LEADERS – AGENTS OF CHANGE IN ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

The present paper in one of a long research conducted in order to determine the knowledge and application of the leadership concept in the Romanian organizations among employees. Specialists often argue that leaders are agents of change in organizations while managers are more often oriented to obtain and retain stability in organizations. This research wants to observe the way of exercising authority and also the way of influencing exerted by leader on the employees he is leading.

Keywords: *leadership, change, influence.*

JEL classification: M21

It is well known that managers of companies need the skills to establish an organization, but after that they have to use their knowledge of how to change their organization to cope with changes in their environment they have to face with in order to be competitive.

Everyone says that change is difficult because one must inevitably deal with people issues and an uncertain future. (Carnal, 2007)

According to Mike Smith, change simply means altering the state or direction of something; change can be for better or for worse; therefore, organizational change means altering the state and direction of an organization – for better or for worse, forwards or backwards (Smith, 2011).

A large number of changes are good and progressive ones, that`s why managers should be very carefully to identify the real cause that brings change.

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Organizations must change, otherwise they become outdated, uncompetitive and eventually they are either taken over or disbanded (Smith, 2011).

According to specialists, leaders are the promoters of change in organizations. In order to determine the involvement of leadership in generating change among employees in Romanian organizations there was conducted a national research through a market research company to collect information. First, there were formulated several specific objectives of the paper, namely:

- *the need of assimilation and adaptation to change by organizations;*
- *the need of leaders that are oriented to change;*
- *identifying the role of leader in the change process;*
- *methods used by the leader in the process of transition from one state to another.*

In order to observe the way of exercising authority and also the way of influencing exerted by leader on the employees he is leading, it has been formulated the following question: "*How do you define the behavior of the leader in making decisions within the leading process in the organization you work in?*".

Figure 1. Defining the leader's behavior of making decisions in the leading process in terms of employees

Most respondents fit the leaders that are in leadership positions within the category of those who rather practice leadership than those who use their position in the firm to determine and mobilize employees to action. Thus, **59%** of employees are defining the leader's behavior regarding decision

making within the management process in the organization **"by involving team and applying a wide range of rewards"** and 41% of them fit the leader in the category of those who "use strict control methods and apply coercive ways" (fig. 1).

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Considering the following options, how do you define the leader's behavior in making decisions within the leading process in the organization you work in?

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According to the results of the analysis made by employees, Figure 2 shows managers that have as a main orientation in their daily activities the tasks distributed to employees or the care for the coordinated team members. It has been found that overall 60% of respondents say that the daily orientation of their leaders is more towards tasks than for people, which means that for leaders it is very important to achieve goals, thus they being found in the managerial size of the held position. Naturally, a much smaller number of leaders have as a main concern during a day of activities the human resources they coordinate (over 15%).

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**Analyzing your daily work, which do you consider is the orientation of the leader in the organization you work?**

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Figure 2. The orientation of leaders towards tasks or people in terms of employees
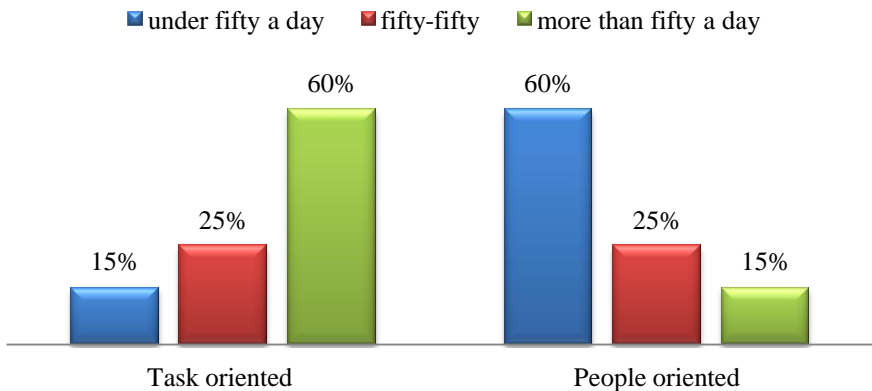
Based on their long experience in time but also understanding (either through the informative note or from other sources) the concept of "leadership", meaning the role of a "leader" exercised by a person with influence on other people, most of the employees (78%) consider that leaders are agents of change (figure 3).

Based on the experience you gained in the management process of the organization, do you consider that leaders are agents of change or not?

**Figure 3. Recognizing that leaders are agents of change in organizations by employees**
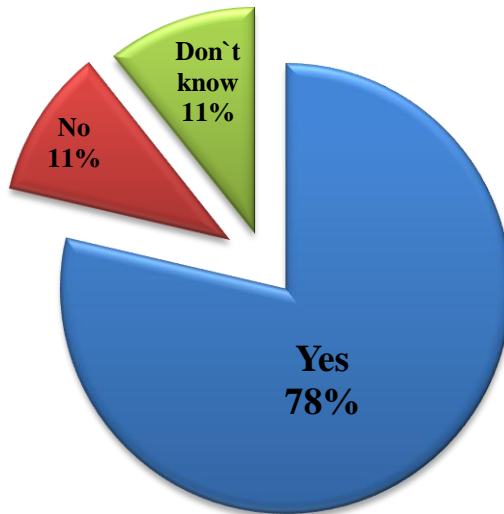
In the influencing process exerted by the leader on his supporters for implementing change, meaning the transition from a known state to an unknown one, so that the organizational goals to be achieved in efficient and effective conditions, the leader encounters resistance due to several factors. To successfully bring the change, it is important for the leader to identify and understand the factors that make employees to resist the change. According to the results of the research, most employees have identified the factor "lack of

confidence in those who propose the change" as being the most common (61%). The second identified factor by 50% of the employees is "fear of personal failure", followed by "losing position" (39%), then "danger to employees" (33%) and "endangering the values and targets" (20%) (figure 4). Once these factors are understood, the leaders have to find ways to counteract them so that the proposed change can be implemented.

> **Which of the following factors do you consider make the employees resistant to change?**

Figure 4. Factors of resistance to change in organizations identified by employees
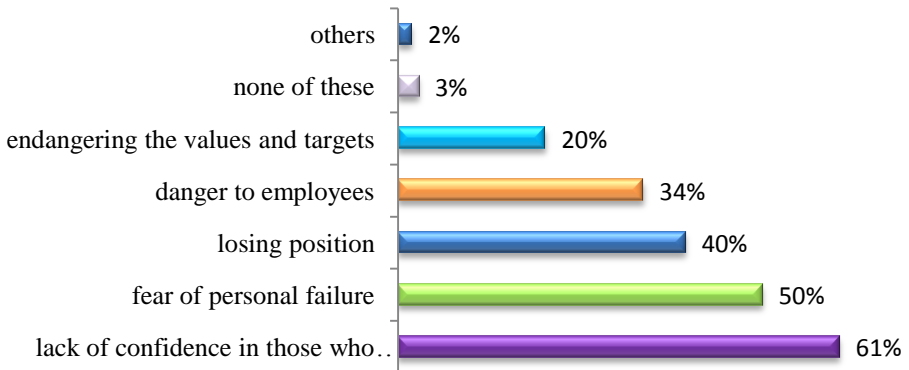
Once known the factors that oppose implementing change in organizations, it is important for the leader to identify ways that would counteract their effect. After interpreting the results of the present research in terms of employees, the majority believes that an effective way of determining and mobilizing them for change would be "preparing people to adapt to the changes that will come" 75%, followed by action "communicating the achieved progress in the change process" 49%, then "empowering people to implement change" 29% and not insignificant would be also "communicating a strong message regarding the urgency for change" 22% (figure 5).

> **Considering the realities of the organization you work in, which of the following actions would mobilize employees for change?**

Figure 5. Actions in favor of change in organizations in terms of employees

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| Category	%
none of these	1%
sincerity	1%
emploees opinions	1%
financial motivation	1%
communicating a strong message regarding the urgency for change	22%
empowering people to implement change	29%
communicating the achieved progress in the change process	49%
preparing people to adapt to the changes that will come	75%

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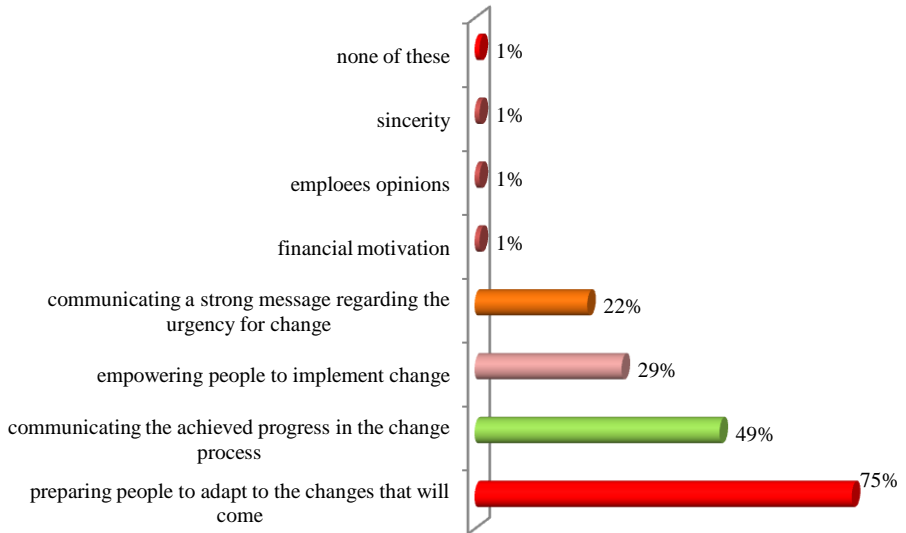
Which do you consider to be the essential qualities of leaders in the coming years?

When asked: "*Which do you consider to be the essential qualities of leaders in the coming years?*", most employees consider as being indispensable to leaders the creativity (68%), followed by positive attitude (66%), intelligence (66%), vision (63%), flexibility (61%), integrity (54%), self-confidence (48%), consistency (22%) and empathy (22%) (figure 6).

In conclusion, we can say that the majority of employees define the leader's behavior regarding decision making within the management process in the organization "by involving team and applying a wide range of rewards". Based on their long experience in time, most employees consider that leaders are agents of change.

According to the results of the research, most employees have identified the factor "lack of confidence in those who propose the change" as being the most common. The second identified factor by 50% of the employees is "fear of personal failure", followed by "losing position", then "danger to employees" and "endangering the values and targets".

Figure 6. Essential qualities of leaders in the coming years in terms of employees
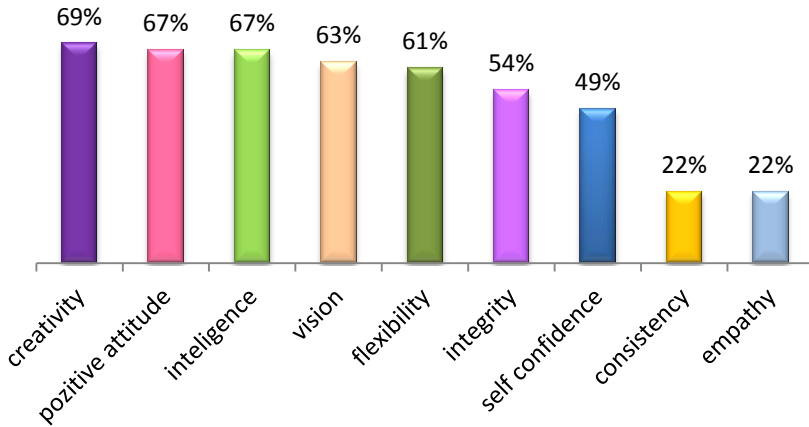
The majority of employees believe that an effective way of determining and mobilizing them for change would be "preparing people to adapt to the changes that will come", followed by action "communicating the achieved progress in the change process", then "empowering people to implement change" and not insignificant would be also "communicating a strong message regarding the urgency for change".

Most employees consider as being indispensable to leaders the creativity, followed by positive attitude, intelligence, vision, flexibility as the top five qualities of a long list.

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