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Human factor in time management

Tero Reunanen*

*Turku University of Applied Sciences, 20520 Turku, Finland
Tampere University of Technology, Pori Campus, 28100 Pori, Finland*

Abstract

Time is the most important resource for leaders. Resources such as personnel, capital or facilities are crucial for leaders, but time is imperative. People's productivity, and hence organizations' performance are heavily related to their time usage. Therefore, especially leaders should have conscious awareness towards their time personality. Time, however, is not an easy concept to handle for leader or even understand it. It has many different faces towards people. The challenge is that chronological time, where the business and management are done, is not nearly suitable when human relations and leadership are handled. Individuals' experiences towards time differentiates to one another and different situations are constantly changing the experience of individual. Therefore, quite often, leaders recognize that it is hard to have schedules to match or plans to actualize within an agreed time. Some people fit more easily to same time reality with leader than others. Consequently, it is crucial for leaders also to understand how organization's members experience their time and how conscious their awareness is. Before it is possible to manage one's own time usage, personal time orientation, biases towards time, situation has to be understood consciously. This article handles research regarding time ontology in leadership and management environment and regarding peoples' conscious awareness towards time and differences in their time reality. Research is done by developing and utilizing application called Chronos & Kairos which main purpose is to give possibility for thorough research for peoples' differences when experiencing time. Time ontology for leadership and management environment is presented as well as research and results of differences of people's time reality. Article argues that people's conscious awareness towards time differentiates and this issues should be recognized especially in leadership positions. Future research aspects and recommendations are also issued in this paper.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +358-44-907-4592.

E-mail address: tero.reunanen@turkuamk.fi

1. Introduction

Peter Drucker [1] starts his article in Harvard business review with the sentence: "Success in knowledge economy comes to those who know themselves, their strengths, their values and how they best perform". In the article, Drucker handles personal management skills and emphasizes consciousness about oneself. Drucker has also observed that "effective executives do not start with their tasks, they start with their time". This way he underlines that time is a limiting factor. [2] Because of the nature of knowledge and managerial work, the difference between either wasting time, or using it wisely, is a matter of effectiveness and results. [2] Hence, the first step to be an effective manager is to learn manage oneself and one of the most crucial issues in it is learn to manage their time usage.

Generally, time is not an easy concept to master. Humans have learned different ways to handle time. It is possible to measure time's duration speed and numerical order with clocks [3], but this is far from really understanding time. There are different points of views to understand time. Newtonian, physics' point of view, towards time is that time is independent of other physical phenomena and absolute. On the other hand, in the general relations theory, it is stated to be as a fourth dimension of space and changes in it are irreversible. For instance, Sorli states that "physical time exists only as a stream of change". [4] There are also different ways to connect time to something what is more easy to realize. Boroditsky proposes that time can be understood as a spatiotemporal metaphors and this causes relations between space and time. However, she also submits that there is no evidence that these metaphors are necessary when thinking of time. [5] Despite the various definitions or metaphors, what is meaningful for managers is that time is a unique resource that cannot be stored, time is perishable, irreplaceable and has no substitute. Demand does not affect time and it has no price or marginal utility curve. One thing above all, when talking about time in modern working life, it is always short of supply, i.e. we are always lacking it. [1][6]

1.1. Time in leadership

Leadership research field is the right field for human factor in time management. Since leadership is at least trying to influence people [7], something that should be felt [8] and changing situations [9] [10] [11]. Holistic concept of man is the recognition that every human is special corporeality as the body and existence as an organism, having own consciousness mind and experience in environment of real world situations [9]. Therefore leadership is craving dynamism and that leadership approaches to where time is recognized should include issue of changing situation.

Leadership approaches which are also noticing time are the background of this research. Approaches scrutinized were: 1) Adaptive leadership [12], 2) Change-centered leadership [13], 3) Contingency theory [14] [15], 4) LAMPE model [16], 5) Leader member exchange theory (LMX) [17] [18], 6) Multiple linkage model of leadership [19], 7) Path goal theory [20] [21], 8) Situational leadership [22] [23], 9) Team leadership [17] [24] [25] and 10) Transformational leadership [26]. All of these approaches are taking into account that there are different situations or time is elapsing or boundary conditions are not similar in every situation.

1.2. Experience of time

Time can be divided into two categories: subjective time and objective time. [27] Objective time is same for everybody and it can be understood as chronological time, business time, where the speed of changes is same for every organization. Subjective time is heavily relativistic and the speed of it is dependent on many different factors. These factors are e.g. a person's way to utilize and sequence time, feeling, [27], a person's cultural background [28], situation, time pressure [29], lack of sleep [29] [30], personal traits [31] or planning personality [32] These are all examples of factors which affect a person's experience of time and are biasing experience from objective time.

A good concept for perceiving the difference between chronological time and experienced time is to be found from the ancient Greeks. According to Czarniawska [33], the Greeks divided time according to gods named Chronos (the god of time) and Kairos (the god of proper time). The difference between these two gods was that when Chronos measured time in mechanical intervals and Kairos "jumped and slowed down, omitted long periods and remained in others". In fact, the Greek word Kairós means time, place and circumstances of a subject.[33] The "Kairos" time is something that everybody has experienced. It is the proper time that people are living and feeling.

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