

# Managerial skills and the managerial culture in the knowledge society

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**Abstract:** Organizational performance is considered, in last decades, to be not only the result of using the capabilities and resources of the organization, but also the result of “how things are done” in the organization towards the achievement of the objectives set. The most complex evaluation and performance improvement programs are giving due importance today to issues such as organizational culture and human behavior; skills for change, managerial skills and managerial competences models, or intangible assets such as knowledge management and organizational learning. The emergence of knowledge management, further developing the concept of intellectual capital from the 1990s, led to the creation of a knowledge society in the last three decades. Moreover, the corporate culture is perceived as a shift in thinking for employees and managers, and the managerial culture puts its full mark on it – through the role models offered by managers who continue to be the “hard core” of it. Putting into practice this approach, we will consider some aspects of how managerial skills and the managerial culture are shared and manifested today in the knowledge society.

**Keywords:** managerial skills; managerial competencies models; managerial culture; knowledge society.

### 1. Introduction. Theoretical approaches

In the last decades, the role of managerial thinking in creating a strong company culture is consistently recognized - as in turn, organizational culture is seen as a management tool, closely intertwined with the effects of managerial thinking. "It is recognized that (this) would help managers enormously in the struggle for organizational control: if they could get their employees to subscribe to corporate convictions entered in the corporate Bible - especially if they themselves could write this Bible." (Watson, p.256, Watson, 2006). During the nearly 15 years that scientists have intensively analyzed the phenomenon of the managerial culture (1994 to 2008), there were found plenty of evidence to demonstrate the impact of managerial culture on organizational performance and on the organizational capabilities for change. According to Edgar Schein (1980, 2004) - one of the leading authors in the field of organization and work culture - organizational culture refers to the internal environment of companies and to the habits (or practices, or "ways of doing" things, or manners) existing therein. Back in 1999, he observed many manifestations of the culture of the company defined as "the way we do things here, "rite and rituals of our company", "climate of the enterprise", "reward system" or "our core values" (Schein, 2004, p. 15).

Returning to the roots of the concept of organizational culture as redefined by Schein in 2004, there are three distinct levels in defining an organizational culture:

- the artifacts and behaviors - that "what is" or "what part" of an organization and their level most visible is composed of attitudes, initiatives, actual behaviors, "schemes" of work and physical

environment, other observable patterns and outward manifestations of culture, such as the dress code, the language used (or accepted) at work etc.

- the values manifested and lived by - or "operational" values, which translate into work strategies, goals and philosophies of the organization; they are so named in contrast to the "established" or "declared" values, which are not as noticeable as the concrete work behaviors or physical artifacts - although employees within organizations will assign their working behaviors to the declared values;

- the beliefs, assumptions and the core values: these are the "inner" values, intrinsic beliefs and priorities - this is the real and most profound level of culture, being the home of exhibited values, of manifested and outside behaviours. Here are stored the learned values, the internal beliefs and assumptions of managers and leaders, shared and considered safe ("guaranteed" or implicit) by the organization - by members of the organization which is aligned with this set of values and beliefs, for being believed „the right ones" for the company's success. They are the ultimate, paramount source of thoughts and actions.

Schein (1998, 2004) also defined five primary mechanisms that leaders can use as important tools to shape the way how their organizations perceive, think, feel and behave, due to their own values and beliefs, of awareness or not.

1. The aspects and elements which leaders pay attention to, which they regularly measure and control;

2. How leaders react to critical incidents and organizational crises;

3. How leaders allocate resources, rewards and status;

4. The deliberate roles modeling - training and development of managers through coaching;

5. How leaders recruit, select, promote and dismiss staff.

We recognise in these five mechanisms some fundamental activities that define the day-to-day work of managers - resource allocation, monitoring, evaluation and control, team working and human resources organization, training of the management team or management succession planning, decision making and implementation in specific contexts, organizational communication. The formation mechanisms of this organizational culture creates the frame of skills through which the business results and performance of the company are acquired. The first interpretation that we can assign to the organizational culture, in terms of its system of management and organization, is finding its intrinsic and indissoluble connection with the concept of managerial culture: how "the manager is", the same goes for the company he manages (whose manager he/ she is appointed). The managerial culture is dialectical unified with the organizational culture, which - as a consequence - it can largely determine, shape or modify.

The organizational culture has been researched also by Ch. Handy (1985, 1999), who defined four types of culture as being dominant:

- the „power-type“ of culture, in which performance is judged by results - because organizations tend to be tolerant to the means by which they were obtained. Culture may appear harsh and abrasive and successes can be accompanied by high turnover, but also by low morale as some employees do not reach their target or waive competitive atmosphere;

- the „task-type“ culture: the structure of this organization can best be represented as a net or a network - jobs, due to work-based projects or targeted at bringing together adequate resources and the right people at the right level to assemble these resources, for the accomplishment of a particular project and tasks ("get the job done").

- the „role-type“ culture: such organizations are characterized by highly specialized or functional areas, coordinated by a narrow segment of superior managers (top or senior managers) with a high degree of formalization and standardization; functional business areas and their interactions are controlled by rules and procedures that define the workplace, the level of influence and authority that characterizes them, how dispute communication and resolution are done. It cultivates the power of position at the expense of personal power, and the expert power is tolerated only to the post held by same expert. The efficiency of this culture type depends on the rationality of allocating tasks and on the perceived responsibility, less on the personality of managers.

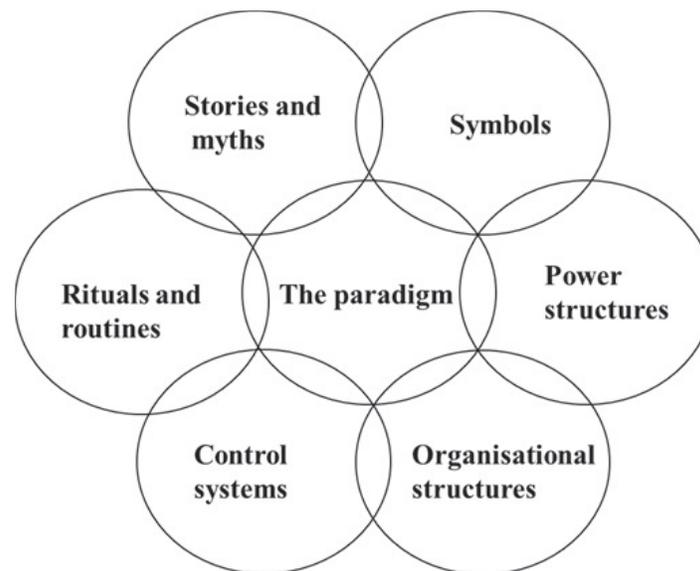
- the „person-type“ culture (or support type): a culture less common, although many employees and managers expose its values. In this culture the individual is the focal point; where there is an organizational structure, it exists only to serve and assist individuals within it, to promote their interests first, having no other priority objective.

Gerry Johnson & Jonathan Scholes (1998) deepened the concept of organizational culture by defining it as a "cultural web" that aligns strategy and culture of any organization ("a new paradigm for working environment"). The cultural web (or cultural network) is an organization composed of six

elements (see diagram below) and these are: his Stories, rituals and routines ; its Symbols - any visual representations of the organization; the Organizational Structure of the company; the Control systems - including financial systems, quality assurance systems

and reward system - how they are measured and distributed within the organization; the Power structures - employees who have the greatest influence on decisions, operations and strategic direction.

Fig. 1. Diagram of the organizational culture: "the cultural web" (source: Johnson și Scholes, 1988)



Analyzing the model of „cultural web“ leads us in the most direct way to fundamental managerial tasks and managerial culture - see the elements: power structures and control systems, also organizational structures.

We note from this review of main theories in the field that the managerial activity determines and is determined in its turn by the managerial culture; that the action levers of culture (organizational, managerial culture) are faithfully reflected in all the components of basic managerial functions (Fayol, 1916), which ultimately generate the economic performance of the organization.

## 2.The managerial competencies. Models of managerial competencies

In a general definition, competence is the sum of the basic characteristics of a person who lead or cause actual or higher performance in an activity performed by this person. Managerial skills are a specific, particular type of individual skills; they are the activities, knowledge, skills and attitudes and also personal characteristics of managers, needed to ensure and improve the managerial performance. When they wish to specify in more detail the managerial skills, experts often mention analytical skills, interpersonal

skills, decision making skills, processes orientation and focus on results, the ability to work independently, loyalty, empathy and emotional competence, the ability to self-regulation / self-control, resistance to stress and motivation.

Based on a comprehensive study, Richard Boyatzis defined in 1982 the skills as being the individual's abilities to behave in a way that meets the requirements of the workplace in given environmental parameters (internal and external) of the organization - and to obtain desired results. In his work he called "threshold competency" those critical skills essential to the management, which does not necessarily have a causal relationship with significant efficiency and superior performance of an organization. In other words, they are generic skills demonstrated by those who occupy the position and perform its tasks to the standard level. Taking further his study (for over 30 years), in 2008 Boyatzis showed that high performing managers seem to have clusters of "threshold" competencies (expertise and experience, specialized knowledge, a set of basic cognitive skills) and clusters of competencies that differentiate high performing managers from standard executives, for the results, that are: cognitive competences, emotional intelligence and social intelligence.

Harold Schroder (1989), a psychologist and professor of Princeton University, uses a similar classification that distinguishes

between basic skills and core competencies for high performance. Basic skills are defined as the knowledge and essential abilities needed for realising the managerial tasks - skills that are associated with specific behaviors that ensure the effectiveness of a manager. High performance skills are relatively stable behavioral manifestations of managers, due to which the entire team led by that manager can achieve excellent results, over standards. Schroder's model is a behavioral analysis framework for managers' and leaders' performance, which operates 12 competence (or behaviors) selected to measure and develop their performance. Due to its validity rigorously tested, the model is now widely considered a landmark for the development of individuals and teams in organizations anywhere in the world. The model is underlying management and talent development programs implemented by numerous major companies, for their managerial structures.

The model uses some specific behaviors that have proven to be consistently associated with superior performance (and therefore they can anticipate it) where the companies and their leaders face complex situations, rapidly changing or very competitive environments. Schroder has identified that the leaders of these teams or organizations will not only survive but will thrive when possessing the following groups (clusters) of specific behaviors:

Fig. 2: The 12 behaviors grouped into clusters: the Schroder Behavioural Framework (1989)



We see in the chart the subdivision of high performance competencies in cognitive skills (thinking), motivational skills (inspires), directional (inspires) and performance related skills (acting). It is important to note that these clusters of behavior are not like other skills and technical attributes, such as the abilities and managerial skills as defined by the specific activities of the managerial work - which are important as skills, but are not a differentiating factor between average performance and superior performance. Other features of the Schroder model: these skills can be developed - they are not innate; they are well defined - they cannot require or influence each other, and over time they remain relevant to performance. Although they were listed 12 different behaviors, successful

leaders demonstrate an average of five or six of them at high level. In addition, a leader does not need to show all 12 behaviors at a strong level to drive team performance: different combinations of behavior manifested can bring the same results, even when they are complementary behaviors of its members.

According to Spencer and Spencer (1993), managerial skills are a subset of specialized skills, expressing the intention to have some specific effects. These specific intentions are particularly important for managers, but remain a subset: the "iceberg" model proposed by Spencer shows the positioning of these managerial skills over work motivation, self-awareness and self management.

Fig. 3. The Iceberg model of managerial skills (Spencer, L., Spencer, S., 1993)



Most organizations are using today their own competencies assessment systems as helpful tools in making decisions on recruitment and selection, staff promotions, career development and succession plans - or staff development through training programs. These systems, however, are effective only when they contain procedures and working methods based on validated behavioral standards in their organization, which reflect the internal organizational culture and management. The systems non-validated internally could not describe an efficient management to achieve organizational objectives - in other words, these systems skills cannot be simply imported, in theory or practice, from other players, but should reflect the attitudes, beliefs, characteristics underlying the desired behaviors - reflecting the culture of the organization - but also the way in which those characteristics can be acquired or how

they can be affected by future environmental changes, internally or externally.

Creating a competencies assessment system enables a stronger link between the initial education and training and the continuing one, allowing greater mobility in the labor market system for employees or managers. A competencies assessment system is necessarily linked to the global business strategy, to the vision of the organization and its growth goals.

Managerial skills deemed necessary for a standard performance level or for superior performance determines the creation of models for managerial competencies within the company. These competencies based on performance are evaluated only through observed behaviors - therefore the difficulty of a metrics' association is inherent in the process.

### 3. The Knowledge Society

Industrial society has been replaced in the last decades by the postindustrial society, where the means of production is strategic knowledge, strongly supported by innovative engine systems and information transmission systems, which created the framework for creating new intellectual technologies (D. Bell, 1989, J.J. van Cuilenburg et colab, 2004).

Information is "a common good" with the corollary: "once created, the information is by its nature accessible to all" (D. Bell, 1980). The concept of knowledge society was pre-figured by Academician Mihai Drăgănescu since 1986, from the philosophical concept of law trends; but in the 1990s the concept of knowledge society (Knowledge-Society) became widely known and grandfathered due to the works of Peter Drucker (Peter Drucker, 1989, 1993). Knowledge Society is currently the phrase used worldwide as an alternative to the name of "knowledge based society".

According to acad. M. Drăgănescu (2001), "Knowledge is information with meaning and operating, acting information. Therefore knowledge society is possible only grafted on information society and can not be separated from it." (M. Drăgănescu, 1986, 2001).

The leverage action of the knowledge society are (M. Drăgănescu, 2001):

- " Expand and deepen scientific knowledge and truth about existence;
- Use and management of existing knowledge as technological and organizational knowledge;
- Production of new technological knowledge through innovation;
- An unprecedented dissemination of knowledge to all citizens through new media,

using mainly the Internet, eBook and methods of learning through electronic processes (e-learning)".

The knowledge society is a new economy where the innovation process (the ability to assimilate and convert new knowledge to create new products and services) is crucial and that, unlike the old economy where tangibles received matter, in the new economy matter first the intangible assets, non-material ones, indescribable and especially not easy to quantify and measure, but that possess value and generate value (Iancu Șt., 2008).

The concept of social and economic knowledge society is promoted and implemented by all major international organizations to guard the fundamental aspirations of mankind - global peace and economic development by reducing disparities among the world (ONU, OECD, UNESCO etc.). As specified in the framework-documents of these institutions (e.g. UNESCO's Treaties, 2001, 2004, 2011), the knowledge society "is an innovative learning society and lifelong extended, possessing a community of scientists, researchers, engineers, technicians, research networks, and companies engaged in research and production of goods of high-tech and providing services."

This forms a national system of innovation-production, which is integrated into international production networks of knowledge, into the dissemination, the use and protection of them.

Its technological tools of communication and information make large amounts of human knowledge readily accessible. Knowledge is used to empower and enrich people, culturally and materially - and to

build a sustainable society. The fundamental assumptions by which the knowledge society makes the difference in the socio-economic development of humanity are:

- all forms of knowledge (scientific, tacit, vernacular, built-in, practical or theoretical, multi-sensory or textual, linear/ hierarchically organized or organized in network structure) are communicated in new ways;

- population's equal access to knowledge is vital, because the use and misuse of knowledge have a greater impact than ever before;

- the accessibility of information should not be a new form of social inequality;

- decreasing the widening gap between developed and developing countries should be a top political priority - no one can be left behind;

- whereas knowledge can not be understood without culture, research at the interface between indigenous knowledge / local knowledge and scientific knowledge must be developed;

- the access to knowledge should be considered as a right and must be protected by industrial interests in the short term, limiting such access;

- there should be a continuous dialogue between society and science, thereby promoting scientific literacy and strengthening the formative and advisory role of science;

- the scientific discourse should not be "gender blinded", and the barriers that prevent many women to choose careers in science and reach top positions should be overcome;

- the interest of younger generation in science and its commitment to a future of their countries driven by knowledge should be boosted by introducing innovative

teaching methods and by changing the image of science, using the media and the involvement of mentoring. (source: <http://www.sciforum.hu/previous-fora/2003/permanent-update/knowledge-based-society.html> )

The knowledge society has important connotations and ethical principles designed to ensure partnership between knowledge and society (scientific knowledge must stay "human" in terms of community and environment, with a perennial moral responsibility in protecting the cultural and linguistic heritage of humanity, its diversity); in a pluralistic society there are individuals in local or regional communities, but also in a national community as well at the same time, so that's why global ethic is a must.

As a result, topics such as managerial culture and managerial competencies put in the context of the knowledge society are supported by new concepts and tools such as: information society services; development of processing capability and use of information capacity, through education and access to new forms of communication; information and knowledge that have become drivers of economic growth and development; new systems of organization, coordination, leadership and managerial control and economic activity in general, etc. Rules have changed dramatically both in managing, maintaining and developing business, as well as in the administration of the formal education for their leaders - their "guarantors", the managers. And continue to change.

#### 4. Correlations and practical tools

At the end of the day, managers are expected to generate performance tracked in the new socio-economic and informational evolving medium of their companies, defined as the knowledge society. For any managerial competencies system they would propose to take, in order to monitor and develop their dependable performance level, contemporary organizations must first develop a new type of culture based on trust and genuine sharing of knowledge. Only a strong culture of knowledge supports further investment in training and development, supports the organizational learning that today is no longer limited to the classical formal training or specializations. Organizational learning includes all modes of acquisition of skills, competencies and knowledge that technology has made possible: long distance learning through e-learning platforms, opportunities to share work experience supported by internet and remote communication (teleworking or home work, team projects working etc.).

The managerial culture adapted to the "circuit" of knowledge facilitates this process of integration methods and new paradigms of work for employees and managers alike: learning organizations are more team and their people oriented than on results, but the people who work for them are able of sustainable superior performance. If by competence we mean a set of specific knowledge, abilities, skills, motivation and personal traits, attitudes and values that are important for personal development and the successful involvement of each manager or employee in an organization, all these aspects that define competence are involved directly or indirectly in performance, through the work conduct demonstrated by each manager / employee.

The managerial competencies model widely used today - validated also for Romanian organizations (<http://profilesinternational.ro/produse/checkpoint-360-cp360/>) – is the system (or profile) CheckPoint 360°, based on feedback to the defined managerial competences. This model is the most widespread of the models created from Schroder one (1989) and it was developed in about three decades of complex work by teams of Profiles International (a UK company, british and american experts). The research began in 1992, when an impressive team of clinical and professionals psychologists gathered to identify behaviors and attributes of effective managers and leaders. The first study involved 3,600 leaders with outstanding results. Over the past 13 years, the initial study has been refined with more than 500 000 profiles evaluated.

The most effective leaders have demonstrated strengths in 8 key areas (communication, delivering results, leadership, adaptability, managing activities, managing relationships, personal growth, developing others) later described each one by sub-sets of skills. The performance of a manager at work is analyzed by eight groups (clusters) of 18 universal skills and competencies, described as follows:

Listen to others | Processes the information | Communicate effectively | Inspires confidence | Provides guidance | Empowers | Adapts to circumstances | Thinks creatively | Builds personal relationships | Facilitates Team Success | Works efficiently | Demonstrates competence | Takes action | Gets results | Cultivates individual talents | Motivates Successfully | Displays Commitment | Seeks to improve.

Used as an organizational management diagnostic tool, the model is based on an customized, multi-layered evaluation process, which gives managers and leaders the opportunity to receive an evaluation of their performance at work from the people around them - the boss, peers/colleagues on same hierarchical level, subordinates/ people whose work they supervise. From this feedback, managers can compare the opinions of others with their own perceptions, can positively identify their strengths, they also identify areas where performance could be improved to work more effectively. It is an assessment tool for identifying development opportunities, based on performance - by combining the feedback from subordinates, peers, superiors or customers / partners, in order to design a specific and customized program, for the development of management and leadership skills and abilities.

CheckPoint 360° helps managers to identify the degree of development of their own managerial skills and to prioritize their development. At the same time, it helps the organization to reduce costs through better planned trainings and investments in managers' development, by reducing misunderstandings between senior managers and the second line, by increasing the employee productivity and job satisfaction. It is successfully used in several essential areas of human resources management, such as skills development, managerial abilities and competencies; developing and prioritizing the needs for managerial and leadership development; identification, management and talent development; strategic workforce planning and succession; teams' development; conflict resolution; guidance and self-improvement. CheckPoint 360° reports have

a special section dedicated to the personal growth, that coaches the manager and helps improve the performance in the relevant development areas. Thus, CheckPoint 360° is an effective system of managerial development that rewards properly the evaluation efforts, leading to improved performance through its systematic use.

When an organization chooses to integrate a model of managerial competencies in its major human activities and practices, the model must be shared with all managers and staff; employees' participation in the development of an internal, own competency model, leads to both a better awareness of the model, and to the acceptance of it: the involvement of managers and employees reduces resistance to change, unifies the meaning of individual and group expectations of the organizational performance and how it can be reached; helps "filling" efficiently the managerial skills gaps by proposing more refined, customized training and development training programs, faster and "better targeted" for acquiring desired knowledge, behaviors, attitudes. Being based on consensus, choosing such a system of managerial competencies includes all the organizational and managerial culture elements that provide decision support and contribute to its smooth implementation - value systems, beliefs and assumptions, the structure of power and control systems etc.

## 5. Conclusions

The managerial culture, by the value system running through its functions and roles as a separate component of organizational culture, makes important connections between variables outside the organization

and its internal environment. Managerial competence, as a variable within the organization with maximum impact reflected in the external environment, is strongly influenced by corporate culture - which makes the learning processes, adaptation and potential growth in the organization. The content, the features and the roles of the organizational culture show a growing interest in recent decades, as a result of multiple influences and direct dependencies referred to them in practicing organizations' management, between establishing development plans for the organization and the effective realization of these plans. Areas of impact of cultural elements are now recognized by specialists and non-specialists - they are: organizational communication, employee motivation, commitment and rules of socio-organizational behavior, planning, coordination, management, implementing change and leadership, economic performance of organizations and competitive advantages, and so on. As a primary vector of organizational culture and a performance analysis paradigm, managerial culture is still a new theme from the scientific and practical point of view, and is inextricably linked to the type of knowledge that organizations cultivate.

On the other hand, as the culture itself, knowledge and expertise are held by people - be they the managers or the employees of the organizations; they are intangible assets that exceed in importance technology and financial capital, in the knowledge society. The integration of managerial competencies with the human resource management system is critical to achieving their strategic objectives. Today, increasingly more organizations recognize and adopt the competencies based approach of their managerial structures, but

face cultural difficulties in using or setting up the managerial competencies systems required: common consensus regarding the competencies that managers must possess, to generate performance to the required level (or higher), is difficult to achieve.

The phenomenon and the concept of "knowledge society" offered interesting research topics, that have captured the curiosity of researchers interested in studying management and business or social sciences for at least a decade (1991-2000) - and continued with this common interest for the managerial culture, but - as a hint from personal observations - in the last 15 years, the managerial culture as a concept associated with the knowledge society has been replaced by the entrepreneurial culture, a concept more congruent with the intrinsic values of the knowledge society.

The influence of knowledge society context on the work of managers, on organizations and on the managerial culture has been attested in numerous works, for representing essentially a new cultural paradigm. Many works show its support in creating the knowledge society by developing intellectual technology (such as: the open source software or the franchise systems).

The managerial culture can constitute, in fact, an early signal of alignment with the principles and working mechanisms of the knowledge society, as well as a managerial culture we believe that progress quickly adapted general informational support this alignment. It is well known the saying: "Organizations do not change. People do." (Dufour & Berkey, 1995; Goman, 2000, 2005; Hiatt, 2002). From this perspective, considering the change as starting from each employee or manager in the organization, it is

necessary to take the first steps at the individual managerial level and at managerial team level as well - from the point that any change really starts.

The individual context of a manager (Stewart, 1982) is decisive for his/her performance and the organization he/she manages. According to the circumstantial theory, the organization must adapt to the environment - technologies, expectations and needs of people, new operations or tasks, other changes imposed by the environment - and this need for change brings up elements of managerial and organizational culture as: how they perceive ambiguity, risk or safety; the impact of potential changes on manager's work - and on his/her team; how they perceive the external pressure and the need for control; the need for additional specialization for integration of work with increasingly more abundant and more available information, with new technologies, processes, know-how in the industry, to ensure a new level of economic performance etc. Managerial skills are also context-specific - they can vary with the position held or with the level of hierarchy; as a consequence, the managerial competencies systems used must be scaled for their levels of competence: for entry-level managers (beginners), middle or top managers (the current stratification used for the levels of expertise and competence in management). If the emergence of knowledge based society constitutes a cause for change at macro and microeconomic level, the managers most likely to integrate norms, values and beliefs of the knowledge society are those who can contribute to the effective implementation of its practices and principles, in real life. In other words, managers able to show flexible thinking, orientation towards new forms of

work organization and collaboration, adaptive capacity through fast learning, critical information processing capability as well as sharing know-how capability, or stress management - they are representatives of a certain type of managerial culture that is based on values and elements shared with those of a knowledge-based society - they are managers in knowledge-based organizations.

In terms of managerial style - which is part of the managerial culture and an important variable of it (Likert 1960-2011) - adopted by the management of the organizations, certainly we can say that participatory-consultative style, based on empowerment, communication and effective delegation, contributes to achieving the objectives of social, educational and economic type top that the knowledge-based society necessarily develops. The authoritarian, autocratic, task oriented and less oriented to people styles are not compatible with the rules and principles of a knowledge society. Moreover, in the last 15 years about entrepreneurship and infopreneurship are "displacing" sensitively (or appropriately complement, sometimes) the classical doctrine of management as a philosophy for business success. Knowledge should be used to empower and enrich people, culturally and materially, and to build durable. Managers and entrepreneurs must identify the internal cultural elements that require restatement or adjustment, must use managerial competencies models consonant to their organizational culture, to adapt the managerial training, in order that their organizations become able to respond better to the complex external challenges posed by the knowledge society.

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