Chapter X

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EMPLOYEES' COMMITMENT MANAGEMENT IN THE ASSESSMENT OF MANAGERS (BASED ON THE RESULTS OF QUALITY RESEARCH)

Summary: The chapter deals with the issue of commitment management. It contains the epistemological part that presents results of the analysis of literature of the problem and the empirical part elaborated on the basis of the focus group interview (FGI). The aim of this study is to confront the commitment management theory with the views of managers on the application of this concept in their professional practice. The collected research material was used to formulate hypotheses for the future quantitative research questionnaire.

Kay words: commitment, commitment management**,** employee relationship management

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X.1. Introduction

Although the term *commitment* has been in use in the management science for at least 20 years, it is an example of the ambiguous and imprecise concept used in a variety of semantic contexts. It is difficult to clearly determine whether it is a state, attitude, attribute of an attitude, or perhaps a set of behaviours. It is impossible to precisely mark out boundaries of the relationship between employee's commitment and concepts such as loyalty, attachment, job satisfaction, high self-motivation, and employee's relations with the organisation. Probably for

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this reason, many conceptualizations of the issue of commitment resulted in a number of competing with each other theories. Nevertheless, one does not raise serious doubts, i.e. key significance of employees' commitment in building a competitive advantage and achieving organisation's objectives. Research (cf. JUCHNOWICZ M. 2010a), clearly indicates a correlation between employees' commitment and variables such as productivity, profitability, innovation, and personnel safety. It should not be surprising that managers display a growing interest in the employees' commitment and the ways of its reliable and accurate measurement (RUDAWSKA A. 2011, p. 79).

X.2. Managing the commitment and through the commitment - epistemological analysis

2.1. Organisational commitment

One of the first definitions of commitment suggested W. A. Kahn (1990, p. 694): "in commitment people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during implementation of organisational roles." From the management perspective, the most important is organisational commitment, which includes other types of commitment: commitment to performed work, commitment to the profession, interpersonal commitment to the colleagues' environment (JUCHNOWICZ M. 2010b, pp. 57-58).
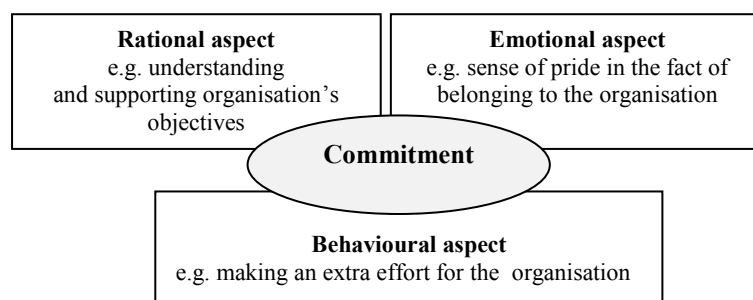

Rational aspect
e.g. understanding and supporting organisation's objectives

Emotional aspect
e.g. sense of pride in the fact of belonging to the organisation

Commitment

Behavioural aspect
e.g. making an extra effort for the organisation

Figure X.1. Model of organisational commitment

Commitment is usually identified with the attitude of an employee. In this spirit, in the 90s of the twentieth century, a model of organisational commitment has been developed (MEYER J. P., ALLEN N. J. 1991), which describes organisational commitment in three dimensions, typical of each attitude: rational (cognitive), emotional, and behavioural (see Figure 1).

Taking into account different motives of commitment, the authors of the model of organisational commitment (MEYER J. P., ALLEN N. J. 1991) distinguish:

- emotional commitment – an employee identifies with the organisation, its values, and adopted norms regards as his/her own. The work is associated with positive emotions of the employee (the attitude "I am working here because I want to");
- lasting commitment – an employee works, otherwise he/she would lose too much (e.g. pension security, a sense of social security, etc.). There are also none interesting proposals on the labour market. This type of commitment can be described in two dimensions: "high sacrifice" – a large loss in case of resignation, and "slight alternative" (the attitude "I work here because I have no other choice").

Results of the research (SPIK A., KLINCEWICZ K. 2008) do not give a clear answer to the question about the relationship between lasting commitment and results of employee's work. Some of them suggest lack of the statistically significant relationship between these variables; while others indicate a lower level of productivity among workers characterized by a higher level of lasting commitment. It is logical that the feeling of being "sentenced" to work in a particular place can have a demotivating influence on the individual.

- normative commitment – an employee works because he/she feels obliged to the organisation. He/she shows gratitude and accepts values and norms adopted in the organisation. This kind of commitment is sometimes associated with some sort of moral duty: "I work because I must."

From a point of view of the employer, the highest value has commitment that manifests itself by initiating changes and taking responsibility for them, recognising problems and making proposals to solve them, innovating, seeking new professional challenges, or showing initiative. Behavioural indicators of employee commitment can be also summarized in a form of the triad: *employee says, stays, and acts*. *Employee says* – it means that in different social circumstances he/she speaks positively about the organisation. *Employee stays* – it means that he/she consciously links his/her future with the organisation. *Employee acts* – it means that he/she puts an extra effort into his/her work (GURYN H. 2009). We can say that commitment is a relatively permanent state of the employee, which leads to undertaking profitable actions in favour of the employer. Therefore, high employees' commitment is very valuable as it allows the company to achieve greater results with the same resources.

2.2. Management through commitment

In Poland, the concept of "management through commitment," has been popularized by M. Juchnowicz (2012, p. 67). Developing J. A. F. Stoner, R. E. Freedman and D. R. Gilbert's theory of dynamic commitment (1997), the author defines it as "a complex and dynamic system that has an influence on employees' commitment through a set of conscious actions in order to create and strengthen interpersonal and intergroup relations based on the internal mechanisms of motivation resulting from the common goals and shared values, as well as mutual respect and trust" (JUCHNOWICZ M. 2012, p. 67). The result of management through commitment is, in this approach, cooperation based on shared responsibility and common benefits. Such philosophy of

management requires the company to give employees greater autonomy, limit the control, and simultaneously, make them more responsible for the quality than quantity of the work. Committed employees devote to their work not only their time, but also passion. They go beyond the standards; can and want positively surprise both their superiors and external customers of the organisation.

Achieving such an attitude of workers requires taking into consideration five key factors in the management process. Firstly, it is essential to systematically diagnose competency potential of the employees and assign them tasks that maximize the use of their skills and aspirations (MOCZYDŁOWSKA J. 2008). It correlates with the demand of creating, in a workplace, environment conducive to continuous development. Moreover, management through commitment requires a genuine, based on the authority, organisational leadership and good working atmosphere. Finally, the significance of a clear, understandable, transparent pay system and attractive career path should not be ignored.

2.3. Commitment management and Employee Relationship Management

In recent years, on the basis of management, a concept of the Employee Relationship Management (cf. STOTZ W. 2007) dynamically develops. It is hard not to notice its relationship with the theory of commitment management. It is even possible to venture to say that Employee Relationship Management is an intellectual continuation of the theory of commitment management and its elaboration. The essence of the ERM is to make decisions and take personnel actions aimed at building long-term relationships with employees by enabling them to meet the needs, expectations, and delivering increasing benefits of an economic and psychological character.

What marks out the concept of the Employee Relationship Management is the emotional context of the relationship between the employee and employer. High efficiency is supposed to be achieved by building relationships based on emotional commitment of an employee.

At this point, the relationship between employee relationship management and management commitment is exposed to the highest degree as the committed person is emotionally connected to other members of the organisation and/or organisation as a whole (SIMPSON M. R. 2009, p. 1020). It is possible to indicate the existence of a positive mechanism of a closed circle: relationships between the employee and organisation lead to building and strengthening of the commitment, in turn, the commitment strengthens the relationships.

The state of positive emotional bonds between employees and the organisation can be achieved through a far-reaching individualisation of incentive influences and providing attractive products and personal benefits for the employees (STOTZ W. 2007, p. 32). It is, however, necessary to highlight the importance of non-material factors in this process (MOCZYDŁOWSKA J. 2013, pp. 346-355).

Emotional relationships between employees and the organisation can result from many different premises of an emotional and symbolic character. These include: compliance of a personal system of values with the system of values occurring in the organisational culture, a sense of breaking the social norms in case of leaving the company, desire to strengthen the relationship of trust, a sense of agency and professional efficiency (LIPKA A. 2011, p. 90).

X. 3 Commitment management in the perception of managers - analysis of the results of focus group interview

3.1. Research methodology

In the study a method of focus group interview (FGI) has been used. This method is used to obtain the opinion and understand the behaviours, attitudes and preferences towards given problem, issue, action, product, etc. The focus group interview is a discussion of 6-12 competent persons on a pre-determined topic. It is run by a moderator (in this case the author of the chapter), based on a previously prepared script [BARBOUR, 2011]. Participants of presented in this section results were managers –

students of MBA studies at Lazarski University in Warsaw. According to the method of FGI, in an interview took part 12 people (including five women). The respondents represented medium and large enterprises from various sectors of economy. Each of them had at least five years of work experience on a managerial position. The aim of this study was to confront the theory of commitment management (through commitment) with opinions of the managers on application of this concept in management practice. Another objective was to create a methodology basis for the quantitative research: empirical material collected in the FGI was used to formulate research hypotheses for the future, large-scale surveys.

In the study, the following research problems were undertaken:

- How managers understand the concept of "commitment management"?
- What, in their opinions, may be a measure of employee commitment?
- Whether they use commitment management in their professional practice? If so, how and for what purposes?
- Whether, and if so, what barriers do respondents notice in the implementation of commitment management?

The research, whose results are included in this chapter, is based on the mechanism of introspection[*]. It is alleged, that this cognitive method does not allow for obtaining knowledge inter-subjectively, that can be verified, and does not give an access to the factual causes of behaviour. Despite these critical comments of the methodologists of social science, the introspective studies constitute the basis of all social researches. Their use in the diagnosis of commitment management in professional practice of managers is based on the claim, well-documented in the literature, that an employee (in this case the employee on a managerial position) is the

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[*] Introspection – from Latin *introspicere,* literally means "looking inside," observing and analysing own mental states, thoughts, feelings, and motives. Its subject are conscious contents and processes.

best source of information about the specificity of his/her work [cf. WOŹNIAK, 2006].

3.2. Managers about management commitment - the results of focus group interview

Analysis of the managers' opinions leads to the conclusion that the concept of "commitment management" is, by managers, closely linked with motivational influences undertaken towards subordinates. In the opinions of the respondents, commitment is related to the specific behaviours visible during the execution of specific tasks or projects. That is why managers identify commitment management with stimulation of motivation for execution the tasks or projects, thus the result of commitment management is significant, greater than average contribution of work, time, energy, or emotions of an employee. These are, according to the respondents, noticeable indicators of commitment. None of the respondents of the study has linked commitment with such conceptual categories as loyalty or commitment to the organisation, what in turn is strongly exposed in the literature of the problem examined in the epistemological part of this chapter.

All managers participating in the FGI declared that they try to use commitment management in their work. This results from growing importance of human capital among all capitals of the organisation. In managers' view, without commitment of the employees organisation would not be able to achieve success in such a competitive and fluctuating market. Therefore, the aim of commitment management is to achieve organisation's objectives through above-average activity of employees resulting from their high internal motivation. Respondents underlined the relationship between the employees and variables such as innovation, entrepreneurship, initiative, and creativity.

When respondents were asked how do they build and sustain commitment of the subordinates, they listed, primarily, differentiated and customized incentives, including mainly the non-material ones (such as appreciation, recognition, assurance that the needs of the higher order,

especially the self-actualisation, will be met). A good atmosphere in the team also plays an important role. It is crucial, especially in situations in which commitment to teamwork is expected, whose results will constitute a potential source of the success of the whole team, not individuals.

Some participants also underlined the importance of personal example, i.e. maintaining own commitment to the organisation at a high level.

Among the barriers to using commitment management in the managerial practice, participants of the interview perceive mainly those related to the "mismatch" of tasks to competences, particularly psychological predispositions of the employees. This regards both sides of the relationship: the employee and his/her supervisor. Commitment should not be expected if a supervisor delegates execution of a task which requires different skills and personality traits than those held by the employee. The opposite situation is also a problem, i.e. the one in which an employee with a low level of self-awareness undertakes tasks that require different professional and personal competences than possessed by him or her.

Managers representing large economic entities also point to barriers to individualized use of incentives, which result from standards and procedures "stiffening" managerial actions.

Another barrier is quite a big job insecurity that for years accompanies employees of Polish enterprises at all levels of the organisational structure. Crises faced by companies, but also by public entities, often mean redundancy. Anxiety about the future, resulting from the lack of professional stability, is a psychological factor that often turns the attitude of commitment into the attitude of "waiting." It is not even possible to speak here about 'lasting commitment,' described in the epistemological part of this chapter. The fear of job loss triggers mostly negative emotions: frustration, a sense of discouragement, and even depressive reactions, which excludes the commitment, which by definition is an attitude based on positive emotions.

X.4. Conclusions

The presented results of the research have a qualitative character and come from the sample that does not meet all requirements of representativeness, therefore generalising the results and formulating on their basis strong and unambiguous conclusions are ineligible. The collected empirical material allows for formulation of hypotheses that can be verified in the course of further research:

- the concept of "commitment management" is known to managers and used in practice as an individualised motivational impact focused primarily on stimulating and maintaining of the internal motivation of an employee;
- commitment of an employee is identified as a key source of the success of contemporary organisations;
- to measures of commitment managers comprise: higher than average contribution of work, time, energy, and emotions of an employee in the execution of tasks or projects. Indirectly, it also has an influence on the higher innovation, entrepreneurship, and initiative of employees;

among barriers to commitment management respondents indicate the uncertainty of employment (and associated with it various negative emotional states), mismatch of the specificity of tasks to professional and personal competences of an employee, and too low flexibility to motivate employees, resulting from adopted in organisations (especially in large enterprises) standards and procedures.

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