
ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP: "FINE MANAGEMENT SETTINGS" AND "SOUL OF THE ORGANIZATION"

Valentin Vasilev

SWU, „Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, valyo@law.swu.bg

Abstract: The world is changing at tearing speed. Much of what is taken for granted and tradition in each area is rethought and redefined. On the agenda is the moment of "fine-tuning" management systems and adapting them to new realities. The finer and more sensitive this setting is and the more adequately it responds to external changes, the more effective the managerial communication in the organization.

The use of new management techniques is an integral part of the work of modern organizations. A key difference is undoubtedly the enormous pressure that organizations are currently under. In this regard, the application and testing of new techniques successfully applied in other organizations is likely to continue to expand and lead to better results and more hope for the future.

Time has brought a new perception of the organization - the time has come to look for the "soul of the organization"!

Benchmarking as a modern management tool is becoming more and more successful in the practice of modern organizations and its proper use is a kind of guarantee for the development of flexibility and adaptability of the structures of successful managers. The use of new management methods is an integral part of the reforming picture of management and is a key factor for competitiveness.

On the other hand, many organizations are conservative in terms of changes in their activities, lack of initiative on the part of employees in their work and lack of flexibility in managing some processes due to over-centralization of decision-making processes.

Keywords: change management; benchmarking; management; efficiency; crises; Human Resource Management

1. INTRODUCTION

What has the crisis in 2020 taught us? What are the key lessons?

It is true that 2020 was full of learning challenges and the opportunity to rediscover a number of new moments for many, but it is also true to say that it is full of pain, loss and insecurity. (https://www.cipd.co.uk/Community/blogs/b/david_dsouza/posts/predictions-for-2021). A research by CIPD /Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development/ (<http://www.cipd.co.uk/>), defines some key changes in modern personnel management in the specific conditions of a globalizing society. Most of the surveyed experts admit that they have not had the opportunity to consider their role in the restructuring and reorganization processes that have taken place in many companies, obsessed with their obligations to cut people and salaries. The global challenges and the crisis have called into question many of the current HR practices, built in years of constant growth, and changed the role of human resources professionals in an organization. CIPD reports "Next Generation HR" try to explore the changes and outline the future of the profession (<https://www.cipd.co.uk/Community/blogs/b/katie-jacobs/posts/top-tips-for-aspiring-hr-directors>). The findings are based on in-depth research in leading British companies, including British Telecom, Tesco.com, Xerox, and interviews with more than 100 senior executives. (<https://www.betterbusinesspartners.biz/english/Next-Generation-HR/#:~:text=Next%20Generation%20HR%20is%20embedded%20in%20the%20business,individual%20and%20organisational%20development%20to%20achieve%20business%20results.>).

The main thesis is that more than ever, management needs a "sensitivity" to change; to readjust systems in such a way as to be able to adapt to change, taking into account that organizations also have, figuratively speaking, a soul and a life. "HRM plays a central role in these circumstances related to employee health and organizational change. Human resource managers are seen as a bridge between management and staff to communicate with them, to positively uphold organizational values." (Gigauri, 2020, p. 26)

2. ABOUT THE MANAGEMENT TOOL "BENCHMARKING" AND THE FINE-TUNING OF THE MANAGEMENT

In recent years, the opinion has prevailed again that the study of foreign experience and its proper "implantation" in the organizational "tissue" of the organization makes it more effective and adaptable to change. (Ribarska & Vasilev, 2009, p 133-134). Could we not define it as an "organizational vaccine" to deal with the challenges of the external environment? Innovation and entrepreneurship in dealing with certain problems in some organizations has led to the creation of a series of good practices that quickly found their realization and gained popularity in various fields.

In the conditions of growing demands of consumers for more and better services, the issue of adoption of methods by the private sector in the public sector and vice versa their approbation and implementation is especially relevant. (<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/overview-and-examples-of-benchmarking-in-business-2275114>), central and local executive organizations are increasingly trying to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their work and the public services they provide, while seeking to reduce the price the public pays for them. (Camp, R., 1989). In order to achieve effective end results in such areas, public organizations turn to methods widely used in the private field - total quality management, quality standards; business process reengineering; goal management; outsourcing, etc.

Mastering the benchmarking technique as a tool for learning from the experience of the better would allow organizations to introduce it in their contacts with other organizations. It is necessary to identify some key factors for the successful use of benchmarking tools:

Organizations are generally conservative about changes in their activities. In this aspect, benchmarking techniques can be an effective tool for change only if it is initiated and supported by the leaders of all. (<https://www.humanresourcetoday.com/benchmarking/examples/?open-article-id=14662727&article-title=just-released--the-2020-hiring-benchmark-report&blog-domain=criteriacorp.com&blog-title=criteria-corp>);.

The organization must have its own strategy and development plans, as well as a clear position and vision regarding the desired results of its activities;

Much of the benefits that the organization creates through the introduction and use of benchmarking techniques should be shared and distributed among employees involved in the implementation and testing of good practices;

It is important to note that the organization does not need a high degree of maturity to launch benchmarking applications as a management tool.

Ineffective leadership (Chankova & Vasilev, 2020, p. 209-210), based on lack of investment in human resource management;

Over-centralization of some structures, not allowing enough initiative and flexibility in management (Ribarska & Vasilev, 2009, p. 135-138).

In theoretical terms, the term benchmarking is English and there is no unambiguous translation into Bulgarian. It comes from the word "benchmark", which means a sign, a sign of a fixed object. In the most general sense, it is something that has a certain quantity, quality and ability to be used as a standard or reference when compared to other subjects.

According to the classic definition, "benchmarking" is a way to evaluate the strategies and goals of an organization in comparison with first, well-functioning relevant organizations for determining the place in a given area (Arsenova, 2004, p. 100-103). It is a systematic activity aimed at finding, evaluating and studying good examples, regardless of their size, field of activity and geographical location.

In view of the globalizing society and the changes that accompany the daily life of organizations, they face the specific and new challenge of changing on the move, learning from the experience of others.

We should also add that "benchmarking" is a word with changing meanings in different contexts. According to some authors (Lundvall, Tomlinson), it is something we all do instinctively, constantly comparing ourselves to others. And that this is a good way to learn and develop.

According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, benchmarking is the study of a competitor's product or business practice in order to improve an organization's performance. Here it is necessary to add that it should be established not as an independent management act, but to be perceived as a long, difficult and systematic process of evaluation and comparison of certain indicators for the purpose of organizational improvement. It is important that the organization adopts the benchmarking toolkit as a management technique to accept that it is not just a tool for gathering some amount of information. Even when applied in a limited form, it gives an idea of its own capabilities. It supports the formation of a new style of work, a new stimulating, "circulating" and competitive organizational culture.

It is now considered that the mastery and effective application of benchmarking techniques is a prerequisite for the success and prosperity of the organization. According to the International Benchmarking Cleringhouse, some of the reasons for the popularity of benchmarking are the following (Camp, 1989, p. 343-348):

- Global and permanent competition– at this point, organizations realize the need for a detailed study of successful organizations, with the main goal of their own success and survival;
- the so-called quality reward – the annual awards for good achievements in various fields of work are becoming more frequent and more diverse. These awards bring a new image, prestige, professional satisfaction, increased motivation;
- the need for universal adaptation of the world achievements in the field of various fields of work - in recent years on a global scale, and after the establishment of the COVID-19 pandemic, work norms have been

established, such as continuous learning, teamwork, change management. The things that administrations around the world are used to and use effectively in their work;

- with quality to a new image – a new trend that the organizations in our country are striving for with all their strength. This is about new areas of management such as branding; impression management; work with stakeholders and others.

The elements mentioned so far send clear signals for the wide applicability of the benchmarking technique, and it is up to the organizations and their management to find the approach for the transfer of good practices.

3. THREE-STEP APPROACH FOR APPLICATION OF BENCHMARKING IN ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As a basic approach for continuation and practical implementation of benchmarking, a three-step approach can be applied for the identification and implementation of good management practices (<https://www.examples.com/business/benchmarking-considerations-checklist.html>). The model is inspired by certain elements of Edward Deming's popular model for total quality management (Vasilev, Chorbadzhyska & Belyovska, 2017, p.114-115), being adapted to the conditions and realities accompanying the work of modern organizations (Andel, 1999, p. 221).

First Step /DEFINE AND ANALYSE/

At the stage of preliminary identification of the areas in which to look for good practices, a detailed examination of the methodological materials developed and tested so far in the preliminary work is made. The aim is to understand the critical moments and to place special emphasis on them. Here it can be used extremely aptly in crisis situations of any kind. An important emphasis is the correct identification of the problem area or problem areas subject to benchmarking.

Second Step /RESEARCH AND ANALYSE/

Good coordination can lead to the choice of specific methods to look for the right practices and identify the best ones.

After discussions and discussions about the ways and techniques for identifying good practices, the main conclusions are reached. Exemplary conclusions applicable to the implementation of benchmarking in times of crisis for the organization can be:

- Interviews (including in-depth interviews) and focus groups are particularly suitable for use, and they must include the staff directly affected by organizational change;
- conducting research and summarizing data and deriving good practices;
- when organizing focus groups to proceed from the rule of strictness and short-term, giving participants the opportunity to share their opinions, experiences and impressions;
- Several focus groups are formed, in which employees of different positions in administration take part. Each focus group consists of 8 to 10 participants.
- In this phase, the immediate joint work on the transfer of good practices is started.

Third Step /APPROVE AND ANALYSE/

- As a process and technique for improving the functioning of the organization, learning from the experience of others, benchmarking technique requires, like any innovation, more change management schemes. The key techniques for change management that are particularly useful in this case are:
- wide communication at all levels of the found good practices; peculiar advertising "spots" for the application of benchmarking in the organization and effective implementation of internal communication strategies (Vasilev & Stefanova, 2016, p. 389-390);
- use of effective internal communications (<http://www.lpajournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/V.-Vasilev.V.Arabadzhieva-%D0%A0%D0%B5%D0%B7%D1%8E%D0%BC%D0%B5-%D0%91%D0%93.pdf>);
- Involvement in the implementation of a cross-functional team of employees;
- translation into "accessible" language and in several main points and the principle of practices, in order to facilitate their perception;
- rapid adaptation of new practices to the strategic plans and actions of the organization and increased attention to motivation (Vasilev & Efremovski, 2014, p. 102-103);

In this final phase the new state and way of work is established, based on the acquaintance and adaptation of good practices. The main rule is that the transferred practices are in constant dynamics, ie. managements of organizations to continue to apply benchmarking techniques as a tool in their work. Very often the practice shows that the organizations fail to "keep" the innovations. This is due to a number of reasons. The main difficulty is perhaps the

lack of specialized units responsible for this type of activity. An appropriate step in this direction is the establishment of rules of operation corresponding to the new challenges in the organization. Thus presented an overview of the benchmarking technique as a management process can be a useful initial signal for work and development of skills in this direction.

4. ARE THERE ANY OBSTACLES TO THE APPLICATION OF BENCHMARKING AND WHAT ARE THEY?

There are several trends that managers need to consider when applying this management tool.

First of all, managers will be faced with *the reluctance of a large number of employees to change the status quo in the work process*. The application of benchmarking in work is a small link in the whole chain of changes accompanying the global and profound changes taking place in the organizations. (<https://content.wisestep.com/benchmarking-types-features-purpose-limitations>).

Another line of reasoning is also *the reluctance of a number of managers to admit that somewhere and some things are being done better*. Lack of desire or even fear of change is fatal and the "litmus called competition" is key in the desire to compare with the best. In the next few years, leaders must focus their efforts on approving change and facilitating its adaptation..

Next, the problem is especially significant with *the constant improvement of the quality of work*. What worked until yesterday is very likely to be infinitely obsolete tomorrow. Benchmarking tools are a suitable indicator for such innovations.

The struggle for an overall improved image as if in many places it is only in its infancy. Information about the work and the results will be the subject of increasingly critical relations on the part of the media, clients, and civil society. As "heretical" as it may sound to some, civil society is taking shape and the development of various NGOs proves it. It is no coincidence that in his book "Revolutionary Wealth"(Toffler, 2007, p.565-570), the Toffler family brings out non-governmental organizations / NGOs / as the second in speed, strength and flexibility to change organizations, along with entrepreneurial ones.

Another important challenge *is the struggle for personnel and their retention*. Seemingly distant until recently, especially in the public sphere, this battle will have particularly severe consequences in a given situation (Vasilev & Ognianski, 2020, p. 93). Managers who believe that there will always be job candidates are potentially doomed to failure. The qualities of the new employees are coming to the fore. The moment for transfer and exchange of good practices in this direction is especially important. Because the time is not far off when contracts with managers and departments for certain results will be concluded in our country as well. In such a situation, the best experience in this regard is mandatory and irreversible as a future management technique (<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/benchmarking-in-business>).

The increasingly important "**sculpting**" of employees' work comes to the fore. With that term, Wildrop and Butler (Waldroop, James, & Butler, 2000; p.121-124)

determine the design of jobs in accordance with the "deep-rooted interests of life." Here it is a question of identifying in the most correct way these internal motives for work deeply rooted in the human nature of the individual.

These are a small part of the specific challenges related to the use of the transfer of good practices in the modern organization.

5. CONCLUSION

The main conclusion we can make based on the above may be that benchmarking techniques should not be accepted as a one-time act of "modernity" by employees and managers. On the contrary, they must become part of everyday work, because they can bring a number of positive aspects in improving functioning and efficiency.

Particularly important element is the persistence in mastering the benchmarking tools as a management technique. Without such an approach, the results will look and be artificial and unproductive in nature.

The use of information about the world's leading experience in the future will become a major tool for achieving organizational development, which will be possible only through flexible training of employees and development of intellectual assets of organizations. Targeted efforts and development of capacity for application of benchmarking are needed, methodically and in stages, in order for the organization to be in line with the changing environment.

We will end with the words of Yuval Noah Harari: "In a world flooded with unnecessary information, clarity is power. In theory, anyone can get involved in the debate about the future of humanity, but having a clear vision is very difficult. Often we do not even realize that there is a debate or what the main issues are. Billions of us can hardly afford to dive deeper because we have more urgent things to do, to take care of our children or our elderly parents. Unfortunately, history does not make concessions. If the decision for the future of humanity is made in your

absence, because you are too busy ensuring your children are fed and clothed - both you and they will be affected by the consequences (Harari, 2019, p. 4) “.

And as if in confirmation of Harari's words we would add - every day, every hour, every decision, it is necessary to go through the "brush" of precision and adaptability to the highest standards in the respective fields. For one reason only - to touch the "soul" of the organization in our desire for a sustainable and developing society! Because the future is already here!

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