Using K-Management to Improve HR Performances

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Abstract: - The nowadays economy is characterized by an increased dynamics, be it positive or negative. The factors that determine this evolution are diverse, difficult to evaluate and difficult to quantify, even more as the complexity of the changes is so large. However, we believe that one of the most important evolutions of the modern economy is the transition to a knowledge-based economy, where care for the human resources’ performances within the organization is the main concern. But, the conditions are extremely complicated, and the cause is even the unprecedented increase of the evolution in the knowledge area, the high circulation speed of the new knowledge packages and the extremely large and diversified volume of different categories of information that have to be managed. In this situation, the emphasis on the continuous improving of the human resources is significant, and an efficient knowledge management is the optimum solution to reach a high degree of competitiveness and progress.

Key-Words: - Knowledge management, Knowledge-based economy, Human resources, Performance, Integrated, Knowledge worker, Learning organization

1 Introduction
All through the latest decade, we witnessed an amplified increase of the importance of knowledge management (K-M), under the influence of several factors. First of all, the accelerated development of the knowledge-based economy (K-economy) determined the increase of the proportion of employees for whom knowledge represents both the work support and the work main instrument. Secondly, the transition from an industrialized economy to K-economy takes place at a more and more extended scale, therefore the main position in the economy of a company is held by the employees capable of solving the company’s problems due to their knowledge and high information analysis and synthesis ability [1]. And last, we mention the contribution of the fast diversification of the IT field, which makes available sophisticated and performance work instruments, so that the management of a vast volume of knowledge is no longer an insurmountable problem.

2 Recent evolutions in K-M
Emphasizing the role of K-M in increasing human resource performances (HR-P) is even more relevant as the access to knowledge is practically unlimited, the dissemination of knowledge is practically without restriction, and the acquisition of technology needed in this field is no longer prohibitive. Apparently, the above-mentioned elements represent an advantage both for the individual and for the organization.
But, further to a more detailed analysis, we observe that the management of an information flow of such dimension is extremely difficult.
We refer here to the entire cycle from the primary collection and processing of the information, the creation of the data bases, their selection and encoding, etc., to their use in the current activity, with the purpose of increasing the performances at the level of the working place and, implicitly, at the level of the organization.
This is why, K-M, as an integrated process in the management of the company is not only an organizational necessity but also a response to the diversification of the needs expressed on the labor market.
An effective K-M decisively contributes to the increase of HR-P because it has the capacity to make available to the employees those categories of knowledge packages that represent the volume, quality and optimal structure of the necessary elements for the carrying out of the activity at a high quality level.
Another evolution worth noting in the K-M field is due to the changes of the way in which the purpose of learning is defined, from the classic type in which it was represented by the acquirement of pre-
established and relatively standardized abilities and competences, to the modern way in which the objectives of learning are established based on the needs generated by the characteristics and requirements of the workplace, the specifics of the developed activity, the field of activity etc. Moreover, it is necessary to start based on three categories of requirements, these being:

- Current or short-term requirements;
- Anticipated of long-term requirements (depending on the field evolution);
- Potential or currently unidentified requirements, determined by the long-term evolution of the economical and social environment.

Also, in the context of the current learning process, the role of the organizations has changed, meaning that from a target of learning, they have become a subject that is directly involved in the issuing and implementing educational strategies at micro and macro-economical levels [2], reason for which the concept of learning organization is used more and more frequently.

This aspect emphasizes the decisive role of K-M in increasing HR-P and also imposes the creation of an integrated education management structure capable to ensure both the acquisition of a set of basic or fundamental abilities and competences, as well as of abilities formed in a dynamic environment, in accordance with the evolution of needs requested on the labor market, be them identified or obvious, and potential or currently uncertain.

3 Basic factors for increasing HR-P

The increase of HR-P is conditioned by the capacity of the decision makers to ensure a flexible and modular K-M that will provide continuously updated knowledge in accordance with the evolution of the need for qualified personnel within the economic and social environment, and will represent a viable support for continuous learning.

In other words, K-M must represent an efficient and complex system in which the conditions for continuous learning have to be ensured [3]. An integrated K-M must ensure the correlation between:

- Needs for abilities and qualifications on the labor market;
- Supply of the educational system;
- Technological evolution;
- Dynamic of the business environment.

The current educational system, be it also public and private, in the way in which it currently operates, can represent, at the same time, an obstacle as well as a vector of the development of an efficient system in view of the research and modern education for an effective system of K-M [4].

The learning system currently applied tends to remain obsolete compared to the evolution of the global economy.

In knowledge-based society the issues of education must be treated in perspective, for medium and long run term. The demand for education is affected by two crucial factors: the individual interests for professional level growth, on the one hand, and the new learning organization, on the other hand.

In this respect, the policy-maker does taking into account all this factors and many others for establishing the education supply.

In trying to offer a solution for solving some of the issues confronting the decision-makers in the field of education, we are starting from the idea that the modern businesses cannot be separated from the problems of education.

Education, as a key element in the formation of human resources at the current dynamic performance standards, does no longer represent an advantage that is specific to privileged categories because the number of the workers of the modern world that carry out activities requiring low training levels gets smaller and smaller by the day.

Currently, the success factors of a company come from the formation and development of highly trained employees, multidisciplinary and multi-qualified, capable of quick and in real-time responses to the challenges of a hypercompetitive economy.

The performance requirements of human resources outline the idea of a complete employee, characterized by adaptability, flexibility, an open mind, prepared for continuous learning, networking, team working, creativity, innovative spirit. Also, we have to mention the entrepreneurial skills, multitasking, etc.

In the new economy, called K-economy, improving HR-P requires the continuous operation of a flow of activities in the following order:

- evaluation of the current performance level;
- identification of needs to increase the performance level;
- establishment of objectives for the increase of the key competences;
- allocation of resources that are necessary to reach the objectives;
- planning of activities by means to assure the development;
- implementation of the activity plan;
monitoring of the accumulation process during the implementation;
- evaluation of the new level of competences;
- application of the new abilities in the day to day activity;
- monitoring during the application of the new information;
- evaluation of the economical and social consequences further to the use of new knowledge, by specific efficiency indicators;
- resuming the performance evaluation activity etc.

In other words, ensuring the continuous cycles of the mentioned activities, in parallel with the establishment of a superior performance level when reaching every new cycle, is vital to constantly increase the quality of human resources and, implicitly, the positive results obtained by accumulating new knowledge and abilities.

4 New trends in HR linked with K-M

In the past few years, thanks to the profound transformations taking place in all fields, carried out due to the rapid progress in the fields of science and technology, the field of human resources has evolved significantly.

One of the most important parts consists in consolidating the concept of knowledge-worker (K-W). This category of employees represents a key strategic resource in any organization because they are a concerted result of the interaction between the educational system, the technological evolution and the development of the organizational theories and practices [5].

A K-W has an important contribution to enhancing the organizational or firm performances, because he creates value by means of the way in which he does his job at the workplace, he adds value to the other parts of the company, he determines the increase in competitiveness of the products and services carried out, he is a vector of creativity and progress and, last but not least, he decisively contributes to the increase in the flexibility and adaptability of the organization in an extremely dynamic competitive environment.

Another trend to which we refer is the continuous and extremely fast increase in the number of K-W, simultaneously with the diversification of the opportunities of the economy based on knowledge. This context imposes the development of employees and companies not as distinct entities, but as a system.

Based on the idea that knowledge represents a strategic tool against competitors, we must note the necessity of wide-scale dissemination of knowledge, without second thought.

In any company, the employees are usually in competition against each other to get a better position, an interesting and stimulating job, more financial advantages, etc.

Under these circumstances, it is very difficult for strategic employees, named K-W, to be motivated to share their experience with the others, because it is a normal reaction for them to have reserves.

In these conditions, another category of key-employees is represented by the knowledge leaders, who have as a main purpose, the creation of an internal environment that would support the sharing of knowledge, with positive direct influences on the increase of efficiency at an individual, as well as at an organizational level.

Thus, taking into consideration the new trends in the field of human resources, we once again emphasize that the performance of a company is determined by the quality of its knowledge assets management.

5 The response of K-M to increase HR-P in knowledge-based economy

A K-M dedicated to improve HR-P in the global learning economy must be based on six pillars:

- The ability of employees for continuous learning and using knowledge at the workplace;
- Developing a new culture of K-M;
- Knowledge or intangible assets must represent a key resource of an organization;
- Increasing the accessibility of knowledge;
- Creating an effective infrastructure or framework to share knowledge;
- Training HR staff for the new role in the K-M process;
- Continuous interactions between individuals or groups.

In principle, the K-M activities mean [6]:

- Acquisition (from conferences, workshops, competitors, customers feedback, employees ideas and suggestions, audits and external evaluations, public sector, trainings, courses, legislation, standards, etc.);
- Storage (in the data base or records on employees, customers, market, research, technologies, public authorities);
- Dissemination (through intranet, e-mail, reviews, informative bulletins, face to face communications, posters, graphics);
Innovation or improving knowledge (appealing to informal conversations, formal discussions, brainstorming sessions, formal trainings, elaborating guidelines and standards, on-the-job trainings, encouraging employees to be creative, innovative, open to get and to share knowledge);

Application of knowledge (for increasing operation, activity, process and management efficiency, continuous feedback from the beneficiary, continuously improving products, services and procedures, etc.).

Taking into consideration the new tendencies of the global environment, of the knowledge-based economy and of the impact of diversifying the needs of employees and organizations, an integrated K-M, that will support the objectives to be taken into account in view of improving HR-P, must be based on the following iterative activities: acquisition, preliminary processing, analysis and synthesis, structuring, encoding, storage, internal and external dissemination, internal and external feedback, innovation or correction and finally, the application of the knowledge that has been processed by going through these procedures in the current activity.

In the new economy, an improvement strategy for the employees’ performances is successful if it is based on the correct identification of the critical competences of the workers, on the one hand, as well as of the specific needs of the employees, on the other hand. Also, it is necessary that the competence accumulation process be continuously monitored, and, based on the results of this activity, it is necessary that action be taken in order to improve the K-M specific activities [7].

An overview picture of the K-M oriented towards the improvement of human resources performance of the organization indicates a cyclic process (Fig. 1), in which four main components operate:

- The ITC field, which provides the necessary support for operating any kind of activity in the informational economy;
- Cognitive Sciences, (physics, mathematics, chemistry, biology, engineering, sociology, borderline fields etc) with the role of generating and supplying new knowledge;
- Economics and Business Sciences focused on the economic profit of the new knowledge. This component part focuses on the stimulation of the creative use of knowledge because it represents the key to obtain the conveyed positive effects, either in the form of elaborating some new ideas, or as increased rates of economic efficiency and profitability;
- In their own turn, thanks to the quality increase in abilities and competences, human resources contribute to the development of ITC technology, the development of cognitive sciences by scientific research and technological progress, offering, at the same time, the information that is necessary in view of the progress of the business environment, as well as of the progress of the sciences that are related to the economical environment.

All four previously mentioned elements complete the information, work tools, methodology and techniques that K-M needs to reach the goal of increasing HR-P, supporting the acceleration of the transformation of human resources into a human capital.

We must not forget that the factors that currently determine and influence the human performances as of the present moments come from several sources:

- Informational barriers at a workplace level;
- The huge volume of new knowledge, data and information;
- The individual capacity to develop performance work;
- Available resources; quality of the work environment;
- Active reactions to external environment challenges, etc.

The above mentioned factors make it compulsory that the HR training activity be achieved systematically and systemically, that it be based on the most complete information sets that are
available, and that it be open to any methods, information sources and domains.

Based on this, the improvement process of the employees’ performances with reference to different work environments can be defined, from a restrictive point of view, as a set of methods and processes that shall be used to solve the problems, and, from a wider point of view, as a systematic process to set and analyze the most significant failures of the human performances, process that is destined to contribute to their future improvement.

To be efficient, the K–M process should be conceived and developed based on the costs - effects relationship, so that it should imply the achievements of ethical and justifiable interventions with a purpose to eliminate the weak points, and to make it possible to evaluate the results, both financially and non-financially.

As far as the knowledge society is concerned, K–M is a dynamic and continuous process. The reasons for the application of correction interventions in case of non-performances, as well as the criteria that are at the bases of the selection of these interventions, should persuade the shareholders with reference to the efficiency of their enforcement.

There is more to it, all through the duration of the measure implementation, it shall be compulsory to monitor the achieved progress and to interfere should the consequences of the corrections be others than the estimated ones [8].

The HR leaders must conceive and design the looked for performance level, and must come to terms with the fact that the improvement of the performances represents the exclusive and singular, really important thing that competitive companies should deal with.

In their turn, those who are involved in activities to form and train HR should take under consideration the fact that if they can contribute to the improvement of the human resource performances of the organization, then, they shall participate, in fact, in the increase of the organization value as a whole.

The human resource training level, that currently influences the performances that are achieved to a greater extent if compared to the previous decades, plays a decisive part so that, at the level of the organizations, intensive knowledge processes can be initiated, and the results of such activities can be applied to the current activities, in real time, with direct and positive consequences on the innovative and competitive aspects of individuals and companies.

### 6 Conclusion

The aggressive competition environment, where companies shall resist and develop, makes it compulsory for them to observe quality standards that are difficult to abide by.

This handicap can be overcome only by means of a continuous improvement process regarding the individuals’ and the organizations’ performances. The economic competitiveness is the major condition for a nation to impose itself at the international level.

To this purpose, the labor force shall be educated to be able to develop their activities at superior quality levels, thus being able to use modern procedures to acquire and handle information sets, advanced productive technologies, a wide and diverse range of specialty knowledge, etc.

But, for example, the efficient and constructive use of the new technologies implies a-priori accumulations of a huge volume of knowledge related to the scientific and technical principles that are necessary the efficient exploitation of these ones. This aspect is even more important since the modern technologies are the ones that are more frequently conceived to operate in other environments.

This way, it is additionally compulsory that knowledge accumulations be made in view of adapting the technologies to the economic environment to which they are brought.

Mention should be made here that the transfer of modern technological capacities is more difficult, and it implies higher costs than the transfer of equipment or know-how as it almost always implies significant efforts, translated into investments to be carried out along relatively long periods of time, and into the assignment of human resources and financial capabilities of huge dimensions.

Starting from the wide range of elements that we must take into account when approaching the HR–P issue, we acknowledge that the improvement of HR–P in the current economy cannot any more be limited to the improvement of the competences that are specific to the current activity.

Under the conditions in which the organizational culture tends to the transformation of companies into modern organizations of learning, the improvement of the performances should be extended along multiple plans, namely:

- Professionally;
- Socially;
- Psychologically;
- Cognitively;
- Behaviorally;
- Deontological;
• Technologically;
• The affective plan, as well.
The dynamics of modifications is that accelerated, that, it is only the personalities that develop in a balanced, complete and complex way that shall be able to resist.
Under the present economic conditions, there can be noticed an underlined tendency of the large companies to make dramatic savings to be able to survive.
Due to it, to lay off well trained employees who are extremely well paid could represent a solution. However, such a decision would be a huge mistake as it is due to such employees, who, by means of their abilities and competences that they have accumulated further to serious efforts and endeavors during long periods of time, that the best and safest solution to assure the companies’ success and stability could be granted during economic downturn periods.
As far as the present period is concerned, the key to the economic and social progress is concentrated on knowledge-workers, since they represent the solution for an effective K-M, well integrated in a business administration strategy, in a dynamic and competitive K-economy.
The fast rate of technical and scientific advances has triggered a matching increase in the amount of new knowledge, which has brought about the need to develop new structures able to provide for and to facilitate the accumulation of new skills and abilities, as well as the setting up of proper conditions to valorize scientific research output in the economy [9].
Nowadays, the main objective of developed countries in the world has been the transformation and consolidation of national economies as knowledge-based economies. The desire and efforts to acquire this status have deeply altered the significance, structure and content of learning. Against the background of global economy and an unprecedented stress on world-level competition, mere accrual of knowledge is no longer enough.
It is true that the characteristics of the economic and social environment condition competitiveness (of individuals, companies and overall economies) based on the capacity to acquire and manage information, as well as the willingness to permanently assimilate new knowledge.
As a final conclusion, we have to say that yet, taking into account the overwhelming dynamics of high-performance technologies, the ability to use creativity in current, daily activities and to effectively capitalize it, with direct positive effects on economic profitability, is significantly more important.

References: