SOME CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE PLACE AND ROLE OF NETWORKING WHEN INCREASING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE

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Abstract: The fast evolution of technology as well as the modern methods of communication and interaction – placed in the context of adaptation to the requirements imposed by European integration and of the feedback to be given when confronted with the new challenges based on knowledge – contributes more and more to providing organizational performance, increasing service quality and improving the quality standards of the human resource.

Within this general framework, networking has become one of the most recent management concepts of the latest decade, which exerts its influence on the efficient functioning of organizations by involving their members in a specific, direct or indirect way.

The present study shows that – considering interaction at an individual level or at the level of certain managerial structures – networking can contribute decisively to finding quick solutions in a very short period in order to improve consistently some activities by identifying, understanding and developing courses of action with other persons and organizations.

Key-words: networking, human resource, modern organization, economic development, performance.

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1. Introduction

The requirements imposed by the modern society have placed the need for knowledge and interaction among the main factors which may contribute to solving the great problems of the present days, as well as to ensuring development and progress in the future.

Prestigious specialists consider that networking can be the key nowadays, and even more in the future, to meeting and knowing certain people, especially successful ones, who can share experiences, contacts and knowledge, in order to have an exchange of ideas that should contribute to the development of both individuals and organizations.

The considerable technological developments in the dealing with and communicating information during the last three decades and a half have profoundly modified economical systems at their very structure (Petrescu, 2009). In order to understand the importance and necessity of networking, knowing its specific aspects, the implementation of the best methods in this respect and the adherence to functioning norms are essential factors. Considering the fast technological progress, it is also necessary to permanently update knowledge in this field and to establish certain utilization techniques of this minor advantage.

The abilities of networking making can be developed in time – hence training courses can be organized in this area – then, after contact networks are created, practicing networking can become a rather effortless activity which is however very beneficial to the development of the opportunities of each human resource.

This activity, if constantly practiced, becomes a compulsory modern method used by successful persons to organize their actions effectively or to interact with the areas of interest of other persons, groups, forums or events.

2. The Necessity of Networking in Human Resource Activity

In order to find some opportunities for activity development and increasing both individual performance and at the level of organizations, networking has a decisive role in this respect, consider the experts in the field of business, human resources and human resource management. Today's networking technologies provide a valuable opportunity to the practice of learning techniques. Educators are discovering that computer networks and multi-based educational tools are facilitating learning and

enhancing social interaction (Ştefan, Ştefănescu, Pânzaru, 2009, p. 49). Hence, this socio-economic activity can be part of the development strategy of each individual and organization as a modern, efficient element of sharing experience and knowledge.

There are certain modalities with special importance within networking firms. Thus, subcontracting and/or cooperation represent a networking modality with an essential role for small and medium firms in the production field and they are characterized by long-term courses and by reciprocal trust between partner companies. They have to be promoted as frequently as possible as they provide numerous advantages, the most important ones being a sure access to the market, maintaining a competitive technical level of the products and the certainty of cash flows, of liquidities. Due to the externalization tendency of activities, big firms will intensify subcontracting and production cooperation, favouring the development of small and medium firms and of each individual. The analyses made for the specific social conditions nowadays, Romania included, spotted the great potential existing at this level. (Nicolescu, O., 2004, p. 282, after Zaman and Vîlceanu, 1999).

For that, it is necessary to understand that, in order to fructify the available potential, taking into account the following elements is compulsory. (http://www.9am.ro):

✓ Tomorrow is the new today

The best moment to start investment in one's own social network is … yesterday. Today is not however too late. Relations are cultivated in time and their impact is obvious in certain social circles (conferences or meetings), when the discussion subjects are numerous and "social connections" are established between people who have not met before. For any professional, irrespective of one's field, networking has become vital to the success and integration within the envisaged community. In other words, networking can be regarded as a daily activity of each individual and it could bring important dividends in the process.

✓ The ambitions of each of us

Personally or professionally speaking, all people have great ambitions. The most productive way in which their actions can create a visible impact is to add immediate value. This concept has been used many times in defining successful networking. Nevertheless, it is true that everybody wants to make friends with the ambitious persons. By looking for modalities

to help the others achieve their ambitions, their own chances of success increase.

✓ I know you, you know him, we know each other

A myth connected to networking is the following: everything one needs is a visiting card. Wrong! In vain do we have a pile of contacts if they provide neither the necessary resources nor the elements of support. We deal with networking when the two persons or groups of persons can support each other and have created their own story: "We had the pleasure to meet at last month's conference and I believe we can think of a beneficial collaboration", is only an example to start with. Moreover, if the connection has been created but interaction begins after a long while: "we met last year", "we met two years ago", networking is not most successful; connections are maintained stable if the relation request – offer is achieved in due time and if it is constant. Taking as a model social networks like Facebook and Twitter, persons who are both influencers and connectors are capable to practice networking. Hence the popularity of the people with a vast network of acquaintances.

✓ We do that every moment

Practicing networking only during social events or at work is not enough. We may be aware or not, but we chase "social contacts" every moment. Either if preparing for a meeting or if wanting not to be solitary in a larger group, the struggle to find useful contacts is permanent and success in networking, as well as within social networks, shows that the number of 150 people who are said to be capable to interact was surpassed a long time ago.

Under these circumstances, in the last decades, the more powerful conditioning of competitiveness within firms of networking developed by investors or managers was mainly generated by the following major processes:

- the growth of stakeholders' number and importance for firms;
- the formation of communication abilities with a great number of persons, especially throughout informational technology;
- the development of a powerful externalizing tendency of activities, especially with big companies and also borrowed by small firms;
- the increased use of outsourcing;

- the fast development of informatics and telecommunications, which provide a superior support for communication.

Since these processes keep intensifying, as well as the training level of investors and managers, an acceleration of networking development can be anticipated and thus a greater impact on the performances of both firms and persons.

Understanding this new perspective very well, the results that can be obtained at an individual level, in the professional field and at the level of the organization with the help of the possibilities offered by networking, will not become realities without trusting the special role it has in modernizing access to information and its modalities of achievement. Nowadays, success belongs to those who have a lot of information, especially in their own field of interest.

3. Conceptual Delimitations

We can consider that networking is the encounter of unknown persons in a social or business context. Filipe Carrera (http://www.networking. manager.ro/) asserts that networking is a normal way of interacting and finding business partners in the entire world. He claims that networking is not manipulation; it is not influence peddling, but simply the support that someone receives from somebody else who is willing to offer it without waiting for any reward.

We can consider that the managerial-entrepreneurial relational system, or networking, represents one of the latest management concepts, contoured and known in the last decade of the second millennium. D.S. Hall (1992, p. 72) defines networking as the development and maintenance of connections with people who have a direct and indirect impact on the business. He treats networking as an interpersonal relation, starting from the premises that the relations between organizations are in fact relations between individuals belonging to the respective entities.

Starting from D. S. Hall's definition and the approach of the firm's stakeholders, the definition of managerial-entrepreneurial networking is defined, in other authors' opinion, as the organized relational system existing between a company and its stakeholders, where the investor and manager have the main role in the initiation, course and development of the process. Networking can be represented as a cobweb (Nicolescu, O., 2004, p

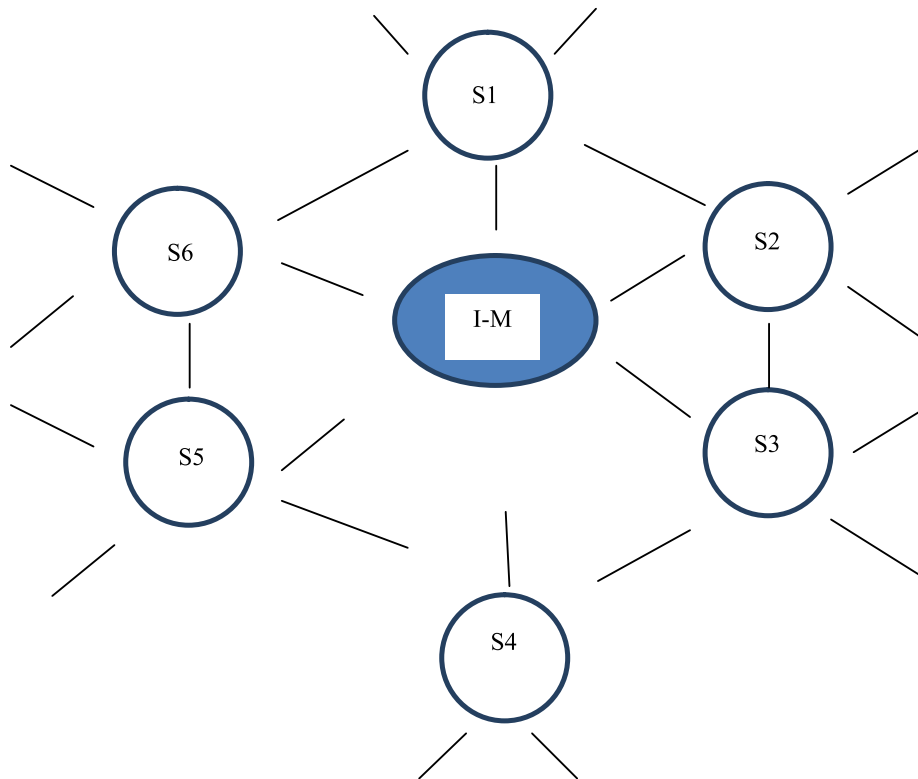281, after Bennet and Haslam, 1992), the investor and/ or manager being placed in the middle (Figure no.1).

Figure no. 1. The entrepreneurial-managerial cobweb
Source: Nicolescu, O., (2004), p 281, after Bennet and Haslam, 1992.

Where I-M – the investor or manager
S1, S2,….. S6 – the stakeholders of the firm
The more it is connected to a superior number of other points (the stakeholders) and the more strings (relations), the stronger the position of the individual or of the firm represented by the investor or manager will be in the given context. Quality entrepreneurial-managerial networking is based on an organizational and individual culture of reciprocity and equivalent exchanges, which confer a plus of intensity and efficiency to the relation of the firm with its stakeholders.

On the other hand, relational marketing arrangements constitute a specific modality of networking contoured lately and involving the common approach of the market based on long-term relations of collaboration.

As a rule, the small firms involved combine certain activities, which are inserted in the chain of values and contribute to obtaining superior added value, devised between the participating companies. Among the numerous advantages of this networking form, we mention: the amplification of the access to market and resources, offering some superior complete products, with the necessary service included, the diminution of unitary production costs, the reduction of fabrication periods and the commercialization and diminution of the risks for every participating firm.

Nowadays, theoreticians and managers of organizations are delighted with the perspective offered by the technologies administrating knowledge as for instance intranet or networking which become organizational expertise, as Paul M. Leonardi and Jeffrey W claim (2012).

For each individual, both the excellent networking possibilities at the level of the firm and the opportunities of technologizing informational communication have become more and more effective strategies to amplify interpersonal relations, having and important role when solving professional problems and not only.

Therefore, we wished to make an investigation which should concretize aspects which are specific to knowing and using networking.

4. Study regarding the place and role of networking when increasing human resource performance

In order to identify the place and role of networking in the development of the qualitative standards of the human resource we made a study using inquiry as a method and the questionnaire as a means of investigation. Starting from a realistic delimitation of our aim in this study, we established the following objectives:

General objective

Outlining the place and role of networking in the development of the qualitative standards of the human resource.

Specific objectives

• Establishing the main contributions of networking in the development of human resource activities.

• Analyzing the main characteristics belonging to networking.

• Identifying a correlation between the characteristics of networking and assurance of the human resource performance.

Hypotheses

The general hypothesis we started from in this investigation was the fact that networking, through its characteristics, influences directly human resource performance at an individual level. This hypothesis can be turned operational and the following enunciations will result:

1. The more we know and implement elements which are specific to networking, the more the possibility of achieving performance at an individual level will increase;

2. A person's performance or failure is determined, in the first place, by the relations he / she has with other persons.

Research methodology

Since the objective of this investigation is to know opinions, attitudes referring to the characteristics of networking and its place and role in the development of the human resource, we considered it best to use inquiry as a means of research and the questionnaire as an instrument of investigation.

Sampling

Research was made on a representative sample of 50 persons – arbitrarily selected – working with Continental Forum Hotel Sibiu and Park Hotel Sibiu. Our attempt was to choose persons with different backgrounds, sex and age. The sample obtained is rendered in the table below:

Table no. 1

Sample configuration within Park Hotel Sibiu

	Continental Forum Hotel Sibiu			
Status	Employees		Managers	
Sex	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine
Number of persons	11	9	2	3

Table no. 2

Sample configuration within Contiental Forum Hotel Sibiu

	Park Hotel Sibiu			
Status	Employees		Managers	
Sex	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine
Number of persons	8	11	4	2

5. Results and discussions

After applying the questionnaire and analyzing the data, a series of answers was obtained and a part of them is presented in what follows. Thus, we identified the opinions of the persons questioned about the characteristics of networking and its role in increasing human resource performance by asking questions. We selected only three of them for our purpose.

• Please appreciate the following contributions of networking in increasing and consolidating job offers at an individual level, by giving marks from 1 to 5. (1 – Not important at all; 5 – Very important):

Table no.3

Variable of question no.2

| Variable	
a. Fast identification of opportunities;	e. Knowing and overtaking concurrence;
b. Working with different types of people;	f. Knowing the latest information from capable persons;
c.Creating an effective relational system;	g. Establishing profitable partnerships or collaborations with different organizations (with different persons);
d.Career development;	h. Diversifying and increasing job offers.
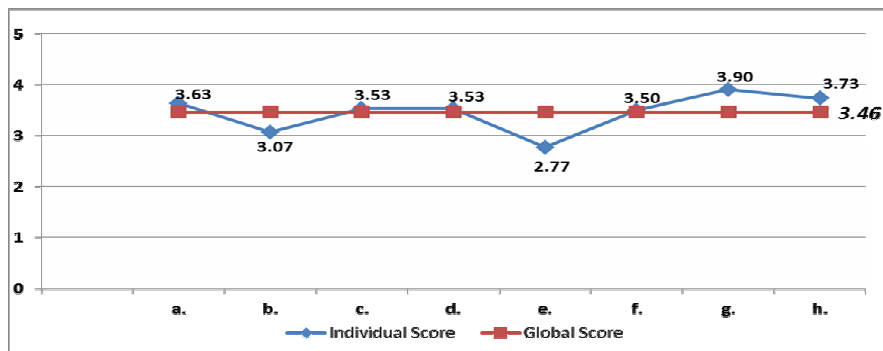
*Figure no. 2 Score interpretation for question no. 2
with Park Hotel Sibiu*

In the above figure (Figure no. 2), it can be noticed that, for the personnel of Park Hotel Sibiu, establishing profitable partnerships with different organizations (with different persons) is extremely important since the individual score is 3.90 (whereas the global score is 3.46). Then, within

the same hotel, diversifying and increasing job offers has a great weighting factor (the individual score is 3.73), followed by the fast identification of opportunities (with a score of 3.63).
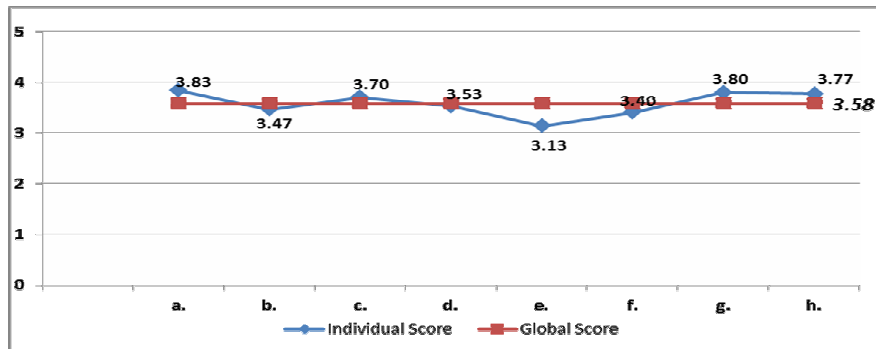

Figure no. 3 Score interpretation for question no. 2
with Continental Forum Hotel Sibiu

For the personnel within Continental Forum Hotel Sibiu (Figure no. 3) the fast identification of opportunities has the highest individual score i.e. 3.83, followed by establishing profitable partnerships or collaborations with different organizations (with different persons) with a score of 3.80 (whereas the global score is 3.85).

After analyzing the answers, it is obvious that all the opportunities offered by networking are very important, in the opinion of the personnel working for the two organizations, in increasing human resource performance.

• Which are the actions that you take for developing networking activities within your organization? Give marks from 1 to 5. (1 – Very little; 5 – Very much):

Table no. 4
Variable of question no. 3

| a.	Going to relevant events and meeting people from the envisaged field;
b.	Establishing clear objectives regarding networking;
c.	Creating an appropriate environment for starting conversation and trying to arise the curiosity of the people around;
d.	Exchanging visiting cards with important persons;
e.	Maintaining newly formed relations;
f.	Collaborating with other specialists in the field of human resources and human resources management
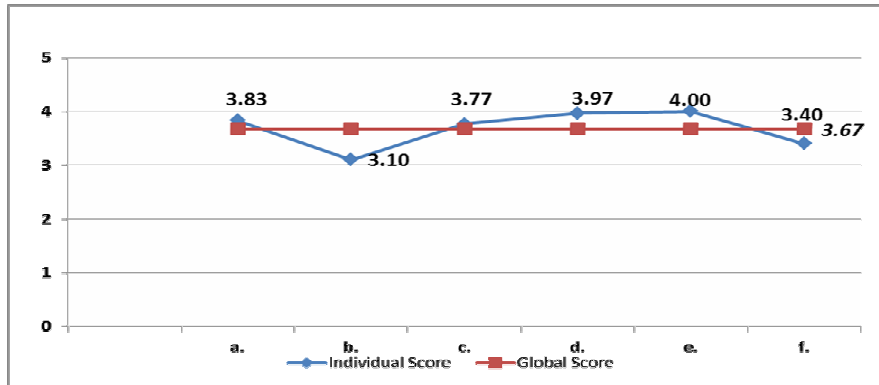
Figure no. 4 Score interpretation for question no. 3 with Park Hotel Sibiu

The main actions performed to develop the networking activity, with the employees working with Park Hotel Sibiu (Figure no. 4) are: maintaining newly formed relations (with an individual score of 4.00), exchanging visiting cards with important persons (with an individual score of 3.97) and going to relevant events and meeting people from the envisaged field (with an individual score of 3.83).
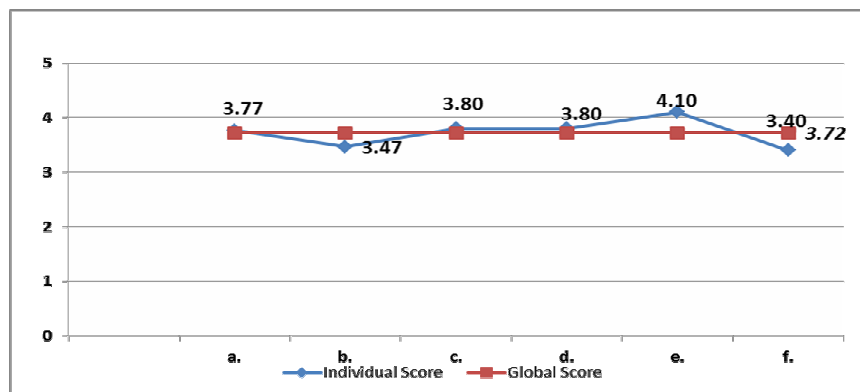

Figure no. 5 Score interpretation for question no. 3 with Continental Forum Hotel Sibiu

After analyzing the results for this question, with the employees of Continental Forum Hotel Sibiu, it is obvious that the most important

activities they perform in order to develop networking activities are: maintaining newly formed relations (with an individual score of 4.10), creating an appropriate environment for starting conversation and trying to arise the curiosity of the people around (with an individual score of 3.80) and exchanging visiting cards with important persons (with an individual score of 3.80).

•Please appreciate to what extent the following actions have an influence upon high achievements in networking activities, by giving marks from 1 to 5 (1 – Very little; 5 – Very much);

Table no. 5

Variable of question no. 4

Variable	
a. Knowing the principles networking is based on;	e. Knowing the advantages of using networking;
b. Stating clearly the established objectives;	f. Permanently renewing knowledge in the field;
c. The existence of some abilities in using the computer;	g. Creating a personal complex database
d. Knowing and elucidating networking myths;	

With this question both the employees of Park Hotel Sibiu and the employees of Continental Forum Hotel Sibiu consider that it is important to know the principles which are at the basis of networking (with a score of 4.10 and 4.00) but also to be aware of the advantages of using networking and of the existence of some components when using the computer.

Thus, we can estimate that networking may function effectively in order to develop human resource performance when its functioning principles are known, but also if there are aptitudes when using the computer and databases.

6. Conclusions

The objective analysis of networking and its interaction with human resources brings about admitting the necessity of its implementation in the conception and action strategy of each person, manager and organization interested in obtaining and consolidating internet performances and modernizing rapid and effective solutions of the current problems. Although this can seem a leisure activity, we consider that networking is a resource

which is necessary and should be used in the benefit of each person. We could say that it is an activity directed towards creating a network of contacts for making business. Networking is more than "having some friends". There are interpersonal contacts which should be developed and maintained once initiated. Networking means exploring business opportunities. Keeping as many active contacts as possible represents having more business opportunities eventually.

Thus, the utility and efficiency of networking can be seen in time, through what one can obtain due to networking relations. The basic idea is gaining trust. When people have gained trust and acknowledgement for a certain thing, recommendation will follow. In interpersonal relations, the person is very important: if one makes a good impression there is a great chance that one's services be recommended. This a greater chance than vice versa.

Thus, the specific aspects of networking for the field of human resources can prove, based on scientific arguments, that today and even more in the future, networking will become a permanent component in the strategy of a person's problem solving, in the sense of improving the actions and activities of the human resource.

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