

Business Administration

The Role of Creativity in Romanian Companies

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Abstract: Creativity is a concept that we encounter every day. We do hear about creative people, admire original art objects or read original books. However, in spite of our capacity to admit, there is a high level of confusion pertaining to the meaning of creativity. The rapid growth of competition in business and industry is often used as a motivation of the desire to better understand the creative process. Thus, many organizations are forced to improve their old system and products. Managers in Romania must also find new methods and better problem solving ways. An even greater number of problems have little or no precedent, hence the conclusion that there are less tested methods of approach, in this way some positive results being anticipated. Therefore, having a creative ability is an essential skill of each leader. In other words, the creative leaders look for new problems and are successful especially in approaching new challenges.

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The term of *creativity* is originated in the Latin word “creare”, which means “to conceive”, “to build”, “to create”, “to born”. The very etymology of the word shows that this term defines a process, a dynamic act which is developing and perfecting itself and includes both the origin and the purpose. The generic term and concept were first introduced in 1937 by the American psychologist G.W. Allport, who felt the need to transform the adjective “creative”, by suffixing, in “creativity”, broadening the sphere of the word’s semantics and implementing it as a noun with full rights, as it appears later in the technical literature and dictionaries. In the 1970s the neologism taken from English was imposed in most international languages (“créativité” in French, “Kreativität” in German, “creativita” in Italian, etc.),

replacing the occasional terms used so far (according to the German the term of “das Schöpferische” was made use of = “creative force”).

By *creativity*, sociologists understand the disposition that is guiding the individuals and groups towards the production of some inventions, and the attempts to explain the creative mood are based on the opposing of originality to conformism (special norm) or of spontaneity to the artifice (convention). What distinguishes the sociological perspective from the psychological one is the concern in the creativity of societies or groups. The creativity of a certain culture, of a social class or some professional category is thus being discussed upon.

The following explanation is required: while the invention is simultaneously the creating act and the product of the creation, the psychological concept of creativity designates the innovative power or the creative capacity viewed from the angle of the view of efficiency. In this way there can be noticed individuals who can put on view their being more creative than their other colleagues in the activity field considered using tests of creativity.

Creativity is one of the most complex human activities. It is often conceived as being a structure exclusively related to intellectual skills, i.e. imagination, thinking, intelligence.

Creativity is conditioned by a degree of their development; a creative person looks at something and sees how it can be changed, in what it can be used or how to combine its components. But creativity is not a mere collection of intellectual abilities. It implies the presence of a certain attitude, a certain way of considering life and the surrounding world and of relating ourselves to it: motivation and interest, enthusiasm, optimism and positive attitude, tolerance against the change and its acceptance, the embracing of the elements of novelty, ambiguity, thinking flexibility, self - reliance and the courage to walk new-found paths and overcome prejudices and habits.

Creativity stands for human mind system's peculiarity by means of which a person or a group of people may generate a product which should at the same time be original as well as adequate. This product might be a mere idea, an academic communication, an advertising article or any other form of creation. In general, a new product must be original and unforeseen. This must be different of what the author himself/herself or other people have obtained until that particular moment, in the field at issue. A brand – new solution cannot yet pass for creative unless it is adequate, i.e. it does comply with the different requirements of a problem. The

importance granted to these two criteria pertaining to the judgment in creativity, i.e. novelty and appropriateness, varies among different individuals and on the nature of the considered problems or tasks.

The main aspects referring to approaching creativity – oriented problems are:

- Knowing the human nature of the subjects – which assumes that the creative person has: assimilating capacity, information keeping capacity, the ability to substantiate judgments, and the imaginative capacity.
- Designing a methodology and a structure of the creative process, which should simultaneously observe the following conditions: be clear, be complete, be appropriate, and be effective.

Creativity involves taking into account several characteristic elements of the human nature:

- *Receptivity*: a good part of what is normally called imagination consists in being receptive to the possibilities ignored by most people. The people who are psychologically receptive have a special mental ability and do not allow the censoring of their ideas.
- *Acumen*: creative people do not tolerate ambiguity and disorder.
- *Judgment*: the inclination to build conceptual systems which allow them to see something extraordinary in common situations and create simple relationships with multiple connections, where others see only confused complexities.
- *Interdisciplinary competence*: these individuals possess a great deal of knowledge and concerns in many areas.
- *Independence*: creative people are independent in their own way of thinking, this attribute often generates conflicts.
- *Perfectionism*: creative people very often have precise standards in assessing certain situations
- *Fairness*: they can say “don’t know/you’re right/ I was wrong”, and when they set a target to focus their efforts on, they are almost certain to succeed through using their arguments.

Creative thinking includes two processes of thinking: convergent and divergent. A divergent thinking means to start a certain problem or idea and generate different

perspectives. The purpose of the divergent thinking is to ignore extant constraints and approach all possibilities.

Convergent thinking follows the divergent one and serves to restraining available options, in the purpose of obtaining a certain number of satisfying solutions for a problem or decision. Who thinks in convergent terms starts from a broad outlook of a particular problem and continues through focusing on particular issues.

Each step of the solving creative problem process contains a set of divergent and convergent activities. It means there is an initial search for information, followed by a restriction of the information. During the convergence process, subjects are being searched for to be very close to the topic under consideration, or sufficiently close to ensure further attention.

Creativity is an important human reserve and organizations should try to use this resource by creating an environment where creative talents can flourish.

The Need for Creativity in Contemporary Management

Today, in a world with broad democratic openness, recognition and promotion of creativity is not just a desideratum, yet a real and urgent necessity. Two decades ago, the psychologist Morris Stein announced this threshold of wonderful opening for creativity and creative spirits: "A society that stimulates creativity provides its citizens with four basic freedoms: freedom of study and training, freedom of exploration and investigation, freedom of expression and freedom to be themselves".

The period that we run trough is dominated by mutations, which occur in our domains of interest:

- Accelerating the process of changing at micro and macroeconomic level;
- Increasing the role and value of the information;
- Emphasizing the creative side of decision-making process in which organization's problems are solved;
- Diversifying the set of methods and techniques used by the managers to solve problems. An increasing number of problems have a single or few precedents, hence there are less tested methods to anticipatively approach to obtain some positive results;
- Increasing the degree of flexibility in designing the useful structures.

All these processes can positively influence the activity of the organization, if managers understand the necessity to emphasize the creative side of management.

In other words, management functions must be exercised in a different manner, relying on the creative and entrepreneurial spirit.

Practicing a creative management, the manager must think in terms of the future management structures that ought to be introduced so as to ensure the organizational framework that is optimal to the development of present and future activities.

Managers in Romanian firms must realize that the most valuable asset of any company is the individual, with his/her creative potential, and be convinced that only the money, equipments or information cannot be turned to the best account in the absence of creativity.

The necessity to promote creativity in the Romanian companies is determined by the need for change and for adapting.

The adapting of Romanian companies to the market economy involves profound changes at the management's level. In such conditions, the variety, dynamism and efficiency must become basic characteristics of the Romanian management.

Therefore the market economy calls for the focus on predicting, dynamism and flexibility in the development of management processes, and managers with high creative potential able to coordinate the activity of the organization, to train the staff and to control the way in which objects have been achieved.

It is necessary, particularly in this period, to produce major changes in managers' way of thinking, understanding and acting in terms of considering socio – psychological aspects.

The necessity to innovate, to set up the “new element” in management implies that, at the level of each Romanian company, innovating strategies oriented towards promoting the new should be adopted. One of the main objectives of managers has got to be the discovery and assimilation of the brand new domains of activity in the company with approaching in an open spirit all change suggestions.

This calls for managers' high professionalism in identifying, understanding and acknowledging the necessity of change, on one hand, and their strive to implement it on the other.

Priorities which are having in view the implementing process of the change and adapting the management instrument in Romanian companies to transition conditions:

- Implementing a creative type management;
- Emphasizing the interdisciplinary character of management;
- Professionalizing the management;
- Enhancing the flexibility degree and receptivity of managers towards the mutations that occur in the internal and external environment;
- Passing from the empirical to the scientific management;
- Emphasizing the participative character of management;
- Developing a strategy and management policies with a pronounced creative feature;
- Increasing the flexibility degree of the organizational structure;
- Increasing the methods and techniques' contribution to stimulating creativity;
- Emphasizing the innovative feature of the plan of gathering, recording, processing and transmitting information

If these priorities are taken into account, the creative side of management can definitely be enhanced in this particular period. In other words, the implementation of a new type of management can be built.

Methods of Stimulating Creativity in Romanian Companies

In order to stimulate creativity, there are used several methods and techniques to trigger the innovation skills of individuals and groups and to remove the psycho-social barriers that prevent, through inhibition, the manifestation of the existant skills. The methods of simulating creativity do observe a set of rules: considering the individual in his/her entirety; accepting statements' relativity; defeating the routine and prejudices; not barring the too daring opinions.

The technical literature has recorded over 50 methods capable of stimulating creativity. These methods were grouped in intuitive methods and analytical methods.

Intuitive methods use intuition, imagination and fantasy to stimulate creativity; as particular methods there can be used: the crushing, the play upon words and the analogy.

Crushing is the (mental) breaking of a whole in its component parts and recomposing it in a good manner.

The play upon words is mainly used in organizing the commercial activity, in establishing the name of the new products.

The analogy consists in transferring some characteristics of a known phenomenon to another phenomenon that is unknown, on the bases of the similarities between them.

The crushing, the play upon words, the analogy, the weighing against and other procedures can be used together in the some intuitive complex methods of stimulating creativity, such as: brainstorming, 6/6 discussion (Philips method), Delphi method, brain writing (or the 6/3/5/) method and the synectics.

- **Brainstorming:** is one of the most popular and appreciated methods of stimulating the creativity of a group, which consists of the group leader's logging brand – new ideas during the session. The group members are invited to expose their ideas about the problem. The purpose is obtaining as many ideas as possible. The ideas are never assessed during the generating process. Due to the fact that they can meet the ideas of others, the participants can find new combinations.

- Related with the brainstorming is the 6/6 **Conversation– Philips Method** – applied in stimulating the creativity of some larger groups. The method consists in dividing the large group in smaller units, each composed of 6 persons who are to discuss during 6 minutes a problem to which they are seeking solutions. Each group has a coordinator that animates the conversation and notes the proposals. After all the group members' conveying their ideas and opinions, the leader reads the recorded proposals and invites the group to rank them.

- **Delphi Method** – is an intuitive method that allows the capitalization of a larger volume of scientific and technical information held by a group of experts. A number of questions relating to a particular domain are fixed, a number of experts in the examined problem are chosen, and one or more coordinators must be appointed.

- **Synectics** – this method allows mixing the imagination and fantasy with the critic, rigorous thinking. It assumes putting a problem in a discussion, in which 5-7 persons are participating, and an animator of the discussion is picked, who takes care to avoid the partiality of some opinions or mocking others. Other two members of

the group have the role of producing ideas, and the others are participants in the synectics group. Group members must have a similar cultural level, but they have to come from different interest areas.

- **Delbecq** – it aims at obtaining a new idea, at solving some problems based on maximizing the participation of group members, and combines the individual creation within the group. The problem lies in the difference between the actual situation and the ideal situation imagined by these persons. Solving the problem is to reduce as much as possible this lag by the participants' expressing in written their ideas, associated with oral interventions within the gathering.

- **MESA** (Manager – Economist – Sociologist – Armenia) - involves the participation in a meeting of a group of maximum 15 persons, including: managers, economists, lawyers; two informal leaders and two experts in the management of human resources and sociology.

The analytical methods stimulate creativity based on the presentation and treatment of various data, pieces of information, ideas, and solutions in prescribed and logical form. The more frequently used analytical methods of stimulating creativity are questionnaire-based surveys of some specialists, the function analysis, the morphological function, the heuristic analysis.

Case Study

To get an idea over creativity, I carried out a mini-study, using a questionnaire (annex no 1), I performed an investigation on 50 subjects.

The study aimed at companies in Braila of different sizes and domains of activity, and the subjects were mainly first line managers – first rate and middle rank managers.

In carrying out the questionnaire I carefully considered the status of the interviewed individuals – I selected the persons according to their age (31 – 40 years, 41 – 50 years, over 50 years), age of employment, occupied position within the company, the main area – clothing, following services and commerce activities.

The importance of creativity in the firm is differently viewed by the hierarchical levels, as follows:

- to first line managers 50%
- 38% - of middle managers

- 12% of the first line managers

Taking into account the element of age, the role of creativity can be interpreted as follows:

- there is a high degree of receptivity of the young managers, with the age between 30 – 41 years, compared with the views of the subordinates and collaborators. Also, the managers have great confidence in the skills, knowledge and abilities of the employees, than those covered in the other age groups
- the managers of 41 – 50 years and those over 50 years, are more reserved than the managers from the first group, in some cases they being too conservative.

The main objectives pursued by the questionnaire:

- using the creativity in different hierarchical levels, age categories and professions;
- improving the manager-subordinate relationship;
- the importance given by a manager to some elements that contribute to the effectiveness of their work;
- finding solutions to the emerging problems.

Table no 1

| Do you have creative a potential? | | | |
|--|-----|----|---------------|
| | YES | NO | I DO NOT KNOW |
| 1. Is the job you have chosen the best suited for you? | | | |
| 2. Do you consider that the work is an expression of your personality? | | | |
| 3. Are you strongly concerned in bringing innovations in the domain that you work? | | | |
| 4. Are your achievements well appreciated by the people around you? | | | |
| 5. Do you intend make the best use? | | | |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| 6. Is the quality of your work remarkable? | | | |
| 7. Did you accumulate a very rich life experience? | | | |
| 8. Do your colleagues often ask for your advice in solving some thorny problems? | | | |
| 9. Are you a good professional? | | | |
| 10. Do you have a good performance at work? | | | |
| 11. In order to solve certain problems, do you usually analyse all the details? | | | |
| 12. Are you capable of making sacrifices to achieve your goals? | | | |
| 13. When you are facing with more problems, do you fix first the most important? | | | |
| 14. Do you often find more solutions to a problem? | | | |
| 15. From more solutions do you usually choose the best? | | | |
| 16. When you have creative ideas do you know how to put them immediately into practice? | | | |
| 17. Do you know how to mobilize the others to help at the implementation of your ideas? | | | |
| 18. Do you have a strong will? | | | |
| 19. Do you have special professional achievements? | | | |
| <i>Note with +1 the positive answers, with -1 the negative ones and with 0 the ones of which you are not sure. Calculate the sum of the points..</i> | | | |

15 – 20 of points: You know very well to express your creative potential; you are a professionally achieved person. Others around you really appreciate you. You have a strong ambition which will help you to surpass all obstacles.

10 – 14 points: you are a creative person, in general. You have a good working capacity, but your profession is not ranked first among your activities. You are not a very ambitious individual but you know how to reach your goals. You know how to put many of your ideas into practice.

5 – 9 points: You consider your work a way that helps you to survive. You are not very interested in what you do. You take action only when you have strong motivations.

0 – 4 points: You are an hesitator. You have the tendency to go from one extreme to another. You act rather from obligation and inertia. It comes to you to abandon what you do. You have ideas, but you do not know how to put them into practice. You rarely find solutions at the problems you confront with.

Negative rating: You do not know how to express your creative potential and what exactly you want from your life. You do not trust in your own strength. You are not a self-assured person. You are the embodiment of negative thinking. It would be appropriate to see a psychologist or to follow personality – improvement course.

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