



Values of a Manager during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Keywords: Values, Value Orientations, Value Orientations of the Manager, Pandemic, Management Activities, Business in the Pandemic.

Abstract: In this article, we will examine the values and value orientations of the modern manager in the business area through the prism of the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, it touches upon the impact of the pandemic on the value system of the manager and the management system as a whole. The topic relevance is determined by the complex and dynamic nature of today's crisis. That's why effective business management requires from managers not only quick reaction and non-standard solutions but also a change in behaviour, which should be based on the value principles.

1 INTRODUCTION

The last two years have already gone down in history as the time of the largest pandemic of our time. There is not a single country in the world without cases of acute respiratory viral infection COVID-19. Hundreds of thousands of deaths, millions of people affected by the disease (potentially with long lasting health consequences), closed borders, trade disruptions, disorganized communities and breach of the routine way of life of individuals – it's just a small fraction of what's going on.

The pandemic had become a special test for managers of all sectors and levels, as they had to be among the first to respond to the direct and indirect crisis consequences with little time to prepare and in an ever-changing environment. The uncertainty has only exacerbated the existing serious problems of the economy and business, requiring them to react quickly and make non-standard decisions.

There are many examples of successful management strategies during the crisis, for example, in the military or emergency management sectors. However, the peculiarity of today's coronavirus crisis is that effective management of the situation requires a dramatic change in people's behaviour, motivations, and principles. Therefore, the new COVID-19


pandemic is primarily a reflection of the public's faith in the entire management system.


In this regard, there is an objective necessity to establish and improve the methods and mechanisms of anti-crisis management, including the implementation of digital solutions, taking into account the transformation of all value systems in overcoming the pandemic consequences.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Many works of national and foreign researchers, starting with the fundamental works of the classics (K. Marx, H. Minsky, J.A. Hobsky, N.D. Kondratyev, Y.I. Kuzmin, and others) and ending with works that address more narrow issues, such as countering crises or addressing the lack of funding (A.V. Lukyanov, O.A. Kotlyarov, S. Kraus, N. Yamori, and others) are devoted to studying of crises, uncertainty, and risks in the economy.

Studies on assessing the impact of the pandemic and related business constraints have also already been developed in the scientific literature (L. Harris, F. Kock, N.A. Gromov, N.V. Altufieva, etc.). However, despite the large number of theoretical and practical studies conducted by scientists around the

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world, such aspects of this problem as, for example, the value aspect, remain nearly untouched. This confirms the relevance of our work and defines its goal and objectives.

As a theoretical basis of the research, we relied on the works of national and foreign scientists in the field of management, anti-crisis management, planning and forecasting, as well as relevant Internet sources in the public domain.

As the methodological basis of the research, we used the ideas and concepts presented in the works and publications of modern scientists on value issues in the management system, as well as our own data obtained by snowballing (130 respondents as of 15/11/2021) and statistical analysis.

The goal of the research is to identify the peculiarities of the value orientation system of the modern manager in the business environment under unstable conditions caused by the coronavirus infection COVID-19.

This goal dictates the following objectives:

- consider the impact of the pandemic on the behaviour of people in general;
- to identify the peculiarities of management activity in the business area in the pandemic era;
- to consider the change in the value system of the modern manager under conditions caused by the coronavirus infection;
- to model the profile of a manager who will be able to cope with the coronavirus crisis and bring the business to a new level, adapting it to the new realities.

The object of the research is the value system of the modern manager during the pandemic.

The subject of the research is organizational and management relations arising in the implementation of management procedures and business adaptation to the new realities caused by the pandemic.

3 RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1 Man in the Age of COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic has become a great challenge for the modern man. But perhaps this shock was needed today so that people would finally think about their future.

Some researchers when considering the impact of the pandemic on a human personality propose to pay attention not to changes but to their reason (Mamedyarov, 2021). Here the value factor comes to the fore as the motivational basis for human behaviour. Faced with a world of uncertainty and

ambiguity during the pandemic, a person ceases to be guided by the rules of law (required behaviour compelling) and begins to rely on his own system of values, acting "with the heart". And what ethical principles society will adhere to after the pandemic will depend on the future, as changes in the system of values have already occurred – toward a more considerate attitude toward one's health and the health of loved ones, social contacts, and safety.

Other researchers believe that it will only be possible to tell how people have changed due to the pandemic just in a few years. At the same time, they do not deny recent changes in people's thinking, which the pandemic has only accelerated (Waldkirch, 2021).

Still others call the pandemic an anti-utopia, emphasizing that the changes that have occurred in the world today have not yet been fully understood or experienced by man (Moustafa, 2021). And many people will not be able to jump straight back in (for example, to go back to work in the office after remote mode) because people will be different and gradually want to live a little differently.

3.2 Economy and Business during the Pandemic

The pandemic has had a huge impact not only on human life, it has also affected the entire economy. For example, the IMF estimates the decrease in the world economy by 4.4% just in 2020, the worst decline since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The only major economy that grew in 2020 was China. Here the growth of 2.3% (Perova, 2020) has been registered. Most countries are still in stagnation or even recession. All industries lost, but the sectors that suffered the most were those directly related to consumption: trade, catering, tourism, transport, services.

Nevertheless, as with any crisis that leads to some kind of change, it is possible to identify the negative and positive aspects of the impact. Moreover, some experts even identify the trends that characterise the global economy that have become increasingly visible since the beginning of the pandemic. The main ones are renationalization, technological development and digitalization (Razumova, Sadovaya, Chubarova, 2020). That is, we see that more and more states are now focusing on their own interests, guided by the principle "reliability is more important than profitability". The most successful companies are those that work in the field of information technology. For example, if in Russia in 2014-2015 this industry experienced a noticeable

decline due to the confrontation with the West (brain drain, mutual sanctions, restrictions on projects), then the pandemic, on the contrary, gave incentives for its development. The transition to remote work for a huge number of people and institutions required the IT industry to meet new needs, including those related to digital solutions (videoconferencing, online learning, "home office", etc.). Moreover, today we see people easily and happily using the online payment for utilities, ordering food, making medical appointments remotely, and even taking part in elections or population censuses.

At the same time, the labor market is also undergoing bad times, not only due to upcoming reorganization in many sectors in the long term, but also because companies are in principle hiring fewer people. Digitalization is not the least, as the pandemic has revealed many weaknesses in this area and didactic skills in working with digital platforms.

And while the world's governments are looking for a way out of the current economic situation, business leaders are trying to optimize the entire management system, adjusting to the new realities of quarantine, self-isolation, and other restrictions.

When it comes to a complex, interdependent problem, the only way to establish long-term business sustainability is to focus on strategies optimizing the entire system rather than damaging parts of it (Hidalgo, Rodrigues-Vega, Perez-Fernandez, 2021). As an example, many employers have taken comprehensive measures that focused not only on keeping their teams healthy and preventing the spread of coronavirus but also on increasing business sustainability and profits. They decided to pay each employee a percentage of his/her salary for three (or more) months after the restrictive measures were put in place (Odegov, Razinov, 2021). This has helped them retain talented, hard-working employees, and in turn has given employees the financial security of being able to pay bills and buy the basic necessities of life while being "sheltered" locally. Such responses have increased employees' confidence in their management, giving a sense of their health gain due to such strategy as the employer continues to support them with a guaranteed and stable salary.

Strategy and management activities based on a system approach are strengthened when critical data are generated and understood (Vyachin, 2007). In real life, we generate data that relate to individual parts of the system. An interdependent system (pandemic) involves sharing and processing data from the entire system so that each participant can access important information for individual, unique adaptation, and modernization. That is, data helps not only make

better decisions, but also improves the efficiency of the entire system, particularly the business. As an example, the companies (mostly Asian) which managers used reliable data to develop strategies to protect the health of their employees. Even in the early stages of the pandemic, with government support, they conducted extensive testing to understand the scale of the problem in their countries. To do so, they used a variety of data, including data from social media, and tracked contacts to understand how the infection was spreading among staff (Ting, Ling, Cheah, 2020). The lack of such data in other companies resulted in weak strategies to protect the health of staff (and the population as a whole) and a much less effective response, which affected business success and growth accordingly.

But it is not always possible to implement such measures due to various circumstances. Therefore, to ensure that management decisions are implemented properly and for the benefit of the organization, in addition to a systematic approach, it is necessary to introduce a value-based approach, which at least will increase the level of confidence in the management.

3.3 Values of the Manager

To be sure, the coronavirus pandemic places extraordinary demands on managers in the business. The extent of the outbreak and its unpredictability make it difficult to respond, causing disorientation, a sense of loss of control and severe emotional burnout.

But when managers' reactions to a crisis are value-based, they create a common sense of purpose across the team. In other words, personal and professional values that support managers' actions in the face of adversity become the driving basis for management decisions that will protect employee health, sufficient productivity, and the financial stability of the business.

Here, among other things, honesty comes first. That is, managers must speak openly about the existing crisis, which did not come suddenly, but grew out of circumstances concealing its nature. To see the slow-growing crisis for what it may become, managers need to overcome the normalcy bias that can cause them to underestimate both the possibilities of the crisis and its consequences.

Next is empathy. Strong empathic responses are especially important in those moments when life literally hangs in the balance. Responses in which the managers acknowledge the existence of "illness," the possible effects of social constraints related to work and relationships, show a close connection to the team, as does a personal appreciation for the

individual employee or group of employees for their efforts and commitment. Employees are more likely to forgive their manager for less favourable results (also financial ones) if they believe that the methods and tools the manager used in making decisions to achieve those results were reasonable.

The next value is trust. It is what allows a person with less knowledge and power (subordinates) to rely on another person (manager) to make decisions consistent with his/her view on what constitutes well-being. As a rule, trust is created through actions (Yoder-Wise, 2020). This could be, for example, planning that takes into account not only previous experience with a pandemic, but also the unforeseen social, economic, and personal effects of the crisis, or providing information from reliable sources.

Openness and transparency are closely related to trust – they are a prerequisite for maintaining it. According to our survey, both parties are involved in creating and maintaining trust-based relationships, which is especially important when delegating specific tasks, when a manager wants to share the decision-making (64% of our survey respondents) or fully trusts the execution of the task and responsibility for it to the team (6.7%). This in itself requires a willingness to take risks and show vulnerability.

In turn, to delegate means to give freedom, which during the pandemic has taken on a literal meaning. Employees working "remotely" now have opportunities that they did not have before: more time for family, reduced commuting costs, more organizational space, etc. And managers have more freedom in management, that is, more opportunities to make management decisions independently, using the necessary resources, and to act on the basis of personal thinking in relation to specific organizational activities within the organizational culture (Tikhonova, Zaitseva, 2017). Also note that freedom (any) during a pandemic is also a responsibility, as the behaviour of each individual, and the manager, in particular, will have far-reaching consequences for him personally, for society, for the entire organization, and possibly for the entire country (world). In other words, according to the majority of managers who participated in our survey, the greater the managerial freedom, the greater the degree of managerial responsibility (66.7% – fully agree, 18.7% – partially agree).

The value of teamwork has also taken on new significance during the pandemic. To withstand such a global crisis, managers need to implement new strategies of communication and cooperation with other people, ensuring the safety and involvement of every employee. To achieve success in business,

according to the respondents of our questionnaire, it becomes a team of professionals (56%) rather than customer focus (22.7%), market research (12%), availability of innovative product (4%) or knowledge in a particular area (1,3%).

4 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results of our research have shown that the current epidemiological situation in the world offers many opportunities for assessment, study, and management analysis. The coronavirus pandemic is a complex and dynamic process involving a number of systems, including public health, economy, environment, social, technical, time factors, etc. They are all interconnected, which in turn creates even more variables that change limitations and opportunities. And these dynamics require us to take an integrated approach to study this issue.

The pandemic had a profound effect on all sectors of the economy. Nevertheless, it has survived, not least because of the smart actions of business leaders. Some paid attention to digital opportunities, trying new strategies, and now they have different priorities for the next year. Others have managed to realize their ambitious ideas through out-of-the-box solutions and foresight. One thing is clear, the pandemic has forced all managers without exception to transform their value orientations and reconsider their views on management activities and their role as a manager.

At the same time, the consequences of the pandemic and all kinds of restrictions are felt today by almost everyone in his/her workplace. A huge number of people lost their jobs, and many had to work from home and change the way they interact with colleagues and clients. An interesting fact was that despite the great freedom (floating work schedule, time and money savings, ability to work from anywhere in the world, etc.) offered by remote work, many people cannot perceive this format as a way to earn a living and do not find satisfaction in such work. This also includes the risk of isolation (especially for single people) or loss of direct contact with other employees.

Answering the question of what is the main quality that characterizes a modern manager when all management activity is under such great pressure, let us say that it is trust. And since the key driver of trust in a manager of any level is his competence and the values to inspire trust, his actions and decisions should be based on the values.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this paper was to identify the peculiarities of values and value orientations of the modern manager in the business environment under pandemic conditions, and how the new system of values affects the success of the organization. Having performed the analysis of relevant literature and publications on this topic, taking into account the results of a quantitative sociological study, our own questionnaire survey, we successfully realized this intention.

The experience of past crisis situations (including pandemics) has shown that it accompanies a person throughout his life and inevitably affects his actions, which are determined by values. And while at first glance, the most widespread changes occurred in the economy, health care and politics, it was the values sphere, particularly in business, that "suffered" the most. Managers faced a lot of questions: whose interests are more important – an individual or the team, whether it is necessary to hold on to each rank-and-file employee or focus on maintaining the most effective staff, whether to go completely to remote working or develop a hybrid business model, whether to take risks or continue the usual activities (if you are lucky), etc. Before the pandemic world, all values were located somewhere between two extremes – maximum profit and general well-being, but now the image of a successful manager is based on completely different principles – honesty, trust, openness, foresight.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic is an extraordinary period in the history of all mankind. Now we can evaluate in real time the effectiveness of our actions. And our successes, failures will be seen very soon, in the coming weeks and months, as this unprecedented crisis continues.

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