

## Knowledge management in multicultural organisations

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*The relationship culture-communication is one of the interdependence with a view to a better functioning of the multicultural organisations. The ability of the manager to solve the crises situations generated by the diverse culture of the organization is a key factor; thou the overall strategy must include a control-evaluation element, having the purpose to regulate the internal tensions. This mechanism must be set up in way that allows transformation and adaptation to the critical situations that requires immediate actions.*

**Keywords:** knowledge management, multicultural organisations, communication, leader.

### Introduction

The manager of a multicultural group should perform the role of leader coordinating activities and resolving intergroup conflicts.

The balancing and control of multinational factors, the functioning of the organisation within the economic, social, political, legal and cultural framework resulted in group perception as central cell, the individual gaining authority alongside with the group.

Strict rules are not longer working in multicultural organisation due to some global factors, which sparsely influence components of the internal and external environment.

The fact that employees have been trained in information technology (IT) led to changes in the organisation mentality and culture. Thus, management methods, models and styles can no longer be related to the overall strategy.

Therefore, it is important that the group role within the organisation, both formally and informally, should be based on individual knowledge channelled towards organisation goals.

The systematic approach of the organisation culture should be integrated both in the global framework of the organisation and in the informational system.

The relationship culture-communication becomes a subtle one, one of beneficial interdependence.

The multicultural organisation efficiency depends on:

- the extent to which information and basic knowledge are circulated and used;
- the circulation mode: from the employees possessing the information to those needing it;
- the degree of processing concurrential information;
- the stability of the interface between the organisation and its clientele.

The external environment complexity is a disadvantage for the organisations, which sometimes cannot adjust to the changes and cannot motivate the employees; therefore, it needs means and instruments to control rapid economic, social and political flotation.

The economic and cultural stakes are emphasised through the acquisition and sharing of knowledge in due time. Consequently, the surviving organisation of the 21 st century will be a multicultural organisation.

Human competence falls into several categories according to the position within the company. In selecting its employees, the organisation aims to spot the individuals that best correspond to the position while disregarding the individual's general knowledge.

It is therefore possible to lose a valuable candidate, which shows general knowledge but lacks key competence, which can be achieved in the long run.

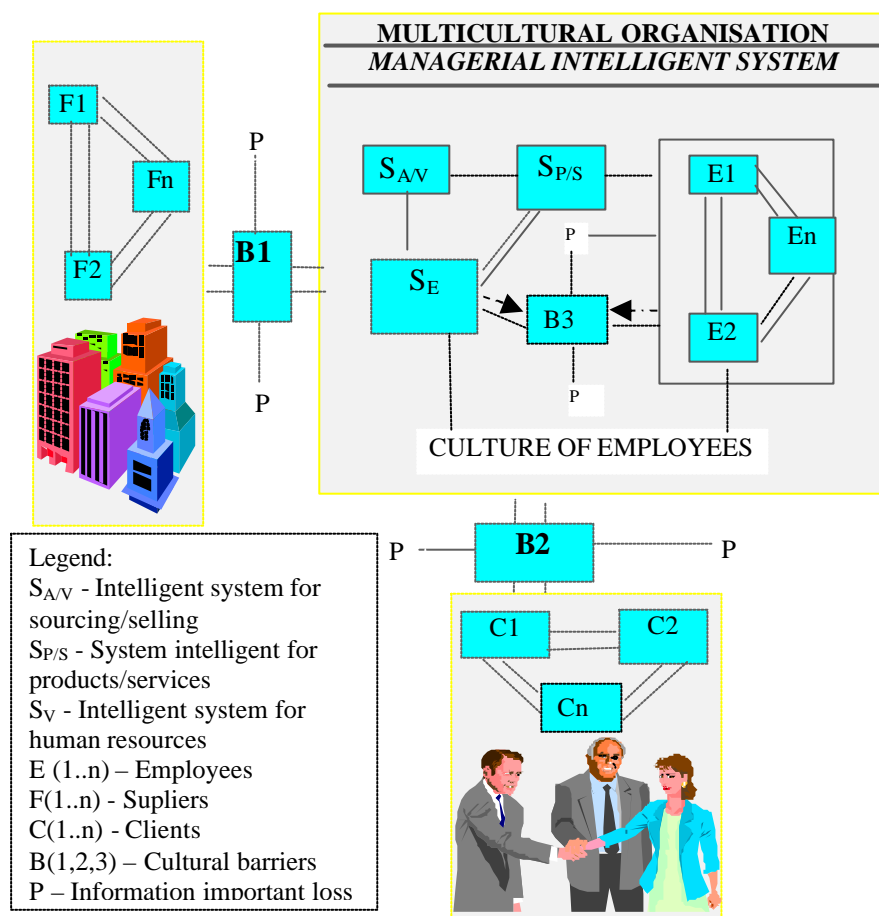
Flannagan and McClelland are among the researchers who have been concerned with the identification of employee competence,

but each of them highlighted a different behavioural component.

Thus, Flannagan identified such elements as activities related to position, while McClelland was interested in the competences of those individuals taking full responsibility. The results seemed to diverge even if McClelland was influenced by Flannagan's research and he combined the critical incidence method with perception tests giving rise to behavioural event maintenance method.

In practice, such models are to be idealised at the level of perception but in critical situations analytical thinking turns into spontaneous thinking, which prevails and provides the strangest solutions within multicultural organisation, competences falls into 2 groups:

1. those specifics to the cultural group – the most serious disadvantage being that hidden competences are not valued;
2. general competences – the advantage lies in the possibility of valuing hidden competences.



**Diagram 1.** Cultural barriers – an obstacle in multicultural organisation development

Cultural and informational barriers (diagram 1) that separate multicultural groups from the organisation find the solution according to the model of multicultural organisation behaviour should be characterised by transparency and flexibility and it should describe the required competences to ensure higher performances.

A training course correspond to each level of competences such a follows:

- at a basic level, a training course is needed to learn the skills and to possess the basics of the job;
- at a satisfactory level, the training course is more demanding as to allow the employees to manage all professional activities;
- at a level of good performance, the development of inventive creative mind and conceptualisation will be in focus.

- at a level of excellent performance, the training course will envisage mobility and flexibility in pursuing a career.

Knowledge Management is based on an inexhaustible capital: the employee knowledge and competence. Within the organisation framework, this capital is quite primitive and should be identified and channelled towards the final product/services to be offered to the clients.

Knowledge exploitation is even more difficult within multicultural organisation. This difficulty originates in the wide range of knowledge and in the complexity of the motivation system.

Multicultural organisations are not rare and the consequences are to be seen especially within small and average companies. This management is faced with specific problems whose resolution depends on the informal leader's support.

Multicultural organisations based on Knowledge Management have the following objectives:

- the identification and protection of multicultural knowledge;
- the development of knowledge and key competences of individuals;
- the improvement of the access mode to the already knowledge.

The cultural dimensions at the organisational level are reflected in quality such as follows:

**A. Management quality:** the way in which organisation goals and values are harmonised. Knowledge Management within multicultural development becomes the very support for key competences. Knowledge management aims to assess the knowledge type necessary to ensure Management Total Quality.

**B. Work environment quality** – work environment can become tensed with a series of conflicts. Every organisation has at its disposal general and technical knowledge, which cannot be quantified and managed as employees have different perspectives to it. This personal perspective is not identifiable with the overall perspective. Therefore, to reach a consensus, the work environment

should be a top priority. The motivation system should be both flexible and complex, able to satisfy the various cultural demands. The quality of work environment is also influenced by the institutional, national and international legal system, which can enhance or prevent the sharing of knowledge within the organisation framework.

**C. Product and service quality impinges upon the organisation image, leading to the shortening of the market segment.** The interdependence of product and service quality and the clientele quality, on the other hand, is possible due to knowledge quality and is considered a means of improving the overall efficiency.

The manager's ability to deal with the crisis stemming from the multicultural perspective can be a success factor, which makes the overall strategy include a control-assessment element, a regulator of internal tension.

The mechanism should be built in order to allow the possibility to be permanently modelled and adjusted to critical situations. Advanced technologies, incorporating various knowledge, will generate:

- \* *changes* in the traditional organisation structure;
- \* *reduction* in employees number;
- \* *increasing* responsibilities and personal knowledge;
- \* *dynamic* internal and external communication.

Cultural elements are not yet taken into consideration and this is reflected in the organisation efficiency. Knowledge management can lead to a new strategic and managerial approach, ensuring the success of cultural group initiatives within the organisation.

The identification of the intellectual capital and key competences can constitute a dynamic database comprising all organisation information and knowledge.

The development of competence centres managed by means of IT plays a vital role within multicultural organisation.

Such organisations have at their disposal a series of intelligent systems, which satisfy all technical demands, and thus several sec-

tors can be monitored: Purchase, Production, Quality, Stocks, Personnel and Wages.

### Concluding remarks

The final conclusion will lead to the identification of the competences lacking in a department or in the organisation and to the elaboration of a development plan could be available.

The summing up of competences aims to develop, according to the candidate potential, one or several projects, which belong to the candidate.

The assessment of competences aims to judge the candidate is helped to assess viable projects in the organisation framework, on the labour market and in the economic and social given circumstances.

The results are difficult to be interpreted and the activities do not prove easy to be planned as every candidate has a unique potential.

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