this domain both at a national and international level.

Like in any organisation or work process, in the case of projects, the manager is the engine that brings about change, coordinates and controls the organisation. He is responsible for creating the environment necessary to developing activities with the goal of fulfilling the objectives as soon as possible, with few resources and in optimal conditions. Managers take action to achieve objectives through the members of the organisation. The managers, who have a clear vision over the importance of the human factor and take decisions intended for ensuring the complete use of the staff's performances,

prove their leader qualities. Their ability to know the people's personality is fundamental to the activity of any manager.

In general, theory admits that leadership is the result of integrating four processes: building trust among the people involved; setting some clear goals for the people to adhere to; the existence of participative decisional processes; strong individual and group motivation. The faulty evolution of the team, due to inadequate leadership of the project manager - can find its origins in: the lack of communication or faulty communication; issues related to assuming and manifesting authority; issues related to the relationships among the team members; deficiencies related to knowing and applying the managerial functions and roles.

Leadership is based on team spirit, communication and motivation the team. The leaders act to make things happen by knowing the objectives and by realising a plan by which the objectives can be fulfilled, building a united team to achieve the objectives and, not only that, each member of the team must be motivated to do his best. To make the best team, the leader needs to know himself very well, to know his weak and strong points.

From an organisational point of view, the results and the efficiency of the activities widely depend on the manager. A manager needs to take into account the following aspects: organising and planning activities, communicating, time management, improving relationships with employees and co-workers, delegation, modernising the managerial tools, the ergonomic organisation of the labour process and ethical managerial responsibilities. These represent starting points in the present research paper. In order to integrate all these in the thinking and actions of the manager in general and of the project manager in particular, we consider the introduction of the leadership issue over project managers to be essential. We consider that the main argument in favour of such an approach is represented by the correlation of the leadership dynamics with the present state of the organisational changes and with the evolution of approaching management.

This research comes as a result to the numerous fast changes in the national and international business environment, which determine fundamental changes with a strong impact over organisations. In order to cope with the daily challenges, the organisations need leaders to guide and influence the employees so as to co-work in the direction of its survival and its success. Thus, there are frequent opportunities and dangers for the manifestation of efficient and successful leadership, and in this context it is

necessary to have leaders who accept and suggest change, concretely by initiating projects that harmonise with the organisational environment in which the company is located. In this context, I consider that the topic of the present paper is a useful and modern subject both for theoreticians and practitioners.

Once the issue of the research is identified, one looks for the solutions which both theory and practice has offerered up to the present day. Analysing the works in the field of general management and going deep into the topic of the research, we have noticed that the literature up to the present doesn't approach directly and in the same manner the aspect analysed in the present research paper. A first aspect that is analysed is leadership, which targets the process of influencing the supporters, respectively the team that the leader works with to achieve their common and organisational objectives. A specific characteristic of the leaders is also the one that demonstrates that he is the person unanimously accepted and chosen from the team, due to the qualities, the charisma, the vision that he shares and inspires to the others; a second aspect is change, regarded as a necessity in the present context and more exactly in the external environment of the organisation, which is ever more turbulent, more volatile and more uncertain. In the mids of this uncertainty that we all fight every day, it is obvious and necessary that strong leaders emerge, leaders who are able to manage and control difficult situations. This need is noticed in all domains, starting with the basic unit of society - the family, continuing with the circle of friends, going further to the highest structures of the society; the third aspect is represented by the projects, as means of putting into practice the changes inside the organisations. Knowing the importance of using project management from the perspective of the elements that it is made up of and which promote it, more exactly knowing the stages that the project undergoes from identifying the need for change in order for the organisation to adjust to the external environment, the essential role of the project manager who needs to collect and manage all the resources at his disposal, to set the general and individual goals with his team, to the implementation and evaluation after the implementation, so as the change might meet the expected results, we consider especially necessary to introduce leadership in managing projects due to the advantages it can bring about for the maximisation of the results. Performance represents the degree to which an organisation manages to satisfy both the requirements of the internal environment (achieving the goals, effective management of the resources,

satisfaction and suitable motivation of the employees, etc) and the requirements of the external environment (satisfying the needs of the clients, the interests of the stakeholders, the business environment, etc), by an optimal combination between effectiveness and efficiency. Without an adequate management, one cannot talk about performance, thus effectiveness reflects what is done in relation to what is proposed while efficiency reflects the way in which what is proposed is put into practice.

The theme of the research paper approaches a current field, both for theoreticians, by increased attention given to studying leadership in projects, due to the positive impact over the human race, and for practitioners who, due to the frequent changes on the market, must find the best, most suitable and recent methods to adapt to concrete situations, not only for the survival of the company, but also for obtaining superior performance.

The study of leadership as a process of influence manifested by a person over other people in order to achieve certain objectives was, is and will be an extremely interesting subject due to the central point around which it revolves, namely – the human being.

In such a vast and complex field like the process of influencing the human race in organisations, leadership respectively, we cannot say that we have exhausted the subject, but any moment there can appear new ideas, opinions and suggestions to improve the field, all of them with the purpose of obtaining performance in the organisation, and this is in accordance with the attitude to progress and development of all those involved in a way or another.

An incursion in specialised works has been useful for understanding the various approaches and faces of the field of management, from which the concept of leadership has been derived and around which the concepts of change and projects have been approached, concepts that are frequently encountered in all domains and at all levels.

In the beginning, when management emerged, practical activity was based on the talent, intuition, experience and charm of the leader, but in time, there have appeared changes over the perception and understanding of the concepts specific of the field. Thus, due to the fact that managers have started to use new methods, techniques and procedures that have proven their efficiency in the managerial practice, a new stage in managerial thinking has appeared, by which was emphasised the fact that managers can be formed by means of training courses, not being constrained by certain native qualities.

Due to the predictions of the specialists in the field, according to whom richness and power in the future will mainly come from intangible intellectual resources, from the knowledge capital respectively, we consider it to be topical and important to approach leadership due to the stress in two directions, namely change and the human resources of the organisations, without which one cannot speak of performance.

Leadership is tightly linked to the personality of the leader, to his ability to influence, to generate interest, expectations, and emotions. This implies to design a vision, to set some goals, to determine some values and principles and much effort from all those involved. It is well known that a good leader stimulates creativity and initiative, emphasizes cohesion inside the group and can exploit the potential of those around him. It is imperiously necessary to build trust in the team members, by encouraging openness among its members, equal delegation of simple tasks, forming new leaders and encouraging initiative inside the organisation.

Thus, leadership is that interaction between two or more members of a group, that often implies influence manifested over the others, without using coercive measures, but by winning the trust, fulfilling the needs and expectations of the team members. The leaders are agents of change; they are the people who can affect the activity of other people by their actions.

In this dynamic context, with numerous changes, characterised by the growth in the economic importance of technologies, information, economic processes, human capital, capacities and competences of the organisation, each factor with a special importance in the management of knowledge, there will be modern leaders, who are expected to exploit the human potential, the potential of the organisation, so that all might lead to socio-economic growth, to the development of technologies and the satisfaction of the requirements of the beneficiaries.

Due to the frequent changes in the business environment, the management of change has become a priority for all managers, no matter the organisation. Change has become more frequent today than it used to be years ago. Organisations encounter daily new opportunities that force them to change. Change has become an important issue for managers, due to the changing nature of the business environment. Organisations have to cope with complexity, uncertainty and dynamism, all of them involving change. No matter the source, the specialists that are drawn in the process of organisational change, by realising various projects by which they intend to

predict and plan, influence and determine change. In order to be able to determine and guide change to the desired direction, specialists must possess certain personality features, experience, knowledge and abilities related to practice.

Managers and leaders are groups with a visible influence in creating and developing successful organisations and we consider that leadership is essential to the growth of competitiveness and future development. Organisations that adopt an approach that is strategic to the development of managers and leaders are more competitive on the business market. Reflecting to the economic, political and social situation around us, it is necessary to have strong managers and leaders, able to bring about change and determine the others to follow them.

Leadership is based on team spirit, communication and motivation inside the group. The manager as leader has the responsibility to build the vision of the team for the future and to build trust. For the leaders, communication is very important, because the goals that the group will achieve will be thus mentioned. Also, the main means of realising this are identified. Encountered under various forms, written or oral, communication is essential to any group, formal or informal, and is a very important process because the interactions between individuals are intense.

The organisational culture of the company can be the key to successful leadership. The foundation of effective leadership is laid on strong organisational culture, because organisational culture can ensure the creation of some strong and extended interpersonal relationships, the communication of common interests and values, reciprocal trust, etc. In order to have the necessary impact, it is important that leadership become an integrating part of organisational culture. Since human creativity and knowledge is supported by both formal and informal elements, we can consider that there is a solid foundation for successful management in the companies, supported by the specific elements of the organisational culture. As the companies reflect the ethics, values and principles of the people that manage them, that are of the leaders, the strong connexion between organisational culture and leadership is obvious.

We consider it to be topical and necessary to treat managerial leadership of projects, due to the importance of applying the principles of leadership not only in the vast context of organisations, but also in the case of projects, no matter the size, which leads to the intense exploitation of the

human factor and thus to obtaining the best results. Thus, managerial leadership refers to combining managerial practices with all the qualities and abilities expected from a leader, namely, trust, clarity, vision, discipline, coordination, which are essential to the process of leading an organised group.

After conducting the scientific research, we have noticed that something was missing in so far as the relationship between leadership and projects is concerned, and this has led to extending the issue of leadership to project managers. The faulty evolution of the team, due to the project manager's inadequate practice of leadership, may be generated by faulty communication inside the project team, or problems related to assuming and manifesting authority or problems related to the relationships among the team members, etc.

Nowadays, more and more companies have started to consider that project management is an indispensable approach for their survival in time, due to the permanent changes in all fields that they have to cope with. Lately, things have changed and company managers understand and use project management, understanding the tight link between the results and project management, thus allocating important amounts of money to these professional trainings. In project management, like in any managerial approach, there are instruments, techniques and processes, indispensable to its theoretic foundation and then to practice. Project management has extended to all economic activities, because it has proven its capacity to cope with the new tendencies manifested on a global scale.

Some researchers consider that projects are very hard to manage because they involve change and moreover, they involve the human nature or working with people, which may sometimes be very difficult. Although researchers have notices that people do not easily embrace change, project management seems to match a field of activity that permanently requires responsibility, flexibility, innovation, urgency and improvement.

Project management, as a theoretical as well as an applied field, has behavioural aspects because at its core there is the human being – without it, no project could be achieved regardless of extent and complexity.

Concerning the proper course of the project activities as well the organization activities, the project managers must be willing to operate it so that the firm's mainstream activity might not be affected within the framework of the company general recommendations, politics, procedures, rules and directives.

Project management represents one of the major challenges for its managers because it requires a wide range of skills and abilities in order to successfully achieve the change which the projects imply. A key factor to a great performance is the project manager's ability to integrate the human resource coming from various functional areas into one effective team that is to prove his leadership qualities. Therefore, in order to achieve the objectives and to get the expected results, the project manager must always refer to the people with whom he is working, to the tasks to be accomplished, to the available tools, to the organizational structure and, finally, to the ever-changing organizational environment.

Successful project leaders must not only be influential people, but they must also exert influence so as to acquire and maintain the commitment of others. So, metaphorically speaking, it is important to balance the two plates of a balance namely both the organizational side of the addressed issues and the human side with emphasis on the individuals working together to achieve tasks namely the use of leadership by project managers.

At the end of this part, we can conclude that this paper is the result of extensive scientific research of secondary sources, able to contribute to a small extent to the development of our society. All these presented here are trying to emphasize the importance of human resource within any action involving the development and progress of contemporary society.

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