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WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT TO INNOVATE, AS A DRIVER FOR ROMANIAN DEVELOPMENT

Dan SERGHIE*

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to describe and explain the case of Romanian workforce management as regards the innovation and knowledge transfer from abroad, conducted over twenty years within Romania.

Design/approach – As part of this project a large survey is conducted on an annual basis, which aims to track redesigning business processes in terms of workforce management amongst small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with Romanian cultural specificity and the effects of such adoption upon Romanian development.

Findings – The paper presents findings from this longitudinal study and discusses these findings in terms of innovation and knowledge transfer and the importance of developing more sophisticated instruments for assessing e-Business maturity amongst SMEs. The research clearly emphasizes the role of adopting an innovative organizational environment as a driver of Romanian development. The initial benefits take several years for being materialized, after the completion of the first four years of the ten-year project.

Originality/value – The importance of the study consists in adding information and acquiring knowledge for the organizations' benefit, regarding the employment and management of the working force for creating the framework and the environment which encourages innovation in the SMEs. This paper describes the cases of many programs funded by the European Union involved with innovative organizational environment adoption, the transfer of knowledge, the e-Business knowledge to SMEs within major regions. The scope of the research project and its longitudinal nature make the study original.

Research limitations/implications – This is a study specific to Romania.

Key Words:

innovation,
knowledge
transfer,
Romanian
development,
small to medium-
sized
enterprises,
workforce
management.

JEL Classification: M16.

1. Introduction

Practical implications – Knowledge infrastructures are aimed at providing a platform for knowledge management to ensure implementation of knowledge strategies with a defined set of workforce management tools. The findings should help Romanian managers, planners and national governments assess the value of innovation and knowledge transfer.

In the context of globalization, of the dynamics and speed of knowledge evolution, changes occur not only at

consumer behaviour level, but also on companies, generators and users of knowledge, in general. By redesigning business processes in terms of knowledge, various modelling techniques and storage models in data warehouses are designed to handle not only knowledge of a business process, but also to handle the knowledge created and applied (innovation) in business processes.

The importance of the study consists in the information provided and the knowledge gained by organizations regarding employment and workforce management to create the framework and the environment and to

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encourage innovation in SMEs. This study is structured as an analysis of a set of elements that define a culture and an environment that encourages business innovations, divided into generations:

- 1965-1984 generation with a cultural structure and a formative background until the 1989 events;
- 1985-2000 generation with a cultural structure and a formative background after the 1989 events.

The purpose of this study is to support management not only in the area of direct coordination of tasks, but for specific information technology as well, to define learning and communication styles, to design job and environmental characteristics for direct and indirect employee supervision, and to inform the manager of the best supervision methods to be used in relation to each specific generation at work. The study will provide the management with information regarding the changes needed in organization culture and structure in order to capitalize the talent and innovative ideas of these generations and retain the best employees in the years to come.

Firstly, the study comprises the defining characteristics concerning the situation and progress of Romania, relating them to the European Union as a frame of reference. Its purpose is to increase economic efficiency through innovations, to provide more competitive goods and services by adding competitive strengths, to create more opportunities for the options of goods and services procurement, to provide more opportunities for regional development, or, in other words, greater economic welfare.

Success in the internationalization process is conditioned by a good development of innovative environment. In the process of internationalization, the company's approach must be oriented towards a long-term vision on innovative environment, on its evolution and on a coherent overall strategy. Implementing the strategy requires a flexible structure of the enterprise as a whole, as well as a way of organizing the activities of labor management, enabling focus and coordinating all efforts towards achieving its goals.

2. Literature Review

To stay competitive in this demanding era, organizations acknowledge that they need to make their systems and operations more flexible to accommodate rising customers' expectations (Liang and Tanniru, 2007).

The word "generative" in the KI (knowledge integration) context was used by Rodan (2002) in his study of innovation and heterogeneous knowledge. Broadly, KI is defined "as the combination and deployment of knowledge drawn from different domains in order to achieve the specific innovative outcomes" (Newell et al., 2006, p. 228 in Audreu and Sieber, 2005) through a

process that combines individual information to create new knowledge (Okhuysen and Eisenhardt, 2002).

Research indicates that SME, the entrepreneur, may be both the cause and consequence of economic development for the purposes of wealth distribution. Countries where wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals make it difficult to coordinate the major components of progress (Mamede & Davidson, 2003). These three components are: labor, capital (resources) and innovation. Innovation policies and research and development at both micro and national and international level are being improved throughout the world with the goal of generating economic growth (Erskine, 2003). People's awareness concerning the diversity of technological progress and the key factors underlying success in innovation, research and development is constantly growing. Research shows that education, taxation and immigration policies to ensure availability of skilled and motivated workforce is a feature in almost all EU top countries. A literature review shows that the pace and intensity of innovation is accelerating worldwide. SMEs, entrepreneurs innovate to develop the market, they penetrate markets that are usually untested and a flexible management of scarce resources in an uncertain and often unforgiving environment is necessary (Asel, 2003). As a result, an entrepreneur, a true leader should encourage expansive thinking in order to generate new ideas, but at the same time, he should filter these ideas and innovations for the market by determining their usefulness. They create the space for generating alternative ideas and for free exploitation, passing them through a coarse filter that selects and tests specific ideas for future investment and development. (Kotelnikov, 2005).

In the early stages of the innovation process, what is dominant for the SMEs is the size; in the later stages, however, tightening is more important to verify concepts and bring the selected concepts on the market (Kotelnikov, 2005). A review of the literature on entrepreneurship reveals that innovation and creativity represent a continuous activity for the entrepreneur, a way to always find new ways of making better products or services with a greater or lesser difficulty as long as he/she disposes of available resources. Creativity in the business environment is combined with the ability to innovate, to generate an idea and make it work in practice. (Kotelnikov, 2005).

The comparative studies of entrepreneurs and their innovative strength were made based on:

- Economic and political history of the regions,
- Leadership styles,
- Changes in regulations.

Innovation, research and development provide an important contribution as regards the results and the total increase of input (Erskine, 2003). Empirical evidence

shows that 1% increase in research and innovation leads to increased production by 0.05 to 0.15% (Erskine, 2003). Differences in economic, cultural and political circumstances in different regions and countries suggest the need for understanding entrepreneurship in the local context (Asel, 2003). Entrepreneurial activities have developed rapidly throughout the global market as a result of the emergence of private capital and microfinance. Small business leaders have initiative, they play a critical role in the organization and energize people, continually seeking new opportunities; they seek to exploit, they assume risks, venture into new areas and provide strategic direction and inspiration for its people. They are the engine of innovation. (Kotelnikov, 2005)

3. Research Methodology

The four assumptions that the research starts from are:

1. Are there significant differences between the values of Generation X - (1965-1984) and the Millennium Generation - (1985-2000)?

Hypothesis I0: there are no significant differences in values between the two generations.

Hypothesis I1: there are significant differences in values between the two generations.

2. Are there significant differences in values according to gender (male vs. female)?

Hypothesis I0: there are no significant differences in values for the two genders.

Hypothesis I1: there are significant differences in values for the two genders.

3. Are there significant differences in values according to ethnicity and interculturality? (Romanian, Hungarian, Gipsy, Macedonian, other co-inhabiting nationalities)

Hypothesis I0: there are no significant differences in values between the groups.

Hypothesis I1: there are significant differences in values between the groups.

4. Are there significant relationships between the values that favor the development of innovative environment in the organization and the sets of values from the assumptions 1, 2 and 3?

Hypothesis I0: there are no significant relations between values.

Hypothesis I1: there are significant relations between values.

The specificity of the problem comes from the fact that more and more members of Generation X and Millennium on the one hand, and belonging to various ethnic groups on the other hand, appear in the workforce in the

business environment of the SMEs. The organizations wishing to remain competitive in global markets will have to strive to create an innovative environment internally, through innovations that will result in an increase of the capacity growth, to attract and retain the best talent in this sense. Baumol (2003) also sees the entrepreneur as being largely responsible for the historical growth of modern society. The purpose of this quantitative study is to measure cultural values of the working force, the social influences in the context of Millennium and X Generation diversity, in order to give managers the tools to support innovative environmental management and maintenance work composed for several generations. I performed an examination of the characteristics of an organizational environment that facilitates innovation on the one hand, and of the diversity of the working force according to generations, for determining the key elements (e.g., dependent variable, work skills, recruitment and maintenance, professional development, benefits and rewards, cultural change, and best practices) essential in the management of an increasingly diverse workforce (independent variable). Other generations were not included in the study because the focus of the research was on the younger and different labour force.

3.1. Instruments

According to Murphy, Conoley, & Impara (1994) the working values inventory is "designed to measure values that are extrinsic and intrinsic to those who work" (p. 998).

A questionnaire with several research questions was drafted to achieve the stated purpose of this research. Then, I applied the multivariate statistical analysis procedure of variance (MANOVA), on a work values inventory. Univariate tests on each variable were used to approach the research issue. Only those respondents who understood the questions, who were able to respond and responded honestly were considered valid. The questions validity was obtained by testing them on a limited sample of subjects, composed of 10 persons.

The survey is developed using 5-point scoring and is ranked by the participants as follows: 5 = very important 4 = important, 3 = moderately important, 2 = of little importance, 1 = unimportant

3.2. The Inventory of Cultural Values Specific to a Work Environment that Stimulates Innovation

1. **Creativity** - is associated with work that allows individuals to invent, design or develop and is related to the scientific and artistic concerns and it is the type of activity seen as self-expression. From this perspective, the workplace is an outlet for the cultural value and allows the individual the opportunity to create freely and to express his individual needs.

2. **Management** - is associated with work that allows the individual to plan, establish and organize the work of other individuals. This activity is often the outlet for individual needs and desire for control over other individuals.
3. **Achievement** - is associated with the gaining of a sense of accomplishment by the employee, in which the tasks were completed, tangible results are desirable for the accomplished work.
4. **Environment** - to stimulate innovation.
5. **Relations of supervision** - are associated with the importance of having a supervisor or manager with whom the employee has a good relationship.
6. **Lifestyle** - associated with workplace that allows employees to choose the type of person he is. This can sometimes be in disagreement with the activity requirements.
7. **Aesthetics** - this is associated with work that allows individual elements to create fun and ensure that they contribute to the world's general beauty.
8. **Prestige** - this is associated with work that provides a high level in the eyes of others or gains other people's respect.
9. **Independence** - this is associated with work that allows the individual to work in a manner consistent with the level of achievement and with the direction he aims at. This is important for those who do not want to be told what to do, for those who do not put great value on explicit instructions.
10. **Variety** - this is associated with the workplace which offers the individual the chance to experience different kinds of work from the same hierarchical position.
11. **Economic outcomes** - financial motivation and other type of motivation.
12. **Intellectual stimulation** - this is associated with work that provides an opportunity to think independently and to learn how and why things work. This is considered a mental challenge and it is important in professional and scientific activities.

3.3. Data Analysis

I assessed Questions 1-3 through MANOVA method, the cluster analysis. The variation analysis (ANOVA) and the covariation analysis (ANCOVA) are used to examine differences between mean values of the dependent variable under the effect of controlled independent variables, by isolating the effect of independent uncontrolled variables. When we have only one dependent variable, depending on the number of factors, we can analyze the variation with a factor or analyze the variation

with n-factors; when there are several dependent variables and several factors analyzed simultaneously, the method is called Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). If the set of independent variables contains both unmetrical (categorical) and metrical variables, the variation analysis must be supplemented by an analysis of covariation, which aims at isolating the influence of these independent metrical variables on the dependent variables and to allow in this way to assess the effect of factors. In research, the variation analysis is often used for identifying the differences between groups or segments that bring their contribution.

Question 4: was analyzed by quantifying the association between two variables - Pearson correlation. WE construct the matrix of Bravais-Pearson correlation coefficients (similarity matrix) between all pairs of units. Correlations are calculated between the profiles of units. A $N \times N$ correlation coefficients matrix results.

4. The Future Trajectory of Romanian Workforce Management Regarding Innovation

A model for innovation that could be followed by the manufacturing sector is that of the 3M. It has been very successful in developing, and continues to develop a wide array of new products by encouraging its workforce to think outside the box. Even Google has adopted this initiative by allowing its workforce to use their imagination, for a certain portion of their official working time, to pursue new ideas. In this era of globalization, prescient adoption of disruptive technologies in developed economies such as the U.S. would neatly balance the routine tasks outsourced to a global workforce in the rest of the world.

In Romania, Generation X puts more emphasis on family rules, the post was just a means of stability, while the Millennium Generation focuses on wealth resulting from an exacerbated need to record and professional achievements. Essentially, if count stability for Generation X, Generation Millennium professional development and social status matter of course results of the financial aspect.

The innovative character of an organization depends ultimately to identify those factors that motivate each generation separately:

Motivation is a product of interaction between individuals' needs and their working environment. Motivation theories help provide an understanding of needs. The human resources department and line managers can build an appropriate environment to foster motivation. A key to effective motivation is to create a positive work environment that enables employees to be innovative. Creating a climate in which each individual can meet his or her own goals ultimately benefits the organization. The organization that fosters a positive environment supports

its individual workers. This organization provides training and development opportunities and shows appreciation. The corporate culture emphasizes participation, empowerment, and tolerance for risk.

Empowered employees tend to be more motivated. Empowering the work force creates a feeling of ownership; it is a demonstration of trust. The managers must let go of power and decision-making. Given more autonomy, workers make more decisions and often take initiative. A participative work force also presents more creative solutions. Employees who are participating in the decision-making process (especially as it pertains to controlling their own job) tend to be more satisfied and more committed to the organization, which translates into higher levels of motivation. However, in order to achieve this commitment, the organization must share information and knowledge, provide skills that employees need, and listen to its employees. The organization must also tolerate risk. Creativity comes with mistakes and employees who are afraid of being punished for mistakes will not be creative and innovative.

4.1. Humor in the Workplace

Today the world is so serious, not rationally by all means. Today's society is said to be the most humorless in history even if it creates a big industry of entertaining. Social problems burden everyone. Business seems so serious, but part of creating an environment supportive of high levels of performance is to develop a culture that embraces humor. We still suppose that everyone appreciates a good laugh and a funny incident. Humor can help combat some of the effects of stress in the workplace.

Humor plays a crucial role in the life of every organization. Although some organizations still resist using it as an interpersonal tool, the importance of humor as an important part of any healthy organization is growing, that enables employees to be innovative. Humor in the workplace brings both personal and organizational benefits. Humor can refresh the spirit and open the mind. In a tense situation, humor can reduce stress and defuse anger. People can use humor as an intervention strategy because humor provides an opportunity to view the situation from a new perspective, even when we talk about hang, anger or monotony. In a work environment that encourages fun, employees have: lots of energy, greater self-esteem, enthusiasm for their work, team spirit, sustainable motivation and positive attitudes. During team building, humor can be used as a powerful bonding tool. When coworkers share humbling, funny experiences, everyone seems more human. People see each other as more approachable and perhaps this humility helps the team bond and create a sense of belonging.

Humor is also valuable in training. Numerous psychological studies have shown that humorous example will increase the learner's retention of a concept by more than 50%. Listeners tend to tune in more when humor is used in training.

A person's sense of humor is also related to creativity. People with a well-developed sense of humor are usually more creative. In some cases, humor can provide the opportunity to think more creatively and to find more innovative solutions to old problems.

Furthermore, there is a direct correlation between humor and promotion. As a general rule, those employees with a good sense of humor are given more opportunities for promotion than those who are humorless. Workers with a good sense of humor generally have creative problem-solving skills and are often perceived as more positive in nature.

But sometimes humor can be overdone. There is a fine line between positive humor and dysfunctional, negative humor, and this can be crossed very easily. Coworkers should never be the subject to a joke; this can be discriminatory. People must know when the use of humor is appropriate and also when it is not.

4.2. Incentive Plans

Generation X focus on packages of benefits like health insurance, pension etc.. Millennium Generation focuses on benefits like training programs, recreational programs. To be effective, rewards must be linked to employee performance. Any incentive plan must also be customized to meet the unique needs of each individual. Management must know what is important to its employees and then provide incentives that are meaningful to them, that enables employees to be innovative. The work force today is not homogeneous. Each worker has unique needs, felt with different intensity. A fair and equitable incentive system will customize rewards to meet the variety of needs of a diverse workforce.

Effective incentive plans must also be creative. Since different needs motivate different people, the incentives must fulfill a variety of needs. The trend is toward incentives that are not financial in nature. For example, gift certificates, additional time off, dinners, and sports equipment are being used more widely today. Plaques, certificates of appreciation, and public recognition have also been used effectively to improve motivation. Creative incentives could be concert tickets, impromptu recognition parties or lunches, keys to the building, stock options, tickets to sporting events, tickets to theater, weekend travel vouchers, trainings.

Each company chooses itself the rhythm of development in the motivation area and the degree to which it realizes the necessity to offer more attractive extra-remuneration packages. The labor market, the candidates' level of

training, the methods used to attract them, the new players who entered the market, the development at the organizational level are criteria that led not only to a better coordination of the allotted costs to increase the loyalty of the employees but also to the delimitation of what is new regarding the stimulants. Each company that has maturity in the business field will know how to cumulate and dimension appropriately the financial rewards, the investments in training its co-workers, as well as the delimitation and covering of business needs and not at last, of personnel needs, and how to properly and best channel the vision in order to obtain performance and success.

Many multi-national companies are beginning to give personalized stimulants according to every hierarchic level of the organization. For a better optimization of granting these types of non-financial – benefits, many organizations choose the method of internal survey in order to find out what bonus is expected by each employee so he could choose something that fits him and is satisfied with, so the financial department together with that of human resources will know the expected costs for the current year.

In 2009 in Romania, trips to exotic destinations, MBA programs, private pensions and life-insurances, participation in international seminars and trainings, subscriptions to fitness gyms, services in children care offered by the organization in order to substitute day-cares or kindergartens, medical insurances were the most attractive stimulants used organizations in motivating and preserving the employees. This year approximately 60% of the Romanian companies have benefited from medical insurance services, whereas only 10% provide subscriptions to specialized parlors and trips compared to the average of 15% in the European countries. The high percentage of the companies that provide medical insurances can be explained by the fact that the Romanian employees feel the need to be protected and safe and so, the medical benefits are the most significant and we can notice that consumers are open to the integration within the framework of a private medical system which offers services at a superior qualitative level.

In other countries, the medical insurance can be seen as a banality due to the fact that the majority of employers offer these benefits which are considered to be fundamental, whereas in Romania, where the private practices are only beginning to assert themselves on the marketplace, these services are seen as of special nature. Taking care of the children represents, in turn, one of the major benefits for the Romanian employees.

4. Finnacle

No one theory explains all human behavior. The most appropriate theory depends on the person and the

situation. A complete understanding of a wide range of motivation theories increases the probability of being able to understand more of what motivates people and create an innovative environment.

Praise can be a great motivator if it is administered appropriately to be most effective. Praise must be specific. To ensure that appropriate behavior is repeated, clearly articulate the behavior being praised. The individual must also understand why this behavior is important and how it helps the organizations to meet its innovative environment.

Contrary to popular belief, money is not the prime motivator. Job satisfaction is the number one motivator. These individuals are already highly motivated intrinsically. Money is a motivator only by comparing it to other goods / things placed under the same circumstance. The arguments are: adjustment, reference to others' earnings, opportunity alternatives and cost and the last level of Maslow's pyramid – self-fulfillment.

Effective motivation today requires creative approaches. Creative incentives can motivate employees to a high level of performance, often without large financial investments.

Equity theory can use standards or surveys as methods of comparison. The salary surveys conducted by most industries can be used to compare inputs to outputs.

Humor has become a strategic weapon to motivate employees and their managers to achieve extraordinary results and build strong, resilient organizational cultures and big profits.

Employees are motivated by consideration and respect. Managers who extend common courtesies to employees in their attempt to balance all facets of their lives are appreciated and often "rewarded" with higher performance. When employees provide feedback or suggestions, be sure to listen and respond to their comments. Your failure to respond may make your employees wonder if they are being heard.

One of the biggest problems with motivating today is that managers are using the same techniques that they used nearly twenty years ago. As workers have changed, the techniques that will effectively motivate them have also changed.

The approach to motivation is a key component of an organization's culture and often reveals important information. Organizations that believe workers can easily be replaced do not invest in their employees. Employees receive this message and respond with less loyalty and tendency to leave the organization in greater numbers.

Poor performance in innovation cannot always be assumed to be a problem of motivation. If an employee is slipping in innovative performance, review his past performance appraisals. Performance is a function of

ability, motivation, and environment. If employees do not have the right skills, they cannot perform well. They may indeed be motivated, but they may not have the necessary skills to be successful.

This research should be carried out differently in each socio-professional category, the idea of innovational environment can't be applied identically to any such category. Leadership style tailored to that organization, an

authoritarian leadership style based on clearly defined rules and regulations for employees belonging to Generation X, or a flexible leadership style for employees belonging to the Millennium generation, based on open communication and generate ideas. Work environment involves distinct characteristics for each type of organization; this analysis must be made punctually on types of activities.

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