

STUDY OF PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS, COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS OF MANAGERS IN SPORT BUSINESS ENTITIES

(Preliminary communication)

Georgi Draganov

National Sport Academy "Vassil Levski", Sofia, Bulgaria

Abstract

The development of the sport market imposes increasingly higher requirements to the qualifications, knowledge and competencies of the sport managers. The current study makes an attempt to outline and reveal some actual tendencies in relation to the personal characteristics, skills, values and attitudes that are required for the successful leaders in sport. The studied subjects (managers, leaders), performing commercial activities in the sport clubs, manager agencies, manufacturers of sport equipment and clothing, stores for sport equipment and private sport and fitness centers. In order to achieve the aim we conducted an inquiry through a specially designed questionnaire, consisting of 25 main indices. This type of approach presents possibilities for improvement of the management of the sport and commercial organizations, as well as the adaptation of the educational process to the needs of the sport market.

Keywords: *management of sport, managerial competencies, sport managers, sport managers, manager agencies, manager agencies, fitness centers, sport centers, private sport, Questionnaire, percentages*

INTRODUCTION

The development of the society affect the conceptions for sport development. According to Kalaykov (Калайков) (1995), the radical changes in the society and more importantly in the orientation towards free market economy cause a disruption of the social structures and the established type of management in them. He underlines the impossibility to react of the dynamically changing environment as a result of the lack of clear strategy and innovation policy in sport, significant gaps in the staff qualification that leads to a chronic insolvency stage, leading to a deep crisis of the physical education and sport system (PESS). The decentralization of the management and the transition from central financing to competitive market with all the consequences, present other set of factors that form the contemporary image of sport (Bankov (Банков), 2007; Цолов (Tzolov), 2008; Deleva (Делева), 2009; Slavchev (Славчев), 2012). The conception for a renewed strategy of behavior is imposed, with the ultimate goal of adaptation to the social environment (Sandanski (Сандански), 2009; Tzolova (Цолова), 2011; Dimitrov (Димитров), 2012; Ilieva (Илиева), 2015; Tzolov, Gavrilov, & Tzolova (Цолов, Гаврилова & Цолова), 2010). The pursuit of these goals is the reason to talk about the specific type of governance, which is the professional sport management. In relation to this the term management is defined as a process of coordination and uniting of the activities of other people, by the managers, but in a way that these

activities are efficient and effective.

The management of activities and the behavior of the individual are among the most important factors in the work of the sport manager for the development of the physical culture and sport (Hristova (Христова), 2008) examines the behavior of the individual (the manager) in work as "the aggregate of perceptions, attitudes, decisions and end results, with the help of which the individual is closing in on the goals". The dynamics of the management of sport is defined by the variety of situations, actions and skills related to planning, organization, leading, budgeting, control, that leads to the development of a complete sport product. The professional sport manager is exactly the one that should be able to organize the knowledge and the laws of the market in a suitable way, so to foresee the development of a given organization in its future, i.e. the managers are employees in the organization "with the statute to unite and coordinate the work of other employees (Gronroos, 1994; Noe, Hollenbeck, Grhart, & Wright, 2011). According to a popular classification of the types of managers, there are: top management, middle management and operational management" (Hristova (Христова), 2008).

The sport management includes all the combinations of skills related to planning, organizing, directing, controlling, budgeting, leading and evaluating in the borders of the organization or a department, which main

product or service is sport or physical activity. This problem is also examined by Tsvetkov & Slavchev (Цветков & Славчев) (2010) and specifically for the sport events Slavchev and Gutev (Славчев и Гутев) (2011).

The sport managers apply these skills in a multitude of organizational areas, such as: university sport, professional sport, amateur sport (Olympic games), sport marketing and management of companies, sport communications and PR, corporate sponsorship and advertising companies, companies for sport equipment, arenas, stadiums, civil centers, public and social programs, sport service agencies, private sport clubs, military sport clubs, etc. The wide diapason of possibilities, in which the sport is present, means that the individuals can chose and pursue careers in a work environment that they desire and feel most appropriate.

METHODS

The revealing of the processes in the management of the sport organizations, and those in particular, that are related to the acquiring of staff, requires the study of the role, functions and meaning of the sport managers in order to perform effective management. Here is why the actuality of the defined scientific problem is consisting of *the discrepancy between the increasing requirements of the contemporary sport practice and the abilities of the sport and commercial organization to adequately satisfy them. Given this, we consider that the revealing of some of the peculiarities and requirements to the professional preparation of the sport managers would improve the efficiency of the management of the organizations, trusted to them.*

The aim of the study is to reveal those personal characteristics, skills, values and attitudes, which are typical for the successful leaders. It is not obligatory for the sport manager to identify with all of them, and it is not possible as some of them suggest different (and incompatible to a certain magnitude) styles of management. In example, some managers would prefer to influence through charisma, while others would prefer dominance and assertiveness to influence the behavior of the employees.

The area of the current study is the sport management and human resources management.

The study is focusing on the requirements and attitudes of the employers to the preparation of the sport managers, and the subjects are managers and leaders of commercial sport organizations, such as sport clubs, management agencies, sport equipment fabrication, selling sport equipment and private sport and fitness centers.

A wide variety of instruments for study have been used, including theoretical analysis of specialized scientific publications, inquiries, mathematical and statistical methods and internet study.

RESULTS

In order to achieve the aim we conducted an inquiry through a specially designed questionnaire, consisting of

25 main indices. Because of the large volume of data only a part of it will be presented in this article, divided in two sets. In the *first* of them we have revealed the main characteristics, skills, values and attitudes, that are required for the successful managers, according to the studied subjects, among which are:

1. **Self-awareness and psychological maturity** - The manager needs to poses a high level of self-awareness – as to his/her qualities and flaws, so to his/her attitudes and prejudices.

2. **Honesty** – A moral responsibility, honesty and ethical behavior are expected from the effective leader.

3. **Responsibility** – The management positions are different with the significantly high responsibilities toward their occupants..

4. **Self-control and emotional stability** – The position of manager requires self-command, ability to control the temper and evasion of aggressive behavior. In the everyday life there are a number of frustrations and stress situations, which should be approached with emotional maturity in order to be effectively controlled and overcome.

5. **Stress resistance** – Each position, that empowers people, carries an intensive feeling for stress, because the individual cares responsibility not only for own actions, but for the actions of others, as well as for the achievement of the organization's goals.

6. **Initiative** – The managers should have the attitude to be proactive, to give direction and set goals by themselves, which help to establish and grow the business.

7. **Adaptability/flexibility** – this is a valuable quality for each employee, especially in the quickly changing world of technology, but for a manager it is not only preferable but obligatory. The manager should not only adapt to the changes, but also prepared to provoke them in order to fulfil the organization's goals.

8. **Cooperation** – Although the manager is associated mainly with influence over the people, it is equally important to cooperate. A management, based solely on power, often gives results, but they are usually short term and cannot guarantee long term success.

9. **Empathy** – The manager position suggests the ability to be empathetic to the needs and feelings of the others, to be concerned and helping. The manager achieves results exclusively through the people and this is why it is important to understand them.

10. **Objectivity and fairness** – It is expected from the manager to evaluate the performance of the employees, and that affects their satisfaction, remuneration and career growth. This is why it is extremely important to be able to be objective in the evaluation and to base them on facts, not on personal preferences. Employees, that feel fair attitude from the management, are more committed to the work, achieve better results and are more loyal to the company.

11. **Energetic** – often the goals can be too ambitious and to lead to exhaustion, but the management should find strength to get the work to a successful end, to be focused and overcome the obstacles.

12. **Self-confidence** – The manager should poses a fair amount of self-confidence and realistic evaluation of his/her abilities in order to be able to defend his/her ideas to the higher management as well as to the employees.

13. **Assertiveness** – This is the ability to express your own opinion in a convincing and confident way. This characteristic helps to convince the employees and the higher management.

14. **Inclusion** – Inclusion is the mindset that defines the cognitive-evaluation attitude towards work and defines the level of psychological identification with it. The inclusion directly influences the performance – as in a quantitative aspect,

as well as in qualitative aspect. To be successful the manager should demonstrate high level of inclusion in the work, as well as to the position.

15. **Ability for self-motivation** – The manager should not only be motivated to fulfill a certain set of tasks but also to be able to motivate him or herself in their setting, executing and evaluating.

16. **Consciousness** – The managers usually have a very strongly developed feeling for duty and are inclined to demand a lot as from themselves, as well as from the others.

17. **Optimism / Enthusiasm** – It is recommended that the managers believe in the success in order to be able to motivate the employees and support the team spirit even on the brink of large problems. A pessimistically inclined manager can also be successful, since the pessimism can be a generator of very careful examination of the risks and taking cautious decisions. The fact however is, that people are more attracted and motivated by leaders that believe and inspire belief in the success.

18. **Reasonability** – The optimism can be very compelling and absorbing people, but the reasonability is equally important, in order to filter the valuable ideas from the extravagant ones and to undertake activities with a moderate risk.

19. **Consistency** – The manager should be able to be consistent in his actions and plans, even in the face of problems and obstacles, which usually are abundant in the pursuit of each ambitious goal.

20. **Creativity** – it is necessary, in order to give direction and reveal new ways of fulfilling the goals. It isn't an obligatory characteristic but it definitely would distinguish the excellent manager from the good one.

21. **Intuition** – Despite the presence of the intuition isn't fully grounded, it is empirically accepted, that the sense and presentiment have big part in taking decisions in an unclear situations that are abundant in the business environment.

22. **Dominance** – the managers are usually recognized for their competitive spirit and assertiveness that motivates them to defend their opinion and decisions.

23. **Charisma** – The most managers influence people through rules, knowledge and authority, but a few are recognized as naturally born leaders. The charismatic managers have the gift to involve with words and actions. They inspire others, motivate and energize them for action in the chosen by the leader direction.

24. **Leadership skills** – this is the possibility to motivate others to give their best in order to achieve a certain result as well as to keep effective relations with the team as a whole and with its individual members. The management positions suggest readiness and desire in the person to lead people, to undertake big responsibilities, to present opinions and give directions.

25. **Social susceptibility** – the ability to observe the people behavior and understand the motives that stand behind their actions, helps to manage their performance.

26. **Critical thinking** – The ability to use logic in order to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of alternating decisions, helps in the everyday overcoming of difficult situations.

27. **Strategical thinking** – the manager should be able to analyze and evaluate the long term effects of the projects, as well as to foresee the changes (internal and external for the organization), that can affect the results of the company.

28. **Skills to motivate the employees** – the manager achieves results through people that imposes to develop the ability to motivate employees. Some achieve it through charismatic influence, some through dominance and assertiveness, others chose the cooperation and empathy to influence others. Regardless of which characteristics are more inherent to the manager, he has to channel their power for motivation of the team.

29. **Result oriented** – the performance of a manager is measured mainly by the degree of fulfillment of the goals. This

is why the ability to focus on challenging goals and give your best on achieving them is from key meaning.

30. **Decision making** – this ability is defined by the ability to evaluate the benefits and costs of potential actions in order to choose the most effective one.

31. **Organizational skills** – the ability to organize people, tasks and whole projects is basic prerequisite for the success of the manager.

32. **Negotiation/Communication skills** – The abilities to influence, convince and unite people despite their different opinions are of key significance, in order for a manager to cope effectively with the responsibilities of the occupied position.

33. **Coordination skills** – Their possession is obligatory, since the activities in a team should be flawlessly synchronized in order to achieve optimal results.

34. **Active listening** – Despite that anyone possesses the ability to listen, few are the people that really “hear” the meaning of what has been told. The managers should have the ability to hear their companions without interrupting, to become acquainted with the presented opinions and to ask the right questions, in order to achieve a complete understanding of the situation.

35. **Problem solving** – the identification of potential difficulties and obstacles, and the evaluation of the possible solutions is of a key significance to the successful manager.

36. **Deductive thinking** – the ability to apply common rules to specific problems is important in the fulfillment of daily tasks.

37. **Inductive thinking** – the ability to combine information in order to define common rules and conclusions is in the basis of the decision making in unclear situations and overcoming precedents.

38. **Conflict resolving skills** – the contradictions in the work process, as well as incompatible characters in the organizational environment, lead to conflicts, that the manager should be able to control and channel the energy in constructive direction.

39. **Ability to delegate** – the delegation of duties is very exploited from detached employees that always find a way to transfer their tasks to someone else. Managers however are often distinguished by higher level of consciousness and perfectionism, which often obstruct their ability to delegate duties to other employees from fear of failure of the tasks. This is especially relevant to the newly promoted managers, which continue to abide to the previous tasks, despite that they are now expected to distribute them among the other employees.

40. **Change management** – the manager is not only a guardian of the norms and procedures. When needed he or she should be the person to challenge the status quo and give a new direction in order to achieve the planned goals.

The **second** set aims at revealing the place, role and meaning of the different examined personal characteristics, skills, values and attitudes in the work of the sport

Table 1. Area of work

Working in the sport area	Percentages
Sport marketing	18,8
Treatment and recovery	9,4
Sport-recreation activity	18,8
Event organization	18,8
Touoperator activity	0,0
Mediatory activity	9,4
Sport equipment commerce	71,9
Consultant services	15,6
Sport erVICES	59,4

managers. The establishment of a company profile of the commercial organization, working in the sport area is related to the revealing of the abilities for realization of the sport managers in the work specific, emerging from the working environment. The results of the analysis clearly reveal the wide variety of possibilities for realizations, as well as the variety of specifics in the working environment (figure 1).

The analysis, presented at figure 2 again confirms the thesis of the necessity of complex development of personal characteristics.

The ones that are distinguished are "responsibility" (75%), "stress resistance" (50%), "honesty" (50%), "self-control" (50%), "creativity" (50%), "Integrity" (50%) and others. The sum of the results are over 100% as the inquired subjects could mark more than one answer.

In order to reveal the necessary knowledge of the sport manager in their work duties we have defined a rank number. The marketing knowledge (0.48), the specialized managerial knowledge (0.4) and the human resources management (0.267) are among the main ones,

Table 2. Classification of personal qualities

Personal characteristics	Percentages
Honesty	34,4
Responsibility	93,8
Self-control	43,8
Stress	43,8
Initiative	71,9
Adaptability	46,9
Empathy	12,5
Objectivity	34,4
Energetic	37,5
Self-confidence	37,5
Optimism	34,4
Consistency	40,6
Creativity	56,3
Intuition	28,1
Dominance	6,3
Innovation	43,8
Integrity	56,3

Table 3. Required knowledge

Knowledge	Rank number
Knowledge for written and internet communication	0,673076923 (1)
Financial and budgeting knowledge	0,588942308 (6)
Project management knowledge	0,605769231 (3)
Knowledge for human resource knowledge	0,59375 (5)
Knowledge for planning in sport	0,555288462 (7)
Knowledge for sport event management	0,59375 (5)
Knowledge for applying sport policies	0,459134615 (10)
Knowledge for conducting marketing research	0,487980769 (9)
Basic management theory	0,533653846 (8)
Legislation knowledge	0,420673077 (11)
Marketing knowledge	0,629807692 (2)
Language preparation	0,603365385 (4)
Specialized managerial knowledge	0,603365385 (4)

Table 4. Required skills

Skills	Rank number
Computer skills	0,723958333 (9)
Analyzing skills	0,703125 (10)
Negotiating skills	0,760416667 (5)
Time and task distribution abilities	0,760416667 (5)
Teamwork	0,776041667 (3)
Adaption to fast changing environment	0,744791667 (6)
Organizational skills	0,799479167 (1)
Communication skills	0,799479167 (1)
Ability to motivate the personnel	0,7734375 (4)
Leadership skills	0,729166667 (8)
Strategic thinking	0,739583333 (7)
Decision making skills	0,794270833 (2)

marked by the inquired subjects (figure 3). In addition we have to underline that the rest types of knowledge are with relatively close rank number, which stresses the necessity of complex development.

In the analysis of the results about the required skills, that the sport manager should possess the “decision making skills” (0.583), “team work” (0.433), “Ability to motivate the personnel” (0.383), “leadership” (0.333) and others (figure 4).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Despite the long list of qualities and skills of the successful sport manager, it presents only a point of origin in the appointment and promotion of a leader. The truth is that the people cannot be put inside a frame and there isn't an exact formula for who is going to be really successful. The shown characteristics are more of a prepositions to lead the higher management and the HR department in the selection of candidates for management positions. Very few are the individuals that will correspond to all criteria, but despite achieve a success through a constant strive to self-actualization, which is often related to the process of education. They should be corresponding to the actual social-economic conditions and the specific of the sport activity. The outlining of the educational-qualification characteristics and requirements for filling in leadership positions, including in the sport system, will help significantly the effective management of sport, and on the other side, orientate and encourage the willing to practice this type of professions.

Individuals that are willing to pursue a career in the area of sport management should possess an academic degree, that will ensure a detailed understanding of sport, business, management and a significant and meaningful experience, related to the management of sport organizations and events. As an academic major it is preferable to be taught as a collective of fulfilling the academic requirements of joint disciplines as: physical education, business administration, management, communications, marketing and sociological research, human resources management, strategic planning, etc. The diversity of requirements on the sport market gives the opportunity and in the same time imposes the pursuit of specialized degree for a concrete market segment (i.e. PR management, Advertisement management, Sport organization management, Sport event management, Sport facility management, etc.)

The education in the area of business, sport marketing, economics, sport sociology, sport psychology, history of sports, mathematics and (business) statistics are useful for the preparation to studying the sport management at university level. The experience from different sport backgrounds, involvement in sport organizations, clubs and helping out with organizing sport events is very valuable, as it provides the individual with a stable sport background and leadership skills. Other experience, that the future sport managers could acquire in their preparation might include: officiating, coaching

young athletes, helping out with the management and activities in sport camps, volunteering in professional teams or events, volunteering in university or amateur teams, camps, events, etc.

REFERENCES

- Банков, П. (2007). *Управление на спорта в свободното време* [Management of recreational sports. In Bulgarian.] София: „БИНС“.
- Цветков, Цв., & Славчев, И. (2010). Изисквания към мениджърите в периода от оцеляване към възстановяване и устойчиво развитие [Requirements for managers in the period from survival to recovery and sustainable development. In Bulgarian.] Спорт и наука, 54(Извънреден брой), 299-303.
- Цолов, Б. (2008). *Основи на маркетинга в спорта* [Basics of marketing in sport. In Bulgarian.] София: Бюлид Инс.
- Цолова, В. (2011). Проблемът за усъвършенстване на учебния процес по физическо възпитание във висшите училища през призмата на образователната му компонента. The problem of improving the educational process in physical education in high schools in terms of its educational component. In Bulgarian.] Спорт и наука, 55(2), 82-87.
- Gronroos, C. (1994). From marketing mix to Relationship marketing: Towards a Paradigm Shift in Marketing. *Management Decision*, 32(2), 4-20.
- Делева, Н. (2009). *Маркетинг на спортните занимания извън редовния учебен процес в българското училище* [Marketing of sports activities outside the regular educational process in Bulgarian schools. In Bulgarian.] (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, National Sports Academy “Vassil Levski”, Sofia) София: Национална Спортна Академия „Васил Левски“.
- Димитров, В. (2012). Глобализацията в спорта фактор за промяна на мениджърския подход [Globalization in sport factor for change in the management approach. In Bulgarian.] Спорт и наука, 56(Извънреден брой 4), 112-116.
- Гилова, В. (1999). *Статистическа обработка и анализ на данни* [Statistical processing and analysis of data.] София: НСА ППЕС.
- Илиева, Д. (2015). Спортните събития на БАСВ като специфичен продукт за удовлетворяване на спортологични потребности на различни социално-демографски групи [Sporting events BASV as a specific product to meet the needs sportologichni different socio-demographic groups. In Bulgarian.] Сборник, „Аспекти на съвременната подготовка във физическото възпитание и спорт“ (pp. 68-74). София: НСА ППЕС.
- Jovanova-Simeva, V. (2015). The connection between top managers education and their successful sport clubs management. *Research in Kinesiology*, 43(1), 11-15.
- Калайков, Й. (1995). *Маркетингът в спорта* [Marketing in sport. In Bulgarian.] София: НСА ППЕС.
- Nešić, M., Fratrić, F., & Ilić, D. (2011). Education of sports managers in the context of the Bologna Process. *Research in Kinesiology*, 39(2), 221-226.
- Noe, R., Hollenbeck, J., Grhart, B., Wright, P. (2011). *Fundamentals of Human Resource Management*. New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- Сандански, И. (2009). *Ефективен маркетинг и спонсорство на училищен спортен клуб* [Effective marketing and sponsorship of school sports club. In Bulgarian.] Со-

- фия: „ЕС Принт“.
- Славчев, И. (2012). *Мениджмънт на състезания по лека атлетика в Република България* [Management of competitions in athletics. In Bulgaria.] (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, National Sports Academy “Vassil Levski”, Sofia) София: Национална Спортна Академия „Васил Левски“.
- Славчев, И., & Гутев, Г. (2011). Изследване на функционалните задължения на организаторите на състезания по лека атлетика от различен ранг. In Bulgarian. Exploring the functional responsibilities of the organizers of competitions in athletics of different ranks. In Bulgarian.] *Спорт и наука*, 55(4), 88-94.
- Tzolov, B., Gavrilov, V., & Tzolova, V. (2010). The Problem of State Financing of Sport in Bulgaria. *Journal of the University of Chemical Technology and Metallurgy*, 45(4), 453-458.

Correspondence:

Georgi Draganov
 National Sport Academy “Vassil Levski”
 Studentski Grad, 1700 Sofia, Bulgaria,
 E-mail: g.draganov_nsa@abv.bg