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[Translated article]

Management skills in private entrepreneurship: contributing to the formation of high-performance teams

Habilidades directivas en emprendimientos privados: contribución a la formación de equipos de alto rendimiento

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The stable functioning of organizations depends on the managerial skills of their leaders. In the current Cuban context, where new forms of management strive to contribute to the economic development of the country, this becomes relevant.

Objective: To disseminate the experience of implementing a development program to strengthen managerial skills in a private enterprise.

Methods: A qualitative approach based on action research was used. Organized in four cycles, it starts with the theoretical and methodological conception, is based on an immersion in the context, contextualizes and implements the management skills development program, and closes with an evaluation of execution and relevance.

Results: It was showed that the implemented program is pertinent, both for the favorable criteria of the workers, as well as for the modifications occurred in the skill areas and the perception of the empowerment of most of the attributes of a high-performance team.

Conclusions: The insipient development of the private sector in Cuba,

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subjected to a changing and constantly transforming environment, presupposes the development of personal and managerial skills that will constitute a competitive advantage in the present and, above all, in the future.

Keywords: economic and social development; industrial productivity; joint ventures; labor productivity; managerial skills; private enterprises

RESUMEN

Introducción: El funcionamiento estable de las organizaciones, depende de las habilidades directivas con que cuenten sus dirigentes. En el contexto cubano actual, donde nuevas formas de gestión se esfuerzan por contribuir al desarrollo económico del país, esto cobra relevancia.

Objetivo: Socializar la experiencia en la implementación de un programa de desarrollo para potenciar habilidades directivas en un emprendimiento privado.

Métodos: Se utilizó un enfoque cualitativo soportado en la investigaciónacción. Organizada en cuatro ciclos, parte de la concepción teórico metodológica, se sustenta en una inmersión en el contexto, contextualiza e implementa el programa de desarrollo de habilidades directivas y cierra con una evaluación de ejecución y pertinencia.

Resultados: Arrojaron que el programa implementado es pertinente, tanto por los criterios favorables de los trabajadores, como por las modificaciones acontecidas a las áreas de la habilidad y la percepción de la potenciación de la mayoría de los atributos de un equipo de alto rendimiento.

Conclusiones: El insipiente desarrollo del sector privado en Cuba, sometido a un entorno cambiante y en constante transformación, presupone el desarrollo de habilidades personales y directivas que se constituya como una ventaja competitiva en el presente y, sobre todo, en el futuro.

Palabras clave: desarrollo económico y social; empresa en participación; empresa privada; habilidades directivas; productividad industrial; productividad laboral

Introduction

The current context, characterized by the regularity and complexity of its changes, gives rise to processes with marked instability that have a significant impact on most spheres of society and whose causes and consequences have

repercussions not only on political and economic factors, but also on social ones.

The study of the behavior of people within an organization is a challenge for its main representatives and constitutes today one of the most important tasks. The organization must seek to adapt to people who are different, since the human aspect is the determining factor in the possibility of achieving the achievements of the organization.

In correspondence with the above, for some researchers such as Pazmiño Gavilánez et al. (2019), state that.:

Managerial skills are the differentiating point between managers who simply order, those who execute administrative processes and those who, thanks to their attitudes, actions and strong and positive motivations towards work and towards their subordinates, contribute to the well-being of their work community and to the organizational climate of their companies. (p. 687)

Multiple researches address the issue of managerial skills, Whetten and Cameron (2011), Codina (2014), Madrigal Torres (2017), Nahou Larrea (2019), Pazmiño Gavilánez et al. (2019), Pérez Gómez et al. (2020), Duarte Garzón and Aguilar Rascón (2022) and in several of them it is mentioned that the formation and development of work teams is one of the managerial skills that currently receives the most attention. However, although in recent years the power of effective teams to improve organizational performance has become evident, the efforts to design these teams have been emphasized in the middle part of organizations, and even attempts to achieve their generalization are scarce. Although attempts are made to create work teams at all levels of the organization, they have not yet produced the expected results.

There is general agreement among researchers, mainly in Latin America, on the decisive role that the private sector of the economy plays in the development of these countries and its impact on the growth of gross domestic product, competition, sales and employment rates (Duarte Garzón and Aguilar Rascón, 2022, Ibarra Morales et al., 2023).

In Cuba, the so-called self-employment is a new form of management on the rise, following the government's decision to promote the private sector as an employment alternative. This initiative was extended as of October 2010 after the authorization of the exercise of this work in 178 activities, as part of the process of adaptation of the national economy. Coinciding with Ibarra Morales et al. (2023), the projected impact of this sector on the country's economy necessarily requires the development of managerial skills in those who lead it in order to increase their preparation and success.

In this sense, Nahou Larrea (2019) and Pérez Gómez et al. (2020), find a direct connection between the study of managerial behavior, the training and development of managerial skills and the results and performance of the organization, not only in the economic field, but also in decision making.

Despite the fact that internationally private entrepreneurship is already a consolidated option, in the Cuban context this is not the case; it is incipient. Most self-employed workers or "business owners", as they are also called, do not have previous training profiles that would provide them with management skills, nor have they received knowledge in this regard through other channels.

The private enterprise Fábrica de baldosas y muebles de granito "Basalto" has two production lines: flooring (tiles and inlaid flooring) and furniture. The group of workers dedicated to the manufacture of tiles has 10 workers who, although they obtain good results in terms of quality and productivity, have some difficulties related to:

- Not everyone identifies fully with the goals of the business, which sometimes slows down processes and makes it necessary to waste time on explanations and guidance, and does not allow everyone to work with equal levels of productivity.
- The average permanence of workers in this production line in some activities is short, which indicates difficulties related to the stability of the workforce.
- There is a regular intervention of the business managers to give guidance on the work to the team members, which generates a predominant use of

vertical communication and little development in the taking of initiative by the workers.

 There is a marked attachment to the original roles for which they were hired, which causes resistance to job rotation and, on some occasions, difficulties for cooperation among workers; in a job where the levels of cooperation are highly demanding.

On the other hand, workers bring to the context of the self-employed business patterns of behavior developed in state labor scenarios that are not accepted in the factory context and therefore generate natural conflicts in the processes of compatibilization of group norms.

There are some difficulties in the organization of work, care and maintenance of the tools and the premises where they work, as well as wasting the working day, which indicates that the sense of belonging operates at medium or low levels.

Based on all these elements, the objective of this article is to socialize the experience in the implementation of a development program to strengthen managerial skills in a private enterprise.

Theoretical framework or conceptual references

Dozens of studies conducted in recent years by management theorists in various business sectors and organizations around the world have shown that the most outstanding and successful companies are those whose managers are highly effective and competent, trained and qualified in management skills.

Madrigal Torres (2017), defines managerial skill as "the ability of the individual learned to produce expected results with certainty and minimum expenditure of time and resources, in order to achieve the goals of the organization efficiently and effectively" (p. 2). For Campos (2021), these also include the aptitudes and skills that managers have to effectively and efficiently manage resources in order to achieve the defined objectives. For Cubas Pérez and Valeriano Espinosa (2019), skills are significant in decision making because the effectiveness of being able to provide solutions to defined problems affecting the company depends on them.

In this sense, authors such as Castellanos Castillo et al. (2019), state that, despite the academic analyses, which at a global level have tried to objectively classify the variety of skills that top management should have, difficulties have been found regarding their conceptualization since they include not only technical knowledge, but also social, political and ethical knowledge that directly impact the organization.

Therefore, rather than assuming one or another definition that includes one or other elements, the analysis of Duarte Garzón and Aguilar Rascón, (2022) was important for this study when they define that:

a) Managerial skills are abilities, aptitudes and skills that managers acquire through knowledge and experience; therefore, it can be inferred that they are not innate, b) managerial skills are fundamental to achieve business results, c) managerial skills can be grouped by categories. (p. 4)

The development of effective teams and teamwork is one of the most recurring themes not only in the scientific literature, but also in daily practice; not only for people in management positions, but for each and every individual. The skills related to teams are associated with different performance remains in the framework of an organization, while they have a leading role in the analysis of the dynamics and interactions that affect organizational performance and therefore the success of the organization will depend on their levels of effectiveness (Díaz-Calzada et al., 2020).

The effective and efficient union of the managerial skill of effective team building and teamwork, mediated by the internal development of its three basic dimensions: leading a team, being an effective team member and facilitating the team's development, definitely compel the emergence of high performance work teams.

According to Cortés Pineda (2020), high-performance teams are characterized by participation, responsibility and trust and must be able to provide constructive feedback, recognize their efforts and results, motivate and reinvent themselves in order to achieve strategic objectives and increase the organization's productivity. They not only achieve positive results, but they

remain over time; they coordinate strategies to increase performance and productivity, show a high level of complementarity, diversity of knowledge, skills and abilities, which allows them to achieve synergy in the development of collective objectives.

Methodology

The research is developed from a qualitative approach, since it seeks to know how the development of the skill of effective team and teamwork is manifested in a Cuban non-state context. The design followed corresponds to action-research of the practical type, based on Kurt Lewin's model, which is characterized by being winding, cyclical and dialectical. It often requires moving forward and backward in a constant process of open learning. The universe of study was constituted by the 11 workers of the tile team of the granite tile and furniture factory "Basalto". The research-action process is proposed to be carried out in 5 defined cycles:

Cycle 1. Initial: it is proposed to systematize the fundamental theoretical and methodological references related to the development of managerial skills in general and group skills in particular, the formation of effective teams and teamwork and the contribution of these to the development of high performance teams, all of which is synthesized in concept maps that will later be used in the learning stage proposed in cycle 3.

Cycle 2. Descriptive: it is based on all the information provided by the conceptual and methodological theoretical analysis and the reflections made on the subject, which allows access to the field to characterize the context of the self-employed business "Basalto" granite tile and furniture factory. This cycle is supported by techniques such as: participant observation, definition of the teams and activities to be observed, coordination actions of the management team, infrastructure and operation, and the selection and reading of documents related to legislation and regulations in force, which regulate self-employment and documents governing the operation of the factory.

Empirical: it originates from the need to contextualize and document the methodological proposal to develop the managerial skills of training and teamwork. The proposal of Whetten and Cameron (2011) is assumed, which is

based on the social learning theory, and brings together the rigid conceptual knowledge with the opportunities to practice and apply observable behaviors. For its implementation, the adaptation of the model that has already been used for the Cuban context by Codina (2014) is considered, composed of 5 stages: Self-diagnosis, Learning, Analysis, Practice and Application.

Cycle 4. Evaluative: arose from the need to assess the relevance of the methodological proposal implemented to enhance the managerial skill of effective team building and teamwork at the "Basalto" granite tile and furniture factory and its contribution to the promotion of a high performance team. It presupposed the preparation of the evaluation protocol based on the definition of the most appropriate moments to evaluate the program; the aspects to be assessed, the indicators or specific criteria to be evaluated and how the evaluation questions would be formulated.

Results and Discussion

Results of Cycle 1.

As a result of this cycle, the fundamental theoretical and methodological references were systematized, related to the development of management skills in general and group skills in particular, the formation of effective teams and teamwork and their contribution to the development of high performance teams. In addition, three hypermedia conceptual maps were elaborated and used as a teaching tool in cycle 3 of the research, in its learning phase, which is part of the development program implemented.

Results of Cycle 2.

The triangulation of all the information obtained in this second cycle from the techniques applied, allowed determining that the Baldosas de terrazzo work team is the most strategic to formulate the design and implementation of an intervention aimed at the development of the managerial skill of effective team building and teamwork. The selection of this study sample for the next research cycle is due to the following reasons:

The selected team is the one with the least stability of its workers and although satisfactory productive results are obtained, these could be better.

It is the largest team and the work it performs has high levels of complexity and demands the cooperative action of all its members.

Because of the importance of the exchange of roles and the assumption of different responsibilities so that they are trained to make decisions.

Given the characteristics of the production they perform, the demands of customers are high and delivery cycles are short, due to the need to align personal goals with organizational goals.

Results of Cycle 3. Empirical

The results of this cycle come from what happened during the implementation of the managerial skill development program and are shown in correspondence with each of the stages that were defined.

Results of the Self-diagnosis Stage

In this stage, two self-diagnostic techniques were applied: standardized presentation and the "Behaviors for team development" questionnaire. The analysis of the results obtained showed that collectively the skill area with the best score is that of being a member of an effective team, which obtained group scores that correspond to the second quartile, with an average score of 85 points, while the skill area of leading the team and diagnosing and facilitating team development obtained scores that place it in the third quartile with average scores of 72 and 69 respectively. These results allow inferring that the team has developed the ability to fulfill its activities, build strong relationships and mitigate negative or dysfunctional behaviors.

However, they have not been able to visualize themselves in the managerial role and assume it when necessary. They are not able to assume the leading role in communicating goals if they are not the official manager of the business.

Results of the Learning Stage

In this stage, the members of the tile manufacturing team were instructed on theoretical issues of effective teams and teamwork, knowledge that was contrasted with practical examples from their daily lives. The learning sessions had an active and motivated participation of the team members, some of them even had to stop their work to join the intervention and then resume it; it could be seen that they did it with pleasure. They showed expressions of pleasure

and tried to identify the theoretical elements with aspects of their own team's performance.

Results of the Analysis Stage

The analysis of the recordings of the case study sessions made it possible to consolidate what was learned in the workshop by applying it to the cases that were analyzed. The members discussed and reflected on three fundamental lessons learned:

- How important it is for them to understand that what they do is worthwhile in order to perform successfully.
- How vital it is to understand and share goals.
- The need for values to guide plans, decisions and actions. The role of the manager is not to tell people what to do, but to encourage workers to use their knowledge and their own talent. The manager's role is to highlight when team members do a good job.

Considering the cultural, social and educational characteristics of the team involved in the study, this stage leaves a positive balance for its development.

Results of the Practice Stage

In this stage, different exercises were developed to practice teamwork skills, consolidating everything related to the classification of the team in one of its development phases such as: offering alternative actions or interventions to take it to the next phase, which generates involvement and participation of team members in the exercise.

This technique also allowed a collective analysis of how to keep the team functioning at this stage and how to increase the levels of innovation of all members, work quickly and empowerment of fundamental skills, which requires the performance of the tile manufacturing activity that they execute. In addition to the manager's support and acceptance of new ideas and encouragement of higher levels of performance.

Results of the Application Stage

With the problem prioritization matrix technique used, the team was able to define a total of 9 problems and prioritize them until defining that the most

important, or highest priority to be analyzed, was the possibility of increasing the production of tiles from 300 to 400 per day.

Having defined this problem, which involves a real situation that the business is going through, given the increase in demand for its production and the need to satisfy customers, the last exercise "From simulation to reality" was introduced, in which an adequate distribution of roles among the team members was observed for the analysis of the issue, the generation of a large number of ideas to argue the weaknesses of the decision under discussion and the attachment of the team members to the achievement of the organizational goals from the number of elements they offered against the new decision, for example, ideas were offered regarding the real possibilities of breakage of machines and work tools due to overload, difficulties with the supply of raw materials, the low availability of storage of finished products and the overload of physical work of the team members, among other aspects. Although the new idea discussed did not lead to the decision that the factory manager would have liked, it did meet the objective of the program stage and thus satisfied the interests of the researcher.

Results of Cycle 4.

The assessment of the skills development program implemented was carried out in two directions:

- According to what happened during its execution.
- According to its contribution to the promotion of a High Performance Team.

Evaluation of what happened during the execution of the Program for the development of effective team management skills and teamwork.

At this stage, those evaluated considered as significant that the program focused its activities on what had been deficient in the diagnosis of needs, also linking the quality and organization of the intervention with the level of coordination achieved during the implementation of the activities by the different parties involved. Regarding the dedication in terms of time and work invested to achieve the objectives of the program, the workers point out that it was developed in a serious and systematic way, although they consider that they would have liked more time to carry out the experience. When assessing the

criterion of operation, the workers think that the decisions taken during the execution of the program were pertinent and that the contents and procedures of each of the activities were also pertinent.

The climate was the aspect most highly valued by the participants. From their criteria it is possible to extract the idea that the climate generated among the participants in the intervention was positive and that collaboration and participation prevailed. According to their own opinions, a relaxed climate of collaboration and involvement was generated between them and the researcher, which facilitated the correct development of the intervention and increased their intrinsic motivation, since a relationship was established that involved them in the tasks to be developed, made them participants in the decisions that were made; it encouraged them to strive to fulfill the functions and demands assigned to them with quality and enabled them to face constructively the difficulties that arose in order to solve them.

Finally, the workers who participated in the intervention consider the knowledge received to be very useful for their personal and professional growth and believe that this will have a positive impact on the performance of their work team and on the factory's productivity in general.

Assessment of the program's contribution to the promotion of a High Performance Team.

The evaluation of the program from this second perspective was based on the reevaluation of the questionnaire "Behaviors for team development" and the group discussion through the "Traffic Light" technique, of the attributes of high performance teams. For the re-evaluation of the questionnaire, the researcher left them on one of the tables in the factory a few days after the initial diagnostic part was graded and asked the team members, according to the marks initially made on their instruments, to pick them up little by little to complete them in their subsequent evaluation. At the end of the program development and in the last working session dedicated to the evaluation, they were asked to complete it again. In this second evaluation, a significant improvement in the skill areas of leading the team and diagnosing and facilitating development could be seen.

However, the skill area that had scored best in the self-diagnosis remained stable.

From these ratings it can be inferred that the team has managed to stabilize all areas of their ability, so that everyone is able to assume the role of leader if needed, they are able to transmit energy and enthusiasm when performing a job, they are clear about what they want to achieve in the long term, but are committed and strive to meet specific daily goals. In addition, there has been a clarification of the roles of each member of the team and improved levels of interpersonal relationships, there has been an overlapping of individual goals with the goals of the team, and in most cases the members have been willing to put the interests of all above any personal interests.

Conclusions

The insipient development of the private sector in Cuba, subjected to a changing environment and in constant transformation, presupposes the development of personal and managerial skills that constitute a competitive advantage in the present and, above all, in the future. Therefore, valuing, recognizing and developing the necessary skills for an efficient performance becomes an action strategy and an essential component in the line of continuous improvement of this type of organizations.

The self-employed business Fábrica de baldosas y muebles de granito "Basalto" can be considered a small company, in compliance with the norms and regulations established for this sector in the country, with an adequate strategic projection, supported by process management, with a strong strategic alliance with the Empresa Provincial de Producciones Varias and with three fundamental production lines, the most interesting for the study being the tile manufacturing line.

The implementation of the development program designed by Whetten and Cameron and contextualized for the purposes of this research according to the possibilities and potentialities of the context where it was applied, achieved a coherent development of each of its stages, a profitable dynamic between the researcher and the workers, as well as the involvement and learning of the latter in the experience.

The development program implemented to enhance the managerial skills of effective teamwork and teamwork at the "Basalto" granite tile and furniture factory is relevant, both for the results achieved during its execution, as well as for the modifications made to the skill areas and the perception of its members on the enhancement of most of the attributes of a high performance team.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contribution

A.C.C.: Integrity of the work. Research, rationale, conceptualization and writing.

N.S.V.: Research, rationale, conceptualization and methodological design.

V.R.S.: Gathering of information, drafting of the initial manuscript.

L.C.R.: Compilation of information, drafting of the initial manuscript.

O.R.R.: Research, rationale, conceptualization and financial support.

R.K.S.: Research, rationale, conceptualization and financial support.

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