

New Paradigm of Management: the Commitment to Innovation and Sustainable Competitive Advantage

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The environment in which companies operate in the 21st century requires management to respond to the challenges relating to entirely new paradigms of management processes, primarily to employees in the direction of maintaining strategic performance and competitive advantage. The main objective of this paper is to highlight the challenge that is before the management, which is that it necessarily has to create such a working environment that encourages each employee to make their best, and be committed to and fully engaged. The paper analyzes the necessity of innovation management system, the current state of engagement of employees, commitment of employees as a route to continuous innovation and guidelines for management towards employee commitment.

1. Introduction

The environment in which companies do business in the 21st century is characterised by a host of challenges and uncertainty. The new era triggered a large number of issues and a necessity that paradigms be changed in the process of company management. With an accelerating rhythm of changes, an increasing number of companies are found on the wrong side of the change curve, and a competitive advantage is likely to expire even much faster¹. Overtaking the competition is not so much a consequence of market power as it is a result of skillful negotiations. From the traditional approach to performing an obligation towards the community, the corporate responsibility embraces a new approach of delivery as a strategy. The world of digitalization is increasingly characterised by the need that information and ideas be free, hence the firms creating and selling intellectual work encounter certain problems. The Internet allowed for the consumers to control the situation more than ever before². They obtain perfect information, therefore there is less and less space for average quality products and services. A new truth in the economic environment is also reflected in the fact that a new company is possible to improve in a much shorter time as life cycles of strategies become shorter and technological advantage is of a short date. The power of outsourcing and that of a global approach to the Internet are greater and greater, and extremely low prices of communications and the globalization open the doors to a large number of new competitors who offer remarkably low prices.

Such new environment requires new organizational and managerial competences. In order to survive, the companies have to become strategically adaptive and operationally more efficient than ever before. The management has to: encourage innovation, build new tools for an efficient capital allocation, cherish and improve the intangible assets in a completely new way, encourage, use and reward the creativity and innovativeness of the employees.

All the above quoted point to the importance and power of the people who work, from the top management to the basic line of the employees. We notice a great power of resources that is increasingly underlined today, and this is an engaged, committed, labour force. The management, therefore, has to change the paradigm of relationships towards the resource that is called the employee. From the intellectual feudalism paradigm: "why is it that whenever I want to employ a pair of hands, I get a brain alongside"³ it changes to "I want to encourage the spirit of enterprise, creativity, and innovativeness in every man". The advantages of the new paradigm of relations to the employees are embraced by many successful companies as their sustainable competitive advantage that is hard to copy.

2. Management innovation as necessity

On the basis of observation of significant changes that have taken place on the technology, life style and geopolitical fields in the last fifty years a conclusion can be drawn that management technology develops at a "snail's pace" [1, p.34]. The majority of the today's management patterns are somewhat different from the ones

¹ Whether we talk about airlines, generally known trade marks, tv networks, pharmaceutical companies, car manufacturers.

² In the past, the customer loyalty used to result from ample research costs and limited information so the companies often profited from the customers' ignorance.

³ A well known Henry Ford's sentence used to illustrate that in the early twentieth century the plain workers' intelligence was belittled. Unfortunately, some managers today can still be identified with that managerial dogma about the resource that is not timely employed and encouraged.

prevailing in the previous generations, while the environment has suffered enormous changes.

The hierarchy and bureaucracy are still the dominant pillars. The top managers, as most intelligent and most qualified, are expected to act in accordance with the directors' decisions. The lower-level managers are still appointed by the higher-level managers. The strategy is still defined by the most important people in the company. Everything is still based on the Taylor's scientific principles of modern management at the beginning of the last century. The above quoted opens the issue of the necessity of innovating the management paradigm. Because, if the Taylor's management principles were revolutionary then, and if Henry Fayol defined management as an activity of planning, organization, conducting, motivating, and control, which the 21st century management could hardly extend, then today's business environment urges that, one hundred years later, some real innovations have to be introduced. Anything they could significantly change the today's management practice for the purpose of business efficiency and effectiveness and competitive advantage sustainability can be defined as innovation.

"The management innovation includes the change in the organizational structures and roles that create values. The companies consist of business units, departments, work groups, relations with suppliers, partners and major customers. The new method of linking these groups may be considered an innovation of management" [1, p.20]. Major advances in the management practice often lead to important changes that make it difficult to competition to respond to. The advantages of systemic innovation are reflected in the network of individual innovations that permeate numerous management processes, which is rather hard to imitate. Namely, even a superficial insight into a competition management practice has a limited value if anybody tries to copy it⁴. Innovation, therefore, is a new competitive advantage, however, it has to stem from a managerial innovation system. Its importance is greatest in the hierarchy of all the effective innovations since it results into a decisive and long-term advantage. For example:

- operational innovation: IT infrastructure, outsourcing⁵ and offshoring can still be benchmarked;
- product innovation: things can be imitated immediately;

- strategy innovation: products-brands at low prices, low-cost airlines that spread at highest speed or are benchmarked.

"The management information has a unique capacity that is difficult to imitate, because it is as if you should change your religion. The majority of directors find it easier to recognize the merits of the business model that brings a general tumult than do away with the basic principles of fundamental attitudes on management" [1,p.34]

The modern environment is characterised by one important feature: an uncontrolled accelerating rate of change. Thus the balance between the promising situations and the threats for any organization depend on its ability to adjust. This normally raises a question of: if the environment changes fast and without control, which speed do the organizations change at? The answer is, of course, well known and negative. Therefore it is necessary that organizations be created that are capable of permanent renewal, that do not bring any shocks, since any late adjustment costs dearly, sometimes too dearly⁶.

Excessive investment into what is settled, known in relation to what could become if change is implemented is the reason that many a company risks its future⁷. Investment into "what could be" has become the only path that leads to survival and prosperity in a world of ruthless competition. Many companies that introduced innovation, implemented the "blue ocean strategy" [3, p.17] and made a turnaround in their business operations did so in that they took the advantage of the first move in one of the three dimensions: they have the concept, they have the customer and/or they have specific skills" [2, p.229] The strategic renewal, however, usually starts with an attempt to improve that initial advantage. In the long run, the continual success becomes a matter of entering a completely new cycle of advantages. "Successful companies have to create strategic spirals in which the end of one cycle of advantages marks the beginning of another, new one" [2, p.229].

All the above quoted suggests that three major challenges the company managers encounter in this new century [1, p. 41] are as follows: 1. a dramatic acceleration of strategic renewal in both large and small organizations; 2. achieving a situation in which innovation is a daily job of all people; and 3. creating an especially favourable work milieu that motivates every employee to do their best.

⁴ "It would be as if you imagined to weave a Persian rug from a few threads of silk" [1, p.31]

⁵ "Synergy is not in any longer, outsourcing is. The managers used to believe that 2+2=5. Now, 5+2=7, since the more subsidiary operations you do outside the firm, the more value you get. The new model settles gradually. It is estimated that from 1998-2000 a number of companies that outsource production trippled". [2, p. 221]

⁶ IBM, Apple, Nissan, Kodak, Sony, General Motors ... experience

⁷ The management is often more prone to risk in order to avoid losses instead to risk in order to earn profits.

Special attention in this article is paid to the challenge of creating a highly favourable work milieu that motivates every employee to do their best, that is, to be defined as a committed and engaged worker.

3. Employee commitment is a path to innovation

“In the times of the domination of the markets that feed on information and grow thanks to the information, organizations necessarily feed on ideas. Innovation is not created by markets, it is created by proactive companies that consider success a maximum creation of value by satisfying real customers’ needs in an innovative manner“ [2, p. 221]. Such companies have created a work milieu that motivates an increasing number of employees to earn a status of the committed, and consequently innovative workers. Such a paradigm of relations to the employees is an innovation of a systemic character that leads towards modern competitiveness and the adaptation capability.

We therefore deal with two aspects of perception of the process achieving innovativeness that is a precondition of modern operations on the market. One aspect are the employees and their competences, skills, qualifications and the value system, whereas the other refers to employers and their readiness to change the pattern of valuating the employees as an important resource of innovation resulting from commitment.

3.1. The perception of employee commitment

The average employers’ perception today can be described as follows: they seek for the methods and opportunities to ensure growth or at least survival, and

consider the payroll to be an enormous expenditure, perhaps the largest of all. There is, however, a significant potential that failed to be rightly articulated for the purpose of minimizing the negative and maximizing the positive effects. These are the aspects of perception of the engaged employees as the source of improving the business performance, who in the long run achieve larger incomes and larger profits, and besides, they provide innovation support, a competitive advantage and a strategic sustainability.

Where does the importance of this perception of the employees who are the resource for improving business performance lie? The importance lies, A. Schveyer [4, p.2] maintains, “in the very identification of a vast potential of the committed and engaged employee, as opposed to a disengaged or a non-engaged employee“. The traits of the above mentioned employees are described in Table 1. Every manager would appreciate it if engaged employees were dominant in the structure of the employees, and if others are as small a minority as possible (or non-existent at all).

The principles and processes of the present, modern management are characterised by certain constraints reflected in a sort of disregard for fostering the competences, originality, courage and enthusiasm in the employees. On the contrary, much importance is attached to discipline, punctuality, economising, common sense and order, i.e., to formal excellence. The result is that a large number of organizations operate below their real potentials [1, p.57].

Fully engaged	Non-engaged	Disengaged
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ready and able to contribute to the company’s success;• high level of discretionary investment in the form of additional work and energy;• prospective innovators;• rarely absent from work;• often used as synonym for motivated and loyal worker;• adopt company’s goals as their own and make best efforts to achieve them;• emotionally committed to company,• optimistic in viewing the company’s future;• important and valuable ambassadors of the company.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• not goal-oriented;• task oriented;• assigned a task, they accomplish the task, switch off until the next task;• feel their contribution is not valued and paying accordingly;• no productive relationships with managers and collaborators;• do not implement their inventiveness and creativity;• potential not used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• absent, switched off even when at work;• often pessimistic in changes and creation or adoption of new ideas;• high level of absenteeism;• spread negative effect including prospective customers, consumers;• prone to undermining work atmosphere and have impact upon non-engaged workers;• potential carriers of high risks that can seriously harm the company.

Table 1. Employee types and characteristics according to engagement level

Similarly, the management has to measure their non-engaged employees' level and implement a new concept to transfer as many as possible of them into the level of committed and engaged employees. According to the 2008 research conducted by Towers Perrin, described in Table 2, the level of non-engaged is a serious threat to the survival and development of any organization. According to one study [8], the costs of demotivated labour force in the USA economy amounts to billions. On the other hand, Schveyer A. [4] stresses, motivated, engaged employees work in a smarter way, they try to find the ways to improve performance. The effects of such commitment are a higher level of sales, cost reduction, a higher quality and innovativeness of the products or services. They communicate, share information with their colleagues, they transfer ideas, suggestions and advice. All this results into better performance, satisfied and hence loyal customers and higher profits.

The management's competence is reflected in the structure of the employees, from fully engaged to non-engaged workers. Sadly, many managers still ignore this fact about non-engaged workers, i.e., about unemployed potential and protect themselves with obsolete paradigms of leading their employees. On the other hand, there are other managers that build their competitive advantage on the very respect of this potential. Managers could have ignored this in the past, however, today, in the environment that primarily calls for adaptability and innovativeness, it is a serious risk for survival.

Employee commitment level	% share
Committed-engaged	22%
Non-engaged	66%
Disengaged	11%

Table 2. Employee structure according to engagement level

Source: according to 2008 Towers Perrin data [4, p. 4]

In recent literature on the human resources management there is a concept of adequate and inadequate human potentials. “The concept of adequate human potentials refers to individuals within an organization that contribute significantly to achieving the goals of the management system, whereas the concept of inadequate human potential refers to those members of the organization who do not contribute to achieving the goals of the management system. For one reason or another, these individuals are not productive in their jobs” [5, p. 276]. In the companies where there is a human resource service or sector there is a whole procedure in the management process to find efficient ways to raise the employee motivation level that will in turn result in commitment. This, however, may not be enough in some cases, as the paradigms of employee management remained the same.

3.2. Management towards commitment

Modern business environment has differentiated among highly important intangible values of the company that cannot be copied. One of these values is the

Passion	They know no barriers and do not give up. Passion is a secret element that turns intention into achievement. Their passion is contagious and turns the initiative of one person into a mass movement.	35%
Creativity	They are curious, uninhibited. They do not fear unknown, they are optimistic and enterprising.	25%
Enterprising spirit	They look out for new challenges. They do not wait to be told to do something. They are always in search of new ways to increase the company's value.	20%
Knowledge and intellect	They are talented, smart. They are willing to invest into the improvement of their skills and they generate good practice. Companies want to have them.	15%
Hard work	Hard-working employees are responsible, they never take an easier path. They are conscientious and well organized.	5%
Obedience	They know how to pay attention to instructions and behave according to the rules.	0%

Table 3: Hierarchal succession of human potentials that contribute to competitive advantage

Source: Author's own plot on the basis of the data [1, p. 59]

employee relation or the participation of engaged, committed workers in the structure of the total number of employees. Employees increasingly become a “key” that is called competitive advantage and development. “The employees become the primary significant stakeholders of the company since really engaged employees make better ambassadors of the company’s brand than any slogans or a promotion of the brand itself” [6, p.2].

The challenge before the today’s management is to create and modernize the system approach to encourage the employees to engage all their creative skills at work, on a daily basis. Human skills that contribute to the quality and success of competitiveness have their hierarchical succession and this is presented in Table 3.

This hierarchy of potentials is important from the point of view of competitive advantage they create. It is easy today to find hard-working, expert and dutiful employees, however, they cannot create competitive advantage. It is the committed: passionate, creative, innovative, enterprising employees who create that value.

In addition to these potentials, there are some types of skills that employers find important for success at the workplace. According to R. A. Noe [7, p.22], the employees born between 1965 and 1975 find unexpected rewards for achievements, opportunities to learn new things, praise, awards and time spent with the manager to be significant, while the employees born between 1925 and 1945, the so-called “traditionalists” attach importance to income and job security. All employees, however, value a number of key aspects, for example: they view their job as a means of self-realization, i.e., a way to employ their skills and potentials as best possible and satisfy their interests, as well as a means to live in a desired life-style. “One report revealed that commitment to a company is higher in those employees who are given opportunity to fully employ and develop their skills, take more responsibility at work, believe that the promotion system is fair and have a reliable manager who works to their best interests” [7, p.22].

From the management point of view, therefore, the above-quoted potentials and skills are highly important, and so is the knowledge of the value system of the employees that motivates them towards commitment. In order that the potentials and skills should be implemented, engaged and in accord with a new value system of the employed, it is necessary that the management itself pass from the traditional pattern of the management system to one leading to a maximum activation of potentials, from the non-engaged to the engaged, committed, innovative. This is a condition without which competitive advantage and sustainable growth cannot be achieved.

Recruiting as many fully committed employees as possible is based on the condition that the managers themselves possess a high hierarchical level of competences and a new paradigm of relations towards employees. They are the primary drivers to the commitment compared to all the others in the organization. This condition can be followed by the elements that make a necessary framework for the management towards commitment:

- working milieu with all the necessary tools;
- favourable structure of intellectual and qualified employees;
- positive and incentive, innovative atmosphere;
- incentives through innovated programmes (carefully planned and still more carefully executed);
- continuous information flow and exceptional transparency;
- reduction of hierarchical levels and bureaucratic formality and extending of authority and responsibility.

Given that the working milieu is equipped with all necessary tools, that the strategies are clear and the goals are innovated, as well as that there is a favourable intellectual and qualification structure, it is necessary that a positive and incentive, innovative atmosphere be created. This means that the management has an entirely new pattern of relations with the employees, i.e., that it is capable of motivating and encouraging them towards creativity, enterprise and innovation.

An incentive, innovative atmosphere and incentive programmes are significantly interrelated elements since human motivation is a complex category. It has been the subject matter of organizational studies for more than five decades and numerous theories have evolved. As an inward state due to which an individual acts in such a way as to achieve a goal, motivation is a continuous process. It explains why people behave in a way they do behave. The process of activating, directing and maintaining the employees’ activity towards achieving organizational goals therefore is a motivational process, based on a need, movement, reward and praise. Motivation is primarily perceived as internal and external. In case of internal motivation, the activity is a benefit in itself, whereas in case of external motivation, the benefit, the reward and the praise are expected to come after the activity has been accomplished. The better the manager understands the behaviour of the members of his organization, their system of values, or what activates them, the more influence he will have upon their behaviour and the more he will be able to adjust it to achieve the organizational goals [5, p. 382]. Hence it is the responsibility of managers to create such

an environment and incentives that will activate the employees towards a desired manner of behaviour, in accordance with the inward needs of an individual.

A large number of companies spend a lot of time and enormous capital on research into their prospective customers, disregarding the need to study the motivation and behaviour of their employees. The management can make use of the traditional methods, such as wages, bonuses, trainings, professional improvements, promotion opportunities to motivate their employees, however, there are also incentive (stimulation) programmes which in addition to remuneration in merchandise or in money, in business meetings, or in conventions, include prize travels [9, p. 438]. A typical ratio in a majority of companies is 70% in basic salary, plus 30% of various incentives [10, p. 228].

The incentives in building new relationships with the employee, reflected in incentive schemes or programmes, include carefully planned and still more carefully conducted programmes that are in accordance with the system of values the employees cherish. These incentives are considered valuable only on condition they can really reflect the management feeling of value, trust and care for the commitment engaged. According to the managements that implement them, the above-quoted incentive programmes really achieve such effects⁸.

Similarly, the new management paradigm includes a necessity that management acts through important segments of committed relations with the employee in the process of creating a positive and innovative work atmosphere. It is necessary:

- that they spend a substantial amount of time with their employees⁹ in order that they should share in the daily efforts to achieve mutual goals, foster mutual trust and understand their employees' system of value;
- that a favourable, incentive environment be created in which the individuals will improve their advantages, creativity and offer innovative solutions¹⁰;

- to define excellence as a challenge for each employee and reward it with praise, prestige, title, through modern incentive programmes¹¹, and not only with money.
- to encourage innovation in all the lines of business operations. This means that perception and logic should not be a privilege of only a number of top managers or directors. Creativity and innovativeness have to be incited and valued on all levels;
- that principles be developed that will inspire and motivate people, develop ideas that will permeate their work places with positive and creative energy. This means that a vision should be developed and ensured for each member of the organization that activates the talented and the ambitious;
- that the employee is allowed to develop his/her identity and the system of value and yet satisfy his/her need to belong and to retain corporate identity,
- to create such a relationship with the employees that builds trust through expertise. As a leader, the manager has to trust people, otherwise, he cannot expect to get new ideas, creativity, and results. Trust is also built through the system authority and responsibility delegation. A task is usually delegated, while authority and responsibilities are not clearly defined, hence the path is lost that leads to commitment in accomplishing goals and tasks.

3.3. Experience: from commitment to innovation and competitive advantage

The experience of some companies, presented by Gary Hamel [1], whose management system is based on new paradigms and principles, is a revolutionary innovation in the management system. This innovation is primarily reflected in incentives of commitment that results into creativity, enterprising, innovativeness as paths to sustainable competitiveness. Among these companies are the Whole Foods and Google¹². New business philosophies, new management paradigms in these companies resulted in a maximum commitment among their employees.

⁸ The research carried out by the Incentive Research Federation (IRF) [11] 2001 and [12] 2007 have indicated a steady growth of the market and expenditures of the USA companies. According to this source, companies spent around \$ 26.9 billion in 2001 and \$ 46.08 billion in 2007 for the incentive programmes of prize travels.

⁹ "Jeffrey Immelt, the General Electric chairman and CEO, spends about 40% of his time with the employees; other members of management do that too" [2, p. 165].

¹⁰ In the absence of such an environment chances are that even that small number of committed employees leave the company. The fact is that a majority of people do not leave the company, they leave the manager.

¹¹ A large number of research in this field, among them Stolovich H. [13], P. R. Ricci and S. M. Holand, [14], [15], based on motivation theories and incentive programmes, are just about the implementation of this method in improving the commitment towards achieving business goals.

¹² According to the reviews of the Fortune magazine, they are top companies by a number of criteria, especially as companies in which the employees are highly satisfied.

WHOLE FOODS COMPANY, Austin, Texas, USA
Organic food chain of shops / 194 in total / more than 30,000 employed.
Goals: 1.offer the customer an alternative in the form of total service and organic food via a new type of supermarkets that satisfy customers' needs in new ways; 2. shopping should be less of an obligation, more a culinary adventure.
Incomes: earns approximately \$ 6 billion annually; the most profitable American retail food industry chain according to the profits rate.
Average annual sales growth rate: 11% , almost three times as the average of the industry itself.
Management system characteristics:
<p>1. Radical decentralisation. Organizational hierarchy form : teams, team leaders, shop managers. The basic organizational unit is the team, not the shop. Team members command high authority, however, graet responsibilities. Each shop has about eight teams. The team is in charge of all key operational decisions: pricing, orders, employment and promotion. There is one condition: comply with strictly set standards. The team acts as a profit centre based on the employee productivity. Incentives defined in the form of rewards and bonuses. Rather a community than a hierarchy.</p> <p>2. “No secrets“ managerial philosophy. Information transparency. Everybody has access to information on the progress of other teams and other shops. Information available includes: daily sales in shops, team sales, product-related costs, profit of each shop, earnings and remunerations of all employees.</p> <p>3. Minimum bureaucratic elements. Close reationship between autonomy and responsibility reduces the need for bureaucratic control that inhibits motivation.</p> <p>4. Mutual mission. Supports the feeling of mutual fate and faith in mutual mission. This is manifested in incentive rewards on the team level, in the financial data transparency, as well as in the limitations of the rewards to the top management. The succes is directly translated into rewards, bonuses, promotions. Profits are a result, not a game. Innovativeness of all employees in sustaining a competitive position.</p>
Management principles: love, community, autonomy, equality, transparency, and mission.



A similar situation is found in the Google company with a specific type of operations. A management model is implemented that is characterised by: negligible hierarchy, a thick network of lateral communication, the policy of awarding special rewards to people and teams that create extraordinary ideas, the approach by focusing of the whole team upon the product development and the company trust that encourages the employee to put the consumer first. This management model is also based on small work units, numerous experiments, a constructive feedback information from colleagues and on the mission of improving the world. Everybody in Google is considered to be of special importance, from the first line of employees to the top management, as they are all committed to innovation.

4. Conclusion

The new circumstances of the 21st century in which the companies operate demand that the management system be innovated. New environment requires perma-

nent innovation to ensure stability, growth, and sustain competitive advantage. On the other hand, however, the today prevailing management system, based on orthodox principles displays its inefficiency. Still a high level of hierarchy and bureaucratic elements of management are reflected in an unfavourable structure of employees from the aspects of motivation and commitment. The research and analyses clearly show that a large number of people are demotivated and non-engaged and thus represent a significant potential that is not employed. It is not only the unexploited potential; in the long term, and increasingly in the short term, too, this potential will lead to large losses and problems. The management has to pay due respect to this and implement an innovative approach to use it as its competitive and strategic advantage. The article offers one approach of a new paradigm of management towards commitment. In addition to the work milieu with all the necessary modern tools and a favourable qualification and intellectual structure of employees, the new paradigm is based on: 1. a positive and incentive atmos-



phere; 2. innovated incentive rewards programmes in accordance with the employee system of value; 3. exceptional transparency of a continuous information flow; 4. reduced the hierarchy levels; 5. substitution of bureaucratic precision and formality by freedom of expressing enterprising spirit and creativity through a higher level of authority and responsibility.

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