



## THE ROLE OF THE LEADER AS A PEOPLE MANAGER: A CASE STUDY IN A BUSINESS CONSULTANCY

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### SUMMARY

The present work aims to analyze how is the performance of the individual who plays the role of leader in people management. Based on the articles read, there is a gap, a vague picture of how it does the job. Thus, it is interesting to verify which characteristics are present in the daily lives of these professionals and how the followers perceive these attributes so that the performance of the leader is clear. To this end, a case study was carried out with a business consultancy in the Federal District with the Organizational President and his subordinates. The results obtained demonstrate that the company's Leader knows its attributes and presents knowledge about the theme and the importance of people management. The subordinates check several important aspects in the performance of a manager and even point out possibilities for improvement.

**KEY WORDS:** Leadership; People management; Characteristics of a leader.

### 1. Introduction

Leadership is the behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group that is moving towards a common goal (PIRES GIAVINA BIANCHI; QUISHIDA, 2017). According to Rowe, it can be found in people in three different ways, being strategic, visionary and managerial.

According to Ulrich (1997, 2004), the role of managing people's contribution - increasing people's commitment and individual competence is, essentially, a role of the leader. (...) The author's proposal is an incentive to expand studies on the importance of the leader in people management.

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Bearing in mind, then, that leadership can be developed (Blake & McCauley, 1991), several academic studies emphasize its development as one of the products or results of people management (PIRES GIAVINA BIANCHI; QUISHIDA, 2017). That is, this management may be responsible for shaping the individuals who will assume the leadership role in organizations.

Thus, organizations that understand the importance of the presence of leadership in employees use people management to develop them, strengthening characteristics of leaders in them, in order to seek various benefits for the company as a whole.

There are also authors who corroborate the concept of charismatic leadership, that is, the type of leadership that has followers due to the personal characteristics of the leader. Thus, the question of leadership is related to aspects of credibility, which include conviction, character, care, courage, composure and competence, and that the degree of credibility of leaders corresponds to the extent of influence allowed by followers (BERGAMINI, 1994). That is, in addition to the support of people management, it is necessary to have the personal and intrinsic characteristics of the individual who acts as a leader.

Leadership, like so many other aspects, has deep dimensions that arise from the characteristics of each person's personality. Therefore, there cannot be a single formula, a ready recipe or a general solution that provides with mathematical precision those recommendations capable of promoting the indisputable effectiveness of leaders. (BERGAMINI, 1994).

In this way, there is still that the team members believe that their rights and interests are not disregarded by the leader, with a positive effect between leadership and the commitment of the team member. In addition, Dias and Borges (2015) state that differentiated performance is achieved from the creation of a stimulating vision of the future by leaders (DIAS; BORGES, 2015).

Bearing these points in mind, the gap in this research will be: although leadership is an older topic of study, when compared to strategic people management, the emphasis [...] is on the individual who acts as a leader and not on the role exercised by this individual in the organization, considering other contingent variables. The performance as a people manager [...] still seems to be little explored. This aspect makes the study of the leader and his [...] performance fragmented, revealing a vague and still inaccurate portrait of this phenomenon (PIRES GIAVINA BIANCHI; QUISHIDA, 2017).

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Originating the following research question: How is the role of the individual who plays the role of leader in people management?

Thus, the article aims to identify characteristics of individuals who act as leaders and how they influence the organization's people management.

## 2. Theoretical Reference

### 2.1. Leadership

Leadership was defined earlier and consists of the behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group that is moving towards a common goal (PIRES GIAVINA BIANCHI; QUISHIDA, 2017). Thus, there are several classifications of leadership, as shown below.

Strategic leadership is the ability to predict, imagine, maintain flexibility, think strategically and work with others to initiate changes that will provide a viable future for the company (ROWE, 2002).

Visionary leadership, on the other hand, requires authority to influence people's thinking and attitudes, which means delegating powers and implies taking risks in various dimensions. [...] Visionary leaders are relatively more proactive, shaping ideas rather than opposing them. They exert influence in a way that determines the direction the organization should take (ROWE, 2002). It is interesting to relate Rowe's thinking to that of Bergamini, that even if the leader initiates actions, his followers must be sensitive to him, that is, take him into account in what concerns his ideas and programs. (BERGAMINI, 1994).

Finally, managerial leadership. For a variety of reasons, organizations train their employees implicitly and explicitly to be managerial leaders. Diverse business organizations in various businesses tend to carry out these actions. Governments further train their employees to be managerial leaders than companies, due to accountability, the degree of diversification, the question of reelection and, for most governments, the enormous volume of debt (ROWE, 2002).

Despite the concern with the leadership theme evidenced in the corporate world, it is worth mentioning, according to the perception of researchers Revista Brasileiros, the need for new theoretical-methodological-conceptual approaches for analyzing the phenomenon in its current dimension (CARVALHO-NETO; SANT'ANNA, 2013).

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Within all the multiplicity of aspects under which leadership was studied, it is clear that some theorists were especially concerned with what the leader is, trying to portray personality traits or characteristics that are responsible for his effectiveness (BERGAMINI, 1994) and this is exactly the purpose of this article.

### 2.2. People management

The study of People Management is based on theoretical concepts of psychology, economics, finance, strategy and has not developed its own theory.

People Management is characterized by the participation, training, involvement and development of an organization's most precious asset, Human Capital, which is nothing more than the people who compose it. The People Management area has the noble function of humanizing companies (SOVIENSKI; STIGAR, 2008). The definition is complemented with the idea that People Management policies and practices need to contribute to the greater well-being of an organization's employees, allowing them to achieve greater personal and professional fulfillment (DEMO et al., 2011). This point complements the role of the leader, explained in the previous topic.

In addition, this management area is sensitive to the mentality that predominates in organizations. It is extremely contingent and situational, as it depends on several aspects, such as the culture that exists in each organization, the organizational structure adopted, the characteristics of the environmental context (...) and a multitude of other important variables (CHIAVENATO, 2014).

It is possible to observe that People Management assumed, then, a strategic and relevant role, supplanting the traditional support role and constituting essential organizational competence, since people are the main protagonists in achieving results, whatever they may be, because they are producing knowledge, innovation and organizational skills (DEMO et al., 2011).

### 2.3. The leader and people management

The leader also plays an important role in the organizational culture (BERGAMINI, 1994) and it is also understood that leadership is fundamental to the performance of organizations, and understanding the characteristics of a leader and his style is of great value

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in determining the next steps of a business (TOMEI; RICHE, 2016). Thus, there is a correlation of the leader in people management, a subject covered in the introduction, because it is necessary for leaders to create conditions in the organization for people to learn continuously, share a vision, provide experimentation and innovation, recognize and reward the effort made in activities and tasks (NEVES, 2002).

According to Goleman (2001) emotional competence is the individual's ability to manage his own emotions and manage the team's emotions. The following are competencies: self perception, author regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. The importance of these characteristics is due to the fact that people are the most important resources within a productive system, as they think, act and monitor their procedures taking into account the environment in which they live.(FERREIRA, 2010).

It is interesting a people manager presents: systemic vision, teamwork, good interpersonal skills, planning, entrepreneurial ability, adaptability and flexibility, quality culture, creativity and communication, leadership, initiative and dynamism(SOVIENSKI; STIGAR, 2008).

In this way, it is possible to relate the importance of a coherent people management to the work environment and of an individual who presents the skills expected in a leader to a profitable productive process, so that it is possible, when leading employees of an organization, to optimize more and more processes and generate an increasingly greater result for it, based on an adequate management of people, motivating the members and being more and more committed to their work.

### 2.4. Characteristics of a leader

There is no magic formula for exercising effective leadership. However, certain authors are committed to studying and finding characteristics that are perceived in great world leaders. It is necessary to gain trust and authority, for example. Or demonstrate self-belief and self-confidence. Passion for work is an important attribute, as it provides energy and focus, as well as empathy for people(HANDY, 1996).

Looking at world history, it is clear that leaders who managed to obtain exceptional results through their actions showed great charisma. So, it is an important dimension to be worked on(GOMES; CRUZ, 2007). In Brazil, there is an example: Getúlio Vargas, considered “father of the poor”, charismatic and close to the people.

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In addition to the need for the leader to be good with people and bring results, it is necessary to master the countless scenarios of uncertainty in the business world. In other words, the market seeks professionals who are more than team leaders, and must have the power to influence and be a leader of themselves(DINIZ, 2007).

The concept of leadership, in modern times, requires a new professional attitude. The leader brings results, builds relationships with customers and the market, speaks the shareholder language and is an example in people management(DINIZ, 2007).

Bearing in mind that leadership is a universal phenomenon [...] it is a process where an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve common goals (CRUZ; NUNES; PINHEIRO, 2010).

That way, knowing that leading it means sharing objectives, listening to suggestions, delegating power, informing, debating, mobilizing efforts, transforming groups into true teams(GRUBBER, 2001)there are characteristics that are necessary in an individual who acts as a leader in an organization. For the mapping of these, there are leadership models.

Leadership is a universal phenomenon in that it manifests itself in one way or another across different organizations and contexts. According to some researchers, a is a process where an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve common goals.

The best known and most used today is the Contingency Theory. This proposed that the efficiency of the group's performance depends on the combination of the leader-member relationships, the structure of the task and the degree of power of the leader's position over his subordinates.(GRUBBER, 2001). As such, these points vary according to cultures and organizations.

With this in mind, a leader seeks innovation, originality, development, prioritizing people, inspires confidence, has a perspective for the future, is questioning, inventing, challenging and always seeks to take the right attitude(GRUBBER, 2001). This is because intellectual skills, technical competence and the possession of knowledge relevant to the job are the points that define the quality of a leader's plans, decisions and strategies(MUNDIM, 2004).

### 3. Method

To answer the research question, a case study was carried out in order to verify the daily life of a leader who works in people management, as well as their characteristics. Such

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method has become one of the main modalities of qualitative research in human and social sciences (VENTURA, 2007).

In other words, it is a methodology or choice of an object of study defined by the interest in individual cases. Aims to investigate a specific, well-defined case, contextualized in time and place so that a detailed search for information can be carried out (VENTURA, 2007).

The work started in May 2017, with the reading of articles related to leadership and people management. The key words sought were “Leadership”, “people management” and “characteristics of a leader”.

The case study took place in a Business Consulting company, which provides Marketing, People Management, Organization and Processes and Finance services. Three interviews were conducted; with the Organizational President, a Project Leader and a Consultant, in order to verify the performance of the Organizational President in daily life and how his attitudes are perceived by subordinates.

The position of President is held by a 22-year-old woman, a student in the Administration course at the University of Brasília. She has been a member of the company for three years and has been a Director of People Management. Currently, as President, he has the following functions:

- Manage operating results;
- Legally represent the company;
- Manage the relationship with stakeholders;
- Hold weekly meetings with the Presidency team;
- Ensure that the company's objectives are achieved;
- Manage the company's organizational climate and culture, raising points of attention and outlining action plans to solve them;
- Conduct monthly monitoring with Directors and Advisors to monitor motivation, difficulties and feedbacks;
- Manage company knowledge, by structuring and executing processes and routines;
- Charge and control process improvements in the functional areas;
- Charge and control measurement and analysis of strategic indicators.

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The interview with the President took place in June 2017, lasting 60 minutes.

The interview with the Project Leader was conducted with a 20-year-old woman, a student in the Administration course at the University of Brasília. She has been a member of the company for a year and a half and previously worked as a Consultant. As leader he has the following duties:

- Manage consultants, defining those responsible for the project activities and ensuring that they are executed (schedule activities, lessons learned, cases, definition and relationship with advisors, validations, etc.);
- Guide the behavioral and technical development of its followers;
- Manage the variables time, scope, cost, quality, risks, acquisitions, human resources, communication and integration of the project;
- Ensure that the project presents the proposed quality, following the consultant's execution and transmitting the necessary feedbacks so that it is aligned with the client's needs;
- Ensure the communication of the results of each stage and of possible unforeseen events to customers.

The interview with the Project Leader was held in June 2017, lasting 30 minutes.

As for the consultant, an interview was conducted with a 19-year-old man, a student in the Administration course at the University of Brasília. This member is part of the Project Office, reporting to the Project Leader.

The purpose of the position is to carry out AD&M management projects, initiatives and activities. Thus, it does not exercise leadership directly in its performance. The interview was conducted in June 2017, lasting 35 minutes.

## 4. Results

The first interview was conducted with the head of the Presidency, Márcia \*\* (fictitious name to preserve identity). For the leader, emotional intelligence, empathy, professional attitude, communication, strategic vision and focus on results are the main characteristics for good management.

Márcia also believes in the importance of “not be volatile in pressure situations and do not show insecurity”, So that the team members trust and feel represented. It also reveals the



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complexity of presenting emotional intelligence at all times, emphasizing that this characteristic is worked over time and improved with professional and personal experiences.

Communication, according to the interviewee, is crucial to achieve good results, in view of the possibility of complications that directly impact the execution of activities. According to the transcript: “the communication is very important, that is, that people understand exactly what I mean”. Therefore, it is important to present clarity and objectivity so that the followers understand and feel motivated to work.

Related to the last characteristic presented, there is empathy. For Márcia, understanding and putting yourself in the other's place makes a total difference in a leadership, considering that the team member feels important, being a point of motivation. According to the interviewee: “empathy is crucial for leadership because subordinates feel understood and work harder, so I think this characteristic is important in a leader”.

Márcia believes that her leadership is focused on results, that is, she demands that activities be carried out with excellence, in order to achieve strategic purposes. However, concomitantly, he feels “volatile to many perceptions at the same time”. There are many members with different ideas and a critical sense who express opinions on the same subject.

The Organizational President knows her role as a leader and believes in making assertive decisions, however, she feels insecure due to the consequences of such choices. He also believes that insecurity is common and that it is possible to improve from new experiences.

There is also that the President shows great concern for the members, seeking to help them, with the aim of having the best experience possible. For her, “emotional intelligence was developed” and tries, on a daily basis, to promote motivation and inspiration to the followers.

Since the second interview was conducted by a Project Leader, a person who works directly with the leadership, their perceptions of what the ideal profile of a leader would be like will be presented.

According to the interviewee, there are characteristics necessary for a person to be able to perform with excellence in the role of leader. Among these, there is the importance of create a sense of team, in order to pull and engage the members as much as possible. This is necessary to avoid that team members feel unmotivated and, consequently, do not perform their duties in the best way, since “there are times in our projects that the consultant's work is

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very monotonous. At that moment, the role of the leader enters, in order to engage his team so that they give their maximum even in moments that are not very interesting”, said the leader.

Following the same reasoning, the interviewee demonstrates the importance of the leader showing empathy. “Empathy greatly facilitates communication between the leader and the led, because there are really times when we are not well in personal and professional life. So, understanding the situation that the other is going through, we can look for better ways to help them. In addition, it also facilitates the creation of a sense of team and the confidence that the team has about the leader”.

Criticism also ends up being a very important characteristic for a leader's daily life. This happens "to know how to identify in which the members have greater aptitude, being able to perform in the best way, as well as what will be better for the person and the team in different situations". It is also important, according to the interviewee, to have good communication and a good logical line, in order to transmit his ideas without noise and with coherence.

When asked about the role of the Organizational President and his leadership, the Project Leader presented that he clearly perceives the characteristics that involve communication. That is, “in meetings and conversations, the President's good logic and excellent communication are noticeable. In addition, he manages to pull the best out of each of his team members, so that they give their maximum”. In this, the President's team sense is also clear.

However, the Project Leader addressed that, an essential point, but which is not addressed by the Organizational President is the need to create a closer relationship with different people to facilitate the role of President of a company.

The third interview was conducted with a member of the company who holds the position of Consultant. Despite not acting as a leader, the Consultant expressed his opinion about the leadership of the Organizational President. Thus, according to him, it is essential that a leader is charismatic, so that the various members of the company do not feel coerced to contact him.

In addition, it is important to be accessible, so that it is possible to ask questions, talk and, possibly, "let off steam about the life and attitudes of the leader that can be discussed".

Transparency regarding the actions in the organization is crucial, so that all employees can understand their attitudes and motives, since these decisions can be reviewed and questioned.

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It is also interesting that the leader is critical, so that he can reflect the positive and negative points of all the actions he intends to take. According to the interviewee, "being organized is extremely important, in a way that does not harm your performance and that of the company as a whole due to failures that could be avoided, such as disorganization. "

When asked specifically about the role of the person responsible for the position of Organizational President, the Consultant stated that "the leadership of this does not encompass all the characteristics that I consider essential. That is, as for being accessible, this does happen, but not in such a way that the various members of the organization feel comfortable to talk and question attitudes taken by the President. "

"In the company's day-to-day life, it seems that it always has a lot of activities to do and, therefore, it ends up not showing itself very willing to take time for a conversation, regardless of the subject", said the interviewee. However, at General Meetings, the President always says that she is able to talk about her role and position, making it possible to make an appointment on the agenda. Despite this, as explained earlier, the member does not feel that power.

As for transparency, the Consultant said that "the Presidents try to be transparent, but the members of the company that are not part of the Board really miss this issue, because many actions are taken without anyone having knowledge about what was done or the reasons that led to this decision, in addition to what are the action plans if it doesn't work as expected ".

Taking into account the criticality, the Consultant says that it is possible to perceive this characteristic in the President when he is questioned in meetings and, consequently, explains the reason for his actions, as seen in the interviewee's speech: "in meetings we can see that he really has a critical sense of the attitudes he takes in favor of the organization, because he discusses the ideas with the other members of the board and then chooses the one he considers the best ".

In addition, regarding the organization of the Organizational President, the Consultant did not have a formed opinion. "I only look at the Google Calendar, which presents all the daily commitments, which makes me think that the leader is organized. "There is a certain distance between the subordinate and the manager when the questions are more specific.

## 5. Discussion

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As stated in the theoretical framework, a leader is one who guides others to achieve the same goal. The consultancy chosen to carry out the case study is well-known in the market, with billing in 2016 of R \$ 475,000.00.

It is noticed that the company values results and project execution and, for this, it is essential the presence of a manager who believes in and strives for excellence in deliveries. According to the case study, it is notable that empathy, communication, transparency and criticality are the most exalted characteristics for an ideal leader.

The inputs collected are similar to that discussed in the theoretical framework, where some fundamental leadership characteristics were addressed. Therefore, it is clear that there is coherence in theory with practice and that, for the interviewees, the person responsible for guiding others needs to be a trained person who demonstrates certain attributes.

It is notable that, with the presence of these characteristics, the followers feel confident and comfortable with the leader, consequently impacting on the execution of the company's tasks and success, since points such as empathy, mentioned by the Organizational President and the Project Leader, are motivating.

As shown in the Result, the Organizational President has already served as a People Management Manager, where she played an important role in the organizational culture of the organization. According to Bergamini (1994) and Neves (2002), people management is linked to leadership, in view of the need for leaders to create an environment conducive to continuous learning, with the possibility of expressing opinions, in addition to providing innovation. There is also the importance of recognition, so that employees feel motivated and develop tasks with enthusiasm.

With the subordinates' interviews, it is clear that the Organizational President was successful in providing a pleasant environment, but that, at times, they do not feel comfortable expressing opinions. Thus, accessibility is present in the leadership of the consultancy, however, it is a characteristic that could be maximized.

The President's team sense was also reinforced, demonstrating that the team members feel part of the team and, as a consequence, feel motivated in their daily activities. However, they also cite the need for a closer relationship with the leader.

Thus, it is clear that leadership is, first of all, a position of trust, where people need to establish a connection to then work together. Therefore, if the President worked on the

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issue of proximity, it would be possible to positively impact the billing and the quality of the projects delivered, since they are directly linked to the motivation of the members.

With the case study, it is possible to certify that the leader has a fundamental role in the entire consulting process. Empathy, an attribute present in the person responsible for the position, makes subordinates feel important, understood and, from that, work harder. The strategic vision, a characteristic also found in the President, guides the organization towards bolder goals, further empowering the members of the company.

Thus, with the case study, it was possible to verify that the theory of renowned authors is found in the daily life of an organization that has leadership positions. The practice is not as assertive as the ideal, that is, the leader does not necessarily have all the characteristics deemed important. However, it always seeks greater training and a consequent maximization of attributes.

### 6. Conclusion

In view of the above, an ideal leader must show empathy, criticality, transparency, organization, good communication and strategic vision. With all these attributes, you must guide the company's employees towards the same objective, in order to create a pleasant working environment and, as a consequence, present better results.

As discussed, People Management is a crucial area for the good development of an organization, given that people are its main assets. Therefore, directing special attention to employees is important for the company to be able to manage them.

In the case study, it was possible to notice that all the characteristics mentioned in the Theoretical Framework were addressed by the interviewees. Thus, the ideal of leadership is the same for scholars and for those who live with a “boss” on a daily basis.

However, with the case study, there was a difficulty in finding in the leader all the ideal characteristics, given that some attributes are developed over time and with experiences. Thus, even though the position of Organizational President has fundamental points, there is a finding of gaps, which could be worked on.

The objective of the article to understand how the leader sees his leadership and how the followers understand such characteristics was achieved, considering that, after the analysis, it is possible to understand how such attributes impact the subordinates' daily lives.

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