LEADERSHIP METHODOLOGY IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract. The article is focused on the issue of universal application of the leadership approach in the digital environment. It is argued that the methodology of leadership is not influenced by the object to which it is applied or by the subject of activity. The novelty is determined by the change in the environment that challenges the participants in these processes. The scale of the digitalization of life creates opportunities for leadership relationships to provoke their potential in an increasingly virtual environment and increasingly dispersed and large communities of potential followers.

Key words and phrases: leadership, digital environment, communication, interaction

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We seem excited to live in such an advanced age. The planes take us farther and farther away. Life is getting faster. The calendar is so fast-paced that by the time you write the seasonal greetings for the new year, it's gone and it's time for new ones. Multitasking has become a primary skill of modern man.

And if that seems like a lot, let's add new technologies, smart devices, the Internet itself. The world has multiplied, and our movement, seen from above, probably resembles the Brownian motions. Is there **a direction** in this new scale of civilization?

To the extent that leadership cannot be thought outside the continuum of a leader with followers in a given situation, then obviously the specificity of change in this case stems from the environment. What does this mean for leadership?

Obviously, the change in the environment is both – challenge and an opportunity for further changes. But the very process of leadership is by definition associated with a successful movement to change and improve the environment and participants (Burns 1979, Rost 1991, Bass 1995, Ciulla 1998). Therefore, it can be said that the skill of leadership should be adjusted to reflect the new realities. In other words, the new digital age opens up new horizons for leadership. It seems enough to have the imagination and the necessary skill to use the digital world to find new followers. From this point of view, the digital environment expands the possibilities for leadership, turning the world literally into a single global space where everyone has the opportunity to reach everyone. *In this sense, the digital is an accelerator of opportunities for leadership interaction.* The use of such an opportunity, the platform for interaction between a people in a leading position (leader) with a given community (followers) would occur on the basis of an existing problem of the group of followers.

Introduction

The central issue that led me to this paper is the peculiarity of leadership in an increasingly digital environment. The theoretical framework of what leadership is and is not has long since become clear in the scientific literature. Regardless of which conceptual school a given model for research and analysis of leadership belongs to, in each of them certain factors in attitudes and behavior stand out, which distinguish leaders from non-leaders. The main axis that distinguishes leadership in the approach of a manager, in contrast to the simple regulation of assignment of tasks and reporting on their implementation is precisely in the answer to the question of how they do it. (Kotter 1990, Zeleznik 2004, Bolden 2004). It is how they manage to inspire their subordinates so that they don't just *have to* do something, but do it because *they want to*.

If there is agreement that leadership is first and foremost a methodology for fulfilling the role, then the fundamental issue of leadership in the digital environment should not be limited to the potential that it adds to greater efficiency, reducing costs and other rational advantages, but to the peculiarities of this new reality, which challenge the transfer of this approach to the new conditions. The new immense potential of the global digital environment raises a number of questions. One of them concerns the extent to which the relatively consolidated collective concept of leadership as a phenomenon and method in our familiar analog way of life is fully valid in the digital environment. The published results of the study by Cortelazzo, Bruni and Zampieri in their article "The Role of Leadership in a Digitalized World: A Review" are a good reason to continue the search in this direction. Their results indicate that the sharp growth in publications on the digital environment and leadership has been observed since 2000 and especially in the last few years. Their approach is based on articles published in other areas than Business and Management since the topic is covered by several disciplines. These criteria resulted in an initial sample of 790 articles. The following figure shows how the debate grew since 2000, and significantly expanded since 2015." [4]
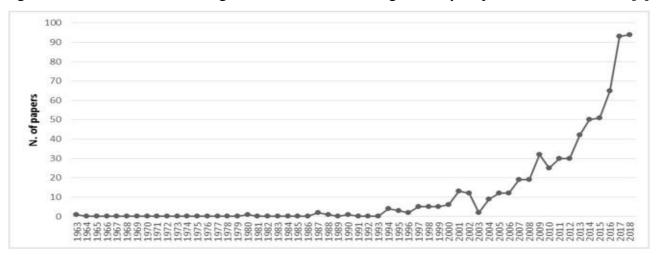

Figure 1. Growth of articles on leadership and digitalization (Source: [4])

Actually, the present article reviews the literature on how the advent of digital technologies has changed leaders and leadership roles. The analysis is a detailed and focused reading of academic publications on these topics. The conclusions reached by the authors in their own words are intended to encourage further research on the topic. According to them, „despite the urgency felt by scholars to understand how leaders keep the pace with technological change, the literature seems to lack a shared approach in studying and theorizing about this phenomenon. Although researchers have been introducing relevant new concepts, such as e-leader and e-organizations, there is a shortage of well-established and consensual definitions in the literature. Our review reveals scholars have relied on several leadership theories to explain the relationship between leadership and digital transformation. However, we question whether theories based on traditional views of industrial organization and business, that still prevail in the literature, are the most suitable to comprehend the multifaceted phenomenon of digital transformation and its impact on all matters leadership of organizations, communities, teams, and even self" [4]

The significance of this problem is evident both from the growing number of publications on the topic and in the elusive profile of possible and expected leadership in this new and in fact unknown environment. The dynamics of the problems in the conditions of physical isolation, which led to the intensification of the digital way of communication, causes the emergence of new authorities or the old ones in a new way. Big changes always open up opportunities for new leadership.

Methodology

This paper is an initial approach to the topic of highlighting the leadership attitude to digital environment. The changes are visible, the problems are more and more often non-standard and the innovations in the way of life and activity provoke the search for new solutions. The more tangible this is in the social environment, the greater the need for theoretical reflection on the topic. Its further conceptualization was sought on the basis of academic publications on it. Thus, publications were found on the basis of an already conducted research on academic materials on digital leadership and a separate desk research.

The need for terminological clarity was also highlighted. The question is whether e-leadership and leadership in a digital environment are synonymous concepts or rather have different meanings as a category of analysis. If we assume that digital leadership means instrumentalizing the approach in a new way, then leadership in a digital environment may turn out to seek change only in the object of impact, preserving the methodological approach of applied leadership. The subject of this publication is limited to the initial orientation in the scope, topics and plots of the analysis in the given matter.

Results

According to some authors, digital leadership is the strategic use of a company's digital assets to achieve business goals. This can be dealt with both organizationally and at an individual level. Looking at it from an individual level, this is often carried out by those responsible for overseeing the digital assets. (Tanniru, 2018; Dimitriosa, Sakasa, Vlachosa, 2013) Within the so-called initial approach to the topic through desk research with the keywords "e-leadership", leadership in the digital environment and variations around these concepts, the understanding of digital leadership stands out as a competence in using the potential of the digital environment to improve efficiency, coherence in the organization and more effective achievement of company and organizational goals.

However, the cited study shows that "the inquiry results has shown, we must comprehend leadership culture, as defined by the submissions of formal and informal leaders cooperate to influence organizational success. It is not the only factors the number or quality of individual leaders that define organizational success, but the capacity of formal and informal leaders to arrange in the support of organizational visions that finally makes the difference. Thus, when we refer in leadership here, it is both the leaders themselves and the relationships between them. At different times, the idea that leadership is bigger than the individual leader has been mentioned to as interdependent, collective or connected leadership". (Nasiopoulos K. Dimitrios et al, 2013: 269)

It can be said that based on the study we generally recognize two types of meanings of the concept of digital leadership. The first is about leadership in the age of large-scale digitalization of life, which is commented mainly through the competencies for the use of modern digital technologies. The latter relate much more to the adaptability of the approach itself and the achievement of coherence within the virtual e-environment. In summary, the first case is about competence or answering the question "what". The second is about soft skills and the answer to the "how" question. The development of the e-environment does not replace the analog one, but rather contributes with its added value to it. They co-exist. This is a new stage of civilization, which does not replace the previous one, but only adds a new opportunity for joint activity and achievement of results. Like the emergence of cinema, this does not displace the theater, but coexists with it, so the new digital realities do not displace the relations in organizations in their environment of physical presence and interaction. However, in order to reach the impact of the new art - cinema, it would hardly be enough to film the game on stage with a camera. The impact can only be completed if a new mode is developed to achieve the desired effect. Each of these two separate but connected realities contains their specific competencies and specific soft skills, characteristic of the respective level of communication.

Let us look at the example of universities as an illustration, regardless of the country in which they are located. If it can be said that teaching in classrooms is a kind of dramaturgical activity, then the transition to distance lectures requires from teachers the skills of cinema. Teaching in front of a monitor screen cannot attain the same effect if the teacher limits his speech to verbalizing each subsequent lecture topic. It obviously needs to be "played out" in a new way. The same is true of leadership in the digital environment. It must find its specific forms 1) to inspire and arouse curiosity and trust, and 2) to process interaction within this electronic environment. In other words, leadership would be the *way* to achieve results. On the issue of applied leadership, I have presented case studies in several articles. My understanding of leadership as a primarily applied concept, through which one can analyze a process or construct the fulfillment of any role, implies the selection of many specific cases from practice. The current situation of physical isolation and periodic lockdowns due to the Coronavirus pandemic intensifies the digital environment and highlights situations that await the determination and creative imagination of the participants. Physical isolation is the creator of a new form of community. It is dispersed in nature, but subject to diverse integration depending on the initiative and approach of those who would seek leadership. The considered cases follow the creation of a project without any prerequisites for development and success. Only thanks to the approach they manage to concentrate resources, to build capacity, to secure reproduction of the endeavor, and to reach sustainability. This gives grounds to summarize that, in addition to all that has been said, leadership can be described as a specific way of doing things. (Taneva 2020:54-59)

The second example concerns an online platform, the launch of which required both digital communication skills based on technological knowledge, but with the participation of experts and a guide with strategic vision and communication to achieve these goals. This fully online platform has created an opportunity for researchers around the world on a specific topic - archival documents on the Holocaust - to seek information on relevant documents stored in archives in different countries and continents. EHRI (European Holocaust Research Infrastructure) manages to achieve a conjunction between competencies in big data management and meta data with the expertise of researchers in a given field, organizational skills and the creation of temporary virtual teams to achieve the set goals. It is hardly possible to say who is the leader in this whole process. This is probably the author of the project and the team members who started it and took part in its implementation. Although we cannot name the names, the online leadership profile is clearly recognizable. On the other hand, implementation of such an interaction platform needs to be communicated in order to identify the general community of potential users. Obviously, the digital environment is a prerequisite for building such a platform. However, its results depend more on the conceptual approach of the initiators who would be the leaders of this endeavor. It can be said that

regardless of whether the interaction between the leader and the followers takes place in a real or virtual environment, whether it is analog or digital, the methodology of the leadership approach remains practically the same. The algorithm of successive actions that structure the relationship follows the logical steps first of recognizing and inducing trust (opening the expectations of the followers); by taking together a goal for which there is agreement between the leader and the followers (gradually implemented into small sub-goals); through maintaining the inspiration and cohesion of the group; through overcoming difficulties and not breaking up relationships; to a successful solution of the initial problem. The novelty to which this report refers does not come from the leadership methodology, but from its adaptation to the new content of the environment in which it operates, which will be discussed in the part that follows.

Discussion

My work on this text has led to the identification of several aspects of the topic of leadership in the digital environment. In the first place, this is the opportunity to think of the digital both as an opportunity and as a crisis. As much as the crisis is a novelty, it intervenes permanently and changes the environment and the circumstances in a sustainable way. In this sense, it can be said that the placement of the digital as a permanent context of our lives, each of our activities and roles is a huge change, which causes not only all the exciting opportunities, but also a large enough dose of stress. This is a novelty for which there is no strict preliminary protocol for action. For leaders, this is a reality that they must consider and deal with.

Secondly, it is, as Carole Lalonde says in her findings from a crisis leadership study, an *expansion of the mission*. "The majority of the managers and professionals expanded the mission they are officially known for in the sphere of governmental politics dealing with crisis intervention. (Lalond, 2004: 84). This is exactly what is observed in the case of the parallel space of the virtual, which has settled everywhere in the real world. Digitization achieves this effect by changing the environment, by deforming, multiplying, zooming in, and moving away, collecting, decaying, and so on.

In the third place is the question of *the conditionality of space*. One appropriate metaphor for the digital profile of the environment seems to be the role of the door in Pixar's famous film "Monsters Inc." The characters of this movie pass from their world to that of people, in its various spaces simply by opening a door. It's almost the same as a click away. In the usual analog mode of life, the transition from one role to another, from one position to another implies a buffer for movement in space. Digitization reformulated the concept of space and distances became conditional in it. They are a click away and we are there. The psychological buffer of distance is the first to disappear in the conditions of digitized space. Dealing with this new reality remains duty of leaders, who are generally responsible for cohesion, climate in the team, strategic direction and

cooperation of participants. The difficulty for the leader in the digital environment is dealing with the diversity of individual situations of physical participants and creating a single common situation for all of them in the digital environment.

Fourth is about cohesion and cooperation within the teams. One of the main challenges for leaders in the digital age is to adapt the participants in an event or group in a unique and emotionally balanced way for all of them in the virtual space of the event or task.

If we take an example with an international forum or even a regular discussion, business meetings, etc., the approach to the main event usually goes through an adaptation ritual. Whether it is a start with morning coffee or chatting in the lobby in front of the hall of the arriving participants - it is always time for the individual adaptation of each of the previous situation to the formal space of the upcoming event. Even the aromas and all the other technical parameters of the space unite the participants in the normal reality. The virtual ignores all this and is present with the same type of space of the participant in the variety of inclusions for the day according to diversity of roles. Practically, the virtual world allows the dominance of personal living space or personal office to become a integral part of the essence of each individual. Obviously, overcoming the dispersion of the environment is one of the new challenges or responsibilities of the leader.

The metaphor of going through virtual doors, which in an instant connect not only different individual situations, but also different worlds and contexts, can be interpreted in many ways. For leaders, this is a challenge to deal with a common goal without the necessary resources. In practice, leaders are given another responsibility for their tasks in order to ensure the necessary cohesion and the feeling of each participant for integration into the community. This is expected to be ensured not only for the time of the event, but also for the previous and subsequent activities, as well as the interaction between the participants on the way to achieving the goals. Assuming that these profound changes in the digital environment are born with the definition of crisis, it is appropriate to assume that for leaders this means expanding their professional responsibilities and roles.

In conclusion, the methodology of leadership as a process of interaction between a leading people with a community to solve a problem of this community in the name of improving the environment for each of them faces a chance to unleash its potential. As Neubauer et all summarize, "to lead successfully at any point in history requires a specific set of competencies and behaviors that mesh with the demands of the time. Different economic circumstances, technology landscapes, cultures, and social values require different approaches. These digital innovations are speeding up the pace of change and making it harder for leaders to accurately create and sustain positions of competitive advantage. (Neubauer et all, 2017:6) The emergence of the digital environment is a new reality that is a source of new and unknown problems. The adaptation of social capital from our

analog life to these challenges depends on the imagination and the capacity of those empowered to fulfill their role in a leadership manner.

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МЕТОДОЛОГИЯ ЛИДЕРСТВА В ЦИФРОВОЙ СРЕДЕ

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена проблеме универсального применения лидерского подхода в цифровой среде. Утверждается, что методология лидерства не зависит ни от объекта, к

которому она применяется, ни от субъекта деятельности. Новизна определяется изменением среды, которая бросает вызов участникам этих процессов. Масштаб цифровизации жизни создает возможности для лидерских отношений, чтобы спровоцировать их потенциал во все более виртуальной среде и все более рассеянных и больших сообществах потенциальных последователей.

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VALUES AND SHARED BELIEFS AS A KEY TO THE GENERATION AND STRENGTHENING OF THE WORK ENGAGEMENT IN THE ORGANIZATION: RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract. Throughout time and through time we have been observing how the contemporary company is increasingly institutionalized and is adapting to the complexity of the current world, recognizing that, in a globalized world, the company cannot be exclusively self-referential but relational, converting the business activity in a motivating act. Today's world encounters a new conceptualization of business management, where ethics is not a separate reality but is part of the same organizational system. People seek to connect with their environment on various levels - rational, motivational, and emotional - and of course they expect this from their workplace. For this reason, we must consider that human talent has clear values and shared beliefs that, directly and through culture, permeate with the purpose of promoting the generation and strengthening of work commitment, known as engagement; which will allow each of the collaborators to maintain positive behaviors and a successful employer brand will be achieved. The strategic choices of ways of thinking and acting within an organizational space are what will be giving meaning to the objectives and instructions in the interaction within the organization. This research will seek to study the relationship between the system of shared values and beliefs and how these can become the key to generating and strengthening work commitment in the members of an organization, with the help of the methodology that is planned to be carried out in this research project, being this of a 'Mixed'