Considerations Regarding the Employees Participation at Organization’s Activities. Study Case: Companies Located in West Part of Romania

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Abstract. The idea that more and more organizations resort to management methods that have a participative feature is not accidentally. The participative management has become a process with qualitative and quantitative extension within the organizations. More than that, the fact that each employee, no matter his hierarchical position, turns over in a participant for the problem solving of the organization, determines a growth of their competences, foundation of a membership feeling, developing of the assumed responsibilities, increasing of the satisfaction degree etc.

Starting this fundamental idea, the present work proposed as a final goal – by theoretical and practical elements which are analyzed – to plead for getting the performance within the organizations by promoting those forms of participation that fit well to the Romanian organizatorial environment.

Key words: participation, satisfaction, positive attitude, motivation for performance, salary non-motivation.

1. Metodology of the research

The essay entitled: Study regarding the employees participation at organization’s activities proposes to present the importance of participative management, identifying and analyzing the involvement-participation degree of the most important members in a company: managers – subalterns in fulfilling the enterprise’s objectives.

The present research is an applicative one based on an analytic-interpretative study. The study is concentrated on processing the information obtained through questionnaire inquest as a research method. The goal is to realize a complex analysis concerning the forms of employees participation-implication on activities of the organizations and interpreting its content.

Some arguments that justify the choice of using questionnaire inquest as research method are: the possibility of explaining the research objectives and the manner of filling out the questionnaire; the subjects can answer the questions when the program allows it and in their own rhythm; anonymity is assured; applicability on a large geographic area; low cost.
The research instrument used to obtain the information is the questionnaire. It was distributed to a number of 173 subjects (with managing and executive functions) in 22 companies from Timis county. Out of the 173 questionnaires distributed, only 153 were filled out correctly. The range of error is ± 2.5%.

The sampling was random and it’s based on criteria as: profitability rate of the last 3 years, the company’s action range, the occupied hierarchic position. In this context, we specify that the investigated companies activate in profitable domains, are placed exclusively in the west region of the country and the subjects are part of the superior hierarchic structure – 36.6%, as well as the inferior hierarchic structure – 63.4%.

One single type of questionnaire was used, which was adapted to the addressed personnel category: to those with managing functions and those with executing functions. The questionnaire was tested on 15 individuals, participants of a post-graduate course organized within the West University Timisoara, with the purpose of verifying and improving its content. The test results led to the improvement of the questionnaire’s content.

A short description of the questionnaire is welcome. In the first part, it contains the identification data of the investigated organization, as well as information referring to the respondent persons. The information regarding the companies contains: the company’s name, activity, number of employees. The information regarding the respondent persons contains: profession, studies, the function occupied in the company, department, length of service, age and sex.

The questionnaire includes 7, respective 8 items (7 – for employees with executive functions, 8 – for those with managing functions) which point out the involvement-participation degree of the company’s personnel, through three important characteristics: positive attitude towards work, satisfaction through work and the subjects motivation for performance.

The obtained data processing, analysis and interpretation was carried out through the SPSS program – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 13 – a well known data analysis solution, developed by SPSS Inc.

World wide leader in this domain – which offers useful statistical processing: averages, tables, graphics, correlations and uses all mentioned scales. SPSS puts at the users disposal the complex relations between dada, it discovers correlations between information stocked in data bases.

SPSS can turn information into precious ideas, in real insights through predictive analysis. The program offers the users the possibility of both quantitative and qualitative statistic data analysis, as well as the possibility of data management. At the same time it allows data collection, storage, processing and two- or three-dimensional visual display in tables and graphics.

Together with the SPSS version 13.0, was also used Microsoft’s Excel, for some specific functions and data processing, as well as graphics editing. Through data processing in Excel, every question received a code of two, three or four characters, using simultaneously numbers and letters.

The codes are unique for every question and the answers were coded with one number or letter.

To simplify the data processing, there were used two codes regarding the answers: numeric code and literary code.

In the answers case, these codes repeat every time it is needed and in the processing and interpretative activity there were always correlated with the question that they belong to. So the answers superposition and also the excessive complication through the coding system were avoided.

The graphics were built based on tables, which contained centralized data, arranged according to dimensions, questions, grades, levels of estimation and the numbers in the tables represent percentages in case nothing else is specified.

The estimation levels signification, chosen by the participants, is: for the scale from 1 to 5 the estimation levels mean: 1 – most important; 2 – very important; 3 – mainly important; 4 – of little importance; 5 – not important. For a scale from 1 to 10: 1 – most important; 2 – very important; 3 – pretty important; 4 – enough important; 5 – Important; 6 – important; 7 – of little importance; 8 – unimportant; 9 – very unimportant; 10 – most unimportant.


2. Analysis and interpretation informations of the research study

The research study used a number of 153 subjects from 22 companies situated in the west region of Romania.

The companies activate in domains like: industry, constructions, transport, commerce and others, but from the total of 22,13 activate in the industry.
The fact that the most come from the industry: 13 (8+5) gives the answers a more rigorous, formal character, because the industry is a more technical domain compared to: commerce, consultation, advertising.

Regarding the companies size, in this study the very large companies (with more than 500 employees) have a bigger percentage of the sample, fact that will affect the research results because they are less flexible, adaptable compared to the smaller companies, who are more concerned with innovation, using a diverse intellectual property that they can economize with great ability.

We can observe that the biggest percentage, regarding the occupied function in the organization, includes subjects with executive functions – 63. 40%. The reason for this large number of executive personnel – 63. 40% of the total subjects, is that in Romania often the employees opinions are not taken in consideration, they are ignored, so we consider opportune that the executive personnel’s percentage to be bigger (63. 40%) than the percentage of other hierarchic levels. Plus, knowing better this category of employees can lead to a growth of the personnel’s participation rate by finding usable solutions for the companies problems.

The most part of the interviewed subjects are between 20 and 30 years old, respective 31-40 years old, fact that has a positive effect upon the work environment and communications. There also exist employees with age in the range 41-50 years, which represent a quarter of the total interviewed individuals (25.49%), while the subjects with ages over 50 years have a small percentage: 7.85%. This fact shows that experience and mature thinking balances the scale between generations and conceptions, being a source of power for the organizations.

Interviewed employees with a length of service in the companies up to 10 years represent 64.05% of the total interviewed subjects. This means that the participant companies are relatively young.

3. The results of the study regarding the employees participation at organization activities

In the quest of determining the involvement-participation degree of the most important members of an organization: managers – subordinates, the research concentrates on three main directions: attitude towards work, satisfaction trough work and motivation for performance. The obtained results are interesting and represent a real challenge for the Romanian managers, who need to identify and then apply the most efficient participative management programs, which lead to performance growth at all three levels of human interaction: individual, group and organization.

The results are presented below.

### Positive attitude towards work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- the activity at work, which includes challenges, is an important stimulant!</td>
<td>- for the Romanian managers, their job's security is very important, because of the offered material benefits and status;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- an agreement is formed, regarding the motivations the work offers, motivations concerning tasks, responsibilities assumed by individuals at work.</td>
<td>- managers have a more positive attitude towards a day of work than subalterns.</td>
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### Satisfaction through work

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
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<tr>
<td>- a correct correspondence between tasks and responsibilities;</td>
<td>- wrong perception regarding the fact that all needs are satisfied through work, including the professional ones (the principal explication is given by the different needs of every employee in part);</td>
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<td>- professional development, looked in this case a source of satisfaction in work;</td>
<td>- the managers different perception from those of the subalterns, regarding the opportunity of having a career. The percentage of managers who consider that the organization offers chances for the employees to build a career is bigger than those of the subalterns (many affirm this fact);</td>
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<tr>
<td>- the existence of a certain number of employees who affirm they are satisfied by the level of responsibilities.</td>
<td>- the existence of employees, who affirm that they are not satisfied by the level of responsibilities;</td>
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### Attractive remuneration, wage equity and preferential retribution

<table>
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<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<td>- few managers admit that attractive remunerations are not applied in their organizations;</td>
<td>- a superficial knowledge of the concrete situation reflects the discrepancy between the managers and subalterns points of view regarding the correlations between the obtained performances and given remunerations.</td>
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<td>- undifferentiated wages;</td>
<td>- a small number of subjects consider that the performances are recognized;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- premiums are not given according to performance;</td>
<td>- the existence of a small number of subjects that confirm they are satisfied by the professional realizations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- a small number of subjects consider that the performances are recognized;</td>
<td>- the performance growth at all three levels of human interaction: individual, group and organization.</td>
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Promoting a participative organizational culture is characterized by attributes like: open-mindedness towards communication, trust in subordinates, group problem solving, employees independence, understanding the importance of involvement and participation in collective activities inside the organization – these represent only few arguments that stand beside participative decisions, actions and behavior.

We consider that the companies have a lot to gain from increasing the personnel’s participation rate. The results might lead to efficiency growth, employee’s motivation and satisfaction.

Considering these ideas, the present study approaches problems regarding positive attitude towards work, satisfaction through work and motivation for performance.

A. Positive attitude towards work

The study results reveal that both managers and subalterns find their work attractive, meaning that they find their activities challenges and that represents an important stimulant at work.
Another aspect that reveals the subjects attitude towards work and the included activities refers to the intern state generated by every new day at work. In this case, according to the obtained answers, the managers manifest a greater satisfaction regarding the positive perception given by their work, compared to the subalterns.

Regarding the motivation offered by the activities, tasks, responsibilities at work, both categories of subjects have given approximately the same answers. An explanation could be that the tasks and responsibilities are precisely defined.

B. Satisfaction through work

Satisfaction is given by many factors. The present study tries to analyze the most important ones that have the biggest influence over the professional development of the employees and not all of possible factors. This growth will lead to a more efficient handling and management of the whole organization.

Manager and subalterns have different perceptions concerning the fact that their work satisfies all of their needs, including the professional ones. While managers consider that their present job satisfies generally all their needs, including the professional ones, we can not say the same thing for the second category of subjects. We can correlate this aspect with the conclusion made earlier that the safety of the job plays a more important role for the managers than for their subalterns.

We can also observe different opinions concerning the career opportunities. The number of managers who consider that the organization offers the employees the chance for a career is bigger than the number of subalterns who inform this fact.

Past these differences, we can observe a similar thinking regarding the correct equivalence between tasks and responsibilities. Both categories of subjects showed that between tasks and responsibilities exists a correct relation, this proves that, from this point of view, the subjects are satisfied with their work.

An interesting factor is professional development which, seen in this case as a source of satisfaction in work, is more appreciated by the subalterns than by managers. Over a quarter of the managers admit that the organization offers training programs only on small scale.

Subalterns have diverse opinions concerning the responsibilities level. There are some subordinates that affirm they are not satisfied at all, but also subjects who claim the opposite: they are very satisfied with their level of responsibilities.

From the managers perspective, the phenomenon remains the same, meaning that some are satisfied by the level of their responsibility, while some are not content with the existent correlation between their satisfaction and their responsibilities.

Regarding the overall satisfaction generated by the professional accomplishments, a small number of interweaved subjects – managers as well as subalterns – confirm that they are satisfied by their professional accomplishments; this correlates with the statements made until now: professional development, level of responsibilities, work.

We observe that, in terms of satisfaction through work, there are many disparities between the answers of managers and subordinates, the second category being – in many cases – less satisfied through work than the category of managers.

C. Motivation for performance

Every performance oriented enterprise makes great efforts to form an attractive motivating package, with the purpose of increasing the employee’s attachment to the organization and their professional development. Although in practice an important percentage (over 30%) of the organizations budget is spent on wages and bonuses, money doesn’t always represent the most important stimulant in work. The money gets the individuals every day to work, but it doesn’t motivate them to obtain excellent results.

I. Salary motivation

It includes all forms of pecuniary retributions of the employees work or obtained results: wage, commission, bonus, premium, dividend, etc.

Financial retribution is a contractual form of the material relationship between employer and employee. It determines the minimum quantity of efforts, needed from an employee, to receive a sum of money. The financial retribution’s algorithm needs to satisfy four major criteria to fulfill its objectives:

1) the personnel wage need to be situated between the average salary values of the industry and the job, so that the employee doesn’t prefer to leave for another job.

2) it must contain a regular part to generate security and a variable part to generate motivation. The variable
part should help to fulfill the objectives and not to execute tasks, because so it will not lose its motivating value and become just a part of the salary.

3) the calculus algorithm should be universal and transparent, so that the employees feel that they are equitably paid according to their colleges from the same hierarchical level and with same results.

4) the sums should be paid in time, according to the contract.

In our opinion, the financial motivation, which includes only the wage, is perceived by the employee as a right, he is more motivated by the fear of losing this right then the wish of achieving better and better results.

- **Attractive and preferential retribution, wage equitability**

In order we can talk about attractive salaries on the labor market, these must have a higher value than those which result from the equilibrium rate between request and offer on the labor market.

When the relation between the employees wage level and effort, skill, responsibility and experience is perceived as being inequitable, the personnel performance will decrease considerably because they are not motivated to make a bigger effort and achieve a higher performance.

This generates tensions, unbalance and leads to inequity. This is the reason why the organization must apply the equity principal.

Beside the standard level of retribution, implementing a preferential salary politic which exceeds the average can stimulate the motivation for performance. But this method has effect only on those with a precarious material situation and has no effect on those who have solved their fundamental existence problems.

A small number of managers admit that stimulating the employees with attractive salaries is a widely used method in the company. This situations existence in many companies shows that motivation is of reduced importance to the companies, especially of employees with executing functions.

Although premiums conferred according to performances represent an efficient way of stimulating the personnel involvement in complex tasks, from this point of view, a large number of subjects – managers and subalterns – confirm that these are not awarded, which denotes another serious deficiency of the company management and practiced policy regarding motivation.

Concerning the performances admission, a small number of subjects – managers and subalterns – say that it is practiced widely by the organizations. This confirms the problems already detected, regarding equity as a leaderships analyzing factor.

The fact that a large number of managers – contrarily to the subordinates opinion – consider that the employee performances are correctly appreciated proves that the knowledge of the concrete situation in the company is superficial. The reason can be the lack of managers professionalism and/or, even worst, disinterest towards employees needs.

If in the case of the performances admission there is uniformity in thinking, in a negative way, we can observe a different situation in the case of the relationship between achieved performances and given retributions.

This way emerge differences between managers and subalterns points of view. The first ones affirm that this correlation exists and it is correct, while the second ones infirm this fact. These differences expressed by both categories of subjects are certified by the answers received for the question regarding equity.

II. Non-salary motivation

The methods used for this type of motivation include those forms of retribution and stimulus which do not require direct payment of money to employees. Non-salary motivation creates loyalty towards the organization, has positive effects over team cohesion, costs less than salary motivation, all these representing only a few advantages of practicing these forms of motivation.

- **Positive organizational climate**

In our opinion, positive organizational climate manifests through the existence of a good collaboration inside the team, between teams and at organizational level, receptivity towards opinions and suggestions etc. and continuity as an important premise for assuring the employees positive motivation.

All managers consider that collaboration between departments is a positive aspect of the organizational climate. This cooperation is also important to the subalterns, but unlike managers who are aware of the communications fundamental role, some employees give a small importance to cooperation between departments.

Regarding team-work, manager’s opinions are divers. Some give team-work a big importance, while others
consider that it is of small importance. Although from the subalterns point of view, team-work is perceived as mostly important, there are sufficient opinions which do not understand the real role of team-work and give little importance to it (over a quarter of the subalterns).

In our opinion, some possible explanations why the managers consider team-work to be an important requirement for success could be: team-work is the most proper mode to solve complex problems which require different opinions and knowledge, it represents an excellent learning environment, there are more objective oriented than the organization and its easier to establish a vision and a proper goal, grows loyalty, it encourages delegation because it offers the guaranty of controlling the members behavior through own rules, it exploits every members resources in a better way because teams are more flexible and can be more easily formed, developed, reorganized.

Regarding open-mindedness, managers affirm that they widely manifest receptivity towards employee’s opinions and suggestions, fact that is sustained also by the subalterns, although the percentage of those with great receptivity is reduced. From the subaltern’s point of view, opinions are more divided in this matter; there exist some who consider that open-mindedness is present in the organization, but also employees who say the opposite: that this behavior manifests only in small percentage.

b. Work’s attractiveness

We consider that in an organization, the work’s attractiveness is given by elements like: tasks and duties, offered benefits, promotion possibility and satisfaction in work.

From the manager’s answers, we can observe the lack of many important elements which are considered normal for the work’s attractiveness, elements like: promotion opportunities, the way superiors execute their duties as managers, working conditions.

The analyzed situations show that managers give the most important appreciation level to the chance then they can use their potential in the activities.

The chance of having a special job, the opportunity of learning new things through their work can also be included in the manager’s options.

Other nominated situations, by many of the subjects with leading functions, are: the possibility to change things which do not satisfy them and the people – teams they work with.

From the subaltern’s point of view, the chance of using their potential in work also represents the most important aspect of their job.

Beside the opportunity to state their opinion about the way things go in the organization, the most of the analyzed situations failed to gather 10% of the subaltern’s opinions, so they didn’t receive high levels of appreciation.

The small percentages obtained by the most important elements of the non-salary motivation can be explained by the lack of those forms of motivations which should be correlated with the salary motivation, each ones goal being to achieve a high rate of work attractiveness.

c. The employees participation-implication to achieve the company’s objectives

Increasing the employee’s participation grade is an important mode of achieving higher performances.

Regarding this idea, participative management must be applied in the company. Participative management means every process where power, knowledge, information and rewards are moved to the base of the organization. It includes a variety of activities in which the employees from inferior hierarchical levels can participate in the decision taking activities.

In the purpose of achieving the organizations objectives, employee’s participation becomes more and more necessary. Participation can manifest as: consultation, perceptivity towards personnel ideas and opinions, a cooperative working climate where employees have the liberty of action.

Almost half of the interviewed subjects declare the wish to be consulted in terms of establishing the individual performance levels and finding new solutions to the company problems.

The existence of subjects who disagree shows that some managers concentrate exclusively on tasks, neglecting the role of consultations for establishing the individual performance levels and finding new solutions to the company problems.

Organizational objectives can be achieved through a good cooperative working climate. The interviewed persons consider that communication and cooperation is crucial.

The fact that we can observe a certain superiority of those who make the decisions is confirmed by only a few of the interviewed individuals and contested by the majority.
As a consequence, superiors are perceptive to employees ideas and opinions.

The majority of the subjects consider that the employees have the liberty to carry out their individual tasks, without managers interference.

Closely linked to the liberty of action, employees feel the need to be informed regarding those events which can affect them and their careers in any way. In this context, over half of the subjects claim to be informed from this point of view.

A paradoxical situation appears. Although the employees have the liberty of action to fulfill their tasks, they do not receive at the same time the information needed to take correct decisions. Though an individual has the liberty to act, he doesn’t know what to do, because he is not enough informed, or sometimes uninformed.

From our perspective, participation can have more levels: the first level regards participation as a purpose for information, the second level refers to consultation, the third one purposes mutual decision taking, while the last level, the forth, can be noted as maximal participation, because it includes all those who participate in taking decisions.

d. Management by objectives-MBO

What does mean MBO? In terms of purpose, is an orientation towards results. Strategic objectives set at the top-management level, which afterwards are transposed into more specific objectives and are negotiated with every department, employee. The presence of a large number of employees included in this kind of management could mean the difference between success and failure.

The objective management’s notoriety and appliance in organizations, this study investigates this aspect alongside other methods that rely on the concept of participation: TQM, delegation, meeting, brainstorming, Philips 6.6.

With the goal of receiving relevant information concerning the management methods notoriety and their applicability degree, only the subjects with leading functions were questioned.

The results regarding the management methods notoriety and their applicability degree reveal numerous problems inside the companies.

1. The most less applied management method is the brainstorming, few managers affirm that they apply this method although it is well known;

2. The meeting is and remains the most known and practiced management method in the centralized economy.

Although it’s unlikely that brainstorming has such a reduced appliance, in practice this method is involuntarily used in every meeting, meaning that all participants have ideas about the discussed problem and proposed solutions. The managers do not know and understand the management methods or at least not the presented ones, confusing them repeatedly even in practice, in our case: brainstorming with meeting.

Even the lesser known methods are more correctly implemented than brainstorming, because of their particularities and algorithms, although their notoriety is reduced (Sinetica, Philips 6.6).

It’s appreciable the fact that a lot of managers know MBO (management by objectives), but it is regrettable that only a small percentage applies it. We can encounter the same situation in the case of TQM and brainstorming, which are well known but rarely applied.

Although the facts presented earlier are not encouraging, we must say that a well known and highly used method is represented by delegation.

This proves that managers delegate the tasks (but not the results responsibilities) so they can efficiently handle their time. Delegation is at the same time an efficient instrument through which the employees are motivated and developed.

e. Work enrichment

The term work enrichment is different from the concept of work extension, because it involves a vertical growth of the job by adding new, more complex responsibilities.

Work enrichment besides efficiency growth presupposes also professional and personal satisfaction because it regards more diversified accomplishment possibilities and personal admission, a more exciting work which demands greater responsibilities, more individual progress occasions and training opportunities. Based on these considerations, the study measures the responsibilities and opportunities level offered by the job, which describe the work’s enrichment.

Although there are unsatisfied employees – managers, but mostly subalterns – who affirm, with significant percentage, that their job makes them rarely and in small degree feel responsible, there is a great number of subjects who express their satisfaction concerning the responsibilities their job requires.
Regarding the career opportunities, managers have diversified opinions; a big percentage considers that these chances exist widely, while less than half give small importance to this matter.

The subalterns opinions are exactly the opposite, few subjects consider that they have big career opportunities, while a greater percentage of subalterns think they have small and even very small chances of professional success.

The conclusion is that subalterns have a reduced perspective of achieving a career and this generates frustration for some employees. This is not beneficial for a company which desires to have personnel with winning attitude.

Our opinion is that performance in management is possible in an organization formed with people who desire, have the possibility to achieve high performances. This requires motivation in work, which include the opportunities of employee professional development.

4. Conclusions regarding the employees participation forms in the organization activities

The central idea that results from this study is that in the present economical and social context, in the west region of Romania, still exist employees who feel isolated, disappointed, frustrated at work.

One of the major reasons is that the rational part of the activity continuously accentuates and the moral part remains reduced, although it contains personal and emotional implication.

The investigated companies manifest different values, inefficient leadership that breaks the possibility of performance.

The need to infuse some new beliefs, values, symbols, rules which lead to a greater professional implication, motivation and higher satisfaction becomes more accentuated.

Elements as: the chance to use the existent potential, of having a special job, the opportunity to learn new things acquire important significations from the employees point of view, besides material stimulants which still remain the principal elements that impel the Romanian employees to have a bigger participation rate.

In the firms from the western side of the country we can observe the need to create a transparent and motivating working environment based on communication, trust which offers a powerful supporting feeling and affiliation for all the company members. Employees from the base of the organization feel that the traditional, conservator elements can create them problems in the future. Because of these facts and under external and internal pressures, these employees are more open-minded towards changes than managers.

The differences in thinking between managers and subalterns can lead to open conflicts between the two parts, which will create a negative effect for all: individuals – organizations.

The results of this study confirm that in the western part of the country, organizations have serious problems concerning attitude, behavior and organizational culture.

Because of this, managers and simple employees must identify those solutions which can transform these problems in opportunities. This requires team-work and a participative management.

Today, the organizations which understand that the principal characteristics of performance are given by: assuming new, complex responsibilities, team-work, delegation, competitive spirit and the will to win, open-mindedness towards new, towards changes, promotion and innovative idea’s implementation, continuous learning, respect and loyalty towards employees, trust in the personnel and client oriented thinking, place at the top pf economic development.

Achieving performance at individual level and finally at organizational level depends only on our capacity and ability to act in these terms.

We think that only those companies will survive and achieve performances at all levels which will apply in practice these principals.
References


