Coaching vs. Motivational Skills: the Romanian Telecom Industry Experience
by
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Abstract. Over the past 25 years, the Romanian telecom industry has experienced rapid growth and has become a major business market in Romania. Today, it can be said that this segment of business and trade has the fastest development in the Romanian economy. This research aims to assess selected issues, basically related to management in general and to leadership in particular. The main objective of this paper is to analyze the motivation field of expertise and coaching skills in the telecommunications business sector through the use of empirical analysis.

The research will focus on how and if leaders make effective use of motivational and coaching skills to enhance employees’ performance in both Rds&Rcs and Vodafone companies; the two major leading companies in telecommunication, mobile and internet market of Romania. Regarding the methodology of the study, quantitative techniques were used, being applied two questionnaires: one for staff and the other for leaders. There were 100 participants from different career status levels in both analyzed companies. The main measurable data on the two independent variables were motivation and coaching, as well as the dependent variables of performance and productivity. According to our researches it was confirmed that there is a statistically significant relationship between techniques of motivation and coaching and abilities taken for granted by leaders, and employees’ satisfaction, and therefore particular level of performance both in Vodafone and Rds&Rcs. At the same time, it was proved that motivation practices at work place were either lower or inadequate, this having a major negative impact on employees’ satisfaction and therefore lower level of motivation. The consequences consisted in lower performance and productivity.

Key words: coaching skills, motivation techniques, performance, employees' satisfaction, Romania.
JEL classification: M12, M53

1 Introduction

Lately business changes, the powerful competition together with increasing diversity have turned into a norm. Individuals are quickly turning into the crucial asset of an organization and as a consequence, only those organizations which admit the important role of employees and of their continuous development will reach the highest performances and also will remain viable in business and industry. In this context, motivation and coaching are two important aspects that the managements should carefully consider.

The ultimate tendencies in HR management focus on the key role of a top manager in motivating his staff as well as in helping them to increase their skills and talents. According to the researches existing in the field of HR management, the efficacy and success of managers are driven by those persons seen as motivators and coaches. Therefore, a successful manager must also be a motivator and a coach in order to develop great performances.

In this article, a comparative study between Vodafone and Rds&Rcs, two of the most prominent and successful telecom companies in Romania is done, with major focus on motivation and coaching implementation within the above mentioned companies. It also should be mentioned that, while Vodafone is a global leading company with a foreign CEO even in Romania, Rds&Rcs is a local Romanian company, with a Romanian CEO. In this respect, similarities and differences with regards to motivation and coaching are expected to be analysed.

1.1. Motivation

During the last three decades and a half, the telecommunication and mobile industry has developed very fast and has turned into one of the major business markets in Romania. Among the major players on the market are so far Vodafone and Rds&Rcs, the last one developing during the last years as a local Romanian company, therefore, competition is growing fast. In this vein, telecom industries
must constantly develop and implement new strategies in order to generate competitiveness and profitability. This article is focused on two major executive issues: first concerns motivation and coaching, and the second one regards the degree to which they have been implemented in the two companies under analysis.

In our days, the major tendency in modern management focuses on the role of managerial techniques, especially those of motivation and coaching as means through which can be achieved increased productivity, higher performance and higher rate of customer retention. This debatable issue represents the main motivation behind this article. Secondly, there are plenty of questions connected to “motivation” and “coaching” especially taking into account the limitation of coaching in Romanian companies in general, and in the telecom industry in particular.

1.2. Research hypotheses
The hypotheses of the hereby research are the following:

1. The motivational and coaching techniques implemented by Vodafone and Rds&Rcs in order to enhance performance are highly different.
2. Executives generally comprehend the concepts of a coach or a motivational leader.

1.3. Data Selection and Scope of the Research
Lately, the role of motivation and coaching skills in increasing performances of companies has been highly discussed in literature, especially in the context of competitive markets. (Milapo, 2001)

In this vein, the most important objective of this research lies in examining the above mentioned concepts, highly related to management and leadership. Firstly, the research focuses on how executives make effective use of motivational and coaching skills to improve employees’ performance in Vodafone and Rds&Rcs; two important companies on the Romanian telecommunication industry. Secondly, the article will analyze the impact of executives’ motivation and coaching strategies on HR and find out their efficiency and satisfaction with regards to the employees in respect of performance.

The study implies the correlation between the implementation of (1) specific strategies and tactics of motivation and coaching skills in a certain work place, in our case the two companies, and (2) performance. Also, the impact of motivation and coaching on performance and productivity will be analysed.

1.4. Research Method and Sample of the Study
As a research method it was used a quantitative technique. Thus, two questionnaires were designed; one for the employees (30 questions grouped on 7 themes and later on 3 themes) and the other for executives (20 questions grouped on 3 themes), both of them sent via email to the two companies after a previous acceptance agreement. For the questionnaires, 5 point Likert scales were used: 1 - Strongly Agree (SA); 2 - Agree (A), 3 - Neutral (N), 4 - Disagree (D), 5 - Strongly Disagree (SD).

The sample consists of 100 participants who work in Vodafone and Rds&Rcs (50 employees out of which 10 executives for each company), who filled in the two questionnaires which were further analyzed by the author of the research. The correlations were made among two independent variables (coaching and motivational skills) and one dependent variable (performance). SPSS 16 statistical software will be used for analyses.

2 Literature review
2.1. Motivation theories
Gredler, Broussard and Garrison (2004) in Haldun (2013) define motivation, in a general manner, as “the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something” (Haldun, 2013, p. 15).

In this chapter several motivation theories are briefly taken into account. The basic one is Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theory of motivation, which focuses on several needs which are seen as being crucial sources of motivation. However, Maslow’s critics were unhappy about the little data that supported his
ideas (Jones and George, 2008, p. 527). Further on, Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory appears also as a major theory in the field due to drawing the attention of scholars on the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Similarly, various major theories concerning motivation and satisfaction of employees must be carefully regarded among which I mention: ERG Theory (similar message as that of Maslow Theory), Expectancy Theory (motivation of employees and high performance can be achieved through high expectancy, high instrumental and high valence), Equity Theory, as well as Goal-Setting Theory (employees should achieve particular difficult goals).

Several recent researches focus on the effectiveness of executives in motivating their employees. Thus, Imberman (2008), in a research conducted in the US stated that even if managers do comprehend the importance of motivating their staff, at the same time they understand that most of the time they fail in achieving this effectiveness, which leads to poor productivity. Dieleman and Toonen in their study concluded that executives need to understand that a motivated and qualified workforce is significant to increase productivity (Dieleman and Toonen, 2006, p. 1). Similarly, according to Harris and Milapo, motivation is crucial because even “people with the required knowledge, skills, and abilities will perform poorly if they are not motivated to devote their time and effort to work” (Harris in Milapo, 2001, p. 29). Another research, conducted by Boachie-Mensah and Dogbe (2011) underlined that “differences in levels of employees’ performance” reside, on the one hand, on differences in skills and abilities, and on the other hand, on different motivation levels (Boachie-Mensah and Dogbe, 2011, p. 270).

The current research argues that motivation leads to the achievement of higher levels of performance, and as a consequence, executives need to find the best practices to motivate their employees. Coaching is one of these practices.

2.2. Coaching theories

According to scholars, improving employees’ performance and motivation starts from their degree of integration within the organisation: the higher the integration – the higher the satisfaction (Kyndt, Dochy, Michielsen, & Moeyaert, 2009) and the motivation. Naturally, a well integrated employee means a motivated and satisfied individual and this leads to the increase of performances for the organisation, which is the main objective of every executive. Crane (2007) considers coaching as an enabling process which helps employees to attain their potential “in a way that they feel helped” (Crane, 2007, p. 7). Executives have the responsibility to coach all employees in spite of tenure in the organization. Therefore, coaching cannot be supported in the lack of the development of a relationship based on mutual trust. For this to occur, the manager must know and view the employees as individuals with particular knowledges, values, beliefs, skills as well as motivations (Batson & Yoder, 2012; Longenecker, 2010).

Therefore, a crucial issue of coaching resides in driving enthusiasm and high performance in an organisation. According to this, coaching lies at the heart of this research as a motivating factor in the organisational environment, especially since the executive-as-coach offers guidance to help employees perform, grow, and develop. Armed with coaching knowledge, executives can increase their staff’s motivation and as a direct consequence can reach higher performance.

3. Analysis

3.1. Employees’ questionnaire

The response rate of employees’ questionnaire was 90%, indicating that only 72 of the 80 targeted employees answered the questions.
Findings are seen as consistent since the difference is little. Further on main relevant themes are presented.

**Table 1. Satisfaction theme (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: Satisfaction</th>
<th>Employees’ organisation</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Vodafone (%)</th>
<th>Rds&amp;Rcs (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missing Value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Neutral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to our findings, employees are dissatisfied in both organizations due to the total of 47% (4 Disagree, 5 Strongly Disagree). However, at a closer look, it can be seen that employees are more dissatisfied in Rds&Rcs Company (54%) in comparison to 40% in Vodafone. Summing up, satisfaction level of the staff belonging to the two companies analysed is low, especially in Rds&Rcs Company and this imposes rapid motivational techniques.

With regards to performance, there is also a high percentage of low performance since 48% of the employees of both companies answered with Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Employees from both are much more likely to be lower the average performance in both companies as the total percentage of both row 4 and row 5 (D, SD) is about 48%. However, at this point, differences between the two companies are low, since the same percentage of the employees (48.6%) of Vodafone/Rds&Rcs employees consider performances as low. Only 20% of Vodafone employees and 24.3% of Rds&Rcs employees see the performance as high.

**Table 2. Performance theme (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Vodafone (%)</th>
<th>Rds&amp;Rcs (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2. Leaders’ questionnaire

The response rate of employees’ questionnaire was 96%, indicating that only 24 of the 25 targeted executives answered the questions.

![Distribution of samples in the two telecommunications companies](image)

Figure 2. Distribution of samples in the two organizations (executives)

In total there were 20 statements answered by executives. Out of these, 17 were very similar and ranged mainly from 1 to 2 (Strongly Agree and Agree). At the same time, median and mean in the above mentioned statements were also relatively close if not the same. The mean fluctuated between 1.5 and 3.00, meanwhile the
median was between 1 and 2 rarely reaching 2.500. From these results, it can be observed that, all executives (in both companies) have motivational and coaching skills, generally agreeing on the best practices on these concepts. In the table below will be presented only the variables which were highly relevant due to their disagreement or neutral tendency:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees are aware of the system</td>
<td>2.9583</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.90790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees are stimulated to make mistakes</td>
<td>3.9583</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.04170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a coach helps executives to be more focused &amp; motivated</td>
<td>3.1250</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.15392</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following remarks mentioned in the table below represent either high disagreement or neutral tendencies:

- Employees are aware of the system for handling lack of satisfaction at work and are stimulated to use it to solve negative issues.
- Employees are stimulated to make mistakes.
- Having a coach helps executives to be more focused & motivated with regards to their work.

According to the scores mentioned in the table above, these three notions are uncertain. As a consequence, these three themes will be further analyzed in order to study the tendencies among leaders in the two telecommunication organizations.

With regards to the first remark, the frequencies are the following: mean reaches 2.96 and median reaches 3.00. According to these frequencies, most of the executives in the studied companies do not know whether the system handles or not lack of satisfaction. This can be seen as a lack of data and therefore can be put as executives’ negligence with regards to their staff. In this context, executives do not pay attention to their employees, they abandon them and do not feel responsible for them.

Thus, 30% of the executives considered that employees were aware of this system in dealing with lack of satisfaction. 25% percent did not agree with this statement meanwhile most of the executives, (46%) could not answer the statement. This comes as a weakness in the management process, especially since executives have the responsibility to advice, make aware their employees and coach them at work.

Further on, on the second statement according to which employees are stimulated to make mistakes, the outcomes are really negative. Thus, mean and median almost reached 4.00 for this notion. The result confirms that most of the executives in the telecom companies studies are against and do not allow employees to make mistakes so that they could learn from their mistakes.

With regards to the third notion, mean and median reached 3 and this means that the executives are against having a coach (executive coach) to direct them and keep them focused and motivated. Also, there could be that they are not fully aware of the role of a coach.

As far as percentages are concerned, these are: 37.5% of the executive agreed on having a coach. Still, almost 42% of them strongly disagreed and disagreed refusing therefore the idea of having a coach to help them being focused and motivated. The 21% of executives who do not provide an answer to the statement leads to the conclusion that they are either unaware or that they simply do not understand the role of an executive coach.

After linking the outcomes of the two questionnaires, it was concluded that there were problems with regards to motivational skills in both Vodafone and Rds&Rcs and that they needed proper implementation, especially in Rds&Rcs.

According to the results, even if to a certain extent executives are aware of these skills they seem incapable of implementing these tools or they consider that the motivational area is not very important within the company.
Generally speaking, the employees’ answers did demonstrate the existence of motivation among them in the two telecommunication organizations, highly proving a satisfactory level of motivation. Still, it should be noted that several indicators revealed also demotivational practices especially at Rds&Rcs. Also, on the one hand, at Vodafone, 31.4% of the employees were Neutral, 22.9% of them were not at all satisfied of their workplace. On the other hand, at Rds&Rcs, 30% of the employees were not at all satisfied, but only a small percentage of them was not decided - 13.5%. Also, significant correlation was found between performance and motivation at work, low motivation decreasing performance as well. At the same time, employees’ performance in both telecommunication organizations is much lower than expected, which needs rapid tools in order to implement motivational best practices. According to this correlation, there could be seen also a positive correlation between performance and employees’ motivation. However, performance was low and as a consequence so was productivity – if we consider researches which confirm this relation between performance and productivity.

With regards to Coaching and Executives skills it was discovered that executives of the two telecommunication organizations had satisfactory executives’ skills. However, several minuses were discovered, with regards to the unawareness or lack of attention of the important role played by coaching in management. Also, motivational as well as coaching skills needed severe development, although it should also be mentioned that many statements concerning the coaching skills were on average. Also, executives were either unaware or they simply did not understand the role of an executive coach or of motivational practices.

4 Conclusions

The two hypothesis were confirmed in the end, as it was proved that “motivational and coaching techniques implemented by Vodafone and Rds&Rcs in order to enhance performance are highly different”. Thus, if with Vodafone, motivation, performance and productivity were higher, with Rds&Rcs these were lower. The same happened with the second hypothesis, “executives generally comprehend the concepts of a coach or a motivational leader.” However, both motivational practices and coaching need be reinforced in the studied companies.

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