PROFESSIONAL PROFILE OF A TOP MANAGER IN A PROCESS AND PROJECT ORGANIZATION

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Purpose: There is a gap in knowledge in the literature on process and project management, even though it is emphasized that processes and projects are complementary elements in modern organizations. The authors of this publication present selected research results, the main objective of which was to define the professional profile of a top-level manager of a process and project organization, by characterizing their role and the competencies necessary for effective management of these organization and the implementation of reactive and proactive strategies.

Design/methodology/approach: The main objective was achieved in three stages. Stage 1. involved analyzing the literature on the subject and conducting targeted interviews using quantitative research methods such as CAPI, CATI, CAWI. In stage 2. a panel of experts discussed the results of the interviews. In stage 3. the results of the interviews were related to related scientific considerations conducted as part of other research trends.

Findings: Based on research, it has been assumed that the top manager in a process and project organization should primarily act as a ambidextrous leader. However, the importance of this manager's competencies may vary depending on the size of the organization, the subject and specificity of its activities, process and project maturity or the level of internationalization, technological progress, forms of work organization, the pace of change, and the uncertainty of the environment. The results obtained are quite consistent with considerations on leadership in ambidextrous organizations that have been conducted as part of other research trends.

Research limitations/implications: The opinion of the research group of 204 internationalized companies may differ from others, especially non-internationalized entities. The survey also did not take into account the respondents' business focus and size.

Practical implications: The research results obtained, can provide a basis for determining the roles and competencies of managers for organizations that want to move to a process-project orientation.

Originality/value: The scientific value of the publication lies in identifying the professional profile of top managers in process and project organizations. The publication is aimed at both academics and management practitioners.

Keywords: process-project organization, top managers, professional profile.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

The growing complexity of the business environment has meant that many modern organizations, in order to function properly, develop, and achieve success in the future, focus simultaneously on processes and projects (Nowosielski, 2017, 2018; Osbert-Pociecha, 2019; Strojny, 2019; Szpitter, 2020; Sliż, 2021). These organizations are called process-project organizations. The literature does not describe many comprehensive scientific research results on the problems of managing these organizations, as they have only been presented in more detail in two books (Szpitter, 2020; Sliż, 2021). They assume that managing such organizations requires ambidexterity.

In general terms, the concept of organizational ambidexterity is described as the ability to simultaneously apply two contradictory but not mutually exclusive approaches – exploitative and exploratory (Raisch et al., 2009), which is associated with the implementation of competing strategic orientations (Hu, Chen, 2016; Zhang et al., 2016). The first of these orientations – reactive – refers to exploitation and is focused on productivity, efficiency, updates, modifications, and improvement of current activities to adapt to market needs (Kohtamäki et al., 2010). The second orientation, proactive, refers to exploration and is focused on change, searching for and investigating new opportunities (Raisch et al., 2009).

Ambidexterity is difficult and involves paradoxes, because reconciling exploitation and exploration requires, among other things, the simultaneous implementation of radical and incremental innovations, single and double learning loops, stability and transformation, and induced and autonomous strategic processes. A synthetic summary of considerations regarding these contradictions can be found in many publications (e.g., Raisch, Birkinshaw, 2008; Raisch et al., 2009; Rosing, Zacher, 2023).

It can be assumed that ambidexterity is even more difficult in organizations that are simultaneously process- and project-oriented, because managing them requires, among other things, different roles and competencies of managers and employees, organizational solutions, and the tools and methods used. To date, the literature has mainly described them separately, focusing on process-oriented organizations and project-oriented organizations. The exceptions are the considerations contained in the books mentioned above (Szpitter, 2020; Sliż, 2021) and a few other, more narrow publications on process and project management. The authors of this publication wish to contribute to these considerations by pointing out the problems of process and project management and the results of research that support their solution.

2. Basis for the research, its purpose, research process, and methods used

The basis for the research was the adopted model of a ambidextrous process and project organization (Fig. 1). The model assumes that achieving the overarching strategic objective of such an organization, which is to increase value through proper functioning and development, requires management focused on the implementation of:

1) a reactive strategy related to operations, including the ability to implement incremental changes – improvements for the effective implementation of existing processes and projects,

2) a proactive strategy, relating to exploration, including the ability to implement radical changes – new solutions, innovations in processes or new processes, as well as new and innovative projects.

The implementation of these strategies involves many problems that pose challenges for the management of process and project organizations. It has been assumed that these problems concern interrelated and overlapping areas, which include: 1. human capital, 2. organization, 3. finance, 4. knowledge, 5. methods and tools.
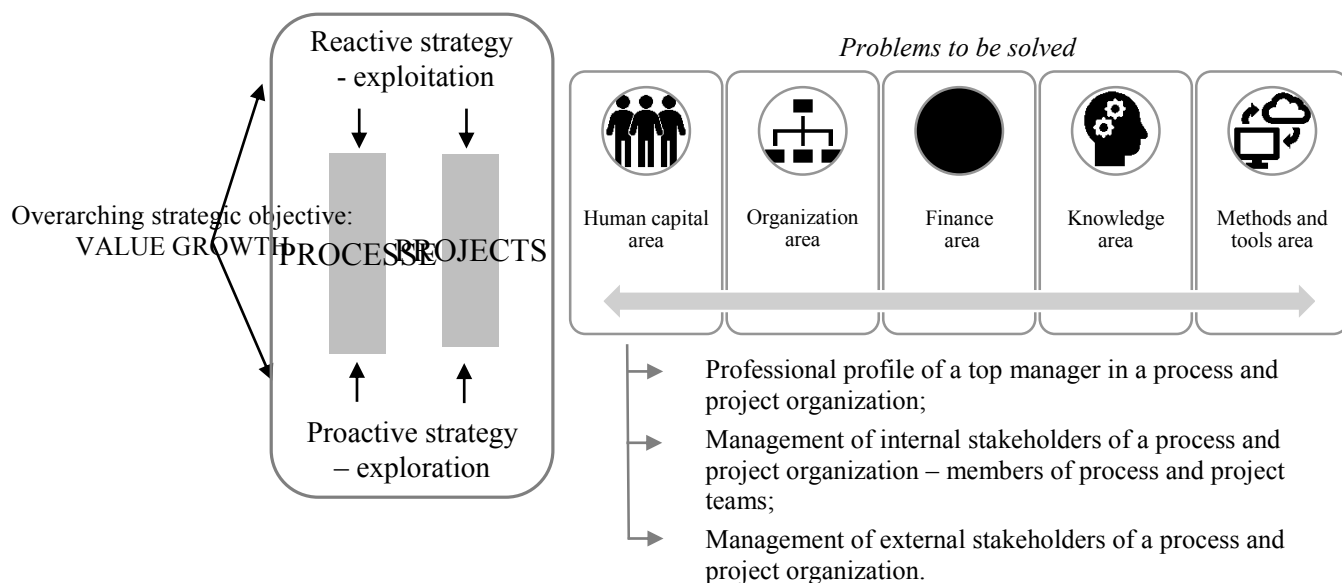

Figure 1. Generalized model of a ambidextrous process and project organization, taking into account selected issues in the area of human capital.

Source: own work.

This publication presents the results of research in the area of human capital, which covered only issues related to top managers, referring to the definition of their role and the competencies necessary for the effective management of a proces and project organization and the implementation of reactive and proactive strategies. The aim of this research was to define the professional profile of a top manager in a proces and project organization. Considerations regarding other issues in the area of human capital will be presented in a separate publication.

The research was conducted in three stages. Stage 1 involved analyzing the literature on the subject and conducting targeted interviews using quantitative research methods such as CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interview), CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview), and CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview). In stage 2, a panel of experts discussed the results of the interviews. In stage 3, the results of the interviews were compared with related scientific considerations presented in the literature on the subject.

3. Research results

3.1. Interviews

In order to achieve the research objective, which was to define the professional profile of a top manager in a process and project organization, the first step was to develop an interview questionnaire.

First, several dozen publications were analyzed that referred to the roles and competencies that should characterize managers of modern organizations. It was noted that there is a knowledge gap in this area with regard to process and project management. A synthesis of the considerations contained in the analyzed literature is presented in a separate publication (Skubis, Bijańska, 2024). It was emphasized there that the top manager of a process and project organization fulfills different roles and has different competencies than the leaders of process or project teams who operate in an environment oriented towards self-organization and self-control of colleagues, and whose leadership is characterized by impermanence and transience.

Next, based on the roles and competencies of managers in contemporary organizations identified in the literature, an interview questionnaire was developed (Skubis, Bijańska, 2024). It served as the basis for assessing the importance of the roles and competencies of top managers in process and project organizations. The questionnaire distinguished such contemporary roles as: professional, manager in an international environment, explorer, agent of change, rescuer, entrepreneur, democrat – servant leader, knowledge propagator, ambidextrous leader, creator of success. Each role was characterized by appropriate competencies.

Next, interviews were conducted in several phases. The first phase, described in detail in an earlier publication (Skubis, Bijańska, 2024), involved 175 managers of process- and project-based organizations based in Poland (Silesian Province) and characterized by internationalization. The sample for the study was selected in a non-random manner – based on the researcher's subjective assessment, quota – from a population of representative units. CAPI and CATI methods were used in this phase. The second phase involved another 73 managers from abroad (EU) who managed process and project organizations related to Polish companies (these were mainly partners or branches or subsidiaries of organizations from the

previous phase of the study). In this phase, CAPI, CATI, and CAWI methods were used (the latter method was used in only 11 cases, at the express request of the respondents). The choice of these quantitative data collection methods was based on their characteristics, which include, among others, the quick acquisition of high-quality information and a satisfactory response rate. When using CAPI and CATI, any doubts were clarified to the respondents in order to ensure an unambiguous interpretation of the assessed roles[1] and competencies.

Previously, all respondents were assessed in terms of their process and project maturity level, based on a model (Sliż, 2021) that included five levels and was based on project maturity assessment (PMMM) and process maturity assessment (MMPM) models. The research results included responses from managers only from those organizations that were at levels 3, 4, and 5 of process and project maturity (Sliż, 2021, pp. 201-211). This was a total of 204 managers from:

1) 89 organizations (66 Polish and 23 foreign) at level 5, defined as a "Process and Project Organization", which means that their:
   – organizational structure is characterized by a process-project layout,
   – projects are implemented in a process-based convention,
   – the level of maturity of process and project management is high in the operational and exploratory layers,

2) 63 organizations (45 Polish and 18 foreign) are at level 4, defined as "Process organization with a high level of project management maturity", which means that their:
   – organizational structure is characterized by a matrix system,
   – their activities are aimed at implementing a pure process structure with project organization or a process-project structure,
   – management consciously uses the benefits of implementing process and project solutions and recognizes the need to group and integrate them in the operational and exploratory layers,

3) 52 (41 Polish and 11 foreign) are at level 3, defined as "Process and project-oriented organization", which means that their:
   – activities are aimed at implementing a matrix organizational structure,
   – the system for measuring process and project results is the basis for management decisions,
   – the operational layer is clearly defined and management activities are aimed at improving the efficiency and quality of process results,
   – exploratory projects are carried out on the basis of formalized process documentation.

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[1] The most doubts were related to the concept of "ambidexterity," which was unfamiliar to practitioners (some replaced it with the concept of "duality").

The obtained assessments of the importance of roles and competencies (on a scale from 0 to 3)[2] were multiplied by the respondents' competency coefficient, referring to the level of process and project maturity of the organization they represented (1.0, 0.95, 0.9 for maturity levels 5, 4, and 3, respectively), then summed and converted into percentages. This allowed us to present the importance of the roles and competencies of top managers in a process-project organization.

The responses given during the interviews show that the role of the ambidextrous leader is of paramount importance in a process-project organization (Fig. 1). The research results are therefore consistent with the assumption that process-project organizations require ambidextrous management. In addition, the roles of success creator, professional, and manager in an international environment are also very important.

Figure 1. Results of the assessment of the importance of top managers' roles in a process-project organization.

Source: own study.

Based on the analysis of the research results, it can be concluded that the importance of the role of the ambidextrous leader increased with the level of process and project maturity (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. The level of process and project maturity of the respondents' organizations and their indication of the dominant roles of the ambidextrous leader and success creator.

Source: own study.

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[2] Scale for assessing the importance of roles and competencies: 3. high importance; 2. medium importance; 1. low importance; 0. no importance for the organization.

In organizations with the lowest, i.e., level 3, 65.38% of respondents (34 out of 52) indicated the significant importance of this role, and in organizations at level 4, 79.37% (50 out of 63) did so. Howeve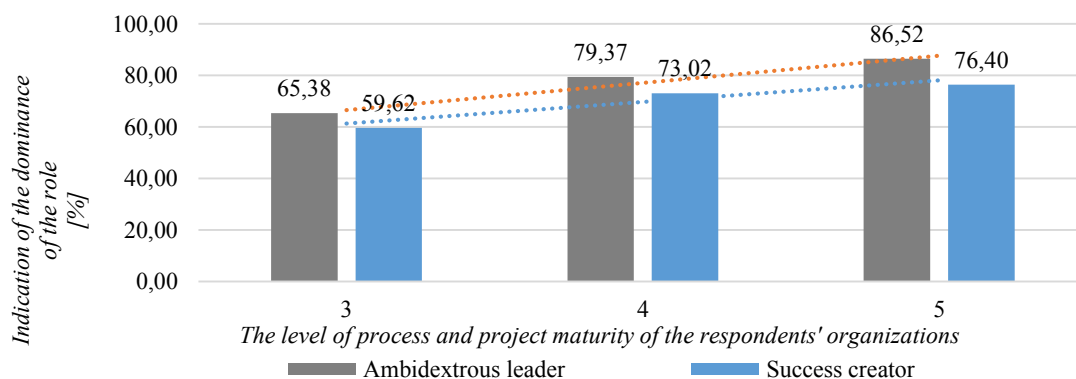r, 86.52% (77 out of 89) of respondents from organizations with the highest level of process and project maturity emphasized the greatest importance of this role. A similar relationship exists with regard to the role of success creator, whose importance increases with the level of process and project maturity of the respondents' organizations.

The presented results, which are expanded to include the assessments of foreign respondents, differ slightly from previous research results (Skubis, Bijańska, 2024). Polish respondents first indicated the greatest importance of the role of a professional (92.3%), followed by an ambidextrous leader (92%), a success creator (90.1%), and a manager in an international environment (88.4%). The order of most of the other roles also differs slightly.

As part of the discussion, it is worth noting that the emphasis on the importance of the manager's role in an international environment is likely due to the selection of respondents who were characterized by internationalization. In the sample, 57 entities were characterized by a high degree of internationalization, 88 by a medium degree, and 59 by a low degree, as assessed on the basis of the DOI model$_{INTS}$[3] (Sullivan, 1994). The analysis of the responses shows that almost 74% of respondents with a high degree of internationalization (42 out of 57) indicated the high importance of the role of the manager in an international environment.

Respondents were also asked which competencies, among all those dedicated to top managers of modern organizations, are most important for the effective management of a process- and project-based organization and the implementation of reactive and proactive strategies. Based on their assessments, a ranking of the competencies of a top manager of a process- and project-based organization was developed (Fig. 3).

The presented results of the assessment of the importance of competencies, which are expanded to include the opinions of foreign respondents, were compared with previous studies (Skubis, Bijańska, 2024). On this basis, it was concluded that these results are consistent in the case of the most important competencies – nos. 1, 2, and 3 – and the less important competencies – nos. 24, 39, and 42 (Table 1). The assessment of the importance of most of the other competencies differs slightly, but in the case of a few, it differs significantly. Thus, foreign respondents:

1. rated the importance of the following competencies significantly higher:
    -   ability to solve large-scale problems – No. 12,
    -   ability to see through the interests of the entire organization, rather than focusing on individual processes and projects – No. 13,
    -   ability to build trust and overcome resistance to change – No. 28,
    -   emotional and social intelligence – No. 34,
    -   ability to communicate when planning and implementing change – No. 38,

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[3]DOI$_{INTS}$ = Foreign Sales to Total Sales, Foreign Assets to Total Assets, Overseas Subsidiaries to Total Subsidiaries, Top Managers` International Experience, Psychic Dispersion of International Operations.
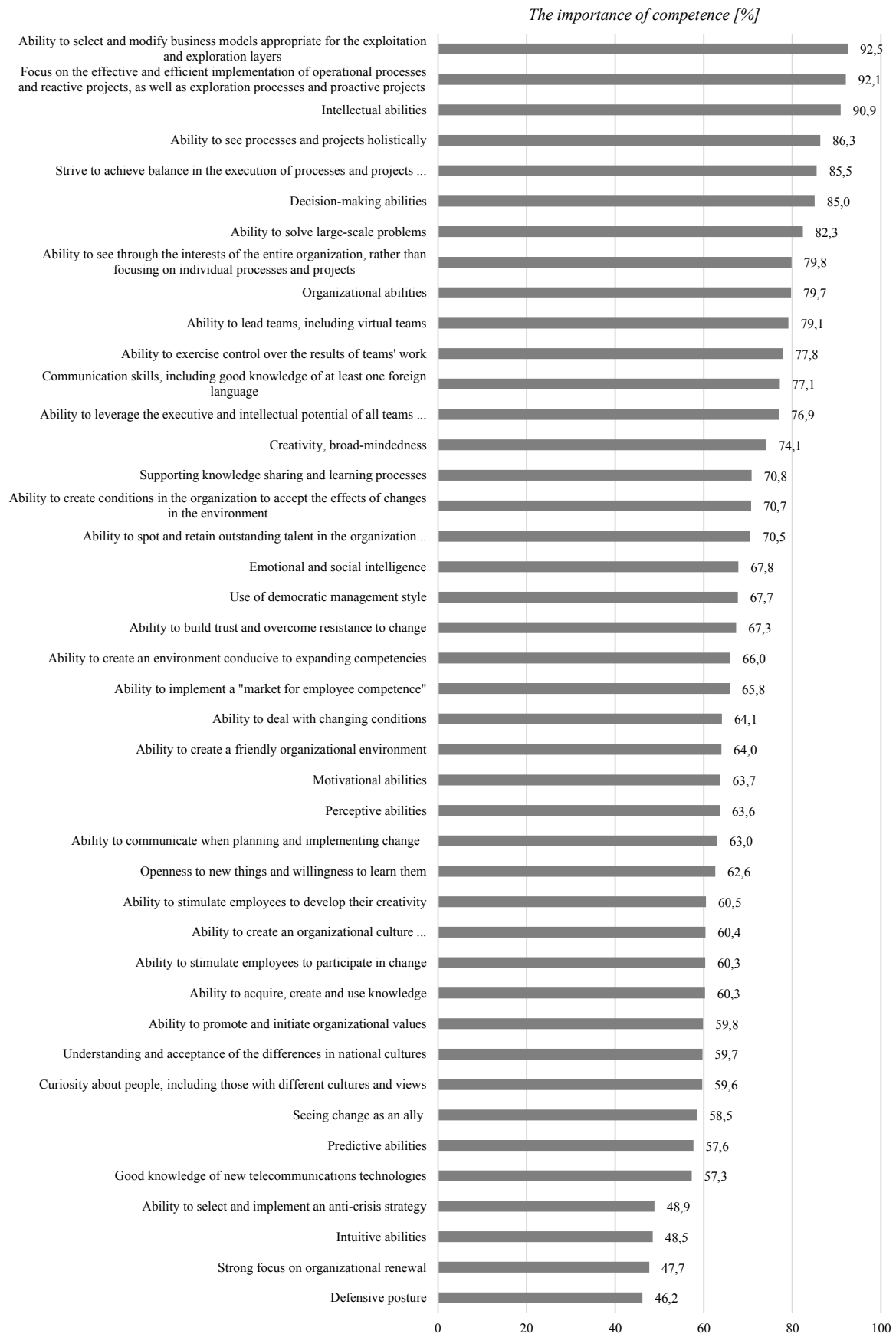
The importance of competence [%]

Competence	Value
Ability to select and modify business models appropriate for the exploitation and exploration layers	92,5
Focus on the effective and efficient implementation of operational processes and reactive projects, as well as exploration processes and proactive projects	92,1
Intellectual abilities	90,9
Ability to see processes and projects holistically	86,3
Strive to achieve balance in the execution of processes and projects ...	85,5
Decision-making abilities	85,0
Ability to solve large-scale problems	82,3
Ability to see through the interests of the entire organization, rather than focusing on individual processes and projects	79,8
Organizational abilities	79,7
Ability to lead teams, including virtual teams	79,1
Ability to exercise control over the results of teams' work	77,8
Communication skills, including good knowledge of at least one foreign language	77,1
Ability to leverage the executive and intellectual potential of all teams ...	76,9
Creativity, broad-mindedness	74,1
Supporting knowledge sharing and learning processes	70,8
Ability to create conditions in the organization to accept the effects of changes in the environment	70,7
Ability to spot and retain outstanding talent in the organization...	70,5
Emotional and social intelligence	67,8
Use of democratic management style	67,7
Ability to build trust and overcome resistance to change	67,3
Ability to create an environment conducive to expanding competencies	66,0
Ability to implement a "market for employee competence"	65,8
Ability to deal with changing conditions	64,1
Ability to create a friendly organizational environment	64,0
Motivational abilities	63,7
Perceptive abilities	63,6
Ability to communicate when planning and implementing change	63,0
Openness to new things and willingness to learn them	62,6
Ability to stimulate employees to develop their creativity	60,5
Ability to create an organizational culture ...	60,4
Ability to stimulate employees to participate in change	60,3
Ability to acquire, create and use knowledge	60,3
Ability to promote and initiate organizational values	59,8
Understanding and acceptance of the differences in national cultures	59,7
Curiosity about people, including those with different cultures and views	59,6
Seeing change as an ally	58,5
Predictive abilities	57,6
Good knowledge of new telecommunications technologies	57,3
Ability to select and implement an anti-crisis strategy	48,9
Intuitive abilities	48,5
Strong focus on organizational renewal	47,7
Defensive posture	46,2

Figure 3. Results of the assessment of the importance of top managers' competence in a process and project organization.

Source: own study.

2. rated the importance of the following competencies significantly lower:
    - ability to leverage the executive and intellectual potential of all process and project teams – No. 4,
    - ability to use a democratic leadership style – No. 14,
    - good knowledge of new telecommunications technologies – No. 21,
    - ability to create an organizational culture that emphasizes the functioning of the market mechanism in the organization – No. 25.

To summarize this part of the study, after conducting the interviews, it was assumed that a top manager in a process and project organization should primarily play the role of ambidextrous leader, and the person performing this role should possess the indicated competencies, the importance of which is based on the assessment of 204 respondents.

Table 1.
The mportance of the competencies of a top manager in a process and project organization, without and after including the opinions of foreign respondents

The importance of competencies			
according to Polish respondents		including foreign respondents	
Number and name of competence	*Assessment (%)**	*Ranking position*	*Assessment (%)**
1. Ability to select and modify business models appropriate for the exploitation and exploration layers	93.8	**1** 1	92.5
2. Focus on the effective and efficient implementation of exploitation processes and reactive projects, as well as exploration processes and proactive projects	93.6	**2** 2	92.1
3. Intellectual abilities	90.1	**3** 3	90.9
4. Ability to leverage the executive and intellectual potential of all process and project teams	87.5	4 13	76.9
5. Decision-making abilities	87.2	5 6	85.0
6. Ability to see processes and projects holistically	84.2	6 4	86.3
7. Strive to achieve balance in the execution of processes and projects	83.8	7 5	85.5
8. Organizational abilities	83.3	8 9	79.7
9. Ability to lead teams, including virtual teams	83.2	9 10	79.1
10. Ability to exercise control over the results of team's work	82.9	10 11	77.8
11. Communication skills, including a good knowledge of at least one foreign language	80.5	11 12	77.1
12. Ability to solve large-scale problems	80.1	12 7	82.3
13. Ability to see through the interests of the entire organization, rather than focusing on individual processes and projects	72.9	13 8	79.8
14. Ability to use a democratic leadership style	72.2	14 19	67.7
15. Creativity, broad-mindedness	72.0	15 14	74.1
16. Ability to spot and retain outstanding talent within the organization, regardless of their nationality	69.4	16 17	70.5
17. Supporting knowledge sharing and learning processes	69.4	17 15	70.7
18. Ability to create an environment conducive to expanding competences of employees and generating initiatives by them	68.3	18 21	66.0
19. Ability to implement a 'market for employee competences'	68.2	19 22	65.8
20. Ability to create conditions in the organization to accept the effects of changes in the environment	66.4	20 16	70.7
21. Good knowledge of new telecommunications technologies	66.4	21 38	57.3
22. Perceptive abilities	65.6	22 26	63.6
23. Motivational abilities	64.5	23 25	63.7

Cont. table 1.

24. Ability to create a friendly organizational environment for good performance	63.6	**24**	**24**	64.0
25. Ability to create an organizational culture that emphasizes the functioning of the market mechanism in the organization	63.4	25	30	64.0
26. Ability to deal with changing conditions	63.3	26	23	64.1
27. Openness to new things and willingness to learn them	63.2	27	28	62.6
28. Ability to build trust and overcome resistance to change	62.6	28	20	67.3
29. Ability to acquire, create and use knowledge	60.7	29	31	60.3
30. Ability to stimulate employees to participate in change	59.9	30	31	60.3
31. Curiosity about people, including those with different cultures and views	59.7	31	35	59.6
32. Ability to promote and initiate organizational values	59.2	32	33	59.8
33. Ability to stimulate employees to develop their creativity	59.2	33	29	60.5
34. Emotional and social intelligence	59.2	34	18	67.8
35. Understanding and acceptance of the differences in national cultures	58.6	35	34	59.7
36. Predictive abilities	58.3	36	37	57.6
37. Seeing change as an ally	58.2	37	36	58.5
38. Ability to communicate when planning and implementing change	57.8	38	27	63.0
39. Ability to select and implement an anti-crisis strategy	55.9	**39**	**39**	48.9
40. Strong focus on organizational renewal	52.4	40	41	47.7
41. Intuitive abilities	50.2	41	40	48.5
42. Defensive posture	45.8	**42**	**42**	46.2

* (100%= maximum importance of competence).

Source: own study.

3.2. Expert panel

The results of the study were presented to 11 top managers of Polish organizations at level 5 of process and project maturity who were interested in them and wanted to participate further. These managers were referred to as experts. Next, a discussion of these results was held within the expert panel. During the discussion, the experts exchanged views and shared their own experiences regarding the most important role that top managers must play and the competencies that are crucial for the effective management of a process and project organization and for the implementation of reactive and proactive strategies.

During the discussion, the authors of the publication asked the experts for their opinion on the results of the study. All experts agreed that the top manager of a process and project organization should act as an ambidextrous leader. However, with regard to the assessment of competencies, the experts stated that their importance will change, depending, among other things, on the size of the organization, the subject and specificity of its activities, and its process and project maturity. The impact of internationalization was also noted – in view of the growing international activity of process and project organizations, competencies related to managing employee diversity will become increasingly important, although the current assessment results do not indicate their significant importance. Experts also noted that strong technological progress (especially the development of artificial intelligence, automation, and digital tools) will increase the importance of competencies related to perceiving change as an opportunity, which were not considered significant in the research. However, according to the experts, the importance of

readiness to test and understand new technological solutions will continue to grow, whereby the point is not that top managers should have specialized competencies in this area, but that they should be able to interpret the results of their use. In addition, experts pointed out that projects are often carried out by hybrid, dispersed teams (working on-site and remotely from different locations). In such cases, knowledge of telecommunications technologies will become increasingly important for collaboration with a dispersed team (e.g., through platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Notion, or Jira). Soft skills related to emotional and social intelligence, motivating and building trust in hybrid teams, as well as the ability to resolve conflicts, especially between process and project teams, will also become important. In this context, the authors of the publication also asked about the relatively low rating of the importance of the role of democrat and the competencies associated with it. The experts agreed with this assessment, stating that in practice, process and project organizations tend to use a situational approach, tailored primarily to the importance of the process or project for the organization, the conditions for their implementation, and the competencies of the employees. They emphasized that their leadership is usually based on delegating the role of process manager (process owner) or project manager (project manager) to competent employees, assuming the possibility of supporting them, co-deciding, and sharing responsibility. The ability to apply a democratic management style is therefore important (as confirmed by the results of the assessment of this competence), but it is not crucial for the effective management of a process and project organization and the implementation of reactive and proactive strategies. Similar comments were made about the other competencies related to the role of a democrat. Views were also exchanged on the competencies rated lowest by respondents. In their case, according to experts, the importance of skills related to renewal and resilience building will grow, as modern process and project organizations operate in conditions of rapid change and an uncertain environment, which implies many threats.

To summarize this part of the study, following the expert panel discussion, it was agreed that the professional profile of a top manager in a process and project organization can be described as that of an ambidextrous leader who should possess the indicated competencies, but their importance is arbitrary and may change.

3.3. Literature review

A literature review was conducted to verify the research results. As mentioned earlier, no considerations regarding the role and competencies of a process and project organization manager have been presented to date. However, there are many considerations about leadership in ambidextrous organizations that have been conducted as part of other research trends, relating, among other things, to how these organizations achieve a balance between exploration and exploitation – that is, how to achieve ambidexterity and how to manage contradictions.

In the research trend related to ways of achieving ambidexterity, contemporary considerations focus, among other things, on three complementary approaches: structural, contextual, and leadership (Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2016).

In discussions concerning structural ambidexterity, it is assumed that it is necessary to create separate structures and units for exploratory and exploitative activities, which must be linked at the top management level. Its role is therefore to integrate them strategically, which requires it to build a common set of cultural values, a shared vision, and an overarching management process (O'Reilly, Tushman, 2004, 2008; Jansen et al., 2009). Contextual ambidexterity, on the other hand, assumes the simultaneity of exploratory and exploitative activities at the individual level and refers to an individual's behavioral ability to perform them simultaneously (Raisch, Birkinshaw, 2008). Top managers should reconcile the conflicting requirements of these activities by building an organizational context of defined by a combination of hard elements (discipline and scope of tasks) and soft elements (support and trust), which is intended to encourage employees to make their own decisions on how to divide their time between exploitation and exploration (Gibson, Birkinshaw, 2004; Miron et al., 2004; Carmeli, Halevi, 2009). Both structural and contextual ambidexterity emphasize the inherent importance of ambidextrous leadership. Leadership ambidexterity emphasizes the particular importance of top management in making decisions about exploration and exploitation in order to achieve short-term and long-term goals in the future, as well as reconciling their strategic contradictions, related conflicts, and problems (Lubatkin et al., 2006; Raisch, Birkinshaw, 2008; Cao et al., 2010; Keller, Weibler, 2015). Considerations related to ways of achieving ambidexterity can be linked to the following competencies identified by respondents, which include:

- ability to promote and initiate organizational values,
- ability to create an organizational culture that emphasizes the functioning of market mechanisms within the organization,
- ability to select and modify business models appropriate for the exploitative and exploratory layers,
- ability to see through the interests of the entire organization, rather than focusing on individual processes and projects,
- the ability to see processes and projects holistically,
- decision-making abilities,
- predictive abilities,
- forecasting skills,
- ability to solve large-scale problems,
- intellectual abilities,
- perceptive abilities.

In another line of research related to the ability to manage contradictions, studies were conducted in contexts such as: 1) innovation, 2) organizational learning and related knowledge, 3) organizational adaptation, 4) strategic management, 5) diversity management in the paradoxes of exploitation and exploration.

Re 1) There are many research results conducted in the context of radical and incremental innovation implementation, related exploration and exploitation (e.g., Smith, Tushman, 2005; Atuahene-Gima, 2005; Cantarello et al., 2012), as well as the importance of ambidextrous leadership (e.g., Rosing et al., 2010, 2011; Zacher, Wilden, 2014; Zacher, Rosing, 2015; Zacher et al., 2016; Rosing, Zacher, 2017, 2023). In this context, it is assumed that top managers must be strongly committed to both open and closed behaviors in order to encourage their employees to explore and exploit. Exploration involves trying new things, experimenting, and seeking innovative solutions, so top managers should not only be creative and intuitive themselves, but also strongly inspire and motivate employees to think and act creatively. Exploitation, on the other hand, involves relying on well-learned actions or following established procedures, so leadership behavior in this area should be well organized and focused on supporting employees not only in maintaining but also in increasing efficiency and productivity through incremental changes. Taking these considerations into account, it can be assumed that they are quite consistent with the competencies indicated by the respondents, which include:

- ability to leverage the executive and intellectual potential of all process and project teams,
- creativity, broad-mindedness,
- intuitive abilities,
- the ability to stimulate employees to develop their creativity,
- organizational abilities,
- motivational abilities.

In addition, in discussions on dual leadership in the context of innovation, the aspect of behavioral flexibility was also emphasized – the adaptation of a manager's behavior to situational requirements (Rosing et al., 2018). These considerations can be related to the competencies indicated by the respondents, which include:

- ability to deal with changing conditions,
- ability to create conditions in the organization to accept the effects of changes in the environment.

In other considerations, also in terms of innovation, it was stated that ambidextrous leadership should not consist of the top manager's own involvement in the exploratory and exploitative behaviors of employees, but should focus on "behavioral integration" (Lubatkin et al., 2006). Empirical evidence has been found for the impact of this integration on both exploitation and exploration, depending on the level of cooperation between the top manager and the team – their communication skills, as well as the use of a participatory approach to management and an emphasis on joint decision-making. It can be assumed that this is quite consistent with the competencies indicated by the respondents, which include:

- the ability to communicate when planning and implementing change,
- communication skills, including a good knowledge of at least one foreign language,
- good knowledge of new telecommunications technologies,

    – emotional and social intelligence,

    – ability to use a democratic leadreship style.

Re 2) Many scientific research results have been published on learning processes and related knowledge in ambidextrous organizations. Initially, it was believed (March, 1991) that exploration and exploitation were related to different types of learning that were essentially incompatible, but later studies often conceptualized exploitation and exploration as orthogonal variables that, with proper management, could be achieved simultaneously (e.g., Baum et al., 2000; Katila, Ahuja, 2002; Auh, Menguc, 2005). The results of many studies indicate a close relationship between learning processes and related knowledge with the effective implementation of simultaneous exploration and exploitation (Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2016). Some of them relate this to leadership, emphasizing that the behavior of top managers influences the level of exploration and exploitation by engaging in and promoting top-down and horizontal or bottom-up knowledge flows (Mom et al., 2007). Top-down knowledge flows from top managers are positively associated with exploitation. Conversely, horizontal and bottom-up knowledge flows from employees at the same or lower levels of the hierarchy are positively associated with exploration. Furthermore, it is emphasized that in order to achieve a balance between exploration and exploitation, top managers should be able to leverage existing, well-developed employee competencies and create conditions for acquiring new ones (Cao et al., 2009). These considerations can be linked to the competencies indicated by the respondents, which include:

    – supporting knowledge sharing and learning processes,

    – ability to acquire, create, and use knowledge.

    – ability to create an environment conducive to expanding employees' competencies and generating initiatives by them,

    – ability to implement a "market of employee competencies",

    – openness to new things and willingness to learn them.

Re 3) With regard to organizational adaptation, it is emphasized that long-term success requires balancing the need to implement change with the need to maintain daily activities – their continuity (Huy, 2002; Meyer, Stensaker, 2006). Too many radical changes can cause organizational chaos and even crisis if continuity is not taken into account, while the opposite situation can lead to inertia, which in the long run can also lead to crisis. Therefore, an important characteristic of top managers is maintaining continuity and implementing change with the involvement of employees. It is also important to be able to skilfully overcome crises that may arise. These considerations can be related to the competencies indicated by the respondents, which include:

    – seeing change as an ally,

    – ability to stimulate employees to participate in change,

    – ability to build trust and overcome resistance to change,

- ability to select and implement an anti-crisis strategy,
- strong focus on organizational renewal,
- defensive posture.

Re 4). In the area of strategic management, research was conducted in the context of induced and autonomous processes. Induced processes refer to initiatives that fall within the scope of the organization's current strategy and are related to exploitation, while autonomous processes refer to initiatives that fall outside the scope of the current strategy and are related to exploration (Burgelman, 2002). The task of top managers is to ensure that they are balanced, which can be related to the competencies indicated by the respondents, which include:

- focus on the effective and efficient implementation of exploitation processes and reactive projects, as well as exploratory processes and proactive projects,
- strivi to achieve balance in the execution processes and reactive projects, as well as exploration processes and proactive projects.
- the ability to control the results of the work of process and project teams.

Re. 5) With regard to diversity management, the importance of top managers in creating an environment in which employees who differ in terms of gender, skin color, national origin, or education, among other things, feel respected and appreciated, and thus use their potential for the organization, is emphasized. The task of top managers is therefore to develop strategies, policies, and programs that create a climate of respect and leverage this diversity for the benefit of the organization (Gruszczyńska-Malec, Waligóra, 2008). These considerations are quite consistent with the competencies, which include:

- the ability to create a friendly organizational environment for achieving good work results,
- curiosity about people, including those who differ in culture and views,
- understanding and acceptance of different national cultures,
- the ability to notice and retain highly talented people in the organization, regardless of their nationality,
- ability to manage teams, including virtual ones.

To sum up this stage of the research, after reviewing the literature on the subject, it was concluded that the results obtained in the course of interviews and expert panels concerning the professional profile of a top manager of a proces and project organizationare quite consistent with the considerations on leadership in ambidextrous organizations, which were conducted as part of research trends relating to how these organizations achieve a balance between exploration and exploitation and how they manage contradictions.

Summary

The article presents the results of research aimed at defining the professional profile of a top manager in a process-project organization. These results were obtained after conducting three stages of research.

Based on the first stage, which involved conducting interviews with 204 Polish and foreign managers of organizations at the 3rd, 4th, and 5th levels of process and project maturity, it was assumed that the top manager of such organizations should primarily play the role of an ambidextrous leader, characterized by 42 competencies, among which the most important are:

- ability to select and modify business models appropriate for the exploitation and exploration layers,
- focus on the effective and efficient implementation of operational processes and reactive projects, as well as exploration processes and proactive projects,
- intellectual abilities,
- ability to see processes and projects holistically,
- strive to achieve balance in the execution of processes and projects,
- decision-making abilities,
- ability to solve large-scale problems.

The second stage of the research, involving an expert panel of 11 managers from organizations at level 5 of process and project maturity, allows us to conclude that the professional profile of a top manager in a process and project organization can be described as that of an ambidextrous leader, who should be characterized by the 42 competencies indicated, but their importance is arbitrary and may vary depending on the size of the organization, the subject and specificity of its activities, or process and project maturity, as well as the level of internationalization, technological progress, forms of work organization, the pace of change, and the uncertainty of the environment.

In the third stage of the research, after reviewing the literature on the subject, it was found that the results obtained in the course of interviews and expert panels concerning the professional profile of a top manager of a process-oriented organizationare quite consistent with the considerations on leadership in ambidextrous organizations, which were conducted as part of other research trends relating to how these organizations achieve a balance between exploration and exploitation and how they manage contradictions.

The presented research is only part of the considerations concerning the management of contemporary process and project organizations. It contributes knowledge that fills an existing cognitive gap in this field and may be significant for both science and management practice. For researchers, the publication may serve as a basis for further research on process and project organizations, while for practitioners, it may be useful in the context of management issues in today's dynamic and uncertain environment.

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