"Clever Management of Clever People"

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to present advantages and disadvantages of clever people management and to begin discussion about their positive and negative impact on organization. In the present world managers and researchers underline the value of innovation and creativity in business, so as a natural result of such way of thinking, clever people became the most wanted type of employee. In this paper the author analyzed main environmental factors of "clever people age" beginning, explained the definition of "clever people", described roles of clever people in organizations, analyzed problems of management caused by this group of employees, analyzed the new meaning of knowledge management based on clever people.

Keywords

Clever people, creative people, knowledge workers, management, knowledge management

INTRODUCTION

In the theory of human recourse management we can find different names of "clever people" as a category of employees. They are called: clever workers, creative workers or knowledge workers. But, however they are called, they became a special and one of the most important group of employees in organizations. We can say even more, they became a specific group of people, necessary in different fields of business. The meaning of these group of staff in companies development comes from obvious fact that: "competitive advantage lies in the ability to create an economy driven not by cost efficiency but by ideas and intellectual know-how" (Franz Humer, the CEO and chairman of Roche[1]). So, present business world where innovation, creativeness and knowledge are underlined as key competitive factors, companies need clever people, but can they manage such people? According to modern theories related to clever people management based on psychological background of clever people features, past rules of human resource management are not valid anymore. In this paper, the basic rules of clever people management are presented.

I have started to be interested in clever people subject from managerial point of view when I read article "Leading clever people" written by R. Goffee and G. Jones[1]. Until then, dealing with clever people and tolerance for their extraordinary behaviour was so obvious for me that I did not realize it as a organizational problem. In mentioned paper, author's described results of their research, and based on it readers can find out that clever people as members of organization:

a. are really good in their work – it is first and very important feature, they have deep knowledge and skills; they do not think that they are good, they really are,

b. know their own worth – they know their skills and range of knowledge,

c. know their worth for organization – they know that "you must employ them to get their knowledge and skills"[1],

d. lead their career in rational way – if they are not satisfied they move on to a different company,

e. are focused on achievements – for them, their results are proves of their worth.

To have a completed clever people characteristic I also present an interesting list of creative person/creative thinking features[5]:

a. liquidity – thinking as a natural, not difficult process,

b. flexibility – not fixed on stereotypes or traditional way of standards,

c. originality – new, creative solutions,

d. sensitivity – finding a core of problem or case,

e. smartness – clever thinking, but not similar to intelligent,

f. redefinition – finding new meaning for old phenomena,

g. accuracy – focus on details,

h. ambiguity – tolerance for undefined meaning and perception,

i. convergence thinking – looking for one solution,

j. divergence thinking – looking for many solutions,

k. difference – no respect for rules, authorities, hierarchy,

l. self-discipline – self-motivation and self-control,

m. excellence – ambitious goals and permanent self-improvement,

n. risk – no fear to be different and independent.

Because of above mentioned feature, clever people must be directed according to specific method, they even expect special style of management. Generally:

a. they do not want to be led, they ignore corporate hierarchy, but

b. they need direct access to chiefs,

c. they expect organization give them high level of safety and support (based on good salary, stable labour agreement, psychological and physical comfort of work),

d. they expect understanding and tolerance of their mistakes,

e. they need access to necessary information.

R. Goffee and G. Jones has written interesting examples of good and bad clever people management in academic environment, newspaper, customer goods and pharmaceutical company. All conclusions that I have found in their paper I automatically compared to my own observations.

During my life I have deal with clever people (represented different fields of activity) many times. They have been artists, computer specialists, researchers, financial specialists, strategists, managers, etc. When I started analysis of this subject I discovered its interesting complexity.

I concluded that R. Goffee and G. Jones presented in their paper only one type of clever people, that I called "clever – specialists". However, the whole problem is more complicated. Thinking about such matter as "clever people in organizations" it is necessary to analyze:

    a. types of clever people in organizations,

    b. clever people position in team (clever people versus ordinary employees),

    c. how to do not waste talent and creative energy of clever people,

    d. how to make clever people work effective form the business point of view.

TYPES OF CLEVER PEOPLE IN ORGANIZATIONS

I identified three types of clever people that can be found in organisations and called them:

    a. clever entrepreneur,

    b. clever manager,

    c. clever specialist.

Of course, it is one proposition among the others (like i.e. created by Thomas H. Davenport[2]). Above mentioned types are similar in such aspects:

    a. they consequently pursue a goal,

    b. they achieve their goals using innovative and creative solutions,

    c. they think and behave independently and non-standard, quite often risky, sometimes against the law.

The main differences among listed types of clever people come from the goals that each of the type wants to achieve. Generally those goals are:

    a. clever entrepreneur – wants to establish a company and lead it to success,

    b. clever manager – wants to be efficient (he/she wants to achieve financial, organizational, interpersonal or team results),

    c. clever specialist – wants to complete/make the tasks or solve problem (i.e. research problem, technical problem, etc.).

Now, when we analyse conclusions written by R. Goffee and G. Jones it becomes obvious that they described "clever specialists".

CLEVER PEOPLE POSITION IN TEAM

One clever man in a team can inspire other members or destroy the whole team. From managerial point of view, it is important to coordinate the whole members of the team, establish and control cooperation between "ordinary workers" and "clever people".

On the other hand I have tried to find out if any of known personality types in effective teams can be automatically compared to "clever people" type of employee. As I listed in previous paper[3], effective team should consist of such personality types as: a leader, implementer, organizer, idea person, spy, judge, integrator and perfectionist. In my opinion each of above types can be "clever" in its own specific way.

HOW TO DO NOT WASTE TALENT AND CREATIVE ENERGY OF CLEVER PEOPLE

In contemporary publications of management authors focus on knowledge management, talents management, creativity, innovations and sometimes they present is as it would be something new. It looks like these phenomenon appears in present business world. Now, in theories I can observe concentration on clever people. Why is it so interesting?

Once, one of my colleague told me that: "There is such natural rule in management top subjects, that authors start writing about these subjects when they became predicament for companies."

Taking such perspective, clever people management probably became predicament. The core of the problem is that competition on the contemporary market forces companies to employ clever people. Companies do it, but internally they are not prepared to direct such type of people. Of course, there are a lot of companies which have deal with clever people for many years and implemented innovative management methods. They start the whole process from correctly prepared recruitment. In some sectors, competitive fight begins on the phase of the most talented students employment. But, the most important is to do not loose these employees and efficiently use their talents.

Because clever people think in non-standard way, how they can fit to organizational standards? Many years ago, as "clever people", people of art were called (for example composers, architects, painters). The most characteristic institution connected with artist was "patron". An artist was free, creative, uncommon, but he/she needed a sponsor, someone who give him/her feeling of safety and allow her/him to create her/his masterpieces. But artist never belonged to patron; patron could never control artists work.

In contemporary world clever people still needs patrons. Companies and entrepreneurs are patrons for managers and specialists. By the way, who can be a patron for clever entrepreneur? In my opinion – investors.

So, how to manage clever people in clever way? In above mentioned article authors underlined that "companies that value diversity are not afraid of failure. Like venture capitalists, they know that for every successful new pharmaceutical product, dozen have failed; for every hit records, hundred are duds".

If company do not want to loose potential of clever people should:

    a. analyse what type of clever people it needs (manager or/and specialist),

    b. analyse what field of knowledge or/and skills this person should have (i.e. biologist, mathematician),

    c. recognise real clever people, do not base on masters on self-presentation,

    d. create organizational culture supporting clever people and giving them opportunity for developement.

Additionally, manager should:

    a. support and encourage clever people,

    b. to mark out goals and conditions (requirements)

    c. tolerate failures, but also expect results,

    d. follow knowledge management directions,

    e. accept time need for research and mental work,

    f. tolerate variable work incidence.

Alan C. Guarino defines it in such words: "you must be able to (…) measure talent supply as well as overages and shortages that are attrition related, performance related, and always in respect to the business objectives"[4].

CONCLUSION

This paper is only a small drop in deep ocean of knowledge related to innovative and creative methods of contemporary management. But, managers must understand that now being competitive means having knowledge and information, and being able to use it in right way and time.

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