

Managing high need for achievement in youth organizations

❖ MIHAELA VLAD ❖

Student organizations in Romania are beginning to take their role as "bridge builders" more and more seriously. In order to effectively link the theoretical world in the classroom to the social realities and the demand of the labour market, these student organizations need: solid values, the ability to provide challenging development opportunities for members and not least, determined and inspiring managers.

Key words: responsibility, young leaders, role models, team workers.

We are witnessing a crisis of well-prepared **young workforce** and an increasing number of determined and success-driven young men and women, with merely a bachelor degree, but already leading teams and managing resources in medium and large-sized companies. Lack of skills and knowledge, not to mention the proper attitude to succeed in business contexts, are leading to a Romanian labour market where competent 25-year-olds have

easier access to **better paid positions** than ever before. Consequently, the role of the academic educational system has become critical in "providing" better educated graduates. To help universities, student NGOs are taking more responsibility than before in **preparing young people** for the labour market.

Simply put, the mission of most students organizations is to: select ambitious and performance-oriented young students, involve them in different

projects (which develop both skills and certain life and work values), provide affordable **training** and **development** opportunities and then have them “delivered” to companies. This might explain why employers frequently prefer to hire young people who have been members of student organizations rather over those who have not.

The context of voluntary student organizations

On the other hand, membership in a students' association does not necessarily equal better performance in an organizational context. The NGO needs to encourage an environment of **ambitious objectives** and high achievement, thus assuming a real responsibility for its members. In fact, ambitious projects and **effective non-financial motivation** are at the basis of NGO development. In order to be competitive, students' organizations need members who are motivated (a team leader's main priority) and have a high need for achievement.

In project teams, members have different **esteem needs**: achievement, confidence, independence, recognition, importance, appreciation. In smaller organizations and particularly in student NGOs, managing the esteem needs of members is primarily focused on **encouraging higher performance** and **self-motivation**.

How to identify a person with a high need for achievement?

People with high needs for achievement will:

1. Prefer tasks in which they have to achieve a **standard of excellence** rather than simply carrying out **routine activities**.
2. Prefer doing jobs in which they get **frequent and clear feedback** on how well they are doing to help them perform better.
3. Prefer activities that involve **moderate risks of failure** – high risk activities lead to failure, low risk activities do not offer challenge or an opportunity to demonstrate ability.
4. Have a good memory for unfinished tasks and **do not like to leave things incomplete**.
5. Can be **unfriendly** and **unsociable** when they do not want others to get in the way of their performance.
6. Have a sense of urgency, appear to be **in a hurry**, to be working against time and have an **inability to relax**.

Managing high-achievement needs

The **need for achievement** is a general concern with meeting standards of excellence and the desire to be successful in competition.

In most cases, one general objective of every student organization is to educate its members in the spirit of volunteering and developing the “right”

attitude in order to be successful. This objective can often be reached by building a **high-achievement culture**, based on a set of **organizational values**.

The leader of a student team should pay great attention to getting a large number of team members to have bigger needs of achievement. This process could include:

- a. **Establishing standards of excellence.** If the organization as a whole does not have clear standards, these should be established at least at the level of project teams. An organization without high standards is more likely to have high personnel turnover and a reduced number of young people with great potential.
- b. **Communicating expectations clearly.** This includes assuring that everyone has understood the values and standards of performance and has agreed with them.
- c. Being a **role model**, using the power of example to send a message about desired behaviour and approach to task fulfillment.
- d. **Minimizing the fear of failure** some students may have, due to the lack of previous experience.
- e. **Regularly discussing strategic objectives**, besides focused tasks and plans.
- f. **Providing feedback** in due time and also **evaluation of performance** for members of the team.
- g. Not treating every team member equally (as traditional management would) and encouraging the **develop-**

ment of new leaders, with higher potential than the average.

- h. Finding the proper ways to **motivate each team member individually**.
- i. Providing an environment that **requires**, not just encourages continuous **learning and development of new skills**.
- j. **Defining project objectives** that are large enough to bring satisfaction and small enough to be "achievable".

Radically, but realistically speaking, **the manager of a student team should take it upon himself to be the reason people want to stay**, to continue activating in the organization.

Who will benefit from student organizations being oriented towards high-achievement?

1. **Members of student NGOs**, by increasing their chances to get **better job positions**, based on acquired skills and knowledge by volunteering in projects.
2. **Employers in the selection process:** more efficient selection interviews and possibly a higher level of personnel retention, by hiring better career oriented candidates.
3. **Employers in the induction training and further on:** new employees can come with a good understanding of an organizational structure and of their own role. Furthermore, they are familiar with **reporting systems** and have abilities to **work in teams** and even manage resources (basic project management).

4. **All stakeholders** than rely on the young generation to make changes and provide new solutions to old problems.

Being part of an NGO with values and standards is an experience worth having, not only because it offers **better chances at a good job**, but also because of the **learning opportunities**. It doesn't really matter if it is an international or local volunteer organization, as long as the members enrich their life and work experience.

It is the first step towards being

referred to as a “**young professional**”, even if you have never really been “on the payroll”.

It is in the power of student organizations to “shape” young people into having “what it takes” to be successful professionals. And considering that hierarchical structures have lower chances of being effective, the key to being a top-choice student NGO might just be the **competence** and **personality traits of team leaders**. And of course the perpetuation of **new talents** and **continuous growth**.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. **P. F. Drucker**- *Management*, Pan Books&Heinemann, London, 1977
 2. **P. F. Drucker**- *The post-business knowledge society begins*, Industry Week, April 17,1989
 3. **S. G. Toma**- *Defining management for the twenty-first century*, Amfiteatru Economic, nr. 19, Editura ASE, Bucuresti, 2006
- 