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Negative Sides of Managerial Competencies

The purpose behind this publication is an analysis of managerial competencies, with special stress on those that have a negative impact on possibilities for achieving success. By convention, they have been dubbed "dark side" managerial competencies. The backdrop for the analysis is a change in the management paradigm, which has resulted in new requirements with respect to leaders. Among analyzed competency elements, the following have been singled out: motivation and hazards (chance events), and dangerous leadership. Also indicated are conditions for developing competencies and mollifying their "dark sides." This publication is based on an analysis of literature.

Key words: Managerial competencies, hazards, managerial development.

Changes to the Management Paradigm

Globalization and the rapid development of information technology have intensified the complexity of economic processes to a level where it is impossible to effectively fill leadership roles in the traditional manner that has been applied to date. Thus, globalization is becoming a new challenge in the evolution of management, where leaders, who have never had to operate in such quickly changing surroundings, are unprepared to manage in such an environment. The management paradigm has changed diametrically, where attributes of the old approach include the conviction that "managers know the best way and make the decisions; management is about manipulating and economic reward package in order to get the behavior the want; people are motivated primarily by economic security" [Smith and Rayment, 2010, p. 58]. What characterizes the new approach is honest and ethical action, maintaining principles of integrity, an awareness of global economic processes, and recognition of the role of the leader in creating the future, which also involves care for the natural environment, and encompassing individuals in

holistic categories, appreciating each and every dimension of their existence. This also brings about the need for changes in leadership, in this case understood as influencing people so as to encourage them to achieve strategic goals [Yukl, 2006]. The management process encompasses the leader's personality, behavior, how the leader is perceived by the people he manages, and the context where interactions between the leader and team take place [Antonakis et al., 2004]. Leadership is a rational process occurring between the leader and his subordinates that is molded by the accompanying context [Fiedler and Chemers, 1974]. Thus, bringing these assumptions to life requires the development of new competencies in leaders. The concept of *competencies* itself stirs numerous controversies among management theoreticians and practitioners. This involves the interdisciplinary nature of this concept, cultural differences in understanding, and the influence of different research currents.

The Meaning of Managerial Competency Concepts

The understanding of the term *competency* may differ depending on country. The first effort at defining the meaning of *managerial competencies* was made in the United States in drawing up the profile of a "competent" manager. It was then that reference was made to the work of McBer and Boyatzis [Boyatzis, 1982] for the American Management Association. They looked at two thousand managers asking them: "What characteristics distinguish the best acting managers?" In the context of this work, the American meaning of the term *competence* as the most important characteristics of a manager is very broad. It may be motivation, a quality, skill, an aspect making up one's view of oneself, social role, or range of knowledge that he or she uses, where *competence* expresses the difference in level between the mean and the best performer [Boyatzis, 1982]. The conclusion to be drawn from this definition is that *managerial competence* involves the characteristics of a manager who performed his or her work very well.

In line with the British definition, *competence* is "… the ability to perform actions in a professional capacity or function in line with expected standards. Competence applied to the ability to transfer skills and knowledge in new situations within the framework of performing one's profession" [Rakowska and Sitko–Lutek, 2000]. In this sense, competencies are tied to actions that may be expressed in the form of concrete results. The fundamental sense of both these concepts is similar. It is effectiveness that is stressed, where the difference is that in the case of the American concept, what one is dealing with is skills or behavior that is expressed in a sense that is more general, all the while underscoring that it should lead to high performance. In the British model, individual behaviors and skills are clearly defined.

The specific activities of the individual involve the utilization of competencies for effectiveness of actions. Competencies are something more than things that are learned. They involve skill in solving problems on the basis of knowhow and experience. The modern organization has more and more situations in which the use of competencies is required. The organization allows the individual to act, trusting in the proper use of competencies.

It may also be assumed that the level of competence is dependent on knowledge held, which consists of personal skills, qualifications, experience, and the ability to use them, as well as attitude and motivation. There is a dependency between level of competence and such elements as skills, knowledge, qualifications, and attitude.

It summarizing the discussion to date, it may be noted that a competent manager is one who performs his or her work very well, where skills held are decisive in achieving results.

Thus, it may be assumed for the purpose of further analysis that the concept of *managerial competencies* should be understood as skills, knowledge, and personal qualities that are characteristic of managers who achieve good results [Rakowska and Sitko–Lutek, 2000].

Research [Rakowska, 2005, p. 10] shows that the most important skills of the modern manager are managing oneself, planning, change management, problem–solving and decision–taking applying a creative–rational approach, negotiation, building good relations, and motivating. In the area of knowledge, of particular importance is knowledge encompassing the newest trends and solutions in the realm of organization and management as well as that applying to the possibility of using information technology. A successive component of competence—the desirable personal qualities of a leader—are willingness and motivation to learn, readiness to take risks, entrepreneurship, energy, significant resistance to stress, openness, flexibility in thinking, self–assurance, and significant autonomy.

The Dark and Light Sides of Managerial Competencies

Looking at changes in the management paradigm, worth doing is an analysis of managerial competencies, taking into account their positive and negative aspects, conventionally described as the "dark and light sides of leadership."

Much attention is devoted to managerial competencies in the theory and practice of management. This interest primarily applies to all efforts at seeking out a set of universal knowledge and attitude components determining success. No such set has as yet been defined. At the same time, in analyzing questions of managerial competencies and leadership, the "dark side," the negative, that which is generally viewed as being bad,

seems to be of equal interest, but is a side of leadership that is, at times, bypassed, and yet is a determinant in a leader's failure in business. Thus, moving away from traditional stereotypes in looking for a model of what an ideal manager should be like and images of what such a manager is like is worthwhile.

Most titles in literature concentrate on the positive qualities of the leader, while the "dark sides of leadership" garner less interest on the part of researchers. As practice shows, examination of personality traits, experience, and competencies that impede the effective performance of the role of leader seem to be extremely important. A pioneering publication on this topic was a special 2007 issue of *The Leadership Quarterly* that concentrated on questions of destructive leadership. Toor and Ogunlana [2009, p. 255] were of the opinion that it is analysis of the dark sides of organizational and leadership behavior, negative personality traits, and neutralizers that are helpful in building a holistic picture of an effective leader. Moreover, consideration devoted to these matters may find practical application in programs for training future managers.

Skills and Personality Traits in the Context of the Dark Sides of Leadership

Analysis of skills, attitudes, and personality traits leading to effective leadership are among the key elements of studies on managerial competencies to date. Lombardo et al. [1988] catalogued qualities playing a role in ineffective management. Among them they identified the inability to create a harmonious team, applying excessive or insufficient weight to the process of management, an undue need for achievement, an unsupportive and demanding approach to subordinates, disproportionate emotion or lack of emotional sensitivity, coolness and arrogance, shallow relations with coworkers, and an ignoring of personal deficits. In their view, it is these competency elements that form the greatest obstacle to effective leadership.

A different analysis is presented within the framework of the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) project, which is devoted to the intercultural aspects of leadership. It takes into account six qualities considered to be undesirable and an impediment to filling the role of leader [Toor and Ogunlana, 2009, p. 257]. They include a lack of empathy, egocentric and antisocial behavior, touchiness, lack of self–criticism, autocratic behavior, lack of collaborative skills, and difficulties in the lucid transmission of views. They occur on a day–to–day basis in leadership activities, but difficulties also often crop up when managers must find their place in a new, higher position and adapt their behavior to their assigned range of authority and powers. Also of great significance is learning from experience. Schaubroeck et al. [2007] proved that demands on the part of the leader that are too high with respect to workers as well

as a lack of sensitivity in interpersonal contacts have a negative impact on the work of subordinates and are the cause of conflicts in the team. Padilla et al. [2007] stated that such qualities may include the following components: charisma, narcissism, negative life themes, abuse of power, and an ideology of hate.

The overview of research demonstrates that among qualities and skills, two areas are particularly important in terms of restrictions—concentrating on own interests and oneself as well as an inability to collaborate with other people.

The Motivational Aspect

The motivational aspect is also very important in analyzing leadership competencies. The results of research within the framework of the third edition of the "Polish Manager 2010" report [*Personel*, 01 (38), 2011, p. 37, in Polish] may be cited in the context of the "dark side." It shows that a total of 46% of the examined managerial staff assesses its effectiveness on a level of 70%–80%. This may bear witness to relatively low involvement and conscientiousness. At the same time, 88% think that higher financial gratification would mobilize them to work harder. Only 7% would not improve their efficiency. This signifies that managers do not feel sufficiently rewarded for their work and do not apply themselves properly to its performance. However, when synonyms of professional success are analyzed, dominant in first place are respect by partners and subordinates (4.76) and recognition and awards by superiors (3.84), while tangible synonyms such as office or corporate credit card have relatively low importance. This means that managers continue to be motivated by material–remunerative stimuli and the satisfaction of the need for recognition. This is somewhat distanced from the stereotypical view of a leader as an above average person who primarily strives to satisfy the needs of self–actualization and development.

Knowledge and Experience

Numerous studies on training managers analyze requirements with respect to knowledge that should be held by a modern manager. Whether or not MBA studies are an educational model for potential leaders continues to be in dispute. Successive doubt is cast in this context when the silhouettes of successful managers are analyzed. Research results demonstrate that the role of knowledge—formal knowledge as gained through school and universities—is secondary. Leadership skills are created by one's life history [Kuc, 2010]. This phenomenon is corroborated by the silhouettes of S. Jobs (Apple) and B. Gates (Microsoft), who were self–taught and never completed their higher education. Experiences, often traumatic, linked with health, loved ones, and family situation,

proved significantly more valuable. Many authors stress the exceptional role played by one's life path in leadership success. In the view of R. J. Thomas [2009, p. 21], life experiences may be compared to an alchemist's crucible through which efforts are made to change base metals into gold. In the case of leaders, this means the transformation of experiences that have an impact on a new or changed sense of identity. There are three types of experiences that improve leadership:

■ *New Territory*, meaning openness to unexpected professional and family occurrences, as well as new social and organizational roles used not only to survive, but also to develop in an unknown environment.

■ *Reversal*, consisting of a loss of someone close, sickness or other traumatic experiences, and situations in which something considered true turns out to be false, bringing about an understanding of the situation in a fundamentally new way.

■ *Suspension*, involving changes in the current situation as well as behavior in light of existing circumstances, simultaneously forcing a specifying of one's own mission and values.

In spite of differences in the experiences themselves, their common feature is the potential energy they supply and the possibility of its utilization. The ability to transfer skills and experiences from various life fields to the professional work of a manager also seems very important.

The Hazard Phenomenon and Its Importance

In analyzing leadership, it is the competencies required for becoming a leader—efficient and effective action differing from others in a positive way—that were the prime focus. This leads to the creation of the stereotype of what is known as an "effective leader" who is, more often than not, distant from reality. There is also an absence of a comprehensive awareness of randomness as a phenomenon—the singularity of certain hazards that are inseparably coupled with the phenomenon of leadership. B. Kuc [2010] defines success in leadership as a roulette incident that can only be achieved once and where the chances for success end with the exhaustion of energy accumulated in the person of the leader. This signifies that each and every leader has only one chance and right moment that may be taken advantage of or missed, because such circumstances will not make a second appearance. Thus, skill in properly assessing situations and utilizing possibilities is also an element making up competence.

One theoretical approach to analysis of the dark sides of leadership is the taking into account of potential threats and hazards. George and McLean [2007] conducted research among both leaders who failed to achieve success and those marked by high effectiveness. Noteworthy was the fact that 125 interviews from among those questioned

in the second group demonstrated that even managers who can boast good results are capable of identifying "temptations" facing leaders such as blaming others for mistakes committed, endowing oneself with high money awards and titles of honor, and the gaining of recognition on the part of the team for unique skills and the rapid achievement of success. Leaders from the first group fell victim to the listed temptations, while those from the second proved capable of resisting them or overcame faults that led to unconstructive behavior.

McLean [2007, p. 5] identified five dangers threatening effective leadership:

1. Being someone who imposes one's own view, a political animal associated with low self–esteem and self–awareness, as well as aggression and competitiveness.
2. Excessive rationalizing, where such leaders have difficulties in admitting to their mistakes and taking responsibility for their decisions, which is why they justify their actions, where this leads to the transfer of pressure from themselves to their subordinates while not solving the problem.
3. Seeking glory and praise, which is motivated by a need for acclaim, which limits the effectiveness of the leader.
4. Taking on the role of a loner, avoiding closer interpersonal relationships, which deprives the leader of a vital element in the management process—feedback.
5. The need for excessive shine and garnering attention on oneself, where such a stance leads to concentration on the leader's own career at the cost of the team.

The above–mentioned areas demonstrate hazards awaiting today's leader. They often emerge as a result of ill–conceived attempts on the part of leaders to ignore their own humanity. Escaping these dangers is possible thanks to perseverance and systematic work on oneself as undertaken by leaders. At the same time, analysis of the hazard phenomenon bears witness to the influence of situational factors that are not always dependent on the leader, which determine his life's road and possible success.

The Need for Development

Lockwood [2006] quotes data demonstrating that in the year 2000 companies earmarked USD 50 billion for development in the field of leadership, with special stress on shaping the skills of individual leaders. In the case of developing leadership competencies and eliminating their "dark sides," analysis of conditions facilitating the creation of possibilities for development is very important.

McCauley [2002] identifies three components vital to developing leadership: (1) Developmental experiences that guarantee opportunities for learning; (2) Personal orientation aimed at learning, including the individual's skills and motivation, and (3) Organizational support such as rewards for achieved success in development.

For his part, Sorbet [2004] presents conditions for the development of managers. Among them he isolated seven key areas: (1) Opportunist; (2) Diplomat; (3) Expert; (4) Conqueror; (5) Individualist; (6) Strategist, and (7) Alchemist.

The traditional model for managing manager development underscores the first four types, which correspond to the conventional approach to leadership. However, it should be stressed that a future task for today's managers is the development of the last three areas, which will allow adaptation to uncertainty in management. Thus, a key task facing leaders is reconciling the role of both custodian and consumer—people utilizing assets—but in such a way so that they become the legacy of successive generations.

Dark Sides of Competencies: A Summary

In summarizing the analysis of elements of leadership competencies as well as conditions for activity in their "dark side" aspects, several are of key importance and should be identified, including:
- Excessive concentration on one's own success,
- Lack of appreciation for the role of life experiences and the possibility of their transfer to business and other areas of life,
- Demoralization of managers in connection with concentration on remuneration,
- Absence of orientation in the building of permanent relations with stakeholders,
- Short–sightedness,
- Minimal awareness of the role of random elements, temptations, and hazards,
- Nonchalance with respect to the need for continuous learning and a conviction that talent itself is sufficient to achieve success,
- Selective and incidental development, and
- A dearth of indicators for assessing the work of leaders facilitating their objective assessment.

The "dark sides" of competence should be eliminated through the process of developing managers. The starting point for this is self–assessment and a diagnosis of one's own "light and dark competencies."

Conclusions

Analysis of leadership competencies—both their light and dark sides—generates a question as to whether it is only the manager who bears responsibility for negative phenomenon and shortcomings in management and influence over subordinates. The answer will most certainly not be unequivocally positive. The modern leader is a hostage of the system, indicators, shareholders, and various interest groups. At the same time, not all

employees have trust in their superiors and their loyalty lasts only as long as no alternative job opportunities make their appearance. However, in spite of efforts at finding universal answers and a competency typology characterizing effective leaders, it continues to be difficult to indisputably indicate just which are fundamental and if the absence of a single one of them might be responsible for failure. Among effective leaders, it seems that a key is credibility stemming from a shared inner system of values—ethical values encompassing responsibility and a moral compass. Thus, the key to success is a credible leader. In reiterating the analysis of the dark sides of managerial competencies, it is the words of Lord Acton that may prove helpful: "All power tends to corrupt." This phenomenon exists not only in economic life, but also in that of society and politics. On the other hand, helplessness is also reprehensible. Thus, it is worth striving to exercise power while keeping in mind the threats of the "dark side of leadership," and to evade reefs on a sea filled with dangers and hazards through development. These phenomena take on special significance in a situation of economic crisis, where this problem stems from the fact that a crisis is nothing more than the sum of errors on the part of investors, entrepreneurs, and managers. More than once, they achieved perfection in introducing traditional management methods and bad ideas. In order to avoid such threats it is necessary for the business world to encompass responsibility for results, not only for the logic of actions and skill in managing the process of permanent innovation.

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