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Dreams About the Future: Indicators of the Congruence of the Goals of Corporate Directors and Managers

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Abstract. This is interdisciplinary research that merges knowledge about psychology and management studies. The examination of the congruence of goals of corporate directors and managers involves a study of whether a qualitative research method – a narrative about future dreams – can determine the congruence of the goals of corporate directors and managers. Nine research participants (N=9) took part in the study. They were aged 25 to 46 (M = 32; SD = 8). One of the respondents was a director, and the others either were managers who were directly subordinated to him. The qualitative research method - narrative about future dreams was adapted in Latvia by Dombrovskis (2014). The goal of the study was achieved, with the author concluding that the method can be utilised successfully to specify the congruence of the goals of company employees. The study focused both individual and common goals, and these were determined to identify their level of congruence.

Keywords: Narrative, dreams, goals, values, manager, director, management

Introduction

The issue of effective corporate management has been of importance since antiquity, with Eider (1999) describing Ancient Greece during the age of Socrates and pointing out that leadership issues were of key importance at that time. Such issues were considered from the military, philosophical and economic aspect, as well as the aspect of overall management of society. According to Eider, “The idea that management skills basically help people to live better lives remains of importance today. This suggests that perhaps, in the more

distant future, we will consider the management is one of the services that we provide to our comrades” (Eider ,1999, p.38). Eider also points out that there are three major aspects of human needs, with these aspects interacting and overlapping. These aspects include the need to achieve common goals, to be able to work in a team, and to look at needs that are necessary to satisfy individuals. Praude and Belchikovs (Praude & Belcikovs, 1996) argue that each company and organisation has its own goal, and the same is true of every employee. People work for companies to help them to achieve their goals, and the work

that they do is aimed at satisfying their own goals in terms of their needs. According to Mezniece (Mezniece, 2015), managers must form secure links between the motivation of employees and the effective work that serves the organisation's needs, thus achieving harmony between individual and organisational goals. If the goal that people want to achieve is sufficiently valuable, then they must try to achieve it. To do so, people look for a leader, and the leader's duty is to satisfy the needs of the people and the organisation. This can best be done if the leader has close interaction with his or her subordinates (Eider, 1999). If a leader or director is to satisfy the needs of the subordinates (Mezniece, 2015), then there must first be identification of the needs and the goals of the subordinates. That is because attempts to achieve a goal are based on the need to satisfy concrete needs.

If a democratic approach is seen as a good management style, in turn, then Praude and Belchikovs (Praude & Belchikovs, 1999) argue that a democratic approach requires common interests, which means that there must be common needs and goals and make it possible to assume that the more there are common needs, the higher might be the indicator of democratisation at the company or organisation.

As the congruence (complete correspondence, equality, coincidence) of interests and goals increases, the likelihood of management conflicts will diminish. According to Praude and Belchikovs (Praude & Belchikovs, 1999) and Omarova (Omarova, 2002), an important cause for conflict situations is a difference in goals.

The aim of this study was to find out whether the narrative method, which involves information from research participants about

their views about their life and work after seven years, can make it possible to identify the goals of employees and to evaluate the congruence of the goals of the director and the managers.

Sample

Nine respondents ($N = 9$) took part in the study. They were aged 25 to 46 ($M = 32$; $SD = 8$). Eight of the research participants were men and one was woman. In terms of socio-demographic indicators, three of the research participants lived in private homes, five lived in flats, and one lived with their parents. Five of the research participants spent their childhood in the countryside, with 4 growing up in an urban environment. When it comes to family status, four of the research participants are married for the first time, two say that they are unmarried, and three are unmarried, but reside together with a partner. One of research participants have one child, two have two, and four have no children. Three of research participants have younger brothers or sisters, one has an older brother, and one has an older brother and younger sister, with the same percentage reporting a younger sister and an older sister. All of the research participants were managers, with one of them being the company director and owner. Three of research participants have a specialised (vocational education) high school education, five have a higher education, and one has a high school education. All of the research participants and their parents are Latvians. Seven of the research participants reported that their parents were still living together, one research participant's parents were divorced, and one indicated a different relationship between the

parents. Asked about their satisfaction with their work, two said that they were a bit less or a bit more than satisfied at the medium level, three rated their satisfaction between medium and good, and four are more or less satisfied with their work.

Instruments and procedure

When we provide narrative information to others, we choose that which is important to us and structure our own identity. The stories that we construct strengthen our identity (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). McAdams (1993) and Whitty (2002) argue that hopes and dreams help people to understand themselves in the presence on the basis of facts that existed in the past, also having hopes about themselves and their Identity in future. Narrative (Story-writing approach. Whitty (2002)) data can be processed with the help of qualitative content analysis, which makes it possible to encode the data, define the purpose of units, and reveal the hidden meaning of the text (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Dombrovskis (2014) adapted the narrative method about future dreams in Latvia in 2014, the author of original method is Monica Whitty (Whitty, 2002).

The study involved top managers of a private enterprise, as well as the director and sole owner of the company. Respondents were first told about the goal of the study, and a secure and creative environment was created for them. Respondents were first asked to fill in a demographic form. Then they were given blank sheets of paper and asked to freely and descriptively offer a detailed statement about their dreams, hopes, expectations and goals for the future. They were asked to write about how

they see their private lives and their work at the company seven years from now. Why seven years? Because people have a myth in our society: every seven-year person have to change something in their life and usually it means to change a job. Research participants were asked not to censure themselves, instead releasing themselves to a free flow of dreams. Research participants were given 40 minutes for this task. The instruction was based on the issue of how research participants perceive their future (Gillespie & Allport, 1955; Mönks, 1968; Whitty, 2001, 2002). Research participants were asked to write the text in third-person form, thus allowing themselves to dissociate themselves from their description of their lives (Haug, 1987). The managers and director were very happy and excited about writing down their views about what their lives will be like seven years in the future.

Data analysis

The narratives were processed with the help of the thematic content analysis method (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008; Pipere, 2011), with a quantitative comparison of how often specific themes were in the narratives (Pipere, 2011). The stories were analysed on the basis of content units (words) in the texts (Baxter, 1991), statements (Krippendorff, 1980), and phrases (Lichstein & Young, 1996) in terms of the dreams and future hopes of the respondents. The categories of content in terms of dreams and future hopes (goals) were merged into themes (Polit & Hungler, 1991), the conducting a comparison of the statements of the top-level managers and the director/owner of the company.

Results

The analysis of the narratives identified 26 content units from the narrative of the managers and the director. Here are some examples about the units:

- Career growth: *“Later, when corporate managers and colleagues observed his working skills and the ability to communicate with colleagues and clients, he was given a higher-ranking job as senior manager, and this meant a new phase in his career – new duties, responsibilities and expectations”;*
- Effective work: *“He will choose his main activities and invest maximal work and effort in terms of working with the highest effectiveness co-efficient, effectively organising and managing a system to ensure maximum benefits for the company, colleagues and himself”;*
- Loyalty toward the company: *“She has been given and has achieved a goal – providing professional support to the director of the company, being loyal toward the company, and being competent about all issues that relate to the company”;*
- Self-improvement: *“At first it was not easy, but now he has obtained new knowledge and skills, completing courses and being graduated from university. He has improved himself as a leader”;*
- Honesty and fairness in the work environment: *“She will be strict, demanding, honest and fair toward herself and her work, as well as in relations with her subordinates”;*
- The ability handles one’s formal power: *“She will have sacked those who ‘damage’ the company with their negativism, inability to do work or unwillingness to do work”;*
- Material aspects of life: *“He will have earned enough money and will live in a private home with a big garden and a very elegant and expensive car”;*
- Family life: *“She will have learned how to separate work from home and how not to bring work-related negations home that cause suffering for her family”;*
- Religion as a value in life: *“Religion, too, will not be forgotten”;*
- Popularising the company: *“He has ensured that employees are happy about coming to work and are happy and proud about their jobs at this company, as opposed to coming to work just to receive a salary; he will have made this company popular”;*
- Social status: *“In the ‘eyes’ of her employees, she must be an honest and fair authority”;*
- Helping parents: *“Given that seven years from now she will be stable and earn good money, she will help her parents, who will be old-age pensioners at that time”;*
- A good working environment: *“To ensure good working circumstances for himself and his subordinates, he will constantly work on development and improvements”;*
- Experience: *“He will be a man with lots of experience”;*
- Personal image: *“I see him as a smart man who is an expert in his sector, dresses well and in a business-like manner, drives a good, new car, has a family that supports him, and has a successful career with growth in his work”;*
- Stability at work: *“New and promising employees will come to work, but that will mean competition; still, experience and increased knowledge all the time will allow them to remain stable in their jobs”;*
- Effectiveness at the company: *“During this period of time he will have helped to introduce several important supplements to the*

XXX system, thus making work easier for himself and his colleagues, at the same time helping the process to avoid the possibility of human factors so as to ensure high-quality and precise correlation of data”;

- Clear duties at work: *“He has drafted clear work guidelines and a work plan so that all employees have a clear sense of what is expected of them and what the work plans are”;*
- Self-affirmation: *“During this cycle of seven years, he will have obtained greater understanding about business ethics and etiquette, and that will allow him to demonstrate himself better as a manager”;*
- Material appreciation for the investment: *“Two years from now, he will earn more at this company than before, and that will provide him with a greater understanding that he is an important phase in this company and that others appreciate the work that he is doing”;*
- Moral appreciation of the employee’s work: *“The company will have recognised her investment and will have accepted her as an equal player in the process”;*
- Active social life outside of work: *“He will spend his free time playing sports and travelling”;*
- Co-operation with colleagues: *“When he gets up and prepares for a new day at work, he will prepare a plan so that there is enough time to do professional and management work, as well as to have time for conversations with subordinates and colleagues, as well as other employees”;*
- Support from management: *“Management will listen to his ideas and his proposals on how to improve the company’s operations, also supporting his plans to improve manufacturing.”*

The content units were renamed so as to get a sense about the unit that characterises needs, values and goals, because employees, managers and the director will try to satisfy their needs, which means that this satisfaction of needs becomes a goal. To compare the congruence of the values of the managers and the director, all of the values were evaluated in terms of the managers and the director so as to determine the numerical mass of these values (i.e., the frequency with which each value was mentioned).

Table 1 speaks to the frequency with which goals were mentioned and how often respondents mentioned relevant categories in their narratives about how they see themselves at the company. These were transformed into conceptual units and reduced to keywords. To compare the data, the units were expressed as percentages of the total frequency of mentions, thus obtaining the “mass” of frequency of mentions.

Table 1 shows that the goals that managers and the director have in common are *Career, Effectiveness, Improvement, Power, Life, Money, Assistance, Experience, Self-image, Optimisation, Self-affirmation and Co-operation*.

Table 1 also shows that managers mentioned goals such as *Loyalty, Honesty, Family, Religion, Self, Environment, Stability, Company, Duties, Bonuses, Praise, Relaxation and Support*.

When it comes to differences between the director and manager in terms of goals and values, there were goals that were mentioned by the director, but not by managers, but there were no values that were held only by the director and not the managers.

Analysis of the congruence of goals, as expressed in percentages, shows that of the 26 identified goal units, there was congruence

TABLE 1. A comparison of the objective units (keywords) of the director and managers

No.	Objective (keyword)	Objective mentioned by the director	Objective mentioned by managers	Objective in % of managers in the sample (apart from the director) who mentioned	Objective in % of the time that the director mentioned
1	Career	3	21	6	9
2	Effectiveness	4	49	13	13
3	Loyalty	--	11	3	--
4	Improvement	6	25	7	19
5	Honesty	--	2	1	--
6	Power	1	19	5	3
7	Life	2	11	3	6
8	Money	1	17	5	3
9	Family	--	25	7	--
10	Religion	--	1	--	11
11	Self	--	3	1	--
12	Status	--	11	3	--
13	Assistance	1	1	--	3
14	Environment	--	15	4	--
15	Experience	5	7	2	16
16	Self-image	3	15	4	9
17	Stability	--	8	2	--
18	Company	--	10	3	--
19	Optimisation	2	36	10	6
20	Duties	--	3	1	--
21	Self-affirmation	2	11	3	6
22	Bonuses	--	15	4	--
23	Praise	--	10	3	--
24	Relaxation	--	11	3	--
25	Co-operation	2	21	6	6
26	Support	--	7	2	--

between the director and managers in 46% of the cases. This can be attributed to a vertical comparison, because the director, who is also the owner of the company, is less dependent on employees than vice versa, and that is why there are differences in goals. The director, for instance, will not emphasise *Duties* or *Bonuses*, because the director freely determines his duties and those of others, as well as whether or not to award bonuses.

After comparing the goals, the author grouped the goals together into five of the most

important goals so as to determine the congruence of the goals of the director and the managers.

Table 2 offers five groups in accordance with their importance, with 1 meaning the most important goal, 2 meaning the next most important goal, etc. We see that *Improvement* is the top goal for the director, while *Effectiveness* is at the top of the list for managers. In second place are *Experience* for the director and *Optimisation* for the managers. In third place are *Effectiveness* and *Improvement* and *Family* re-

TABLE 2. Priorities in the goals of the director and the managers

Director's goals	Ranking by the director of the group	Employee goals	Ranking by the employees of the group
Improvement	1	Effectiveness	1
Experience	2	Optimisation	2
Effectiveness	3	Improvement, Family	3
Career, Self-image	4	Career, Co-operation	4
Life, Optimization, Self-Affirmation, Co-operation	5	Power, Money	5

spectively. *Career* is the fourth most important goals for the director and the managers, but at the same level are *Self-image* for the director and *Co-operation* for the managers.

In last place in the "Top 5" are *Life, Optimisation, Self-affirmation and Co-operation* for the director, with managers choosing *Power and Money*.

In looking at the importance of the groups of goals for the director and the managers, we can determine the congruence of the goals, finding that the top five areas in which the goals are congruent for the director and the managers are *Effectiveness, Optimisation, Improvement, Career and Co-operation*.

In analysing the congruence of the five most often mentioned groups of goals by the director and the managers, we find that goals are congruous in terms of 42% of the top five goals.

Discussion and Conclusions

The qualitative research method: A narrative about the dreams, hopes, expectations and goals of employees when it comes to their future, what they think about their private life and their life and work at the company seven years from now, with the narrative used to identify the goals, priority goals and congruence of goals among employees at various levels of the enterprise.

The research found that the goals which are congruent for the director and the managers apply to the effectiveness of operations, optimisation of processes at the company, self-improvement, plans, possible career growth, as well as improved ways of communicating amongst each other.

Congruence in the goals of the director and the managers and in the top five goals can be seen in nearly one-half of the identified goal units.

In terms of psychology and management studies, it would be interesting to look in future at whether there are links between the congruence of the goals of a company and its managers on the one hand and the satisfaction of managers with their work on the other hand, because among the identified goal units, nearly one-half where congruent, while the question about satisfaction with work showed that 22% of the respondents said that they were a bit less or a bit more than satisfied at the medium, level, 33% rated their satisfaction between medium and good, and 44% are more or less satisfied with their work. This would propose this research question: "As the congruence of the goals of company managers and employees increases, does the satisfaction of employees with their work change?"

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Svajonės apie ateitį: korporacijos direktorių ir vadybininkų tikslų sutapimas

Aivis Dombrovskis

Santrauka

Tai – tarpdisciplininis tyrimas, apimantis psichologijos ir vadybos mokslų žinias. Straipsnyje yra nagrinėjama, kaip korporacijos direktorių ir vadybininkų tikslai tarpusavyje sutampa ar prieštarauja vieni kitiems. Atliktas kokybinis tyrimas, apklausiant tiriamuosius apie jų ateities svajones. Tyrime dalyvavo 9 tiriamieji, kurių amžius svyravo nuo 25 iki 46 metų (vidurkis 32 metai, standartinis nuokrypis – 8 metai). Tyrime dalyvavo korporacijos direktorius ir 8 vadybininkai, kurie buvo jam

tiesiogiai pavaldūs. Kokybinis tyrimas – pasakojimas apie ateities svajones Latvijoje buvo adaptuotas Dombrovskio (2014). Tyrimo tikslas buvo pasiektas, autorius padarė išvadą, kad šis metodas gali būti sėkmingai taikomas norint nustatyti kompanijos darbuotojų tikslų sutapimą. Studijoje buvo tiriami tiek individualūs, tiek bendri kompanijos tikslai, nustatant šių tikslų sutapimo lygį.

Raktiniai žodžiai: pasakojimas, svajonės, tikslai, vertybės, vadybininkas, direktorius, vadyba.

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