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EDITORIAL

Multiculturalism, diversity and change

Globalization
has changed G.E. into
a company that searches
the world, not just to sell or
to source, but to find intellectual
capital – the world's
best talents and greatest
ideas.
(Jack Welch)

As business has gone global over the past few decades, its role in spreading values has gained importance. Through commerce, trade and investment, and the exchange of ideas and knowledge, business has become a major actor across cultures and people.

Business is often at the forefront of creating space where people from different cultures meet and cooperate. The process of learning to work together is not always free of tensions, and mistakes are made. But overall, business has become a critical force in support of cultural understanding, building bridges between cultures and people by offering the prospect of economic opportunity.

Most of the developed countries are experiencing an aging of their populations. This increase is due to people living longer and a decrease in the number of children, particularly those in „teen" age groups. Some of the implications of the shifting age of the workforce include the following: retirement benefits will increase in importance, particularly pension and health-care coverage for retirees; retirement will change character, as organizations and older workers choose early retirement buyouts and parttime work; service industries actively will recruit senior workers for many jobs.

The two words that best describe the challenges of HR management are change and

diversity. Change and diversity are seen in the following major areas: an increasingly diverse workforce; changing work patterns; industry and occupation employment shifts; education and training needed by a diverse workforce; economic changes resulting from global competition and the growing internalization of contemporary organizations. Managers must provide an environment that encourages the performance of individuals of differing ages, races, cultural origins, abilities and genders.

In addition, varied lifestyles, personalities and other factors affect each individual's performance. Hence, work patterns, training and HR management practices must be flexible to accommodate these diverse individuals.

A growing number of employers have taken steps to manage diversity through HR activities. Training often is at the heart of these efforts. The goal is to sensitize all employees to diversity issues and the needs of co-workers who are dissimilar in some ways. The main forms of HR diversity at work can be attributed to the following factors: women in the workforce; racial/ethnic diversity in the workforce; age-based diversity; individuals with disabilities in the work force.

Culture constitutes the foundation of group differences. Culture refers to the characteristic behavior of people in a country or region. Culture provides people with an identity – one they retain even when they emigrate and that is retained by their children and grand children as well.

When we talk about culture, we refer to family patterns, religions, customs, political systems, social classes, clothing, food, literature and laws. Understanding the factors that make up a person's culture helps diverse people to deal more constructively with one another. Accepting diversity means more than feeling comfortable with employees whose race, ethnicity, or gender differ from your own. It means more than accepting their accents or language, their dress or food. What it does mean is learning to value and respect cultural styles and ways of behaving that differ from your own.

Implications of the increase in racial and ethnic cultural diversity are as follows: the potential for work-related conflicts between racial/ethic groups and whites will increase; extensive employer-sponsored cultural awareness will be required to defuse conflicts and promote multicultural understanding; greater cultural diversity in dress, customs and lifestyles will be permitted by employers.

Prof. Florin Dãnãlache, Ph.D
Senior Editor

ABSTRACTS

UNIVERSITIES IN THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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All over Europe and worldwide there is an increasing interest on the university-industry cooperation and the development of more entrepreneurial oriented universities. The aim of this paper is to describe and highlight the steps of a research methodology for the investigation of the university-industry cooperation used in a doctoral thesis. The case study was conducted in the biggest technical university in Portugal, Instituto Politecnico do Porto. For the research methodology there were used 8 in-depth interviews with academics involved in the middle and top management of the institute, in different positions. The content analysis research method was used for the interpretation of the answers. Another resource used for the research was a large international database, giving access to more then 17.000 worldwide online resources, in order to track the best papers issued in the last 7 years (2006-2012) related to the research subject. The results are showing the efforts of our case study institution to „abandon" the „ivory tower university" attitude and to cooperate with the local, regional and national industry, seen as the „real world" for their students. As further research pathways, this research could be completed with comparisons between Portuguese and Romanian universities.

CULTURE IN VIRTUAL TEAMS

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Virtual teams are becoming more used because specialized knowledge and skills are often geographically distributed. The relationship between different types of culture and virtual team performance is still unclear. For this purpose, an exploratory research study was regarded as appropriate. This exploratory study examines researchers' perceptions about how cultural differences might influence the virtual team performance. Therefore, our research seeks to address this gap by examining the cultural differences impact on virtual team effectiveness. The research data was collected from 29 students in 2013. Results of hierarchical regression analysis indicated that cultural differences are significantly related to virtual team performance. The findings of this study fill the gap in the literature and offer a relevant source of ideas and solutions for academics and practitioners. We provide a detailed discussion of our findings in the conclusion of this paper and highlight the implications for management and businesses.

Keywords: multicultural virtual team, collaboration, leadership, communication

RISK PREDICTION
IN INNOVATION PROJECTS

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The continuous growth of maritime transport and the need to provide sustainable
shipping drive proposals for innovative solutions of naval equipment development.
This article aims to make a review of risk-based design developments and to
attempt to demonstrate that scientific and technological developments are in
place for Risk-Based Design to be fully implemented in the maritime industry.
The article is presenting the use of Theoretical Methods and advanced Tools
in the design methodology. Also, there are given examples of some applications:
Bayesian Risk Model for Ship Fire Simulations, Lightweight Composite Sandwich
Superstructure, Hull form optimization, Novel Lifesaving Appliances.
To be applied properly, this new design concept requires a significant amount
of future research based on software modeling and rigorous theoretical methods.

Keywords: Risk based design, risk assessment, innovative solutions,
maritime transport safety, naval equipment

LEADING MULTICULTURAL TEAMS

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Globalization and the development of multinational companies cause managers to face new challenges: those of leading multicultural teams. The aim of our paper is to assess some of those challenges and to create the profile of a good multicultural manager. In our opinion he has to speak one or more foreign languages, needs to be empathic, tolerant, flexible, has to respect values coming from different cultures than his own, and to learn as much as he can about his „adoptive" culture.

Keywords: multicultural team, manager, tolerance, respect, empathy

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS OF MAINTENANCE ACTIVITY

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Maintaining the industrial products in working condition, but also at the qualitative parameters imposed by users requirements, needs periodically maintenance interventions because using of every industrial product, especially in extreme scheme, which all users aim to, has the effect of increasing the wear and, therefore, the number and the volume of damages. The improvement of the maintenance activity and increasing the quality of the industrial products are both current concerns of field specialists, and others. The scientific research presented in this paper show that there are still solutions for both continuous improvement of the maintenance activities and the quality of industrial products improvement. These solutions have resulted from multi-criteria analysis of the maintenance activity.

Keywords: maintenance, quality, multidimensional analisys, competitiveness

COMPARISON OF TWO EUROPEAN CITY HALLS

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The present paper aims to study the quality management system within a public institution, its analysis conducting, if necessary, to the improvement of the services, by developing effective proposals. This paperwork describes the basic concepts of the quality system in public services, with special emphasis on presenting the importance of implementing a quality management system in a public institution.

In the end it includes a case study which consists of two parts which served to identify any malfunctions that can affect the quality of services in the specific institution. In this regard, the first step was to achieve a quick overview of some key aspects in providing quality services by comparing the chosen institution, with a body resembling from a developed European country. Subsequently was analyzed the providing service system, by applying the SERVQUAL method.

The study ends with a number of proposals and recommendations, developed in order to improve the quality management system in the Romanian public institution. The results of the case study, proved that the institution analyzed, still has a series of aspects that need improvement, the most important one, represented by the human resources involved in providing the services and maintaining a good relationship with the citizens. The questionnaire applied to the customers, revealed a very bad opinion regarding the level in which the public officials, understand their needs and are able to empathize.

Keywords: public institution, quality management, quality of services, SERVQUAL method