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# ON THE ROLE AND THE DETERMINANTS OF INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

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**Abstract**

Internal communication is important for organizations because it creates a conducive organizational climate for performance. However, internal organizational communication did not receive proper attention in organizational management, nor the resources required for effective implementation. We proposed a framework to analyze organizational communication by establishg its determinants and its role. As a consequence, the management of organization will be able to improve the internal communication. In our study, conducted in a large Romanian organization, we analyzed two factors that influence the internal organizational communication: organizational culture and leadership exercised in the organization. Due to its essential role, in transmitting information and ensuring a climate leading to performance, organizational communication must occupy a central place in the organization's top management concerns.

**Keywords:** Internal Organizational Communication, Organizational Culture, Leadership, Job Satisfaction

## 1. Introduction

Organizational communication is an important determinant of performance for any organization. Internal organizational communication has the potential to contribute to the development of internal relationships in the organization, to motivate employees, to facilitate all the process of the organization. The employee is the organization's most important resource (Argenti and Foreman, 2002), and internal communication focuses on the nature of relationships between employees of an organization.

Internal communication contributes to creating trust for internal stakeholders of the organization. Poor, manipulative communication causes a decrease in confidence and loss of employees' enthusiasm towards the organization. In this way, sincere organizational communication leads to the improvement of organizational climate and organizational performance. And reciprocal is true, in the sense that trust leads to a quality, honest communication.

From the perspective of organizational characterization, organizational communication describes the way organizations function. From the perspective of the organizational phenomenon, people communicate through interaction, which leads to the development of organizations. Internal organizational communication is the result of the interaction between organizational culture and leadership that manifests within that organization. Internal communication refers to the process of social interaction between employees of an organization. Any professional, formal or informal contact between members of an organization is likely to be analyzed by internal communication.

The objective of this paper is to investigate the determinants of internal organizational communication and how communication contributes to the satisfaction of employees. In the category of organizational communication determinants, we will analyze organizational culture and leadership. We will investigate the relationship between organizational culture and organizational communication, how organizational communication helps to transmit and develop organizational culture. Each organization has certain cultural features such as language, traditions, symbols, practices, social interactions that differentiate it from other organizations (Schein, 2004). Each organization has its own unique identity and its own distinct ways of acting. Somacescu *et al.* (2016) studied the relationship between organizational communication and culture and identified a positive interdependence among the two concepts.

Leadership influences in a big measure the internal organizational communication. The environmental conditions in which the leader operates determine which types and leadership styles can be most effective, which type of leader is admired by society. Working, technological, economic, social, cultural conditions play an important part in choosing the type of leadership. In this respect, in the last decades, a major influence over the leadership style is played by the level of turbulence and insecurity of the organizational environment.

## 2. Literature Review

Organizational communication as a science and area of management interest lies at the confluence of four thematic areas related to the literature: business communication, management communication, corporate communication and marketing communication (Kalla, 2005).

Corman *et al.* (1990) consider that organizational communication is the study of how social organization is influenced by communication. The purpose of organizational communication is to facilitate the achievement of organizational goals. In this regard, a network of communication within the organization, the adoption of appropriate communication policies and the implementation of these policies through specific orchestrated communication activities is needed.

Cheney and Christensen (2001) emphasize that we are currently talking about integrated organizational communication, including external organizational communication (public relations, marketing, crisis management) and internal organizational communication (relations between employees, mission communication and implementation of the organizational development strategy).

Miller (2012) states that as far as organizational communication is concerned, it is based on five defining elements: the presence of a social collectivity, organizational and individual objectives, an activity directed toward a common goal, a functional structure and the cooperation of the organization with other organizations.

The specialty literature highlighted two distinct branches of organizational communication: external organizational communication and internal organizational communication. For the purposes of our study, we will detail the internal organizational communication.

In a knowledge-based society, the main assets of an organization are people, information and knowledge created in the interaction between people. Internal organizational communication is a central process through which organizations can create value (Quirke, 2000).

Bovee and Thill (2000) appreciate internal communication as the exchange of information and ideas from an organization. From the point the view of stakeholders, Scholes (1997) defines internal organizational communication as the management of interactions between those who

have an interest in an organization. This definition emphasizes that stakeholder interests must be orchestrated in a coherent manner by the organization so that the organization is not caught on the wrong foot. Interactions lead to relationships so that we can generalize the organizational communication as being the management of relationship with stakeholders. Argenti (2003) states that internal communication can create an atmosphere of respect for all employees, which can lead to a pleasant work environment. Kalla (2005) highlights the multidisciplinary interest in internal communication and defines integrated internal communication as all forms of formal and informal communication that take place within the organization at all levels of organization. The definition of Cornelissen (2004) considers internal communication as being composed of all the methods used by an organization to communicate with employees, including direct and mediated communication. Welch and Jackson (2007) establish the role of internal communication: to contribute to the development of internal relationships in the organization; to generate a sense of affinity among employees; to make employees receptive to the changes in the external environment; to make employees aware of the need for the organization to evolve and to ask them to be prepared for these changes.

## 3. Research Methodology

We start from the assumption that the organizational communication is influenced by leadership and organizational culture. Another hypothesis of our study is that organizational communication is a determinant of job satisfaction. The research objectives can be synthesized as follows:
- to determine the association between organizational communication and job satisfaction;
- to identify the relationship between organizational communication and organizational culture;
- to identify the relationship between organizational communication and leadership.

The study was carried out among the employees of a large public organization in Romania. As we have shown above, staff is the most important asset of the organization and the most important category of the organization's internal stakeholders. Employee perception of organizational communication, organizational culture and leadership is the best diagnosis of organizational health and a barometer for management in order to adopt the necessary measures. The hypotheses of our study are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. The hypotheses of the study**

| No. | Hypothesis |
|---|---|
| $H_1$: | *Organizational communication positively influences job satisfaction* |
| $H_2$: | *Organizational culture positively influences organizational communication* |
| $H_3$: | *Leadership positively influences organizational communication* |

The structure of the questionnaire used in the research is presented in Table 2. When developing the questionnaire, we took into account the fact that it allows us to achieve reliable results. We performed an exploratory factor analysis to confirm that the items investigated correspond to the respective variables. All the items used in the research, with factor loadings, are detailed in Appendix.

**Table 2. The structure of the questionnaire**

| No. | Variable | Items used | Item type |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Job satisfaction | One item | Scale |
| 2. | Internal organizational communication | Seven dimensions grouped in 28 items | Scale |
| 3. | Organizational culture | Four dimensions grouped in 15 items | Scale |
| 4. | Leadership | Three dimensions grouped in 12 items | Scale |
| 5. | Demographics | Sex | Nominal |
| | | Age | Nominal |
| | | Work experience | Nominal |

Job satisfaction best synthesizes the interest of the staff for the organization. A high level of satisfaction with the current workplace can lead to increasing employees' efforts, better identification with the organization and increasing labor productivity.

Regarding the organizational communication, we investigated seven dimensions of it based on the methodology developed by Downs and Hazen (1977): organizational integration, personal feed-back, organizational perspective, communication climate, relationship with superiors, media/quality of communication and informal communication.

The dimensions of the analyzed organizational culture relate to: innovative culture, competitive culture, bureaucratic culture, people-oriented culture.

The leadership style has been analyzed through three dimensions emphasized in the literature: participative leadership, supportive leadership and instrumental leadership.

In order to achieve the research objectives we considered an initial sample of 350 people. The method of sample selection was the random method. Responses were collected in January-February 2016. A total of 274 questionnaires were received. Out of these, 56 questionnaires were incomplete or contained multiple answers to single-choice questions, which determined that the final number of questionnaires taken into account for the research was 218.

## 4. Results and Discussion
### 4.1. The Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Organizational Communication

Employee satisfaction is a central element of the organization's success. Employees satisfied with the workplace are more productive, efficient, motivated, involved. We can consider employee satisfaction as an approximate good of the organization's performance. We asked the question "How satisfied are you with your job?" requiring the respondents to express their opinion on a very unsatisfied scale (1) to very satisfied (7). The score on the employee satisfaction question was 5.37. There is no significant gender, age or work experience difference on the level of satisfaction with the workplace.

For the study of organizational communication, the questionnaire comprised a number of 28 items grouped in seven dimensions of organizational communication (Appendix, Table A1). The 28 items are of Likert's scale type going from total disagreement (1) to total agreement (7). By centralizing the results for the composite mean for each of the dimensions of organizational communication we can see how the components of organizational communication are evaluated by the respondents (Table 3).

**Table 3. Dimensions of organizational communication**

| No. | Dimensions of organizational communication | No. of items | Cronbach's Alpha | Mean |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. | Organizational integration | 4 | 0.776 | 5.19 |
| 2. | Personal feedback | 4 | 0.787 | 4.88 |
| 3. | Relationship to superiors | 4 | 0.773 | 4.80 |
| 4. | Media/quality of communication | 4 | 0.796 | 4.74 |
| 5. | Organizational perspective | 4 | 0.830 | 4.53 |
| 6. | Informal communication | 4 | 0.756 | 4.40 |
| 7. | Communication climate | 4 | 0.803 | 4.20 |
| **Mean organizational communication** | | | | **4.68** |

All dimensions of organizational communication are correlated as they measure the same variable. Organizational communication is an important factor in motivating and integrating staff and contributing decisively to work satisfaction.

There is a clear positive link between the dimensions of organizational communication and job satisfaction. Thus, the two variables influence each other. Increasing satisfaction with organizational communication translates into an increase in job satisfaction. Organizations in which communication is effective and open benefit from well-stated, satisfied employees with the workplace and who can fully show their potential. Many people want to work in an environment

where communication is fluent, open and honest rather than in a highly competitive environment where communication is demanding and machiavelic.

The organizational communication positively influences job satisfaction (beta = 0.604, $R^2$ = 0.361, p <0.05). The relationship between the two variables is statistically significant. Therefore, the $H_1$ hypothesis - organizational communication positively influences job satisfaction is validated.

### 4.2. The Association between Organizational Culture and Organizational Communication

Organizational culture was analyzed using a set of 15 items that characterize four dimensions of organizational culture: innovative culture, competitive culture, bureaucratic culture, people-oriented culture (Deshpande *et al.* 1993; Ogbonna and Harris, 2000; Cameron and Quinn, 2006). The results of the exploratory factor analysis regarding the dimensions of organizational culture are detailed in Appendix, Table A2.

Innovative culture is based on the assumption that the only certainty is change. In this respect, the values promoted are personal development, stimulation of creativity, assuming the risk. Communication encourages new projects and does not penalize failures. Competitive culture is the one that awards the successes of people and organization. Being an external oriented culture, communication focuses on sharing information, analyzing and interpreting information. Bureaucratic culture appreciates stability. Beliefs are that people behave appropriately when they have clear roles, and procedures are formally defined by rules and rules. Communication is formalized and geared to performing routine tasks. People-centered culture starts from the basic assumption that the most powerful element of motivation is human affiliation. Values promoted by such a culture include collaboration, affiliation, attachment, trust. Communication is an open, honest communication.

In Table 4 are presented the means for the four dimensions of organizational culture.

**Table 4. Dimensions of organizational culture**

| No. | Dimensions of organizational culture | No. of items | Cronbach's Alpha | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Innovative culture | 4 | 0.750 | 3.94 |
| 2 | Competitive culture | 3 | 0.704 | 5.50 |
| 3 | Bureaucratic culture | 4 | 0.736 | 5.39 |
| 4 | People culture | 4 | 0.777 | 4.58 |
| **Mean organizational culture** | | | | **4.81** |

Analyzing the correlation between organizational culture and organizational communication, we obtained a regression coefficient (beta = 0.778, $R^2$ = 0.605, p <0.05) indicating a strong determination between the two variables. Thus, the $H_2$ hypothesis - organizational culture positively influences organizational communication is validated.

### 4.3. The Association between Leadership and Organizational Communication

The leadership style of an organization provides the conditions for a healthy organizational climate and effective organizational communication. Different currents of thinking have characterized leadership and its implications on the performance of the organization. The hypothesis from which we started in our study is that there is a positive link between leadership and organizational communication.

To analyze leadership, we considered three dimensions of leadership: participative leadership, supportive leadership and instrumental leadership (House and Dessler 1974; Ogbonna and Harris, 2000). Participative leadership measures how the leader engages in leadership by taking into account the needs of employees through ongoing consultation with them about the organization's issues. Supportive leadership takes into account how the leader engages to create a pleasant atmosphere among employees. Leaders' support efforts will be rewarded by increasing employee effort. Instrumental leadership measures how the leader engages through

personal example in solving tasks, sets expectations and procedures, and assigns tasks. For each dimension, we asked respondents to answer to four items, evaluating the organization's leader and expressing their agreement or disagreement on a scale of 1 to 7. Factor analysis results for the dimensions of leadership are presented in Appendix, Table A3.

Table 5 summarizes the results regarding the dimensions of leadership.

**Table 5. Dimensions of leadership**

| No. | Dimensions of leadership | No. of items | Cronbach's Alpha | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Participative leadership | 4 | 0.912 | 3.94 |
| 2 | Supportive leadership | 4 | 0.874 | 4.15 |
| 3 | Instrumental leadership | 4 | 0.801 | 4.83 |
| **Mean leadership** | | | | **4.31** |

We have made a correlation between the dimensions of leadership and organizational communication. Between all dimensions of leadership and organizational communication there is a positive association. Also, by transforming the dimensions of leadership into a composite variable we find that between the leadership variable and organizational communication the determination is strong and positive (beta = 0.744, $R^2$ = 0.554, p <0.01). Therefore, the $H_3$ hypothesis - leadership positively influences internal organizational communication is validated.

The results suggest that the management process is very important for internal organizational communication. When leadership is transparent, equidistant, visionary, people's confidence increases, which leads to open communication. Problem solving leadership recognizes mistakes, inaccuracies, or missed goals when the organization is confronted with new situations, but does not allow repeating mistakes or failing to comply with procedures. Attention to detail and concern for well-being of colleagues are elements that, if used frequently by the manager, can lead to effective organizational communication.

Our study has shown that there is a positive association between organizational communication, leadership, organizational culture and job satisfaction. It is time to build the model of the determinants and to establish the role of internal organizational communication. The premise we are starting from is that job satisfaction is dependent on the variable, the result of the organization's efforts to implement organizational culture, leadership and ensure effective communication. We can assume that job satisfaction is a warrant for increasing organizational performance, the ultimate goal of any organization.

Job satisfaction is directly influenced by organizational communication and indirectly by leadership and organizational culture. Organizational communication mediates the link between leadership and culture on the one hand and job satisfaction on the other. Communication thus becomes the mechanism for transmitting and implementing leadership and culture, the decisive element that can influence organizational performance. The standardized coefficients of the regression model are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6. Regression coefficients**

| Dependent variable | Independent variable | Standardized regression coefficient (beta) | Coefficient of determination (R2) | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Job satisfaction | Organizational communication | 0.604* | 0.361 | 0.000 |
| Organizational communication | Leadership | 0.744* | 0.554 | 0.000 |
| Organizational communication | Organizational culture | 0.778* | 0.605 | 0.000 |

**Notes:** * p < 0.01 significance value

The results of the ANOVA test are significant and all regression coefficients are statistically significant. Since organizational communication acts as a mediator, we need to

calculate the indirect coefficients between leadership and job satisfaction, and between organizational culture and job satisfaction. Using path analysis, indirect coefficients are calculated by multiplying the direct coefficients (Table 7). The total influence is calculated by summing the direct and indirect coefficients.

**Table 7. The impact on job satisfaction**

| Independent variable | Direct effect | Indirect effect | Total effect |
|---|---|---|---|
| Organizational communication | 0.604 | - | **0.604** |
| Leadership | - | 0.449 | **0.449** |
| Organizational culture | - | 0.470 | **0.470** |

The model of internal organizational communication is depicted in Figure 1. The internal organizational communication mediates the relationship among leadership, organizational culture and job satisfaction.
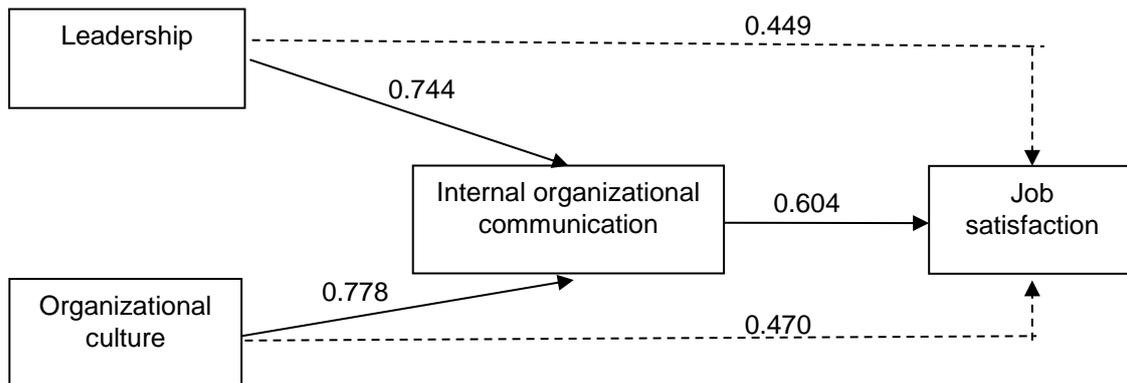


**Figure 1. The model of internal organizational communication with beta values**

Internal organizational communication influences organizational performance directly and mediated. Directly, organizational communication ensures good cooperation between the staff of the organization and between managers and staff with operative tasks. Indirectly, organizational communication is the bond between leadership, culture, and work satisfaction. Implementation of leadership vision and trained tasks is dependent on the quality of organizational communication. A good job satisfaction can lead to a better organizational performances.

Leadership influences organizational communication and organizational performance. The way of communicating the vision of leadership through communication can be a motivational or demotivation factor. It is the organizational culture that creates the general framework of internal communication. Organizations focus their attention on leadership and organizational culture without, however, realizing the decisive role of communication in reaching organizational goals.

## 5. Conclusions

Job satisfaction can predict organizational performance. Performance management requires proper administration of human resources and communication with human resources. Satisfaction of the employees results not only from internal communication but also from messages sent outside the enterprise. Thus, employees do not want the organization to communicate systematically in a lying manner with the outside public. Hiding or distorting

information for the internal or external public negatively affects the motivation of employees who do not want to be involved in these situations. Transparent communication leads to increased employee trust in the organization, greater involvement in the workplace, willingness to specialize in the sector of activity of organization.

Organizational culture is important because it refers, inter alia, to the way communications are conducted within the organization. Improving organizational culture through appropriate communication practices contributes both to motivate the organization's staff and to improve the performance of the organization. Organizational culture thus has an instrumental role in supporting organizational communication.

A good manager needs to constantly prepare and take into account the fact that the science of management is learned in a continuous manner. In the management process, an essential attribute is integrity. The manager should not be duplicitous, but to openly assume his views and by constantly arguing his decisions. Integrity increases staff confidence, leading to even greater leadership credibility. Mutual trust between managers and staff leads to cost savings in the organization and creates the premises for increasing job satisfaction. The image of the leader is reflected in the organization and transmits a pattern of behavior immediately adopted by the employees. The leader must be a responsible person for himself and for the organization.

On the theoretical side, the main contribution of our paper is that it formulates a framework for analysis of organizational communication, therefore allowing managerial actions to influence this communication. By establishing the determinants of organizational communication, namely leadership and organizational culture, the manager can alter these factors to generate an improved organizational communication. In this respect, internal organizational communication is not only a mean to achieve organizational objectives but also an important goal in itself.

On the practical level, internal organizational communication plays a central role in all processes of the organization, yet it does not receive proper attention from management. It is necessary for the organization's management to consider the role of catalyst for internal organizational communication and to focus on the factors that influence communication.

The main limitations of the paper result from the fact that the study of internal organizational communication was carried out only in one organization. A possible future direction of action may be the correlation between internal organizational communication and organizational performance expressed through different indicators.

Creating a proper communication climate requires an honest communication with all employees, empathically encouraging employees to express their views open, without the fear of being punished or other repercussions. Management should encourage open communication to prevent the build-up of tensions and the generation of conflicts that may disrupt the organization's activity. Encouraging horizontal and informal communication networks within departments and among departments as well as encouraging team-building activities leads to the cohesion of employees, the feeling that they belong to the same team and work together for a common purpose.

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**Appendix**

**Table A1. Items of organizational communication with factor loadings**

| No | Item | Organizational integration | Personal feedback | Organizational perspective | Communication Climate | Relationship to superiors | Media/quality of communication | Informal communication |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Information on my career progress | 0.736 | | | | | | |
| 2. | Information about the policies and objectives of the department in which I work | 0.732 | | | | | | |
| 3. | Information on job requirements | 0.718 | | | | | | |
| 4. | Salary information and other benefits | 0.704 | | | | | | |
| 5. | Recognition of my merits | | 0.845 | | | | | |
| 6. | Information on how the assessment is carried out | | 0.796 | | | | | |
| 7. | Information on how my requests are resolved | | 0.745 | | | | | |
| 8. | The extent to which superiors understand my problems | | 0.702 | | | | | |
| 9. | Information about organizational budget | | | 0.789 | | | | |
| 10. | Information about changes in the organization | | | 0.782 | | | | |
| 11. | Information on the organization's policies and objectives | | | 0.735 | | | | |
| 12. | Information about accomplishments and/or failures of the organization | | | 0.716 | | | | |
| 13. | The extent to which organizational communication motivates me | | | | 0.926 | | | |
| 14. | The extent to which people in the organization have good communication skills | | | | 0.856 | | | |
| 15. | The extent to which organizational communication makes me feel that I identify with the organization | | | | 0.789 | | | |
| 16. | The extent to which conflicts are addressed in an effective manner | | | | 0.743 | | | |
| 17. | The extent to which my superior listens to my problems | | | | | 0.819 | | |
| 18. | The extent to which my superior helps me solve problems | | | | | 0.772 | | |
| 19. | The extent to which my hierarchical superior trusts me | | | | | 0.761 | | |
| 20. | The extent to which the superior is open to my ideas | | | | | 0.725 | | |
| 21. | The extent to which meetings are well organized | | | | | | 0.846 | |
| 22. | The extent to which the organization has a healthy communication | | | | | | 0.806 | |
| 23. | The extent to which the written guidelines are clear and concise | | | | | | 0.744 | |
| 24. | The extent to which organizational communication is relevant | | | | | | 0.720 | |
| 25. | The measure of compatibility between my department members | | | | | | | 0.786 |
| 26. | The extent to which informal communication is active | | | | | | | 0.744 |
| 27. | The extent to which communication practices can adapt to emergencies | | | | | | | 0.738 |
| 28. | The extent to which communication with other members of the organization is open and free | | | | | | | 0.715 |

**Table A2. Items of organizational culture with factor loadings**

| No. | Item | Innovative culture | Competitive culture | Bureaucratic culture | People culture |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | The organization is ready to face the new challenges | 0.881 | | | |
| 2. | People are encouraged to take risks for discovering new and effective solutions | 0.784 | | | |
| 3. | The organization easily embraces new ideas | 0.753 | | | |
| 4. | In this organization being a good manager means being entrepreneurial and innovative | 0.716 | | | |
| 5. | The organization focuses on achievements and goals | | 0.913 | | |
| 6. | In this organization being a good manager means being a specialist and a worker | | 0.862 | | |
| 7. | The organization is geared to the prompt fulfillment of tasks | | 0.824 | | |
| 8. | The organization is geared to formal rules and procedures | | | 0.846 | |
| 9. | The organization is very formalized. Procedures govern people's actions. | | | 0.809 | |
| 10. | The organization is concerned about stability and predictability. | | | 0.758 | |
| 11. | In this organization being a good manager means being a coordinator, organizer and administrator | | | 0.746 | |
| 12. | The organization focuses on loyalty and tradition | | | | 0.826 |
| 13. | In this organization a good cohesion of the group is important | | | | 0.796 |
| 14. | The organization is like a bigger family | | | | 0.763 |
| 15. | In this organization being a good manager means being wise and mentor | | | | 0.728 |

**Table A3. Items of leadership with factor loadings**

| No. | Item | Participative leadership | Supportive leadership | Instrumental leadership |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Ask for advice from his subordinates | 0.877 | | |
| 2. | Takes into account the opinions of his subordinates | 0.845 | | |
| 3. | Before making decisions he shall consult with his subordinates | 0.844 | | |
| 4. | In the face of an unexpected problem he consults his subordinates | 0.726 | | |
| 5. | Helps people make your tasks more enjoyable | | 0.844 | |
| 6. | He is concerned about the subordinates' well-being | | 0.803 | |
| 7. | Looks at the small details that create a pleasant atmosphere | | 0.758 | |
| 8. | He treats all subordinates alike | | 0.741 | |
| 9. | Decide what needs to be done and how to do it | | | 0.823 |
| 10. | Maintains high standards of performance | | | 0.793 |
| 11. | Prioritizes the work to be done | | | 0.773 |
| 12. | Shows / demonstrates how a particular thing needs to be done | | | 0.716 |