

The Catalytic Manager

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Abstract: *Nowadays, the quality has become a key element of the organization's strategy and an ace, which allows it to face the competition catching the consumer's, manager's and marketer's attention more and more.*

The efficiency of the quality system and the continuous improvement of the quality depend on the intellectual capital and on the organization's culture of the quality. There is very important to have a complex approach of the components of the quality system (the customer, the personal and the processes) inside an organization which crosses a process of continuous learning. These components depend on the manager's "portrait", on all the responsibilities assumed by the manager and also on each employee.

The new manager needs a new way of "seeing" the old problems (which should include the previous perception as a partial truth) as an aspect of reality with a larger coverage which should respect both internal (internal customers) and external (external customers) requirements.

The manager must become "the catalyst" of applying the knowledge to all his co-workers, must be the promoter of a courageous vision upon the strategy of the product's and service's quality, together with a new mentality which promotes transparency, the knowledge dissemination and their active usage.

The efficient management of quality systems is based on the efficientization of work flows, of processes. These processes have to be created, simplified, optimized in order to produce the best quantitative and qualitative result, at the lowest price and in the shortest time possible. In the case of public administration, the analysis of a process performance and the rapid identification of the possible dysfunctions represent the means of avoiding the feared trap of the excessive bureaucracy, through which a process tends to live for it self and not for meeting objectives.

The arguments that can make managers want, know "what, who, how, when, why" act for the projection, implementation and development of a Quality Management System are numerous. The key to successfully approach to a Quality Management System is the client: the internal client and the external client. This "key" can be used by the manager but he has to learn how to use it, has to approach new management styles, some of them based on the knowledge management.

Knowledge represents the intellectual capital and is considered to be essential for the development of an organization. The role of the management team consists in the development and valorization of this capital. Excellence, which ensures the competitive character, depends mainly on the way labour force, talent and knowledge are used in the organization. The new management style used in modern organizations does not refer to technology, but to the way in which the staff is organized for cooperation, interaction in order to emphasize their knowledge as efficiently as possible.

There still are some confusions concerning the intellectual capital especially when managers think that this capital can be identified only with the “good name” (that is temporary if we do not take part in the real competitions), with “the eagerness” of the management team (that avoids the talent and professional skills belonging to some individuals seen as “dangerous” in the internal competition) or with the recognition of knowledge by as many documents as possible. Nowadays, the fate of this type of organizations whose management does not know or does not want to show to advantage the knowledge of all employees is decay. The success will belong to organizations that by an appropriate management and by training are concerned with the development and permanent valorization of the intellectual capital.

Specific, personal knowledge must be identified, assimilated and stocked in usable forms within the organization. The value of an organization will be measured not only in periodical financial or election campaign, but also by their most powerful assets, the intangible ones: the assimilated know-how, the experience of employees, the results of personal research-development, the performance of processes, the satisfaction of users/beneficiaries, the social environment and the organizational culture etc. The old disappearing paradigm considers that value is represented by the product/services life duration. The change of paradigm reports value to the speed of introduction of new products and services, by their permanent development. All specialists state that the speed of the activities’ development, processes, the time of answer to the clients’ needs and to other interested parties and the setting on the market of new services and products that add value are the determinant factor of success. Speed is the origin of most pressures we all feel and we already cross some turbulence areas.

The value creation process in the public administration process is continuously changed in an accelerated rhythm and this is why there is a demand for the information and assessment of the intellectual capital, concerning its relation with the tangible capital. From the management point of view, *knowledge* is information placed in people’s minds and whose value can permanently increase by application.

The managers of the public administration can, as well, manage knowledge by creating human motivations. “The extraction” of knowledge to be used in the organization’s processes, by dissemination of information, is difficult and supposes mastering of the people’s management art and science. Relying only on the fact that employees consciously transform knowledge into different forms of information (expert’s reports, letters, projects etc.) and gather information from others in order to develop their own knowledge is a mistake. The particularity of the modern public administration is rendered by the quantity of knowledge the employees dispose of, by the way in which the management knows how to valorize this knowledge, as well as by the creation in organizations of the mentality that the existent knowledge inheritance must be supported and developed. The business “sense”, the managerial “sense” cannot certainly lead to results. One needs research, education, knowledge acquired in time in order to know how to act for the optimization of results. “The life-long learning organization”, “the interdisciplinary, interdepartmental integration” have been more and more discussed lately. (Savoyat, 2007; Nyuyen, 2006, Russu, 2008).

The manager has to become the “catalizer” of the application of all collaborators’ knowledge, the promoter of a daring vision on the strategy of products and services, combined with a new mentality that promotes transparency, the dissemination of knowledge and their active use. The models of some western firms regarding the human resources policy are not to be ignored. A modern organization has to “learn” permanently, it needs active employees that should be let to act, to take responsibilities and their knowledge should be appreciated at their true value, and the people possessing it should be stimulated. The “catalytic-manager” should make employees apply, use, communicate and develop the existent knowledge. Knowledge, as well as information, is worthless if it is

not applied for decisions on the actions necessary for the organization's well-being, for the full satisfaction of clients and even for the exceeding of their expectations, for the generation of new ideas on the organization's future.

Just like the catalyser in the chemical reaction, the *catalytic manager* can efficiently contribute to the application and use of knowledge if certain conditions are observed. Some of these conditions are:

- The conviction that the organization stimulates and rewards the employees' decisions and actions by means of which knowledge is used and communicated;
- The creation of conditions for the transfer and/or the acquisition of new knowledge by specialized programs for the longer/shorter seniority employees;
- The existence and development of a consultancy attractive market on the good practices in the knowledge management and, why not, in the innovation management concerning people, culture and communication.

"Innovation means 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration" – said the genial inventor Thomas Edison. Thus, it is necessary to make an additional effort in order to help ideas see the light of the day, to admit them, to offer them the possibility to be applied. The management of competences is focused too often on a small number of stocked knowledge and organizations (especially those in the services sector) deprive themselves of a huge and cheap resource system. (Savoyat, 2007).

A study, realized by a German institute (presented in *RKW-Zeitung*, 1998), showed that the industrial sector is the one that traditionally involves in the highest degree employees in the creation of new ideas as compared with other sectors. Comparing the number of new ideas offered by 100 employees the results of the study led to the following results:

- the car sector – 83 ideas
- the insurance sector – 26 ideas
- the services sector – 7 ideas
- the public administration sector – 0,3 ideas.

These results show that certain sectors, especially that of services, have a rather low level of innovation fact that imposes the dynamization of the internal creative forces in their organizations. We consider that one of the causes is the lack of standardization in the services field with all its negative consequences.

In the case of public administration services we have to bring to discussion the paradox of the phenomenon, as well. The human resources in this sector are most of all of a university level, meaning that they should be used with the creative approach and with the liberty of innovation. There is at least one explanation for this problem. The need for creativity of all employees seems to be connected to the competitive pressure of the market, or the public services have not met such a pressure before. The public function has lived without any competitive stimulation while the industry had to survive, taking part in the competition. The transparency culture did not offer either the public administration employees the possibility to react to each other's ideas, not to talk about the external clients' ideas. And here comes the manager's role or the role of the creative ideas team that should allow "the exploitation" of the organization's intellectual capital. The efficiency of this approach comes from the talent of bringing together resources (material and human), of supplying an open structure that should allow new knowledge and ideas move freely, be encouraged to express themselves, to be known and applied once their advantage has been verified. There is created thus a way of permanently improving the quality of services and of rendering more efficient the Quality Management System. The ones who have the most to gain are the clients, either internal or external.

In the quality management, comparing the city or town with an industrial enterprise, without taking into consideration the particularities, is a mistake. The real crisis of the local budgets, the sources of aggravation of social inequalities, the citizens'

demands, adaptation to the communities' needs and to their culture, the lack of the democratic exercise and others have determined a new context of the quality management application at this level.

Who are the external clients of the public administration services? What do they want? What are their expectations? Who ensures the clients' satisfaction? What do we do in order to guarantee the quality of their services for the clients, for the tax-payers? What do we know about our clients? These are only some of the questions whose correct answer can ensure the way to excellence.

"The client is the heart of quality systems. Within a quality approach, all logic will be focused on satisfying the clients' expectations." (Margerand, Gillet-Goinard, 2006). Therefore, the discourse, actions, indicators, all of them will converge to all employees' understanding of the importance given to external clients. Clients have expectations and needs. Clients must receive high quality services in accordance with their expectations and needs. The quality of these services must give them satisfaction.

Further on, we suggest an approach based on assessment anticipation and measuring of expectations, needs and of clients' satisfaction.

The assessment of the clients' satisfaction implies four stages:

- The gathering information;
- The analysis of expectations;
- Selection;
- Formalization.

The gathering of information can be done by means of several general questions, 10-12.

Examples: What do you expect from your employees? What do you like about your services? What do you appreciate the least? How the ideal job you expect should be? etc. The golden rule has to be the acceptance of what the client says, with no alluring justifications or hasty solutions.

The analysis of expectations should make a clear distinction between the solutions proposed by the client and his real expectation. Example: A client suggests that in the institution's hall there should be a receiving person. His expectation is in fact the satisfaction of the need for information in order to find more quickly the appropriate desk for the solicited services. This can be realized by information boards, the direction of clients by light signals, indicators etc.

The selection of expectations has to be done in accordance with the institution's objectives. It is recommended to select to key-expectations, the most often expressed and/or the implicit expectations, but also the original expectations that show the evolution of the clients' needs.

The formalization can be done by keeping, on certain thematic areas, the suggestions and expectations of the target-clients, expressed by their importance (very important, important, less important).

The anticipation of clients' needs can be realized in many ways or stages, according the client's listening way.

Case 1. Unsatisfied clients address the institution. The institution is interested in settling the client's complaints in a friendly manner, to find out from them and to keep under control the dysfunctions, to punctually launch the appropriate corrective actions. The used indicator is the number of complaints.

Case 2. The institution addresses the clients in order to establish the degree of satisfaction, afterwards it establishes the improvement program of conditions, practices and behaviors. The used indicator can be the percentage of highly-satisfied clients/customers.

Case 3. The client is considered a true partner, and in this case the institution will be the first to answer to its customer's latent needs. The indicator can be the number of

customers' suggestions to be taken into account.

Conclusions

The "complaints" phenomenon is still wrongly understood and managed. The anticipation, knowledge and analysis of complaints are a sure way of improving the service quality. The specialty literature on the management of complaints offers numerous examples of creating suggestions for the service quality improvement and for emphasizing suggestions and complaints. The system of suggestions and complaints is not an "offence" to the management of complaints, but a working instrument. The Japanese have adopted and applied "The system of creative suggestions" for more than fifty years. The organizations that understood the importance of the client had in view: the listening of the client, the identification of the interested parties, the communication and relational problems, the clients' counseling, the avoidance or solving of litigations, the organization of services, the solving time and the expectation time, the way of perceiving the product/service quality by the client-citizen and by the citizen-client, the employees' professionalism and performance, the taking of responsibility etc.

The reform in the public administration, the decentralization offer opportunities for action, for reaching a maximum efficiency with a minimum consumption, for a new paradigm. Moreover, the decentralized organization has the capacity of taking decisions closest to the environment, fact that also leads to the capacity of adapting very well to the interests of its environment and, implicitly, to its own interests. There are also viewed the increase of the quality of services offered to the clients, tax payers, stimulating at the same time the evolution, education and satisfaction of civil servants.

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