

Some Problems in Management Competence Development

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Abstract: This paper seeks to answer how to improve and develop Management Competence. The conception of Management Competence (a manager's qualification) is oriented on the "outputs" of managerial work and duties. The contribution will also be oriented on the ways and means of developing Managerial Competence as well as the problems and issues relating to the transference of Management Competence. It shows that it is incredibly difficult to develop Managerial Competence. This paper interprets the results of research that was focused on these questions: Which area of managerial work do Czech managers have problems that can be eliminated by further development (training, education) in? Which factors hamper to managers in further development (training, education)? What is the experience of Czech managers with training and development of Management Competence? The resolution of this thematic topic can increase the quality of the professional preparation (i.e. education/formation) of future managers for the execution of their professional duties. If however, we can come up with new observations relating to this field, the results will show themselves in the actual performance of individual managers in their work. This can as a consequence lead to increasing the competitive abilities of individual organisations.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is focussed on the process of improving and developing managerial competence. The paper shows the methodology and partial results of the research that was done within the dissertation work of the authoress (Management Competence Models and Manager's Qualification Development) and the research project Developing Managerial Tacit Knowledge, reg. No. 406/08/0459 supported by GA ČR - Czech Science Foundation.

We can understand Managerial Competences as "the ability of a person to behave in a manner corresponding to the requirements of working within the parameters of the given environment of an organisation, and thereby to produce the requisite results." [1] This conception of a manager's qualifications is thus oriented on the "outputs" of managerial work and duties.

We see the need and at the same time the resolution of this thematic topic in its contribution to the increased improvement of the quality of the professional preparation (i.e. education/formation) of future managers for the execution of their professional duties. To further

develop Managerial Competence and to pass on/transfer one's knowledge to another is a highly complicated matter. If however, we can come up with new observations relating to this field, the results will show themselves in the actual performance of individual managers in their work. This can as a consequence lead to increasing the competitive abilities of individual organisations.

THE METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire "A" for successful top managers

The aim was qualitative approach to the solved problem. That is why this questionnaire mostly consists of opened questions.

The identification of respondents:

It was addressed 451 managers in the Czech Republic, 270 of the questionnaires were sent by post and 181 by e-mail. 57 of 451 questionnaires were sent in English version, because among addressed managers there were also international managers acting in the Czech Republic.

Target respondents were managers that are referred to as successful and are the members of top management of an organisation. Addressed managers were:

- managers placed in the competition for the title Manager of a year 2003 and 2004 organised by Manažerský svazový fond (managerial federation in the Czech Republic)
- managers working in companies that were placed in the chart Top 100 of companies that is made up by the association Czech Top 100
- managers working in companies that were placed at the prominent positions in the competition Subcontractor of a year 2004 organised by agency CzechInvest in co-operation with Association for Foreign Investments
- managers from selected companies acting on Zlín territory (part of the Czech Republic)

I realise that the selection of managers that are referred to as successful, is very complicated. Even the manager's placement at the prominent positions in the mentioned competitions it is not a guarantee of the fact that this manager will be successful in the long term or in another organisation. Nevertheless I consider the selection of respondents as very suitable.

The data collection took place in July and August 2005. 30 questionnaires were filled up and sent back. The rate of return was 6.65 %. In literature [3] this number is considered (regarding the character of research) as acceptable.

Average length of being in managerial position was 13 years. Respondents were members of top management of the company, 4 respondents were international managers acting in the Czech Republic.

Assessment of used method:

The usage of opened questions in the questionnaire enabled more flexible and deeper answers. This helped to identify the true and authentic respondent's attitudes and opinions.

Unfortunately, some answers lacked the context that is very important for real understanding to the respondent's answer. It is shown that more suitable method of data collection could be in this kind of survey interviews with managers because the probability of absence of message context is lower there.

The data evaluation was quite complicated with regard to the qualitative approach of questionnaire. The exact quantitative data evaluation is practically impossible. To evaluation of some answers there were created the data category by opened coding and cataloguing of concepts.

The questionnaire "B" for managers

The aim of this questionnaire was quantitative approach to the solved issue. That is why this questionnaire consisted mostly of closed questions.

The identification of respondents:

Target respondents were "common" managers in the middle and top management because we wanted to get the overview of opinions and personal experience with training activities especially of "common" managers. As contrasted to the previous questionnaire research, it was not important whether managers were members of top management and whether addressed managers were signified as successful.

First of all, the questionnaire was tested on two managers and then the questionnaire research was realised. After previous phone calls explaining the essence of the questionnaire research was addressed 113 respondents that filled in the questionnaire and sent it back. The data were collected from August till October 2007. 8 questionnaires had to be rejected due to missing or wrong answers of some questions. The results come out from the file of 105 questionnaires.

Assessment of used method:

During the process of questionnaire construction there was accentuated the need for time unpretentiousness of filling the questionnaire out all the time. This unpretentiousness increases the probability of filling the questionnaire out.

The data evaluation in this second questionnaire was not as complicated as in the first one. The reason is different - quantitative approach to the issue. The matter was also the usage of closed questions in the questionnaire. Their advantage is higher uniformity of measurement and thereby higher reliability [2]. This

enabled better and easier quantitative data processing – there are exact mathematic-statistical methods for these ways of data evaluation.

The research sample was larger in this case as contrasted to the previous questionnaire research, where there were high demands laid on target respondents. This enabled the quantification of solved issue.

PARTIAL RESULTS OF SURVEY

Reserves of Managers

Managers were addressed with the question: Which area of managerial work do you have problems that can be eliminated by further development (training, education) in?

The survey results also show that managers with economic education (that dominates among respondents) have the greatest reserves in leadership, communication and presentation skills and the usage of information technology. But in the other places it is the knowledge of foreign languages and the special technical area. There arises a question whether the reason is the fact that addressed managers do not use the languages and the technical issue so much, or it is easier (eventually also faster) to learn these knowledge and skills. These managers have the minimal reserves in the area of economics, finance and time management that is understandable in view of the branch of education.

Managers with technical education have the greatest reserves in the knowledge of foreign languages, then in leadership and time management. They have the minimal reserves in special technical area. These results are not very surprising because it corresponds to the branch of absolved education.

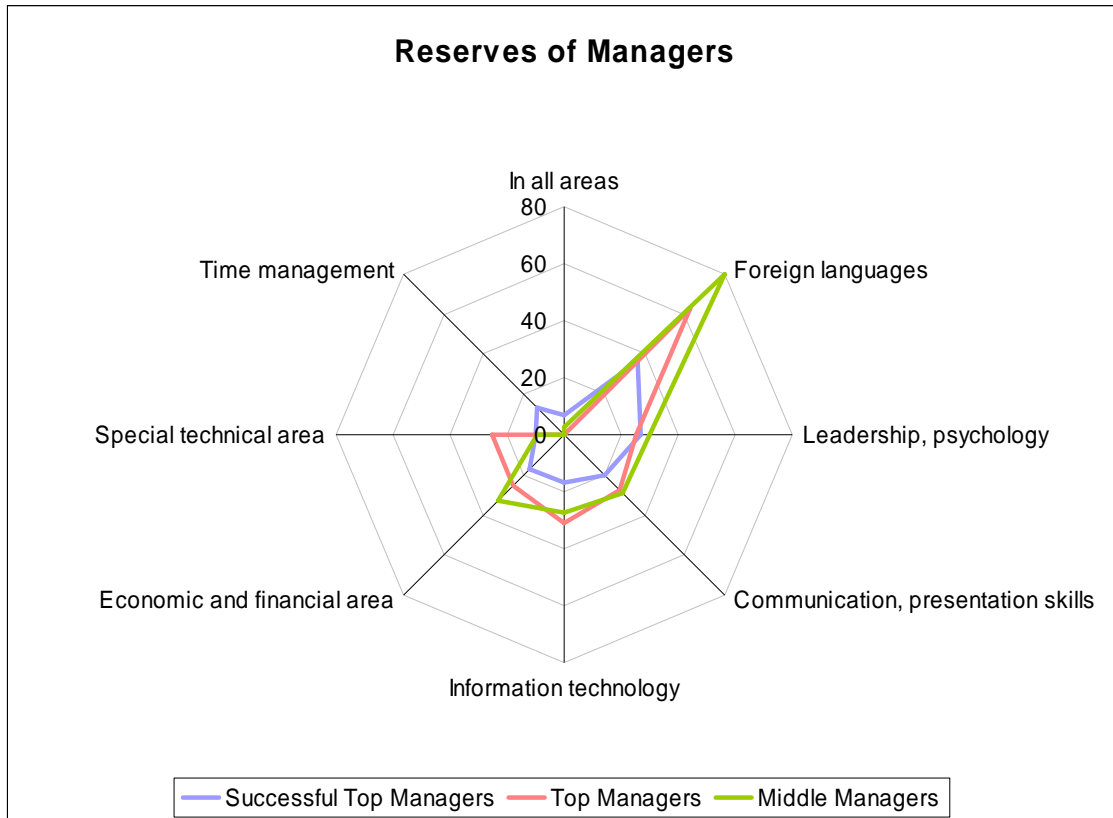
Managers educated in Humanities have their reserves in economic and financial area but leadership and the knowledge of foreign languages are in the second place. There is also surprising fact that these managers have the minimal reserves in the area of information technology.

Barriers of further development of managers

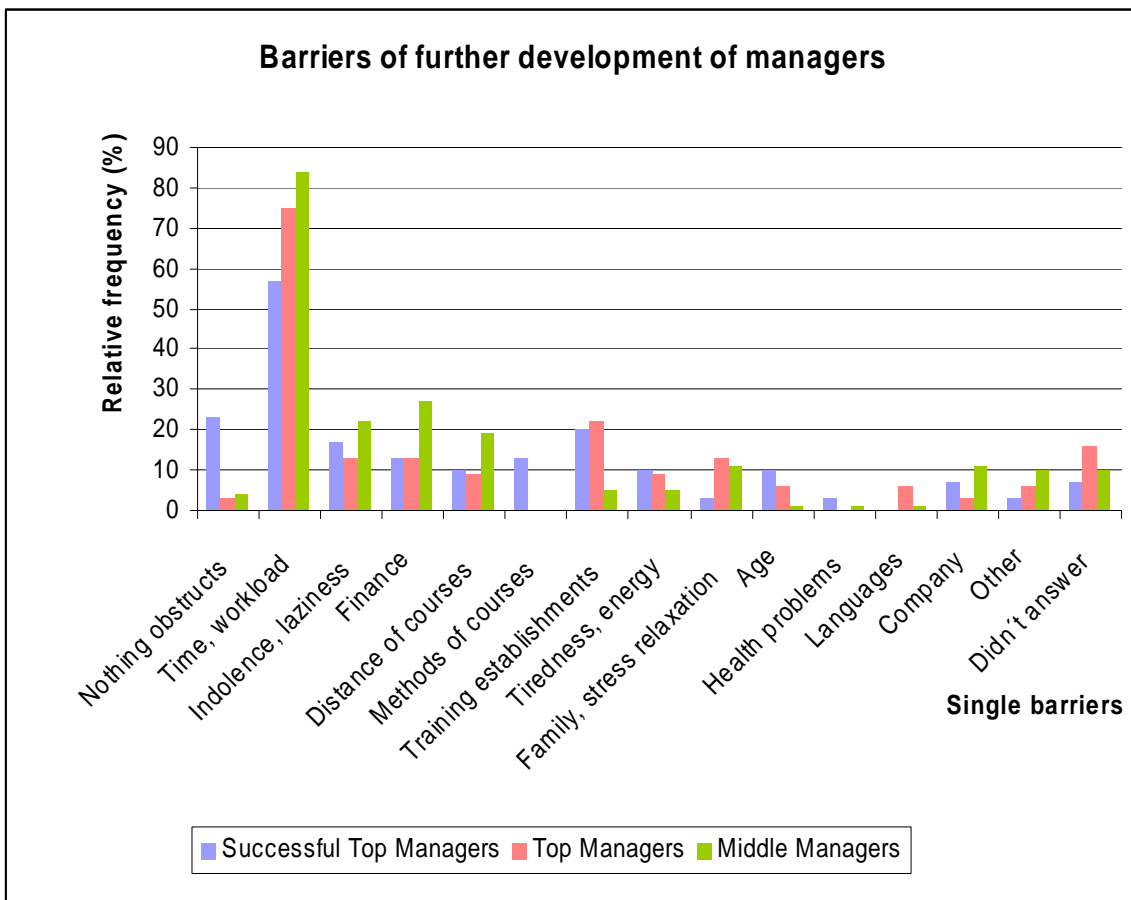
Managers were addressed with the question: Which factors hamper to you in further development (training, education)?

Factors that obstruct managers in further development (training, education...) are high working load and related lack of time. But it is surprising that high working load is considered as a barrier by higher part of middle managers in comparison with top managers. In comparison with successful top managers it is about more than 25 percents.

In this respect 23 percents of successful top managers realise that it is mainly managers themselves who are responsible for their further qualification development. They self-critically realise that their time is distributed to various activities according to their values and priorities, so they said that nothing obstructs them in their further management development.



Note: The number of respondents in each group of managers was different; hence there were compared relative frequencies.



Notes:

Each respondent could mark more barriers. Hence the sum of relative frequencies is not 100. The number of respondents in each group of managers was different; hence there were compared relative frequencies.

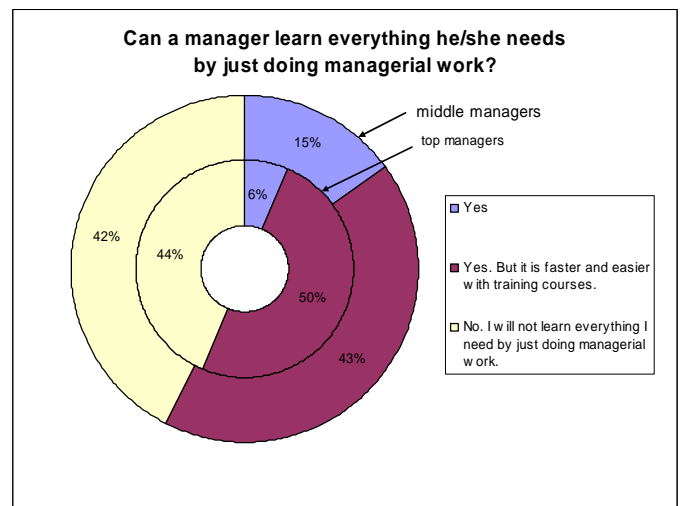
It is very fairly illustrated in the answer of one successful top manager to the question: Which factors hamper to you in further development (training, education)? His answer was: "Laziness. All else (time, family...) is the tergiversation."

To barriers, which are connected with managers alone, belong the indolence of managers, their laziness and motivation to further development. Than tiredness, lack of energy and other priority (e.g. the need for putting manager's mind to his/her family or relaxation, sport, hobbies) is connected with that. This is shown in the following answer: "Time that remains to me I want to pay to my family and relaxation."

However there exist barriers that are not at the side of managers but at the side of training organisations and the methods used by them to the management development. These barriers are mentioned below.

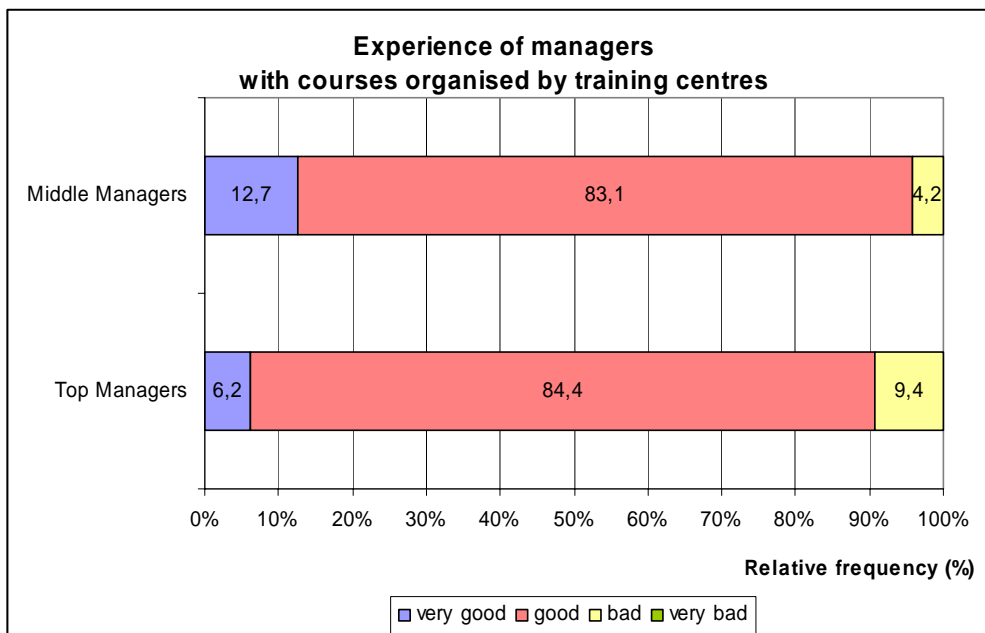
Can a manager learn everything he/she needs only by doing managerial work?

Managers very often refuse training activities organised by training and developing organisations because of the fact that managers develop and learn by performing the managerial work. That is why there was the following question in the questionnaire "B": "Can a manager learn everything he/she needs only by doing managerial work (without passing training courses)?" The answers are shown in the next graph.



Note: The outer zone represents answers of middle managers; the inner zone represents answers of top managers.

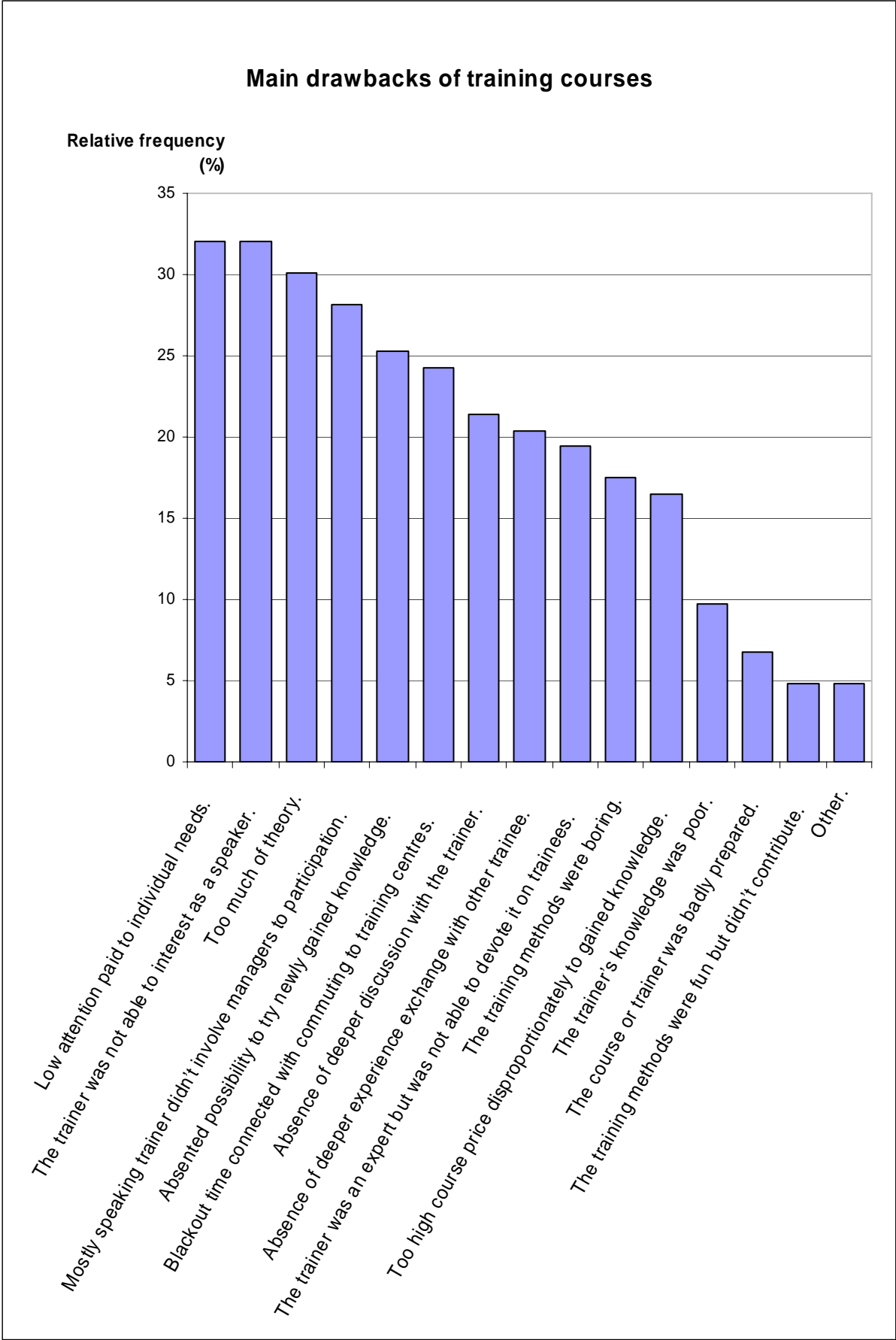
The search shows that 42 or 44 % of addresses managers think that they will not learn by doing the managerial work all they need. Next 43 or 50 % of managers think that training courses are faster and easier way of gaining needed managerial competencies as contrasted to just performance of managerial work. This could speak on the side of manager's attendance at training courses. But we can see it also in this way – 58 or 56 % asked managers is persuaded that they can gain all the managerial competencies they need just by doing their work. The opinions of managers are not united. It is also remarkable that 15 or 6 % of managers do not think that education in the training courses is faster and easier way of gaining needed managerial competencies.



Managers were addressed with the question: Try to assessment the absolved training courses – how many percents of your expectation were fulfilled?

Maximal value was 95 %, minimal value was 25 %. Arithmetic average is 67 %, modus is 80 %, and median is 70 %.

Main drawbacks of training courses



CONCLUSION

This paper was focussed on the process of improving and developing managerial competence.

Managers felt reserves mostly in knowledge of foreign languages, human resource management (e.g. labour motivation), and communication and presentation skills.

As factors that prevent managers from further development (training, education) were mentioned especially high working load and deficient motivation. Some managers wrote that it is a question of preferences and basically nothing inhibits them from further development. Occasionally are managers discouraged by common used methods of education, blackout time connected with commuting to training centres and the quality of educators and trainers.

This paper also shows the main drawbacks of training courses. E.g. low attention paid to individual needs of trained managers, the absented possibility to try newly gained knowledge and skills in practice, too much of theory, absented deeper discussion with the trainer and other managers focussed on exchanging of experience and best practices...

In spite of many training courses for managers in the market with management development, managers say that the supply of relevant courses is not sufficient, attractive for managers and the course content doesn't corresponds to the needs of managers. Managers have not enough trustworthy references and are not sure when choosing high-quality training institution. Managers very often have experience with trainer with poor competencies and this influences not only the process of management development but also the motivation of managers. Managers prefer gaining of practical experience to training courses.

LITERATURE

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