

DO MANAGERS HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The question if management is a science or an art is frequently present, even nowadays. The correct answer to this question depends first upon a clear understanding of the meaning of the key terms: science and art. Many successful managers emphasize the importance of utilizing both, science and art in their everyday working. Even though managers can be science-oriented in their decision-making, they often need to solve issues based on their experience, intuition or instinct. However, managers can perform better by using the organized knowledge about management. Hence, it can be said that, managing as practice is an art and the organized knowledge underlying the practice may be referred to as a science. Therefore, when it comes to management, science and art are not mutually exclusive, but are complementary.

Additional approach to observing the managerial activity entails categorizing the skills required to perform the work. Any effective managerial activity requires possessing different types of skills, depending on the activity itself. There are three main types of skills that managers need to possess.

Unanticipated situations that companies face, like the COVID-19 pandemic, force them to think strategically about the potential future changes they can undertake. Furthermore, many companies will very likely face future of uncertainty. Future scenarios of potential disruptions of different kind are considered by many, to be very likely. Being in uncharted territory is especially challenging, since many of the decisions in these situations can be often either very positive or very negative for the organization.

KEYWORDS

Management, science, art, skills, crisis

JEL CLASSIFICATION CODES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Being relatively new area of studying organized human functioning, management still somehow battles to gain the status of scientific field, even though it is recognized by many as such. There are still views that do not see science in management, but rather luck, intuition, resourcefulness etc, while others see it as a subfield of economics.

From the beginnings of management that occurred with Frederick Taylor's "The principles of scientific management" (1911) and Henry Fayol's "General and Industrial Management" (1916), up until nowadays management got to be recognized as a separate scientific field. (Krалев and Krалева, 2016)

For more than hundred years, management as maybe no other area, tries to promote its scientific dimension. At its beginnings, all authors, including Taylor and Fayol, were determining principles as an evidence of management being a science. Taylor's four principles of management and Fayol's

fourteen principles of management are still valid in this day and age. Moreover, they can be applied nowadays, even though companies have gone through substantial changes from the time these principles were introduced. Additionally, after World War II, Operations Research gained its prominence.

Along with proving the scientific character of management, another issue arose, and that is whether management is only science or does it include art and skills as well.

2. MANAGEMENT: SCIENCE OR ART?

The question whether management is a science or an art is frequently present, even nowadays. The answers are not uniform, but rather diverse. However, if one observes a manager's job, it can be easily concluded that it involves both science and art. Managers face a range of different situations and they often find themselves in one of the ten different roles, as described by Mintzberg, well known name in management theory. Understandably, the degree of uncertainty and complexity of their decision-making is contingent on the position they hold, among other variables.

The correct answer to this question first and foremost depends upon a clear understanding of the meaning of the key terms: science and art. The emphasis in any activity that is referred as an art is on applying skills and knowledge and accomplishing an end through deliberate efforts. So, when this notion is applied to managerial activity, it can be concluded that management is an art. Science, in contrast, involves seeking new knowledge through the use of rigorous methods of collecting data, measuring it, setting up hypotheses and testing those hypotheses. An in-depth observation can easily lead to the conclusion that management has given increased attention to its scientific aspects. (Massie, 1986)

According to Pierce and Dunham (1990) science is a body of knowledge that has evolved through controlled systematic investigation. Science provides explanations, descriptions and predictions about a certain phenomenon under investigation. Moreover, there is a large body of scientific management literature based on such analyses. The *art* in management becomes visible in the application of the knowledge derived from scientific investigation. Furthermore, science documents and discusses and art creates. A body of management knowledge has been developed through systematic and controlled examination. However, managers who rely only on this knowledge, often deny the significance of intuition, common sense or feelings. Effective managers increase their knowledge and develop skills necessary to apply that knowledge artfully.

Mary Parker Follet, one of the pioneers of the organizational theory, defined management as an art. However, her definition is not universally accepted. It is generally considered that management does involve certain degree of skills. But there is still an ongoing debate about just how management should be classified: as an art, as a science or as a profession? (James and Wankel, 1986)

Furthermore, Boettinger (1975) has the same outlook on management as Follet. According to him, painting or poetry (or any other fine or literary art) requires three components: the artist's vision, knowledge of craft and successful communication. In these respects, management is an art, for it requires the same components. For that reason, just as artistic skill can be developed through training, so can managerial skill be developed in similar ways to those used in training artists.

On the other hand, Gulick (1963) defined management as a "field of knowledge that seeks to systematically understand why and how men work together to accomplish objectives and to make these cooperative systems more useful to mankind". He then, goes on to explain that management meets the requirements for a field of knowledge, because it has been studied for some time and has been organized into series of theories. According to him, management can be considered to have become science, when theory would be able to guide managers by telling them what to do in a particular situation and enabling them to predict the consequences of their actions (Gulick, 1963). This has happened from the time that Gulick lived and worked. Management science, a term which is often interchangeably used with the term Operations research, is a distinctive discipline that uses scientific approaches for improving the performance of the management.

Numerous issues in management can be addressed in a manner that is logical, objective and rational. Managers can collect data, facts, information... They can use quantitative models and decision-making techniques in order to help them get to the optimum decision. Scientific approach is needed when

dealing with solving problems whenever possible, especially when they face issues that are unclear or non-routine.

Even though managers can be science-oriented in their decision making, they often need to solve issues based on their experience, intuition or instinct. For instance, if managers rely to a great extent on the conceptual or interpersonal skills, they might find themselves in a situation where they would need to choose between equally acceptable paths. (Kralev and Kraleva, 2016)

Managing, just like any other practice - engineering, football, music composing ... – is an art. More precisely, it is know-how. It is doing things in the light of the reality of a situation. Additionally, managers can perform better by using the organized knowledge about management. It is this knowledge, whether basic or advanced, that, to the extent that it is well organized, clear and relevant, constitutes a science. Hence, it can be said that, managing as practice is an art and the organized knowledge underlying the practice may be referred to as a science. Therefore, it can be concluded that, when it comes to management, science and art are not mutually exclusive, but are complementary. As science improves over time, so should the practice. This includes not just management, but all practices. The science underlying managing, having in mind the fact it does not go back centuries, is relatively basic, and to some extent inexact. This is true, because of the variables that the managers deal with, which are very complex. The internal and external environments of any organization are multifaceted and demand unique approach. However, the management knowledge as is available can certainly improve managerial practice. Physicians without the advantage of science would be little more than witch doctors. Executives who attempt to manage without management science turn to intuition, luck, or past experience. In managing, unless practitioners are to learn by trial and error, there is no place they can turn for meaningful guidance, other than the accumulated knowledge underlying their practice. (Koontz and Wehrich, 1988)

Mary Parker Follet defined management as “getting things done through people”. This vague definition is actually a very good description of management, and one of the most used ones. It sums up and presents in a very straightforward way what managers actually do, without using complex terminology like other definitions. Management is often regarded as “getting things done”, and by this it puts emphasis on the *art* of performing the job. Nevertheless, many studies have emphasized the *science* aspect of managing, which is, systematic approaches to problem solving and decision-making. Thus, management is a combination of art and science that requires both, the behavioral and systematic approaches. (Sang, 1988)

Similar view on management is presented by Wren and Voich (1994). According to them, management is composed of both art and science. *Art* in management is visible in the decisions, creativity, experience and the individualism that are traits of the managerial style. *Art* is something that cannot be easily taught. It is difficult to teach one to use common sense, be creative etc, even though it can be improved in a classroom through different experiences that can be gained by learning. The *science* part is more easily learned.

The view that management is both science and art was further supported by Megginson *et al* (1997). According to them, it can be assumed that effective managers use scientific approach in decision-making. They further explain that managers systematically observe that a problem exists, gather data about it and the prospective solutions to it. After they have done that, they go on to generalize about the potential outcomes, and then make the optimum decisions. Nevertheless, in many aspects of planning, leading and communicating with people, managers must use also the artistic approach, basing their decisions on judgment, intuition or gut feeling. Consequently, the question is not whether effective management is a science based on application of a systematic body of management knowledge, or an art, based on an acquired skill. To a certain extent, effective management is a combination of the both, in varying proportions in different situations. Namely, the managerial activity depends on many variables, including the predominant management style, the organizational culture and the expertise of the managers, among others. Furthermore, the management level determines what kind of decisions managers make predominantly, programmed or non-programmed. Subsequently, different situations will require different combination of art and science.

It has to be noted, that management is not a “hard” science, like the natural sciences, like for instance, chemistry or physics are. It is considered a “soft” science like other social sciences. In physics, according to the Newton’s third law of motion “to every action, there is always an equal and opposite

reaction". This law describes invariably true relationship, with no exception. However, this is not the case for management. Management has numerous concepts, which are generalizations that tend to be true, but are not always. It is different from a law, which is consistently true, under all circumstances. So, the art of management involves the skill of knowing when and when not to apply management concepts in varying situations. Additionally, it requires that managers use judgment when previous experience or training does not provide solid principle on which to rely. It should also be noted that many managers do not have formal training in management, and nevertheless are very successful, relying on the *art* in practicing management. Megginson *et al* (1997)

Overall, the literature on this question suggests that most of the academics agree that management does include both, science and art. However, the degree of utilizing any of them depends on many variables.

3. MANAGEMENT SKILLS

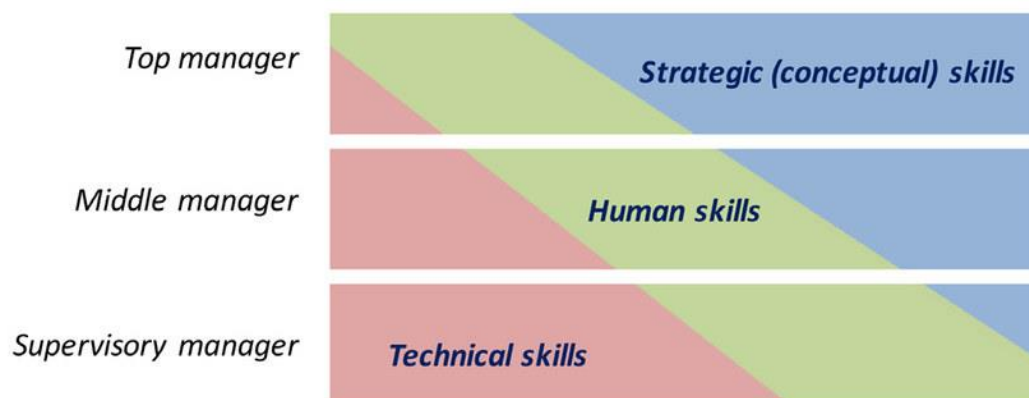
Another approach to observing the managerial activity entails categorizing the skills required to perform the work. Any effective managerial activity requires possessing different types of skills, depending on the activity itself.

There are three main types of skills that managers need to possess: technical, human (relations) and conceptual. The relative significance of any of these skills to a certain manager at a given time depends on many variables, like the type of the organization, the managerial level, the function being performed etc.

The technical skills involve being able to perform a particular job. They imply that the managers should be able to use the tools and techniques of their specific area. The human relations skills entail understanding people as well as being able to work with them. These skills allow the manager to understand the employee motivation and group processes. Possessing conceptual skills means being able to understand the relationship of the parts of a business to one another, and to the business as a whole. These skills are especially important for decision-making and planning. Moreover, they represent the manager's ability to organize and analyze information in order to improve the performance of the organization. The conceptual skills are needed for successful coordination, so that the whole organization can pull together. (Openstax, 2019)

These three types of skills were suggested by R. L. Katz in the 70-ties of the 20th century, and until nowadays there is practically no textbook on management in which they are not mentioned. However, it should be noted that different levels of these skills are required for different management levels. Top management positions require far more conceptual skills, than technical skills. On the other hand, first-line managers need more technical, than conceptual skills. The human relations or people skills are equally important and needed at all three levels. (figure 1)

Figure 1. Different management skills required by manager level (Kang *et al*, 2017)



Even though these three types of skills are agreed upon and accepted by numerous scholars, there are some authors which have somewhat of a different outlook. Namely, according to Buble (2010) there are two types of management skills: basic and specific skills. The basic skills encompass conceptual, people, technical and decision-making skills, whereas the specific skills involve skills related to the management functions: planning, organizing, human resources management, leadership and controlling. Similar division of the needed management skills is presented by Madura (2007), according to whom there are conceptual, interpersonal, technical and decision-making skills. On the other hand, Megginson *et al* (1997) add administrative skills to the generally accepted three types of skills.

Furthermore, according to the American Management Association, most managers need conceptual skills, efficiency skills, communication skills and interpersonal skills. (Robbins and Coulter, 2005)

As Henry Mintzberg, one of the renowned modern academics in the field of management, states “if one combines some “part” of art, with certain “quantity” of skills and something of science, one gets a type of job that is primarily a practice”. So, according to him, management is a combination of great deal of art, smaller part of skills and lesser part of science. (Mintzberg, 2009)

4. MANAGING IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Managers often face an array of different situations in their daily activities, which is first and foremost dependent on the management level and the type of organization. Sometimes a manager’s decision-making is straightforward, and this happens when they encounter routine situations and can use programmed decision-making. However, very often they need to solve non-routine issues and their decision-making is nonprogrammed. This is especially challenging, since many of the decisions in these situations can often be either very positive or very negative for the organization.

Furthermore, when businesses face complex and unanticipated situations, like the COVID-19 pandemic that occurred in March 2020, most of them tend to put people’s lives first, especially the safety and health of their employees, while maintaining critical operations for continuity. They should also be engaging as soon as possible in exploring recovery options, potentially needed changes in strategy and business models along with possibilities to advance the financial, technical and operational resilience in future. (Samans and Nelson, 2020)

It is very frequent occurrence that unanticipated and unplanned situations that companies face, like the COVID-19 pandemic, force them to think strategically about the potential future changes they can make. Numerous businesses began practically immediately considering the so called “new reality” and its impact. Namely, many companies began considering to allow their employees to work remotely in the future, even when the pandemic ends. The term WHF (working from home) became very popular and something that many businesses are considering as the “new normal” in future. This is a substantial change and it requires a great deal of adjustment from operational perspective.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a huge obstacle for normal continuity for most companies, and they had to adjust very quickly and adapt their functioning. Because of the possibilities that the information technology offers nowadays, it was feasible for many companies to shift rather fast and allow many of their employees, if not all, to work from home.

However, there was another challenge that many companies faced because of the pandemic, not solely the challenge to adapt to the new reality and continue to work normally. Many businesses changed their focus from profit to civic duty. They jumped to the aid of the health care industry, shifting their production to masks or disinfectants. For instance, as *Business Insider* reported on May 27, 2020 many of the world-renowned fashion brands are helping fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Namely, the famous brand Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH) has been manufacturing and distributing free hand sanitizer in France using the factories it normally uses for perfume and cosmetics production. Ralph Lauren reported to be producing 250.000 masks and 25.000 gowns in USA. Prada announced it was producing 80.000 medical overalls and 110.000 masks in its Italian factory. Chanel says it’s working with its partners and volunteers from its workshops to make protective masks and gowns. Yves Saint Laurent and Balenciaga are committed to producing face masks at their French workshops.

Moreover, some companies shifted their mission to help relief efforts in fighting the pandemic. In general, numerous organizations worldwide went into action to support the people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and this was reflected in their functioning.

All the changes that the companies went through during this pandemic, certainly disrupted their normal operations. However, for many of them it opened a window for future positive changes. It ushered in many changes that the companies as they report, were going to implement anyway, like remote working. Many companies will likely see a change in the so-called office-centered culture.

Unfortunately, this crisis is not over, so it is difficult to predict for the time being, what the consequences will be for the companies. This economic disruption tested the resilience of basically every company worldwide. Understandably, not all industries are affected equally. Some industries had to learn rapidly how to sustain operations without risking the lives of their employees, whereas other like leisure, hospitality and retail were probably hit the hardest and laid off many of their employees. (Poole, 2020)

As Samans and Nelson (2020) point put “systemic crises and shocks are on the rise, ranging from financial crises, recession and political conflicts to natural disasters, the impact of climate change and pandemics.... To improve preparedness [the boards of the organizations] must undertake more regular and sophisticated scenario analysis and horizon-scanning activities, stress-test the company’s resilience against shocks that may have system-wide implications, and put crisis response and emergency succession plans in place for mission critical roles at the executive and operating level.”

Future scenarios of potential disruptions of different kind are considered by many, to be very likely. As Poole (2020) states “the reality, ultimately, is that crises like this will happen again”. So, organizations need to prepare accordingly. Overall, an optimal combination of science, art and skills can surely greatly contribute to the successful managing in potential crisis.

5. CONCLUSION

There are still views nowadays by some, which do not see science in management, but rather luck, intuition, resourcefulness etc, while others see it as a subfield of economics.

The question is no longer whether effective management is a science based on application of a systematic body of management knowledge, or an art, based on an acquired skill. Many academics agree that to a certain extent, effective management is a combination of both, in varying proportions in different situations. Additionally, any effective managerial activity requires possessing different types of skills, depending on the activity itself.

Overall, an optimal combination of science, art and skills can surely greatly contribute to the successful managing in any potential crises, which are predicted by many, to be very likely in future.

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