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Original paper

The Sociological Approach to the Values of the Manager

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Introduction. This article explores the system of values of the modern manager in the context of social processes, social structure, and the sociology of management. The authors set the task to determine the degree of importance of such “parameters” as gender, age, the length of management activity, etc. in management systems and processes, paying particular attention to the professional priorities and values that contribute to success in business.

Methodology and sources. Based on quantitative and qualitative studies of the works of various authors the management mechanism in the context of modern science is analyzed and the relationship between personality and management style is established through values and the system of values of the person – the theoretical basis of the study. The empirical basis of the study consisted in the data obtained during an in-depth interview in which active managers of different age, length of employment and employment status were interviewed to form an idea of the manager's activity in modern Russian organizations and to determine their professional priorities and values influencing their success.

Results and discussion. As a result of the study, it was found that, since the formation of the manager values is influenced by various social factors and peculiarities of individual development, it is necessary to consider the management activity in the light of sociology. The range of values significant for the manager, personal and those for achieving success in business, is as follows: family, health, systems thinking, implementation of ideas and constant self-development.

Conclusion. The authors conclude that the basis for the modern manager success is not only a good state of internal talent, including with similar values but also his ability to be responsive to all changes and be ready to clearly reorganize and adapt the parts of his business. The inclusion of the systems thinking as a priority value in his management function structure will give an additional advantage in this regard.

Keywords: sociological approach, management sociology, values, system of values of a manager, systems thinking

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Социологический подход к ценностным ориентациям руководителя

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Введение. В данной статье рассматриваются ценностные ориентации современного руководителя с точки зрения социальных процессов, социальной структуры, социологии управления. Авторами ставится задача определить степень значимости таких «параметров», как пол, возраст, стаж управленческой деятельности и другие в системах и процессах управления, уделяя особое внимание профессиональным приоритетам и ценностям, которые способствуют достижению успеха в бизнесе.

Методология и источники. На основании исследований трудов различных авторов анализируется непосредственно механизм управления в контексте современной научной базы и устанавливается связь между личностью и стилем руководства через ценности и ценностные ориентации человека, что определяет теоретико-методологическую базу исследования. Эмпирической базой исследования послужили данные, полученные в ходе глубинного интервью, в рамках которого были опрошены действующие руководители разного возраста, стажа и статуса в занятости, с целью формирования представления о деятельности руководителя в современных российских организациях, а также для определения их профессиональных приоритетов и ценностей, влияющих на успех.

Результаты и обсуждение. В результате исследования было установлено, что, поскольку на формирование ценностей руководителя влияют различные социальные факторы и особенности индивидуального развития, то рассматривать его управленческую деятельность необходимо сквозь призму социологии социальных процессов. Диапазон значимых для руководителя ценностей, личностных и необходимых для достижения успеха в бизнесе, выглядит следующим образом: семья, здоровье, системное мышление, реализация идей и постоянное саморазвитие.

Заключение. Авторы делают вывод о том, что основой успешной деятельности современного руководителя является не только хороший кадровый потенциал, в том числе со схожими ценностями, но и его способность чутко реагировать на все изменения и быть готовым к четкой реорганизации и адаптации частей своего бизнеса. Дополнительное преимущество в связи с этим руководителю может обеспечить добавление в структуру его управленческой роли системного мышления как приоритетной ценности.

Ключевые слова: социологический подход, социальные процессы, ценности, ценностные ориентации руководителя, управление, системное мышление

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Introduction. Management activity takes one of the central places in human consciousness today. It is varied and manifests itself in different forms. That is why there are many discussions, including in the business community, about who is a manager and by what criteria he can be considered good and effective. The fact remains indisputable – management activity is necessary

for the success of groups, organizations, and companies. But if the majority of disciplines studying this concept focus primarily on the personality of the manager himself, examining it in the context of his personal characteristics, qualities and behavior styles (for example, psychology) and in the context of his knowledge, competence and financial productivity (for example, management), then from the sociological point of view the study of management activity is based on understanding how a manager achieves success in groups, organizations, and society. And here such “parameters” as gender, age, education, marital status, range of management authority, etc. become relevant. In other words, the sociological view of management activity includes the aspects of business, psychology, economics, and sociological analyses of different years that describe the mechanism of social changes and relations, as well as regularities of social actions and behavior in the management systems and processes [1].

This approach entails additional research, the results of which are reflected in our work and will be useful not only to young employees who are interested in career development but also to managers with experience, as they give a more holistic comprehension of management activities and orient them to success.

Methodology and sources. This paper contains the most interesting results of our theoretical and empirical research. The purpose of the work was to describe the system of values and system of values of the manager from a sociological point of view, as well as to determine the degree of significance of the value of operational mindset in the social structure of the role of the manager. To realize the above goal, the following tasks were set:

1) to identify the range of tasks solved by managers of different levels of the management hierarchy;

2) empirically determine the system of system of values of the managers according to several criteria;

3) to conduct a comparative analysis of the results and determine the degree of significance of systems thinking in the hierarchy of managers' values. The object of the study was the system of system of values of the manager of the Russian organization.

Domestic and foreign practice the term is used “manager” [2], in our study we differentiated these concepts in relation to the functions performed by specialists, and used the term “manager”, because it is based on the human factor:

– a manager is a person officially charged with managing and organizing the staff and is legally responsible for the functioning of the group (collective) to the authority which appointed (elected, approved) it and has strictly defined opportunities to punish and encourage subordinates to influence their productive activity.

As a theoretical basis of research, we used the relevant works, publications, theories and classifications of various authors. If we turn to history, we will see that the management science as such was formed through the efforts of scientists from different countries, including such American classics as R.L. Ackoff, F.W. Taylor, F.J. Roethlisberger, and our national researchers A. Bogdanov, A. Gastev, P. Anokhin, N. Lapin, V. Yadov [3], and Japanese businessmen, who have a high degree of commitment to their companies and a sense of the importance of their contribution to collective success [4]. The penetration of sociology into management has made it possible to study this process in more detail by incorporating additional and specific information

about various social objects. Currently, the effectiveness of any management environment is largely determined by how deep is its scientific rationale, in this regard, the actual task is to achieve the best combination of theoretical scientific knowledge and practical expediency (compliance with the realities. The article emphasizes the idea that theoretical concepts must be deeply embedded in all stages of management environment. It is about integrating sociological knowledge into the structure of management environment. Integration of sociology and social sciences in management processes, as a variety of social processes, will allow to determine the main directions and means of implementation of socially important goals on the basis of specific research, to give scientific justification, forecast the consequences of decisions made, evaluate the implemented measures in accordance with clear criteria of effectiveness [5].

Sociology also examines the nature of relationships in a management structure headed by a manager. We are primarily interested in management in the business sphere – the organizational level, so let's consider it in more detail. Since the number of managers, as well as the degree of division of labor and specialization in this segment is constantly growing, we distinguish between) [6]:

- 1) senior management (defines strategies, allocates resources across enterprises, etc.);
- 2) middle management (production and development control, marketing, human resources, reporting, and finances);
- 3) operations managers (control over executive personnel activity).

As you can see from this classification, the structure of the functions of the leader may include systems of legal and other social norms, the system of expectations imposed on the manager by others, higher or lower in status [7]. All of them, in their turn, determine the manager's responsibilities and duties. At the same time, the leadership role gives a person the right to take certain actions with regard to his/her subordinates to effectively manage their activity and the business as a whole. And from this, we can deduce that the personality and the leadership role assigned to it have a mutual influence on each other [8]. In other words, not only the personality can influence the leadership style but also the leadership role structure can contribute to the formation of specific characteristics and qualities of a personality. For example, the role of a top manager implies a large number of multilateral situations, which, in turn, require not only good communication skills but also developed systems thinking to understand how the other party thinks [9]. This means that in this case we can say that the role of the manager is a means of embodying his values and system of values.

The mechanism of such values and value orientations' formation was discussed in detail in his works by Talcott Parsons, the classic American sociologist. He wrote that value standards penetrate into the personality system in two ways and regulate the relationship of the subject (in our case, the manager) with the group (in our case, the professional team). The first way is performed through socialization (in our case – the training system of the future specialist), the second – through the inclusion of values in the system of actions that are associated with roles in the social structure [10] (in our case – with leadership roles in the group, organization).

The empirical research was conducted in two stages. The first stage was an in-depth interview with executives of different employment status at the age of 40–48, the purpose of which was to form an idea of managers' activities in modern companies, as well as to determine their professional priorities and the system of values that contribute to the achievement of success.

30 managers of various Russian organizations (from owners to managers of departments, structural subdivisions) were interviewed from September to October 2021. Territorial boundaries of the study: the Russian Federation. The sample is represented by the criteria of “employee's place in the management hierarchy of the company”.

The second stage of the empirical study was a comparative analysis of the data obtained, their interpretation and reduction to a unified system.

The following facts were taken into account in our research:

1) All participants of empirical research are included in production relations (acting managers), which allowed to obtain reliable data on the specifics of management processes in the Russian organizations.

2) The managers who participated in the research are representatives of different types of companies and different activity areas, which nevertheless allowed us to identify some common patterns in their activities.

3) Obtaining a consistent and true picture required the involvement of several groups of respondents – the representatives of different levels of management hierarchy (from owners to heads of departments and divisions of organizations), who were asked the same questions.

Results and discussion. The results of the structured in-depth interview highlighted the following trends:

1) The majority of mid-level managers moved to this position from a position of average executive, i.e., career changes were made vertically within the same organization. At the same time, some of them initially were not after this position. *“They said you'll be in his place”*, says Sergei, the manager of a large industrial equipment manufacturing company (46 years old, 9 years of experience in a management position). *“I was the most efficient manager and held more than 80 % of the company's turnover. They must have decided that I could do it”*. High-level managers are predominantly from the 45+ age group, usually have family and children. On the other hand, it is difficult for a manager to grow vertically without expanding his professional knowledge and skills. This means that he develops in two directions - horizontal and vertical, at least in the initial stages of his formation.

2) Despite different corporate profiles, almost half of the respondents adhere to the democratic style of management in their work as the most effective. *“I'm more of a democratic leader, let's put it this way. I adjust to the structure; I understand what people are like. I select a new team and hone it for me”*, says Andrey, the Director of a large electrotechnical company cooperating with the state supervisory authorities (49 years, about 25 years of management experience). *“I am not driving hard. I try to negotiate with people”*. In other words, today the managers do not manage the work of individual employees but the work of the entire team by leading it to success through the satisfaction of individual needs. They not only give instructions but also explain how to perform them, not just supervise but support.

3) A manager's system of values includes the value of family, health, systems thinking, implementation of ideas and continuous self-development. According to 18 respondents, these values help to move towards the goal. At the same time, some managers identify the value of family with the value of love or even money, explaining that *“<...> without love you cannot have a family, children <...> everything we do is for the family: money, status – everything home”*

(Mikhail, 48 years old, 5 years of experience – the Director of a small metal construction factory). Accordingly, when ranking the categories of values (economic, social, spiritual, family) almost all put family values in the first place. It is interesting that the focus on family changes for some respondents not only with age but also with the transition of the company to a new stage of development. Andrey, the owner of a small construction business (47 years old, 4 years of management experience) says that “<...> *today family values are the basis of everything for me but a couple of years ago, at the startup stage, I would have probably named other values*”. Hence there is a new trend – the business is also becoming more flexible to the needs of employees, their family obligations, which in turn ensures the effective work of the entire organization and the loyalty of people. This trend was especially evident during the pandemic and now, against the background of aggravation of the situation around Ukraine, which is quite predictable. Crisis situations, force majeure and instability in the world expose the very value of physical life.

4) The system of values of managers in the context of their business activities, characterizing the principle of usefulness, which is based on the focus on achieving results and success in business, can be represented as an operational mindset – honesty (integrity) – responsibility – stress resistance.). These values were named by 17 of the respondents. According to the results of our survey, some executives also associate success with a team (“*Manager is not alone. It's a team and the ability to create a team*”, says Alexey, 46 years old, 7 years of experience, the owner of a consulting company), the ability to change and healthy competition. Speaking about healthy competition, we mean primarily cooperation, not competition, which in any case causes loss of time, effort, physical and emotional health (“The most important thing should be the ability to change yourself and people, but not by force, but by example, so that they stretch, trying to get ahead of you. This I call a healthy competition, which guarantees profits”, – explains his position Sergey, 46 years, 9 years of management experience, manages an enterprise for the production of industrial equipment).

5) As we indicated above, the positions of the majority of respondents regarding the main values for them personally and for achieving success in business coincided. Systems thinking is among them (14 respondents indicated it). Or “... *systems thinking is like playing chess. If you make a move, you need to understand what actions your partners (competitors) will take in some time, and be prepared. You have to rely on statistics, do analyses*”, Alexander, the manages of sales at the leasing company (45 years, 7 years of management experience), explains this concept. “*When you think systematically, you save a lot of your own, people's, the company's time (resources) to implement goals <...> The system makes life easier*”, argues Mikhail, the owner of a small business in the service sector (47 years, 10 years of management experience). This interpretation speaks not only about a fairly strong theoretical background (game theory: Nash equilibrium, prisoner's dilemma, etc. [11] of modern managers but also about their ability and desire to mobilize this knowledge in practice, and about the willingness of experienced (and more senior) managers to go beyond traditional business and adjust to the realities of a rapidly changing modern world. That is, systems thinking, based on basic skills, helps managers understand how to get the most out of them and thereby lead the business to success.

From the above we can see that it is safe bet that management in a business environment brings stability. That is, no change in a group, department, or company will occur without

a manager, who is an important social agent in the entire organization. This is one of the main reasons why management environment should be viewed through the lens of sociology, which is precisely the focus on the individual as the main element of society and relationships.

Conclusion. An important conclusion of our study was the identification of the main content of the value principles that Russian managers adhere to in relation to their employees – the belief that good human resources (including those with similar values and value orientations), is the basis of their successful business activities, and compliance with ethical standards in interaction with employees.) That is, we can see that the balance has shifted precisely in the direction of employees, and their value orientations and attitudes (family, private life, a positive atmosphere in the team, rather than high earnings) have become a definite advantage, which must now be respected. This is confirmed by the results of a recent global Edelman Trust Barometer study, conducted by the US international public relations and strategic communications agency Edelman, in the summer of 2021 in the midst of the next pandemic wave [12].

But since most modern organizations operate in systems full of interconnections and constant responsiveness, managers today need a separate “tool” to plan such complex systems and navigate strategies [13]. Moreover, the result will depend on the manager's ability to be sensitive to all changes and be prepared for precise reorganization and adaption of their business constituents. With such an understanding of management activity, adding the systems thinking as a priority value to the manager role structure can provide him with obvious advantages – to formulate complex tasks and goals, to show alternative directions for improving the company's internal and external connections, to ensure the business sustainability [14]. And although the latter requires special skills and a deeper understanding of the management process, systems thinking can be successfully implemented and used to strengthen any business. Many open sources data demonstrate that the main values that constitute today the manager's personality are also material welfare, career development, social status, and the family [15]. In spite of the fact that the values can be considered as independent categories of the personality's individual relation to the reality according to the fluctuation theory developed by P. Sorokin [16] or as components of some structure formations under T. Parsons's theory of normative functionalism [17], the very question of the value orientations of the modern manager in the management process remains debatable and requires further study, because over the past two years the world has faced unprecedented challenges and is forced to adapt to conditions in which no one has been before. Increasing the status of scientific knowledge in the process of management environment is not just a necessity for Russia, but a result of the dynamics of socio-economic relations in management environment, dynamic external social environment, development of social processes and structures in society.

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