The Relationship between Project Manager Skills and Leadership Skills in the Workplace

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Leadership skills are observed to have a huge impact on the development of the organizations. With the development of organizations, there has been a huge shift in the mode of operations within an organization, particularly after the advent of globalization. Managing dynamic changes have been one of the major needs of the present day organizations to maintain a sustainable development. These changes could be effectively handled by ensuring the development of human resource and by enhancing the leadership skills of managers. The efficient leadership and project management abilities help in developing the ability of the workforce to manage the diverse situations effectively within an organization. Management of the workforce has been a huge challenge for developing the performance of the overall organization. The leadership abilities help in managing the performance of the organizations in an effective manner. This paper aims to investigate and tackle competencies that are correlated among a project manager and a leader.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Project management has emerged as one of the most popular fields in the present business domain. The change in the social settings and the development of business has influenced the concepts of project management over the years. This change involving the use of different technicalities has influenced the need of innovation into the different sections of the society. The diversified mode of business and the different influences that have implemented by the dynamic business environment are noted to have huge influences on the organizations [1]. This dynamic environment of the business world has even entailed the organizations with the need to develop their employees to maintain a sustainable business environment. These developments could be influenced by nurturing the individual abilities to motivate and develop the leadership skills to meet with the challenging environment, [1]. In this regard, leadership skills are one of the pre-requisite for the development of an individual as well as for an organization. Leadership skills help in developing individual abilities of employees and enhance the credibility of the individuals to perform [1]. The different challenges that are imposed by the business environment lead to the development of a specific environment that may influence the challenging business environment at large. This change in the business environment has in turn influenced the different business motives and has further created situations that lead to the nurturing of leadership skills to manage the different projects. There is a different segment of the concepts are predominant within the society affecting the business domain at large (*Ibid*).

This is even noted that leadership abilities are used to develop the different systems that are operating within an organization. The development of technical skills is only possible with the use of the different strategies that may be applicable for the different syndromes. Project management skills are dynamic and develop a strategic approach towards managing the different system of projects. With the dynamic business environment, there has been a huge shift in the process of management. This shift is observed to be developing the skills and abilities of an organization and enhancing the leadership abilities of an organization at large. The development of the leadership skills is closely related with the development of the other skills that are related to the personal development [2]. The significance of this research is to elaborate

on the relationship between the project management skills and the leadership skills that the individual possesses. Furthermore, these skills together helps in developing the performance of the workforce and enhance the overall performance of the organizations. The overall performances are majorly observed to have a huge impact on the development of attributes that are required for enhancing the workplace performances and developing the overall organizations. Therefore, to ensure the legitimacy of the study, a series of real life evidences have been provided. The real life evidences act as relevant sources for developing the generalizability of the research and enhancing the credibility of the same. These evidences even acts as appropriate resources that would enhance the acceptance of the research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Leadership and How It Influences Workplace Productivity

According to Voon et al. [2]; leadership is defined as a process that helps to enhance the interpersonal relationship of the employees and their approach towards the authority. Effective leadership helps in developing the different attributes that enhances the level of job satisfaction among the employees and helps in achieving goals. The level of job satisfaction refers to the development of approaches that enhances the ability of an organization to perform, [2]. Ajala [3] commented on the workplace environment that can be improved with the development of appropriate leadership skills. Furthermore, the effective leadership abilities have been noted to develop the level of productivity within a workplace and enhance the credibility of the workplace to perform. Effective leadership abilities help in developing the communication skills that are predominant within an organization and enhance the ability of an organization to perform. The report of the National Library Board [4] reflected about the fact that the talented leaders with efficient leadership abilities are the backbones of an organization.

According to Lunenburg [5], the different approaches of management are noted to develop the diverse concepts that help in enhancing the workplace management. This even enhances the credibility of an organization to perform and enhance the working environment that is

prevalent within an organization. Additionally, Laschinger, Read, Wilk, and Finegan [6] argued that the leadership abilities help in controlling the workplace un-civilisation and foster a healthy work environment. This even helps in managing the different conflicts that are predominant within an organization and further enhance the credibility of the different sections to perform. This is more likely to develop the workplace productivity and develop the cost of organizational cost of workplace, [6]. Taiwo [7] argued about the sensitivity at the workplace, which can be handled with effective leadership abilities. The transformational leaders help in developing a proper chain of command that would enhance the ability of an organization to perform. In developing those skills, subordinates will become more aware of their potentials and spend more time building trust and focusing on the organization performance as a whole rather than an individual requisite.

Mazur [8] affirmed that the workplace diversity has affected the overall environment of an organization. The multicultural value of the workplace has been noted to be a major challenge affecting the overall performance of an organization. Globalization has influenced a huge amount of challenge on the working environment and has imposed a further challenge on the managers to manage the multicultural views of the present workforce. Taiwo [7] argued on the productivity of labor that could be nurtured by the effective management of the leadership skills and abilities. With the strategic development of the leadership abilities, the organizations are effectively managing the different skills and further contributing towards enhancing their skills to manage the diversified workforce (*Ibid*). According to Laschinger et al. [6], the management of the workforce in an effective manner could be efficiently done using leadership skills. The management of human behavior is observed as one of the major needs of the present day organizations. With the development of different attributes and inclusion of most diversified groups within the workforce, it is apparent that management of employees has become a complex task for management (*ibid*).

Mazur [8] propagated that development of leadership abilities has become one of the most efficient tasks to create a civilized workforce within an area of operation. There have been several features leading to the satisfaction of the workforce and these factors highly influence workforce satisfaction and in turn enhance their

productivity. In this regard, Ajala [3] noted that effective leadership proficiency could act as an added advantage for developing an effective scope of management and further develop the level of productivity among the employees. The leadership abilities help in developing workplace flexibility that has been influencing job satisfaction and even affecting the level of commitment and productivity among the employees. A sustainable environment can be created with the effective management of leadership abilities and developing a healthy workforce. Furthermore, the effective leadership can lead to the efficient flow of information and enhance the level of communications among the different segments of the society [2]; in correspondence to the above facts, the efficient management of the diverse workforce can lead to a huge amount of challenge for the management. With the introduction of collaboration, there is a huge requirement of the work effectiveness. This could only be conducted with the effective leadership abilities and management of diverse actions that are persistent among the workforce [5]. The management of human resources could be effectively done with the use of efficient leaders. Furthermore; enhancing organizational culture is determined through socialization process where employees attain new knowledge to assume better roles in the organization. Another belief in enhancing organizational culture is to manage different activities and celebrations which bring a new perspective of the organization.

Roberts [9] stated that developing leadership skills is one of the imperative ways to promote value in an organizational system. The level of spiritual intelligences that could be instigated within the workforce is observed to be directly proportional to the performances of the employees. The leadership abilities that are present among the employees are observed to improve the performances of the employees at large. With the motive to develop a workforce, the management should be more focused to develop the leadership abilities among the managers, so that they can align the individual goals with the objectives of the organizations [9]. According to Boedker, Videgen, Meager, Cogin, Mouritsen and Runnalls [10] the high performing offices enhance the ability of the organizations to perform better. This could only be developed with the effective management of leadership skills of the managers, so that the overall performances of the organization could be monitored, (*Ibid*). Ngambi [11] even commented on the global

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environment, creating an impact on the performances of the employees. The organizations could be effectively managed by their human resource. The organizations by the management of their human resource can sustain effectively even in the turbulent business environment (*Ibid*). The leadership abilities can effectively increase the efficiency of the management to meet with the dynamic issues that may occur at the time of operation. The leadership abilities would efficiently develop the performances that are undertaken by different organizations to develop the operations of the total workforce [10]. Therefore, the key to success is to enhance communication and constantly provide new tools and skills through training programs or/and classes of leadership. We must remind ourselves that we are forever learning, experimenting, and adapting.

2.2 The Project Manager Skills Required To Control Performance

The determination of the successful project outcome has been observed to be possible through the effective project management skills. The project management abilities are observed to have a huge amount of impact on the different aspects of the management [12]. According to Houser and Oman [13], it is even noted that the different strategies that are implemented by the organizations are involved with the development of the overall performances of the workforce. Morgeson, DeRue, and Karam [14] stated efficient management of skills would help in developing the performance of an organization. According to Ajelabi and Tang [15] effective management of the projects helps in developing efficient tools for management of change that is being undertaken by the management. Based on the report presented by the Project Management Institute [16], the skills of the management is to effectively develop strategies that would increase the efficiency of the management to manage the various tasks that helps in controlling the performances of the overall organization. As the project progresses, from top on down to least participant, the connection among everyone will become stronger and clearer.

According to Ajelabi and Tang [15] the development of benchmarking helps in managing the quality of the different products and services. With the proper development of skills, it is further noted that the different performances could be monitored. The development of project management skills helps in developing the

different phases of the project and enhances the management of the changes that are taking place within an organization. Furthermore, the different practices of the management help in developing the evidences that enhance the performance of an organization as a whole [15]. Morgeson et al. [14], affirmed that the development of innovative skills and efficient management of the leadership abilities help in developing the different attributes that enhances the credibility of the performances within the workforce. This requires an efficient management of the different strategies that helps in developing the approaches of an organization to perform effectively. With the development of the best management practices, the development of effective skills is required [14].

According to Morgeson et al. [14], the innovative skills of the managers help in developing effective strategies that would enhance the ability of an organization to perform. This would even help in developing the effective leadership strategies to manage the complexities imposed by the different changes within an organization [14,15]. The complications of the external and internal environment need an effective management of the different risks that are occurring within an environment and developing the efficient strategies for the same [15]. Thompson [12], the different organizational changes is further developing the different approaches of the management to enhance the performances of the organization. The dynamism of the environment is even likely to create the different impacts of the management and develop the credibility of the organizations to perform (*Ibid*).

According to Wadalkar and Pimplikar [17], the changing scenarios and systems has been implementing a challenge for the development of the individual ability to meet with the diverse changes into different projects that are handled by the organizations. Furthermore, Humaidi [18] stated that the knowledge of the project managers acts as an efficient tool to develop the different understanding of the management of projects. Peterson [19] commented on the development of the knowledge base of the project managers that acts as an efficient source for enhancing the overall performance of the projects. The effective leadership skills of the managers are most important to develop the overall performance of the team [19]. It is further noted that leadership abilities helps in enhancing the credibility of the projects and further improves

the performance of the overall projects [17]. This even helps in enhancing the organizational performance [18,19].

2.3 Managerial Skills Directly Influence and the Impact on Performance

Employees are the most important resources for the organizations as they helps in managing the different situations that an organization is likely to face during different phases of its operations according to Julius [20]. The same authors advanced organizations can effectively achieve its goals by promoting a harmonious relationship among its employees. Most organizations fail due to the lack of proper skills among the managers to handle the diverse needs of the external as well as the internal environment within an organization. According to Farooq and Khan [21], the defective training and development of personal skills help in developing the attributes of the managers to manage the diverse situations arising out of the dynamic nature of the business. The implication of the effective skills for the development of an organization helps in enhancing its credibility and performance (*Ibid*). Sani [22] noted that the strategic practice of managing human resource in an effective manner could only be implemented with the effective leadership strategies of the managers. The leadership abilities of a manager effectively enhance the credibility of the organizations to perform and further develop the organizational performances at large (*Ibid*).

Different practices of human resource management are observed to be majorly inclined towards developing the strategies that would further develop the workplace efficiency [23]. According to Boedker et al. [10] the effective leadership skills help in developing the workplace environment to manage the different diverse situations that may arise due to the complexities of the different factors. Lazim and Azizan [23], commented on the importance of training that is provided to the employees. According to Hotepo et al. [24], this training is possible with the development of the effective leadership abilities of the managers to deal with the challenges that are faced by an organization during their operations. In this context, Khan and Khan [25] commented on training as an integral part of the management necessary for the development of the overall organization. With the effective training and management of the diverse situations, the managers enhance their personal

skills and increase the organizational abilities to perform (*Ibid*). Leadership skills help the managers for innovating new measures and deal with the ever-changing business environment. Furthermore, with the advent of globalization, there has been a huge shift in the nature of business. This requires an amount of innovative skills of the managers this could only be developed through the efficient management of leadership and project management skills [6]. Periodic internal training would than augment the intrapersonal skills, the development and the enhancement an individual human capital, namely, skills and tools needed to perform the intend job.

These skills among the leaders even help them to manage the diverse situations and even enhance their efficiency to deal with complex situations effectively. The efficient leadership abilities help in developing the different attributes for the development of an organization as a whole, [6]. Additionally, Hotepo et al. [24] stated that the effective leadership skills even enhances the credibility of the managers to handle the different situations of conflict and prevents stagnation of operations for them. In order to maintain the competitiveness of the market, it is noted that the organizations can develop their skills only with the management of their human resource, [23]. This could be inferred that the development of the competitive success of an organization could only be met with the development of the leadership skills of the managers, [20]. The development of competitive advantage for the organizations could only be met with the efficient handling of the leadership abilities, [10]. Thus, the development of an organization could be rationalized to have a direct proportion to the development of human resource. The organizational development could be directly linked with the overall development of leadership skills within an organization, [2]. The development of the leadership skills as well as the project management skills ensures the effective development of the organizations at large, [17]. Managers' leadership skills are to align human resource management with business strategy to reach competitive advantage and organizational sustainability.

3. CRITICAL EVALUATION: EVIDENCES FROM THE REAL LIFE

A manager can be successful only if he/she possess the abilities of a good leader and can exercise his control positively over the workforce to increase its productivity. Talented leaders are

considered the backbone of any organization. They help the organization to attain key attributes such as high level of morale among the employees. Talented leaders with the leadership skills that they possess would prohibit the employee turnover rate, increases the intensity of productivity and fosters new and innovated ideas. Several case studies have uncovered the impact of leadership skills and their effect on the workplace performance, [26]. The research paper will outline the findings of the research study through proper analysis, and will try to provide a brief overview of how channelized leadership qualities possessed by a manager can affect the workforce and the working environment. Leadership is based on getting others to do things they want, rather just getting things completed. Studies have suggested that leaders set clear instruction that determine the success or failure of an organization. They gather the report based on implementation of strategies that ensures their future course of action. Leaders try to extract the best of its workers and exploit the available resources for organizational success. Leaders play a vital role in the fulfillment of worker's needs and the level of job satisfaction. Leaders ensure that there is a proper communication flow between the management and workers. Leaders make sure that proper communication skills are deployed in the organization, [27].

One such case study can be related to leadership skills of Jack Stahl, who was an influential president in Cola-Cola and Revlon's CEO. Stahl, during preparation of Coca Cola's public offerings report, had derived the effectiveness strategy of Doug Ivester, which he applied within the organization. Stahl had implemented a strategy to provide training to its employees for stressing on the minute details that will serve as an alternate option for micro management. It enabled Stahl to use the knowledge and implement it over 180 nations of Coca Cola's operations. He focused on extracting key facts from his information mechanism and remained aware of the detail [28]. This would help in minimizing effects of the cultural differences which will eventual reach their main object of satisfying customers. Furthermore, one would infer that achieving competencies to sustain business success is to encourage such as Multinational Corporation a synchronized collaboration among its staffs.

Another personality who displayed a high level of leadership skills was Bob Diamond. He was a

skilled and determined professional manager in Barclays, who had a belief that the organization can attain success only when it applies its own strengths and knowledge rather than relying on funds provided by government. He focused on implementing strategies that were associated with low level of risk. A cautioned approach was adopted by the organization, where Bob had united aggression of employees with the calculated uncertainties. Bob's leadership skills were unveiled when the company survived a credit shortage, without the assistance of governmental funds and established control over the assets of Lehman Brothers after their bankruptcy without further liabilities [29]. The synthesis of awareness, control, creativity, and motivation made this interpretation of leadership development useful in contemplating the linkage of human capital along with multiple individuals that share common vision.

James Parker, a superior level employee at Southwest airlines, was an exceptional leader who developed and implemented leadership skills in the organization through his values. Regardless of the situation, the company always focused upon its customers, which helped it to create an opportunity out of the risks. After the September 2011 attack, when many of the airline companies shut down, Southwest tried to engage the attention of the customers towards co-curricular activities such as movies. The enactment of this strategy helped the company to attract loyal customer and enable flexibility and resourcefulness in the organization. Additionally, it helped the company to gain competitive advantages and draw future potential customer. Parker further made an announcement that even in the tough situations; the company will preserve all its employees and would further pay additional benefits and profits for its employees, where other companies were facing high losses and retrenchment. Hence, due to Parker's internal capabilities, the company was able to survive the in turbulent environment (India.com web portal private limited - Zee Entertainment and Penske Mediacorp India.com, 2011) [30].

CEO and president of Renault, France & Nissan, Japan, Carlos Ghosn, was one of the strongest leaders of his time. He was an influential superior who was very rational towards the subordinates of his organization. Ghosn, known for his leadership abilities, assigned challenging tasks to subordinates to make them more beneficial for the organization and upgrade their performance. Ghosn further made sure that subordinates

should carry a thought that Ghosn had faith on them and their abilities. Additionally, Ghosn authorized his subordinates to take and present their decisions and opinions regarding the working mechanism for the benefit of the organization. Furthermore, he laid stress on the opinion that a positive change in the organizational culture can only be achieved when initiative is taken from the subordinates rather than pressure from the superiors.

A project manager must possess certain qualities in order to produce the optimum performance of his employees. For attaining success, a manager must establish a feeling of trustworthiness among his subordinates that can be achieved by developing rapport among him and his employees. He must be an active listener and must be able to handle difficult situations [31]. Furthermore, a manager must opt for a diplomatic mechanism that will include trade-offs at times for arriving at better opportunities and achieving greater influence over employees. They must establish a feeling of credibility among different parties, which will help them to earn respect of the employees through positive performances. Furthermore, the managers must remain consistent with their performance management styles and their approach towards increasing the performance of employees. In case of conflicts, managers must be able to resolve them by providing justification that will help in restriction of further conflicts hampering the organizational performance. Among many others, strong managers possess the abilities of a strong communicator that will ensure a smooth flow of information and would increase productivity. A project manager must establish a project plan, its schedule, budget, risk, minimize project conflicts, and deliver projects efficiently [32]. Embedded culture might prevent managers from communicating effectively. The complexity of attaining an understanding is through revisiting different layers of culture such (work, family, demographic environment, heritage, and language). The more we learn about culture the more we stumble into traps. With this enormous influence on our personalities, yet we are forever innovative in adapting to the world, often surpassing cultural inclinations.

One of the positive traits possessed by a successful project manager for controlling the performance of employees is putting the right employee on the right job. One such person was George Marshall, who was an American soldier who possessed leadership abilities that made him a general in the U.S. army. He increased the performance level of his soldiers during World War II and displayed utmost level of command, responsibility, and leadership skills. He further acquired a tactical vision that inspired his soldiers to think of the situations and act accordingly. Furthermore, he was successful in implementing coordination among the ways and means to achieve success. Along with a project manager, he was a successful leader who laid emphasis on efficient pre-training of soldiers, enacting social, ethical, and moral standards upon which the soldiers could build a feeling of honesty, integrity, and frankness. He provided effective feedback and gained feedback from his soldiers that helped in achieving victory. Furthermore, he understood cultural backgrounds of his soldiers, developed mental agility and focused on interpersonal maturity [33].

Victorious project managers plan their goals and responsibilities prior to the initiation of the project. This helps in achieving effective performance standards and enhancing the workplace productivity of employees. Former CEO of Apple, Steve Jobs, was one such leader who had effectively planned his duties, at the time when he undertook projects as a project manager (Kurian, n/d) [34]. Jobs, was one of the successful project managers. Jobs had taken Apple's name as the most valuable corporation, possible only because of his leadership qualities as a project manager and its implementation with the assistance of his employees. He was such an influential manager that he planned his developments for the future, knowing that he was going to die prior to its completion. Job gained success in developing performance as he had planned, projected, and researched the potential outcomes before implementing projects. He had developed a habit of doing things that he loved to do and encouraged his employees for the same. Furthermore, he motivated his employees to be different from others while developing creative ideas, and SWOT analysis prior to project implementation. He held the viewpoint that employees must ask for and should be provided feedback whenever required, innovate their own ideas that would increase productivity along with maintaining quality standards. Additionally, as a project manager, whenever he failed to accomplish any objective, he never disregarded such failures and focused on learning from those failures for successful implementation of new projects (*Ibid.*).

From the above justifications and examples, it can be derived that leadership has positive implications in increasing productivity and managerial skills for controlling organizational performance. In fact, able to perceive managerial skills as initiators of change that positively influences workplace performance. Organizational leaders and managers play a vital role in influencing workplace performance of employees. Managerial relationships are based upon combinations of managerial skills and managerial communication processes [35]. Managers must possess interpersonal skills and abilities for prohibiting the hindrances to effective communication. Merging interpersonal communication skills with business requirements assists the organization in effective delivery of messages and establishes strong relationships within the organization. For successful implementation of organizational duties, managers must communicate properly with superiors, subordinates and peers. Without adequate communication, managers may fail to receive commitment from all the parties, achieve the business objectives and may be unable to create rapport with others. The most effective managers must possess the quality of a good listener. In situations when there is a high level of emotions, team situations, and sharing of thoughts among the employees, listening is very essential for the effective managers [36]. They must be able to respect other's feelings and emotions. However, experience from the Middle East has shown that this is not really applicable.

Another important skill that must be possessed by the organization is planning about the future course of action and establishing an understanding about the job responsibilities. It has also been observed that managers can efficiently perform the job goals when they have pre-planned their duties. Managers possessing the adequate skills and competencies are able to plan activities required for achieving production goals. Furthermore, research studies have elaborated the fact that managers who are able to establish employee development courses are able to achieve targets as these courses help to develop the skill sets required to achieve corporate goals. Furthermore, researchers have laid emphasis on the fact that if managers, who are able to distinguish between their abilities and job requirements, are successful managers (Employee Development Systems, n.d.) [37].

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDA-TIONS

It can be derived from the literature reviews and real life evidences that leadership has a positive effect on workplace productivity. Leadership is considered as a process, which helps in improving the interpersonal relations among the employees, and increases their approach towards maximizing productivity. Effective leadership qualities help in enhancing the level of productivity within the work environment along with improving the credibility of the workplace.

Studies have further elaborated the fact that quality leaders can help in enhancing the credibility of an organization and develop the working environment, which is required in an organization. Furthermore, effective leadership helps in enhancing productivity by reducing the costs incurred in the workplace and sensitivity of employees towards various factors. Additionally, effective leaders can transform the way organization deals with human resource and establish a suitable 'chain of command' that will enhance the productivity and exploit the available resources fully. Positive skills possessed by project managers have resulted in managing performance of employees. These skills have a huge impact on various management aspects. Additionally, management skills assist the managers in developing the stages of project undertaken and keep the managers updated about the changes occurring in the workplace. The developed managers with leadership and innovative attributes develop efficient strategies that address the complex internal and external environment. Additionally, the understanding of job duties by project managers helps the organization to develop comprehensive knowledge about the projects.

The reviews further help to understand that the managers can act as an effective mediator between the management and employees. As many organizations face the problem of lack of coordination among the parties, effective skills can help in eliminating the prevailing issues and create a relationship among the management and employees. By inculcating proper training, managers develop new standards that help them to tackle with the dynamic external environment. These innovative ideas help the managers to face competitive challenges effectively and help the organization to achieve a competitive position with the help of its employees. Furthermore, skills developed by managers help them to cope

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with diverse conditions and deal with intricate issues such as conflicts and stagnant operations.

Researcher studies conducted on a global level have found certain leadership and managerial skills that must be possessed by influential managers to achieve success in the organizations. Managers must have the ability to appraise individual performances of its subordinates. He must ensure that employees are well aware about their job duties and focus on achieving those goals. Through performance appraisal, managers must identify objectives of employees, align those with the objectives of the organization, and finally establish standards for performance. Managers should focus on maintaining discipline, show a feeling of understanding and commitment, and provide counseling, coaching and mentoring for the employees. Additionally, managers and future leaders must lay stress on listening to the employees and collecting valuable feedback in response, which will ensure high benefits for the organizations. Furthermore, managers, besides listening actively, must recognize the problems faced by employees through appraisal and must try to reduce such barriers by employing critical thinking abilities. Managers must set goals that are achievable, should follow feedback mechanism, and provide clear facts regarding the job responsibilities for employees. In addition to training, mentoring, and coaching the employees, managers must also focus on priorities such as time and work management for successful completion of organizational objectives.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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