

THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP ON MOTIVATING YOUNG GENERATION

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to provide some new insides on the most effective means to motivate young generations, highlighting the decisive role of leadership in this process. Starting from the theoretical approach of the motivation concept and the relationship between it and leadership, as it is found in the literature, a set of behavioural rules is proposed, which we consider useful in motivating young employees. Concerning the practical side of this paper, the research methodology allowed to validate two hypotheses related to the importance of the youngsters' motivation ways, and the positive influence that the leadership style has on motivation. Last section is dedicated to conclusions, recommendations and to the presentation of the intention to continue the research to obtain more representative results, which to be extrapolated to a more general level.

KEYWORDS: *leadership, motivation, motivation strategy, young generation.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *D83, I23, J01, J23, J24, J28.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The specialized literature in management and organizational-management psychology talks about motivation strategies, techniques and methods to increasing employee performance and satisfaction through work motivation. Therefore, motivation should be considered decisive for companies' survival and as a key factor of its competitiveness. This paper discuse the relationship between leadership and motivation of young people, more specifically of students, and the most effective motivational strategies to motivate them into their future job.

We chose this approach due to the constant interaction with young people and students from our university, having as objective the determination of the characteristics they value most when it comes to their workplace, but also regarding their perception of the leadership style from the companies they represent. Thus, we have found that young people encounter some problems when choosing a job because they have difficulties in finding a job that motivates them to the highest level and they feel that their work could be appreciated more by their superiors. On the other hand, employers are facing difficulties when hiring young people, because they have observed some tendencies of not awarding full attention to tasks, due to lack of experience or insufficient motivation. Therefore, at their turn, the employers are still in progress of searching the most suitable alternatives for motivating the young employees.

Considering those two perspectives, we aim to bring some insights on the most effective ways of motivating young employees and, more important, to make some theoretical contributions in the field of leadership and motivation of the young generation.

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2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Over time, it was considered that the performance of human resources, the efficiency of their work, derives in particular from their knowledge, skills and aptitudes, but it was nevertheless noticed that individuals both physically and intellectually endowed may provide a lower return than other employees, less endowed. From this perspective, Zlate (2007, cited by Lefter et al., 2012) states that *"the success is achieved only in conditions and when the endowment and the training of the individual are accompanied and sustained by a dynamic, directional and energizing internal state that allows him to focus on the achievement of the objectives, namely motivation"* (Lefter et al., 2012).

To define the concept of motivation, Burduş & Popa (2013) states that *"motivation is the degree of orientation of a persistent effort to achieve one or more objectives"* (Burduş & Popa, 2013). Thus, motivation expresses an ensemble of intrinsic and extrinsic forces/energies that initiate and direct human behavior toward a particular purpose, while a person/employee is motivated for the work he/she is deploying when he/she makes a permanent effort to achieve certain goals and obtain certain results.

Employee motivation is an important dimension of human resources management. Lefter et al. (2012) consider that *"the basis of motivation is the theory of equity: the employee put in balance his contribution and what he receives in exchange for his work"* (Lefter et al. 2012).

Over time, in relation to different criteria, several forms of motivation have been identified, including: (1) in relation to the nature of need felt by employee to perform or not his tasks, distinguish: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation, (2) in relation to the type of motivational factors used by those motivating the employees (managers) we have: positive motivation and negative motivation, and (3) depending on the nature of the means used to motivate the organization's staff: economic or financial motivation and moral-spiritual or non-financial motivation.

Analyzing the typology of motivation presented in the previous paragraphs, in this paper we will focus on the last classification, that of the financial motivation and, above all, on the non-financial motivation on which an increasing emphasis has begun. Given that it is impossible to apply within a company only financial motivation, because it would be difficult, or even impossible, for an employer to raise wages or to provide monthly bonuses, that is why it is very important that this type of motivation is complemented by moral-spiritual one.

Moral-spiritual motivation imply to stimulate employees to work harder, better and more efficiently, but to do all of this with an open heart. In order to morally and spiritually motivate employees and keep them in the company, the Business Academy mentions six strategies that managers might call, namely (Business Academy, n.d.):

1. *To help company employees to start with the right foot.* If employees receive a good treatment in the company from the beginning, then success is guaranteed. Even if it is the first day at work, the employee must be made to feel as if they are part of the organization for a long time.

2. *To satisfy the employees' three special needs related to their work:* the need for safety, the need for recognition and the need for belonging to a group.

3. *Create a working environment in which employees to feel good.* In the first place, it should be removed from the company the feeling of fear; people should enjoy an open atmosphere and have confidence each other. People must also be allowed to sometimes make mistakes without criticizing them or making them feel bad, helping them to improve their skills and learn a lesson from a negative experience. A motivating workplace is that which brings fulfillment to the employees: *"to be proud of his accomplishments by doing things that matter and doing them good; its merits to be acknowledged; to be proud of his achievements"* (Sirota, Mischking & Meltzer, 2010).

4. *To give employees total attention.* Managers need to be interested in the continuous progress of human resources in their company, discover and reveal their hidden talents, listen to them, focus on their needs, because later employees will focus more successfully on their work.

5. *Motivate, motivate, motivate.* In addition to financial motivation, as mentioned above, moral spiritual motivation is extremely important.

6. *Reduce stress of human resources.* In order to reduce the stress at the workplace, managers should define the job descriptions as accurate as possible, clearly describe the tasks, confirm the responsibilities so that the employees know exactly what they have to do and who they are subordinate to.

3. THE MOTIVATION - LEADERSHIP RELATIONSHIP AMONG YOUNG EMPLOYEES

The particular way the young people starts their career, like any other project they initiate, is influenced by a number of factors and variables, less visible than behavior, results or any visible reaction. Among the most important of these, may be mentioned personality, motivation, leadership style, as well as knowledge, skills and competencies that may become competitive advantages for each of them. If part of these are acquired over time, personality or motivation are more complex factors, varying from person to person, being closely related to the values and the way of thinking of the young person.

Choi et al. (2012), as well as Taylor & Betz (1983), confirms the strong link between motivation and personality among young people, which may influence their own efficiency or career interests such as artistic, practical or entrepreneurial spirit (Pellerone, Passanisi, & Bellomo, 2015). The literature also highlights the importance of individual and particular skills as a premise of success in career (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011).

Perceptions about the future, optimism, conscientiousness or adaptability to different situations are also considered important in motivation as they reflect the perception of the opportunities and challenges that can be encountered in a future career (Richardson, Abraham & Bond, 2012; Chang, Choi, & Kim, 2008).

Corr & Mutinelli (2017) also studied the correlation between personality factors in view of a theory that studies the sensitivity of strengthening youth learning (RST) and factors related to the predisposition of students and recent graduates such as Adaptability Career, Optimism in Career, and Perceived Knowledge. The results concluded that young people are motivated in choosing careers by two main factors: rewarding their efforts and involvement, and persevering in achieving their goals. They were also positively correlated with the factors described above.

Leadership is also a feature that young generation appreciates in many ways. First of all, it should be said that young people are motivated and inspired by the true leaders encountered in their lives, making them facilitators in finding the future vocation and starting to build their own path on which successfully evolve. That is why these leaders should be present both the educational environment, where they should communicate to young people the meaning of vision and strategic management, as well as in the future career they choose as professionals. Can (2009) describes the importance of presence of leadership in the educational system as an essential factor in the sustainable development of young people. His research also looks at other dimensions, studying the effects of leadership among younger generations. According to its results, they should be present in every aspect of local and global community activities, to establish common values and behaviors that will facilitate people's interaction and development, and establish an environment that is based on respect, spirituality and culture.

4. METHODOLOGY

Starting from the information presented in the previous chapters, the discussions with the students of the Faculty of Management and on basis of own experience, there were formulated two

hypotheses regarding the relation between the motivation and the type of motivational factors, as well as the correlation between the leadership style and the motivation, as follows:

Hypothesis 1: *Young people feel more motivated by moral-spiritual (non-financial) factors than financial ones.*

Hypothesis 2: *Leadership style has a positive influence on motivation among young people.*

The research part of the paper is based on a pilot survey applied to a convenience sample of students from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, which is intended to be followed by a second survey on a larger and more representative sample. The pilot questionnaire was completed by students which were currently employed, 83.33% of them being master students and the remaining 16.67% undergraduate. Regarding the structure of the sample, according to the gender of respondents, it is known that 56.67% of them are females and the remaining 43.33% are male. In fact, the results of this pilot questionnaire were obtained in proportion of 13.33% from people aged 18 to 19, 16.67% from 20-21 years old, 56.67% of the respondents are aged 22-25 and the remaining 13.33% of them are aged between 25 and 30 years.

Regarding the structure of the applied questionnaire, the questions it contains are structured according to the issues addressed: (1) three questions referred to equity, fulfillment and collegiality at the workplace in order to find out how motivated are the respondents; (2) two questions referred to the financial and non-financial factors motivating young people as well as to the main non-financial motivation methods they appreciate most; (3) a question referred to the importance that young people attach to the leadership style, along with the set of right / wrong leadership rules presented earlier, in order to assess the extent to which leadership influences young employees' motivation; (4) also, in the questionnaire were inserted demographic questions regarding the students' gender, age etc.

5. FINDINGS

Since the motivation in work may be explained by equity, fulfillment and collegiality, there were formulated a series of questions in this regard. Thus, the first question was: "How do you assess the real interest your organization manifests for its employees' welfare?", and the following results were obtained (figure 1): 57.14% of the respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with their workplace and more precisely the interest that the managers of the company they work in show them to make them work in a favorable environment. 23.81% of respondents say that they are neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, while 19.05% of students are dissatisfied or very unsatisfied with the interest of the company's representatives in terms of their well-being.

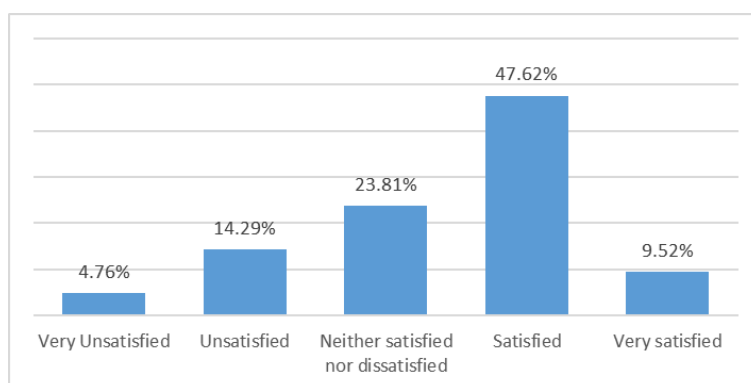


Figure 1. Assessment of organization's interest for employees' welfare

Source: Own representation based on survey data

The second question relates to the extent to which the present job is able to harness the potential, skills and abilities of the respondents. It is noticed (figure 2) that 42.86% of them agree or totally agree with this, which means that they work in an environment that motivates them and allows them to develop on a personal and professional level. 23.91% of the respondents are neutral about this statement and the remaining 33.33% disagree that their job is harnessing their potential. A possible explanation of the high percentage of respondents working in a job that does not value their potential may be due to the fact that they are freshly employed, have no experience, which sometimes prevents them to exploit their full potential.

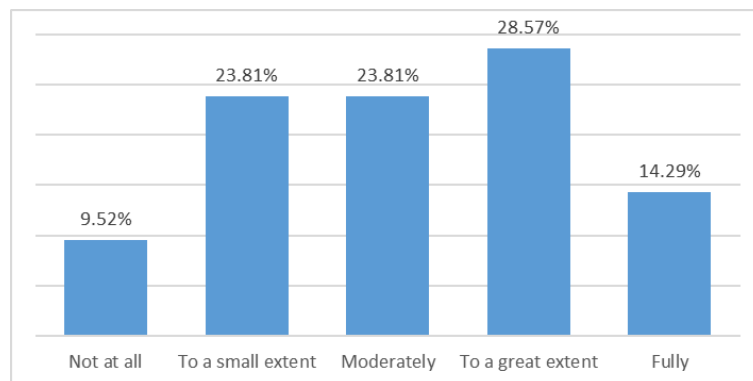


Figure 2. The extent to which the present job is able to harness the potential, skills and abilities
 Source: Own representation based on survey data

Regarding collegiality, cooperation and team spirit in the workplace it is estimated that 66.67% of the students are satisfied and very satisfied with this aspect at their work place, 19.05% of them are declared neutral and only 14.29% of them are not satisfied with the environment in which they work.

To find out to what extent financial or non-financial means motivate young employees, was asked the question "Which of the following factors motivates you in your job?", providing a list of possible motivational factors, both financial and non-financial. One may see that students equally appreciate the amount of salary and the environment at work, 80% of them being motivated by each of these two factors, which is expected since students are just starting their career and the salary represents a significant income, enabling them to support themselves. The second place as a source of motivation is the leadership style practiced in the company, which is indicated by 75% of the respondents. Respondents also refer to an important source of motivation for job security (70%) and recognition of merits by superiors (60%). Regarding the granting of honorary titles, 55% of students say they are motivated by those, while 50% of them are also motivated by bonuses they receive. The least important motivational factor, which still achieves a significant percentage, is the salary premiums (40%).

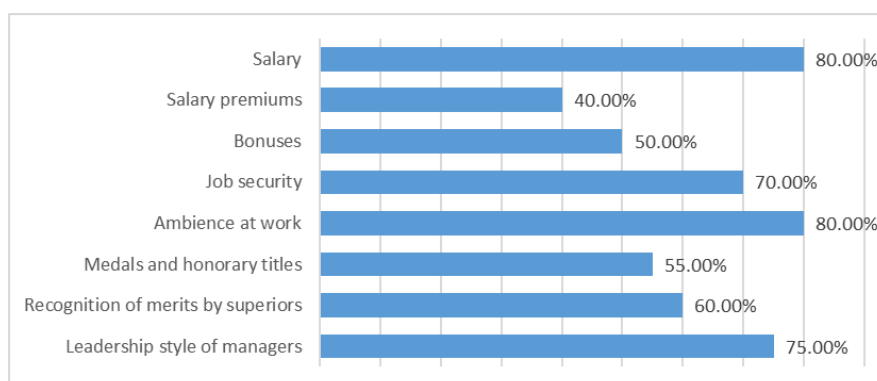


Figure 3. Motivational factors

Source: Own representation based on survey data

Analyzing the overall results on motivation factors, one can see that the young employees are more morally and spiritually motivated (on average, 68% of them appreciate this motivation methods) than the financial motivation (appreciated on average by 56.66% of respondents). Based on these findings, we may conclude that moral spiritual motivation plays a more important part in motivating young generation, thus validating hypothesis no.1.

When asked "Which of the following motivational means do you appreciate most?", the following results were obtained (figure 4). Young employees feel motivated non-financially when their company offers free enrollment for training courses (75%) or when teambuilding events are organized, which may increase collegialty, better teamwork and enhanced organizational culture. 60% of respondents appreciate as a way of moral and spiritual motivation granting free days to reward their performing activities, and 55% of them say they feel very motivated and satisfied when their merits are recognized at public events or twhen they are offered free tickets for various sports events / concerts, etc. It also notes that employees are motivated if they are offered free subscriptions to gyms (50%), and also if their achievements are published in the company newsletter (45%).

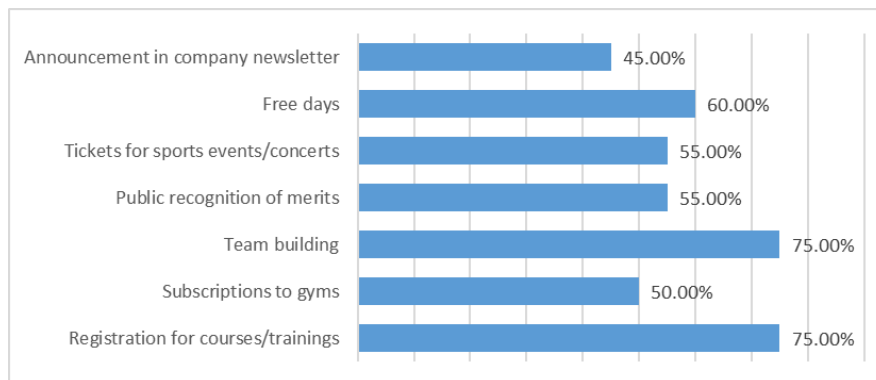


Figure 4. Motivational means

Source: Own representation based on survey data

Another aspect pursued by the applied questionnaire referred to the importance that young people attach to the leadership style practiced by managers within their organization. In this respect, it is observed (figure 5) that 83.33% of them appreciate leadership as very important feature, witch they consider motivating and decisive in acheving performance, 13.33% appreciate it as important and only 3.33% of them are neutral in this regard.

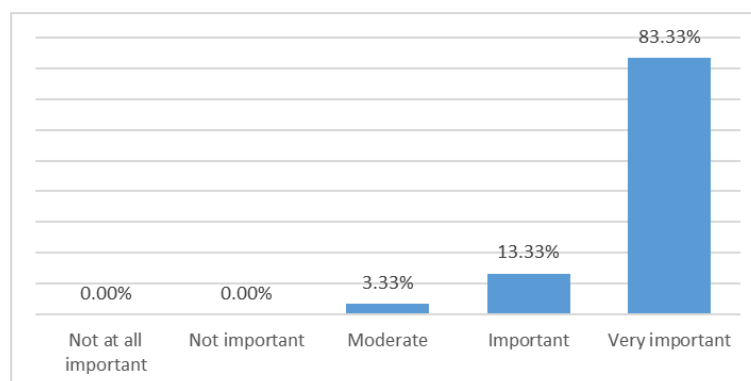


Figure 5. The importance of leadership style in motivating young employees

Source: Own representation based on survey data

The previous question was correlated with another question asking respondents to allocate 10 points for each pair of alternatives considered to be correct / wrong leadership behavior, depending on the extent to which each of them motivates them more. The individual scores obtained for each of the alternative pairs, as well as their average are shown in table 1. By averaging the scores given by students on each set of rules one may see that the respondents describe themselves as motivated by the first type of behavior adopted by leaders with their company. On the basis of these data, the second hypothesis previously formulated, which refers to the fact that leadership positively influences the motivation of young people, is also validated.

Table 1. Leaders behavior and its impact on motivation

Explain and convince	8,33	Tell people to do it	1,67
Say "what"	9,33	Say "how"	0,67
Provide space and resources	9,33	Let them get exhausted	0,67
Provide time	8,50	Interfere	1,50
Set limits	8,00	Create bureaucracy	2,00
Speak directly	9,66	Rsort to intimidation and misleading	0,34
Accept failure and maximize learning	7,33	Prepare	2,67
Recognize merits and enhance achievements	8,66	Frequently provide feedback	1,34
Lead and make connections	9,50	Assume all merits as a leader	1,50
Average score	8,73	Average score	1,37

Source: Own representation based on survey data

6. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

From a theoretical point of view, it may be noticed that the beginning of youth career is influenced by a series of factors and variables such as personality traits, motivation, leadership, knowledge, skills and competences that they have acquired over time, or they still acquire, which can become true competitive advantages for each of them. Moreover, the literature confirms the strong link between motivation and personality among young people, which can lead to influencing their own efficiency or career interests such as artistic, practical or entrepreneurial spirit.

Starting from the various types of motivation, the research results confirmed that for young employees the financial motivation is extremely important, but it is not enough because they want a job to enjoy, to work in a pleasant and stimulating environment, to have colleagues with whom to communicate, who respect and appreciate their work, all of which are the basis of moral-spiritual motivation. Moral-spiritual motivation among young employees, and beyond, is a decisive factor contributing to the survival of companies, while being a key element of competitiveness that drives employees to capitalize on all their knowledge, skills and abilities to get the best return on the job.

Regarding the nature of the means used to motivate young employees, it can be said that they appreciate more the moral-spiritual motivational means, that provide them with a pleasant environment, a high level of collegiality and value their potential, skills and aptitudes, over time. Therefore, based on these findings, hypothesis no. 1 proposed in this paper, namely that young people feel more motivated by moral-spiritual (non-financial) factors than by financial ones.

Another important factor that is a feature that the young generation appreciates from many points of view is leadership. Young people feel motivated and inspired by leaders of their lives, which become facilitators, helping to develop and build their own path to success. According to above findings, the managers' leadership style plays a decisive part in motivating employees, which also should be different from the traditional one, because in order to lead people and make them feel good at work, managers should not simply manage their employees, but guide them and be their mentor. Therefore, we propose a set of rules that companies' leaders should adopt in order to effectively motivate their employees.

- *Explain and convince vs telling people to do it.* To make your employees feel motivated one should explain them what to do and not tell them to do because this may be interpreted negatively

by smart and motivated employees, seeming to submagnify them self esteem. Thus, the art of leadership consists in listening and talking a lot, using leadership through conversation. To feel motivated, employees need in-depth explanations about the decisions they are going to adopt and more conviction. Moreover, in order to increase their satisfaction at work, employees should not be told just "no". The manager should offer an explanation, so to tell them more because they are not willing to accept "yes" or "no" instead of well-formulated answers.

- *Tell employees „what” vs tell them „how”*. If the manager tells people "how" to do some tasks, they can feel deprived of the pleasure of solving things by themselves, and this can demotivate them. To motivate the company's human resources, one needs to give them instructions on what to do, help them set goals without instructing how to reach them. If they complete tasks in their own style, employees feel proud when they get good results. This motivates them from a moral and spiritual point of view.

- *Provide space and resources vs let them get exhausted*. To feel motivated, employees need a lot of resources to fulfill their tasks as well as possible: they need laboratories, libraries, specialized spaces, equipment and many other resources. Employees need dedicated space where they can go and think about their decision and tasks; this type of activity within a dedicated space will further give them satisfaction.

- *Providing time vs interfering*. To feel motivated employees need time to ask questions. As managers, they have to give time to employees, go where they are, and not just wait for them to come, and lastly not to overcontrol them. The leader must understand and approach his subordinates without restricting their freedom.

- *Set limits vs create bureaucracy*. In order to have motivated employees, besides having to give them enough space to express themselves, a manager has to impose certain limits to help them concentrate their efforts. So, to motivate a company's human resources, a manager needs to give them direction and protection, and also time for them, help them understand what they need to get things done.

- *Directly speaking vs resorting to intimidation and misleading*. To be successful, the manager needs to be confident in his / her skills, to know who he / she is. In order to motivate its employees, the manager needs to know exactly what kind of value they bring and how his activities complement theirs. The communication lines between the manager and the employees must always be open. Managers should explain and convince employees, as motivated employees can overcome any obstacle if they know what is happening around them. If not, they could have the impression that things are being done without taking them into account, and in this way the overall results could be diminished.

- *Accepting failure and maximizing learning vs preparing*. The employees should be encouraged to take risks in order to bring benefits to the company. If they fail, the manager should not criticize them but help them learn something from what has happened. In addition, to motivate employees, one needs to help them achieve their goals. In this way the need for protection arises, which may also refer to providing them with the right work conditions, creating a favorable environment to ensure their success. A manager should enable employees to perform their tasks as well as allow them to fail.

- *Recognizing merits vs frequently providing feedback*. To be effective, recognition depends on its type, on the person for which is applied and the frequency with which is formulated. People are motivated when their work is appreciated even with a "thank you" or "it was very good". Recognizing the merit does not necessarily consist of expensive prizes or wage increases, but sometimes a simple hang out with company employees can deliver excellent results and make employees feel like they are part of a friendly environment with valuable people.

- *Leading and making connections vs assuming all your merits as a leader*. Motivated and smart people do not want to feel guided but paradoxically need leadership to reach their full potential and to bring value to the organization and society.

As far as the novelty of this paper is concerned, it results from the introduction of the above set of rules proposed regarding the behavior that should underlie the leadership style. Based on the respondents' answers, it can be concluded that at the level of the target group of the pilot research, the leadership style (and especially the correct leadership style) has a positive influence on motivating employees, which has also helped to test hypothesis No. 2 that I proposed in this paper. Based on the results of this pilot survey, we aim to continue the research in this field and to carry out a new survey on a representative sample, with the help of a new, improved questionnaire, in order to highlights the relationship between motivation and leadership among young employees.

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