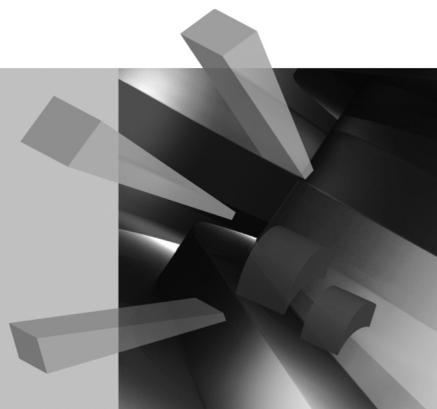


Human and work in a changing organisation. Management oriented on the employee interests



edited by
Małgorzata Gableta
Agata Pietroń-Pyszczek



Reviewers: Halina Czubasiewicz, Aleksy Poczowski, Anna Rakowska,
Agnieszka Sitko-Lutek, Lidia Zbiegień-Maciąg

Copy-editing: Marcin Orszulak

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Typesetting: Adam Dębski

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Teresa Kupczyk

University of Business in Wrocław

DEFINITION OF PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS BY THE EMPLOYEES OF LOWER SILESIA ENTERPRISES. RESULTS OF OWN RESEARCH

Summary: This paper presents results of the questionnaire survey carried out in 2010 among 789 representatives of Lower Silesian enterprises. The aim of the survey was to recognise employees' interests by identifying the way of defining professional success. The paper describes also the differences identified in the respondents' answers depending on the level of education, age, position occupied, and employment status. In this paper recommendations were formulated concerning the necessity to take into account different definitions of professional success provided by employees, which will allow satisfying their interests and to using their potential in enterprises more effectively.

Keywords: professional success, man, Lower Silesia.

1. Introduction

The way of defining professional success is still poorly recognised, particularly in contemporary economic conditions. Building an organisation that is favourable to its people is a condition to increase their engagement, loyalty, effectiveness, and innovation. All of these factors are invaluable for an organisation and translate into its high competitiveness and good results. That is why the undertaking to recognise employees' interests and the way of defining professional success by them has become fundamental for further functioning and development of contemporary enterprises. The paper presents research results and analyses thoroughly differences that occur among respondents' opinions depending on their age, level of education, and position occupied. This allows formulating conclusions including postulative ones concerning conditions and the possibility of implementation of an idea of an organisation favourable to people, that is, the one which, taking into account its interests connected with finance and development, respects also the interests of employees engaged in its activities. This paper constitutes a summary of empirical research results conducted within one of phases of research project entitled "Support for the development and adaptation in Lower Silesia region", which is co-financed by the European Union from European Social Fund.

2. Defining professional success – review of opinions

According to the PWN Dictionary of the Polish Language success means “a satisfactory result of a given venture, achievement of the goal” or “winning fame, making a fortune, gaining high position”.¹ The need for underlining the meaning of the favourably judged result of the action is indicated also by Pszczołowski [1978, p. 174], Obuchowski [1985, p. 128], Kupczyk [2002, 2006] as well as Dornan and Maxwell [1995]. The last two authors interpret success slightly more extensively. A successful person is one who achieves set goals and intentions as well as realises his or her expectations in respect to the environment in which he or she functions [Dornan, Maxwell 1995, p. 54]. It happens that success is identified not only with achievements but also with prosperity, triumph [Krupski 1997, p. 21], prestige, self-respect or popularity, fame, money, wealth [Gładyś-Jakubik 2005, p. 8], shaping a life that we desire to experience or having a sense of one’s existence [Waitley 1995]. It is understood also as a process of perception and acceptance of one’s own professional activity. In this case, success is specified by objective and subjective determinants, that is, conditions which should be fulfilled so that an individual could identify himself or herself as a person who has achieved success [Bartkowiak 2004, p. 43].

Professional success is quite commonly associated with professional career and simultaneously with identifying oneself with an enterprise [Mowday *et al.* 1982; Fołta-Sarna 2010]. Employees opinion survey conducted in 2009 for INCO-VERITAS SA showed a very strict correlation between identification with an enterprise as well as motivation to work and the possibility of professional development and realisation of life goals in an enterprise [Fołta-Sarna 2010]. More and more authors emphasise the necessity for keeping the balance between all the levels of life while achieving success [Majewska-Opiełka 1996; Kupczyk 2002, 2006, 2009; Guillaume, Pochic 2009].

As can be seen from the preceding discussion, success cannot be defined unambiguously. Perception of success is multidimensional and depends on an individual system of values [Brzozowski 1989] or personality [Siuta 2009, p 21; Fołta-Sarna 2010], which have a great impact on behaviour in various professional situations. Managerial staff show similar, varied approach to defining success. Research results lead to the conclusion that to a manager professional success means implementation of plans (effectiveness, efficiency), then professionalism, improving qualifications and development, recognition in one’s occupational group, good salary and satisfaction from work. For managers of the top-level management, success above all is connected with implementation of plans, effectiveness, or efficiency. It is less related to improving qualifications and knowledge (like to managers of middle-level management), but more related to recognition in one’s occupational group, satisfaction

¹ From *The Dictionary of the Polish Language (Słownik języka polskiego)*, PWN, <http://sjp.pwn.pl/slownik/2576536/sukces> (date of access: 30.09.2011).

from work, and doing what one likes [Kupczyk 2002]. Success in management does not come directly from the individual's disposition, but it occurs as a consequence of interaction between the characteristics of mind and uncertainty as well as possibilities existing in the surroundings [Nosal 2006]. A manager's success happens to be treated as a permanent action at the highest level of individual capacities oriented towards the achievement of goals and tasks of an organisation or of an organisational unit as well as of one's own, keeping the balance at the same time between all the levels of life [Kupczyk 2006]. Women holding managerial positions define success of a manager in a similar way though they set priorities differently. To them success is connected above all with satisfaction from their work, doing what one likes, improving qualifications and development as well as acting for the realisation of organisation's plans and one's own life plans [Kupczyk 2009, p. 68].

Presented research results and the authors' opinions indicate that employees understand professional success in a quite individual way, which depends on many factors. More difficult definitions of success undergo changes even in the case of the same person depending on, e.g., age, achieved education, or position occupied. In this field, definitely less research is being conducted. That is why the author of this paper has undertaken to identify the way of defining professional success depending exactly on these factors.

3. Aim of research, methodology, description of the sample group

The aim of the empirical research was to identify the way of defining professional success by the employees of Lower Silesian enterprises. Research problems of the planned empirical exploration were formulated and they form the following questions:

- How to define professional success?
- Are there any differences in the answers of the sample group depending on age, level of education, and position occupied (managerial staff, persons not holding managerial positions); if yes, what are they?

In order to find an answer to those research questions, a qualitative and quantitative research proceedings were conducted on the basis of the survey. Quota sampling was used, which was selected not only with regard to the aim of the research but, above all, research possibilities. In quota sampling, criteria are defined which significantly diversify population with regard to the subject of the research [Lohr 1999; Rao 2000]. Such approach was decided upon, because the selected sample group, to a large extent, corresponds to the structure of the population with regard to the characteristics described. Secondly, individuals inside the group are characterised by higher homogeneity. The examined population was divided into groups according to specified criteria. To establish a percentage participation of the divided groups, the actual distribution of those groups in population was used (according to the data of GUS (Central Statistical Office of Poland)). Finally, within the selected

groups specifically targeted types of individuals were chosen to participate in the research. To examine the relevance of differences as regards the percentage of answers in groups defined by variables: education, sex, age, a chi-squared test was used.² The research was conducted among 789 respondents, 66% of whom had a university degree and the rest had a secondary school education. As many as 40% were the representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises, 32% of micro-enterprises, and 28% of large enterprises. Forty-eight percent were directors and managers. Nineteen percent of respondents were persons qualified to the group of specialists, 5% were office employees, and 6% were personal services workers and sales workers. Thirty-eight percent of respondents revealed the status of the owner or co-owner.

4. The way of defining professional success by the employees of Lower Silesian enterprises

The examined representatives of enterprises define their professional success mainly as improving qualifications and satisfaction from work (see Figure 1). Improving qualifications is understood by them as training, gaining new qualifications, experience and development. Satisfaction from work, on the other hand, is understood as a satisfaction from performed work and from knowledge that they have, having a sense of their meaning, being an expert, performing work in accordance with one's interests, passion, and education, prestige of the place of work/occupational prestige. For the respondents, professional success means also conscientiousness (21%) which is defined as: achievement striving, setting oneself goals and accomplishing them, effectiveness, being organised, responsibility, aspirations, perseverance, self-discipline, sense of duty, consideration, diligence. What is of importance is also the survival and development of an enterprise (running one's own business, its success and development, the survival of an enterprise on the market) as well as professional promotion, in particular to a managerial position, and recognition of superiors (16%). While defining professional success respondents mention also financial satisfaction (high salaries, financial satisfaction, job security – 13%). Less than every tenth person enumerated customer satisfaction (satisfied customers, having good relations with customers and earning their trust, high quality of services offered) and having good relations and cooperation with employees (good relations with employees, earning their trust, pleasant atmosphere, and a well-matched team).

Only 4% of the sample group while defining professional success pointed out that it is necessary to keep the balance between occupational and private life. Individual persons signalled the importance of such aspects as happiness, optimism, positive attitude, flexibility, adaptability to changes, ability to foresee the future. An analysis of the provided answers allows stating that professional success cannot be

² Chance is a ratio of likelihood that a given event will happen to the likelihood that this event will not occur.

defined unambiguously and that perception of success is multidimensional. What is striking is that the sample group put more emphasis on improving qualifications and development as well as satisfaction from work than on conscientiousness connected with achievement striving and realisation/effectiveness of them. It should be pointed out that it is actually on the basis of achievements and the realisation of planned goals that an employee is assessed as these are the factors that determine, especially nowadays, the effectiveness and success of an organisation.

How would you define your professional success? (%)

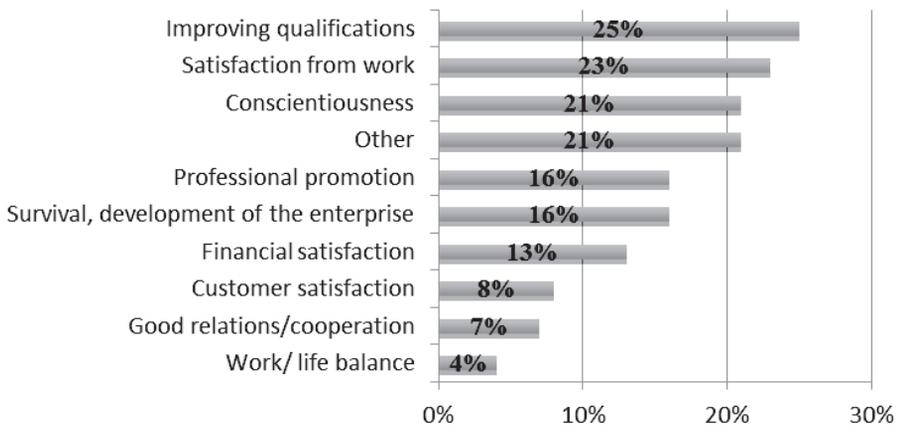


Figure 1. The way of defining professional success by employees of Lower Silesian enterprises – all the respondents

Comment: Description of categories defining professional success according to the opinions of the sample group: *Improving qualifications* – training, gaining new qualifications, experience, and development. *Satisfaction from work* – satisfaction from performed work and from knowledge that they have, having a sense of their meaning, being an expert, performing work in accordance with one's interests, passion, and education, prestige of the place of work/occupational prestige. *Conscientiousness* – achievement striving, setting oneself goals and accomplishing them, effectiveness, being organised, responsibility, aspirations, perseverance, self-discipline, sense of duty, consideration, diligence. *Survival and development of an enterprise* – running one's own business, its success and development, survival of an enterprise on the market and development of an organisation. *Professional promotion* – promotion, in particular to a managerial position, and recognition of superiors. *Financial satisfaction* – high salaries, financial satisfaction, job security. *Customer satisfaction* – satisfied customers, having good relations with customers and earning their trust, high quality of services offered. *Good relations/cooperation* – good relations with employees, earning their trust, pleasant atmosphere, and a well-matched team. *Balance* – the balance between vocational and private life. *Other* – happiness, optimism, positive attitude, flexibility, adaptability to changes, ability to foresee the future, I cannot answer.

Source: own study based on research results.

The research confirmed the existence of differences in defining professional success by the respondents depending on the level of education. People with secondary school education associate success more with promotion, the survival, and development of an enterprise as well as customer satisfaction. What distinguishes persons with university degree is that they associate professional success more with satisfaction from work, the balance between vocational and private life, and, above all, (that is the biggest difference) with conscientiousness, i.e., achievement striving, setting oneself goals and accomplishing them, effectiveness, being organised, responsibility, high aspirations, perseverance, self-discipline, sense of duty, consideration, diligence. For both groups improving qualifications and good relations with employees as well as cooperation have identical meaning. Only 2% of the people with secondary school education and 3% of those with university degree identified their professional success with the balance between vocational and private life. In the time of global competition, such a high burden of professional duties, the necessity of constant development, and the lack of the balance may generate stress, reduce the number and quality of relations with family and friends, force people to give up their hobby, and, in consequence, have a negative impact on the physical and mental health. The diagnosed situation should worry. It should be taken into account that a satisfied employee is more effective, which gives better results for an organisation.

The analysis of research results allowed identifying differences in defining professional success by respondents depending also on age. The importance of financial satisfaction decreases with age. It is the most important in the 20-29 age group. What most distinguishes this group is that they associate professional success with satisfaction from work and financial satisfaction as well as improving qualifications. While conducting research, it was observed that persons at the age of 50-65 define success slightly differently. In this age group, stronger than in other groups, success is associated with good relations, cooperation, pleasant atmosphere in an organisation, conscientiousness, including effectiveness, diligence, reliability, and achieving goals (5% of difference).

It was observed that with age respondents more associate success with survival and development of an enterprise as well as its customer satisfaction. The older a person, the more often he or she identifies his or her success with the success of his or her employer. Young people (at the age of 20-29) associate success strongly with satisfaction from work and financial satisfaction as well as with improving qualifications and the least with the survival and development of an enterprise and customer satisfaction. It may indicate that older people identify themselves more with an enterprise and take care more of its survival, development, customers, and success. Taking into account the observed regularity, employers should see to employing in their enterprises also the older people. Analysing the respondents' answers, taking into account the diversity of positions occupied, it was stated that there are essential statistical differences between managerial staff and persons not holding managerial positions in defining success. For managerial staff, success is more connected

with conscientiousness and for employees with financial satisfaction and improving qualifications. A chance that a person defining success as a financial satisfaction is an employee not holding managerial position is two times bigger than in the case of managers.

It also turned out that the meaning of that satisfaction decreases (in a way that is statistically significant) with age – the older the sample group, the less meaning it has. The opposite situation was identified in the case of the survival and development of an enterprise. The older the sample group, the more often they identify professional success with the survival and development of their enterprise. It indicates that it is worth employing older people, as they to a much greater extent identify their success with the success of an enterprise.

5. Conclusions

The aim of the research was achieved. It was identified how employees of Lower Silesian enterprises define professional success and the differences were determined depending on age, level of education, and position occupied. Both the conducted research and the review of literature on the subject show that there is not a universal and uniform definition of professional success. It does not change the fact, however, that it is necessary to take into account different definitions of professional success formulated by employees, which will allow satisfying their interests, and thus to use their potential in enterprises more effectively.

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DEFINIOWANIE SUKCESU ZAWODOWEGO PRZEZ PRACOWNIKÓW PRZEDSIĘBIORSTW Z DOLNEGO ŚLĄSKA. WYNIKI BADAŃ WŁASNYCH

Streszczenie: W opracowaniu zaprezentowano wyniki badań ankietowych, przeprowadzonych w 2010 roku wśród 789 przedstawicieli przedsiębiorstw z Dolnego Śląska, których celem było rozpoznanie interesów pracowniczych poprzez zidentyfikowanie sposobu definiowania sukcesu zawodowego. Opisano też zidentyfikowane różnice w odpowiedziach respondentów w zależności od wykształcenia, wieku i zajmowanego stanowiska. W artykule sformułowane zostały zalecenia dotyczące konieczności uwzględnienia odmiennego definiowania sukcesu zawodowego przez pracowników, co pozwoli na zaspokojenie ich interesów i efektywniejsze wykorzystanie ich potencjału w przedsiębiorstwach.

Słowa kluczowe: sukces zawodowy, człowiek, Dolny Śląsk.