

Five most valuable career skills

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Abstract

Nowadays, companies around world are seeking more than ever soft skills. In recent years, soft skills are at the center of studies for their multi-dimensional impact. Different job positions require different skills. The importance of soft skills increases with each upward step along the company ladder.

The purpose of this study is to investigate which are the most valuable skills for any job position. Another objective of the study is to analyze the correlation between them. This research paper utilizes quantitative research and the descriptive method. The questionnaire is the research instrument used. The questionnaire was distributed online. There are 125 managing employees in various positions and different companies in Albania, who participated in the study. SPSS 20 and JASP-0.8.1.2 software were utilized for data analysis. This study employed these statistical analyses: regression analysis, frequency tables, crossed tabulation, Pearson correlation coefficient, One Way-Anova. Confidence interval 95% was used in supporting the research hypotheses.

The study concluded that motivation is the most used skill by managers. Managers from different management levels use skills that are applicable to their management profiles. Management skills have a positive impact on the workplace. Skills do not have the same relevancy and effectiveness for all managers. This study has an impact in the development of human resources of companies. In addition, its findings can assist in the development of organizational policies aimed at employee long-term growth and future performance.

Keywords: most valuable skills, low-level management, middle-level management, top-level management, human resources.

Introduction

Managers manage companies in a global dynamic environment. In order to be successful, each manager uses skills that differ according to the job position. Some skills are more relevant at a certain management level, while others at another level. Today, the most sought after individuals are those who possess soft skills. Technological advances have had an impact in the rise in demand for skilled persons by organizations (Mitchell, Skinner, & White, 2010). Companies now operate in a global setting, and in order to compete successfully they must be managed by professionally capable individuals. It is soft skills, which distinguish individuals from

one another. Organizations use programs in order to develop their human resources. The implementation of such policies is positively perceived by employees (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Which are the most essential skills for different positions in Albania? This study's objective is to investigate the most valuable skills for any job position. Another objective is to analyze the correlation that exists between them. This research paper will have an impact in improving the human resources of companies. Its findings will contribute in the amelioration of staff development policies of organizations.

I. Theoretical framework

The topic of skills has been studied by many researchers. Skills can be categorized as knowledge, attributes, personal qualities, which assist an individual to become more effective in their job position. Katz (1974) classifies skills in three categories: technical skills, human skills, and conceptual skills. He asserts that these are the skills that help a manager to be more effective in their job. Others have used different categorizations (Robbins & DeCenzo, 2008), however Katz's (1974) categories remain the basis for all the other groupings. Different studies emphasize the importance of soft skills at work (Mitchell, Skinner, & White, 2010; Klaus, 2010; John, 2009). Several authors maintain that soft skills can be determined as a combination of interpersonal skills and personal attributes (James & James, 2004; Evenson, 1999; Gewertz, 2007). Soft skills are essential in career development. Klaus (2010) in his study found that $\frac{3}{4}$ of success at work can be explained as a result of the individual's personal skills and only $\frac{1}{4}$ by the person's technical skills. This shows the impact that soft skills have in career advancement (Wilhelm, 2004; John, 2009). Therefore, the development of soft skills is important for individuals, because it helps them improve their performance. Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman (2014) focused on the study of the skills most used by managers. The researchers were keen on learning which skills were responsible for success in the workplace. The most applied skills by managers was motivating and inspiring others. This skill received the highest rating from the managers. At the same time, a trait of successful managers is the ability to distinguish what makes an individual unique (Buckingham, 2009). According to PourKazemi, Beigi, Kohan and Nateri (2016) the ability to communicate is an essential skill for managers to achieve the company's objectives and career development. Kakirman-Yildiz, (2012) arrived at the same conclusion. She says that effective communication helps one to become efficient and effective in the workplace.

Different researchers have studied skills in relation to the level of management. Managers are categorized into three levels: low-level management (employee management), middle-level management (management of low-level managers), and top-level management (company management) (Robbins & DeCenzo, 2008; Robbins & Coulter, Management, 2012). Based on the management level scheme, researchers argue that motivation is the most used skill among low-level managers (Qureshi, 2009; Khan & Ahmad, 2012). Middle-level management most used skill is communication (Qureshi, 2009). Whereas top-level management most used skill is team-building (Khan & Ahmad, 2012; Qureshi, 2009). However, it must be noted that managers of all levels make use of various skills, but their usage is dependent on the job position.

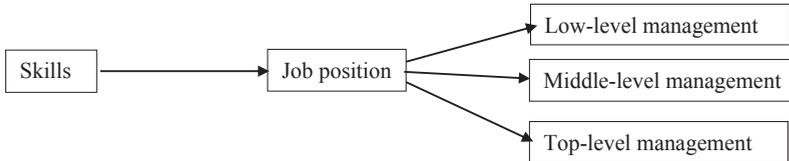
The research questions are:

1. Which skills are mostly used by managers generally?
2. Which skills are mostly used by low-level managers?
3. Which skills are mostly used by middle-level managers?
4. Which skills are mostly used by top-level managers?
5. Do skills have an impact on success in the workplace?
6. In accordance to actual job position, how do managers evaluate their skills?

Research hypotheses are:

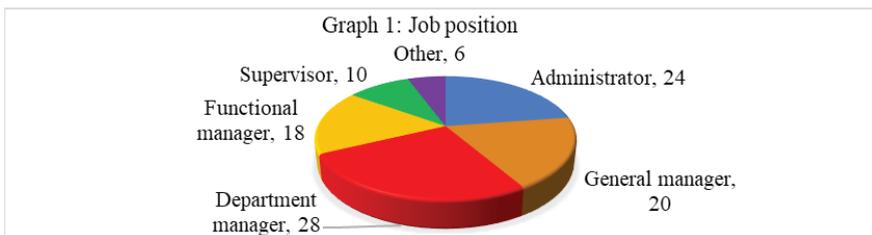
1. H1: Management skills have an impact on the manager's perception about the future in the organization ($\alpha=0.05$).
2. H2: Managers in different levels use the same skills ($\alpha=0.05$).
3. H3: Skills have the same relevance for all managers ($\alpha=0.05$).
4. H4: Skills are effective the same for all managers ($\alpha=0.05$).

This study employs the following conceptual model:



II. Methodology

The descriptive method and quantitative method will be used in this study. The research instrument consists of a questionnaire (Pedler, Burgoyne, & Boydell, 2006), which has been modified by the authors. The questionnaire is comprised of 15 questions. The evaluation is conducted through a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree". The questionnaire was distributed online during the period May-September 2017. The study sample consists of 125 managers from various management levels from companies operating in Albania, of which 106 fully completed the questionnaire. Concretely, 24 are administrators, 20 are general managers, 28 are departmental managers, 18 are functional managers, 10 are supervisors, and 6 have not determined their job position. The response return rate is 85%. The study sample is represented in Graph 1.



The programs used to analyze the data in the study are SPSS 20 and JASP-0.8.1.2. The value of the reliability coefficient in Table 1 is 0.834. The data are therefore reliable and can be used in the study. Table 2 shows the reliability coefficient for each variable.

Table 1: Reliability coefficient Cronbach's α

	Cronbach's α
scale	0.843

Note. Of the observations, 106 were used, 0 were excluded list wise, and 106 were provided.

Table 2: Reliability coefficient for each variable

	If item dropped Cronbach's α
Management skills	0.795
Job position	0.808

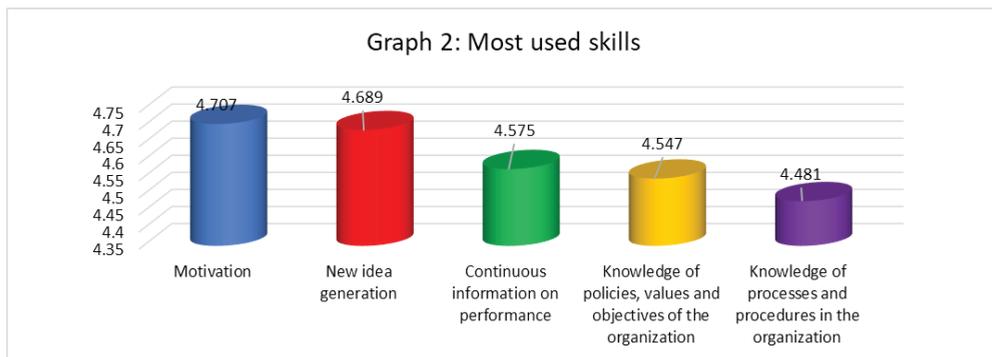
III. Empirical Analysis

Which skills are mostly used by managers generally?

Managers in all levels rank motivation as the skills most used with a mean value of 4.707. Which is followed by generating new ideas with a mean value of 4.689, followed by continuous information on performance with mean value 4.575, knowledge of policies, values and objectives of the organization with mean value 4.547 and last, knowledge of processes and procedures in the organization with mean value 4.481. A detailed representation is can be found in Table 3 and Graph 2.

Table 3: Skills most used by managers

	N	Mean	SD	SE
Motivation	106.0	4.707	0.497	0.048
New idea generation	106.0	4.689	0.485	0.047
Continuous information on performance	106.0	4.575	0.568	0.055
Knowledge of policies, values and objectives of the organization	106.0	4.547	0.604	0.059
Knowledge of processes and procedures in the organization	106.0	4.481	0.693	0.067



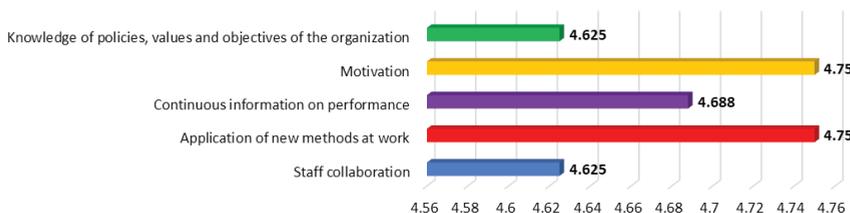
Which skills are mostly used by low-level managers?

Table 4 data show that low-level managers evaluate similarly the application of new methods at work and motivation with mean value 4.750 (Table 4). Continuous information on performance is ranked third with mean value 4.688. Last two skills are staff collaboration and knowledge of policies, values and objectives of the organization, which are evaluated the same by low-level managers with mean value 4.625. Graph 3 provides a diagrammatic representation.

Table 4: Skills most used by low-level managers

	N	Mean	SD	SE
Staff collaboration	16.00	4.625	0.500	0.125
Application of new methods at work	16.00	4.750	0.577	0.144
Continuous information on performance	16.00	4.688	0.479	0.120
Motivation	16.00	4.750	0.447	0.111
Knowledge of policies, values and objectives of the organization	16.00	4.625	0.619	0.155

Graph 3: Skills most used in low-level management

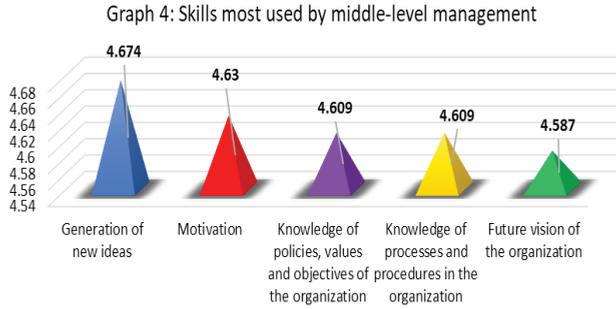


Which skills are mostly used by middle-level managers?

Generation of new ideas is ranked first, as most used skill by middle-level managers, with mean value 4.674 (Table 5). Today, organization are seeking new ideas. Motivation is ranked second with mean value 4.630. Middle-level managers rank third and fourth, knowledge of policies, values and objectives of the organization, and knowledge of knowledge of processes and procedures, with mean value 4.609. Last, vision for the future of the organization with mean value 4.587. Graph 4 is a diagrammatic representation.

Table 5: Skills most used by middle-level managers

	N	Mean	SD	SE
Generation of new ideas	46.00	4.674	0.474	0.070
Motivation	46.00	4.630	0.531	0.078
Knowledge of policies, values and objectives of the organization	46.00	4.609	0.682	0.101
Knowledge of processes and procedures in the organization	46.00	4.609	0.614	0.091
Future vision of the organization	46.00	4.587	0.541	0.080

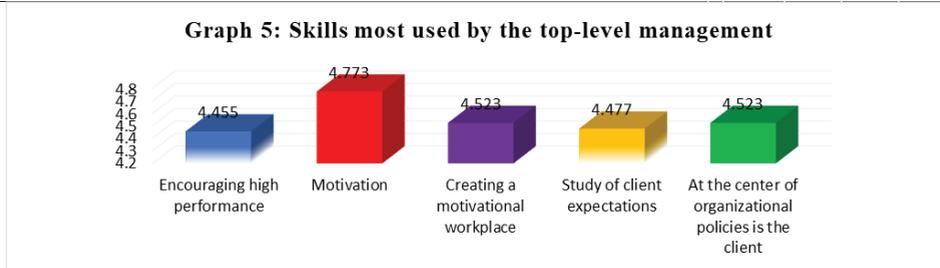


Which skills are mostly used by top-level managers?

Table 6 values show that top-level managers rank motivation as the skill most used with mean value 4.773. They evaluate as the same, creating a motivational environment and the management of client strategies, second and third respectively, with a mean value of 4.523. Then, the study of client expectations with mean value 4.477. Last, encouraging high performance with mean value 4.455. Graph 5 shows the skills most used by top-level managers.

Table 6: Skills most used by top-level managers

	N	Mean	SD	SE
Encouraging high performance	44.00	4.455	0.697	0.105
Motivation	44.00	4.773	0.475	0.071
Creating a motivational workplace	44.00	4.523	0.664	0.100
Study of client expectations	44.00	4.477	0.549	0.083
At the center of organizational policies is the client	44.00	4.523	0.731	0.110



Do skills have an impact on success in the workplace?

Management skills have an impact on the workplace. There exists a very strong positive and significant statistically correlation between them with correlation coefficient 0.712 and $p=0.002$ (Table 7). The increase of the independent variable (management skills) leads to an increase of the dependent variable (job position). Thus, both variables move in the same direction.

Table 7: Pearson Correlations

		Management skills	Job position
Management skills	Pearson's r	—	0.712**
	p-value	—	0.002
	Upper 95% CI	—	0.893
	Lower 95% CI	—	0.334
Job position	Pearson's r		—
	p-value		—
	Upper 95% CI		—
	Lower 95% CI		—

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

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Managers do evaluate their skills. Concretely, 22 think that as a result of their skills belong within the best 50%, 21 within the best 25%, 27 within the best 10%, 25 within the best 5%, and 11 the best. In some cases, managers evaluate their skills maximally, but that does not match the organization's assessment. Therefore, there are cases when the managers' skills are overrated by them but underrated by the organization, and the converse. In fact, it may occur that the organization does not properly appraise its

Table 8: Management skills and actual job position

Management skills	Actual job position						Total
	Administrator	General manager	Department manager	Functional manager	Supervisor	Other	
Within the best 50%	5	3	3	5	5	1	22
Within the best 25%	3	2	8	3	2	3	21
Within the best 10%	5	6	8	5	2	1	27
Within the best 5%	5	7	8	4	0	1	25
The best	6	2	1	1	1	0	11
Total	24	20	28	18	10	6	106

human resources. Table 8 provides detailed data.

H1: Management skills have an impact on the manager’s perception about the future in the organization ($\alpha=0.05$).

Management skills explain 15.2% of the variance of the manager’s decision about the future in the organization. Table 9 shows that Adjusted $R^2=0.152$, $F=19.81$ and $p<0.001$. Thus, skills have an impact on the manager’s perception about the future in the organization. Regression analysis in Table 10, shows that there exists a strong positive correlation between management skills and manager’s perception about the future in the organization with coefficient $Beta=0.400$, $t=4,451$ and $p<0.001$. The value of $p<0.001$ conveys that there exists a significant statistical correlation between the

Table 9: Regression analysis

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	p
1	0.400	0.160	0.152	1.361	0.160	19.81	1	104	< .001

Table 10: Regression analysis between management skills and manager’s perception about the future in the organization

Model	Unstandardized	Standard	Standardized	t	p
	β	Error	β		
1 (Constant)	2.100	0.320		6.566	< .001
Management	0.458	0.103	0.400	4.451	< .001

two variables, thus hypothesis H1 is supported with confidence level of 95%.

H2: Managers in different levels use the same skills ($\alpha=0.05$).

Among all the skills only between 5 of them there exist significant statistical differences in valuations (Table 11). Managers in different positions make different evaluations about skills: continuous information on performance, encouraging high performance, client-centric organizational policies, application of control systems, collaboration among managers. Whereas, they have similar thoughts on the rest of the skills. Since there exist differences about 5 skills, hypothesis H2 is rejected.

Table 11: One Way-ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Staff collaboration	Between Groups	1.576	5	.315	.606	.695
	Within Groups	51.981	100	.520		
	Total	53.557	105			

Generation of new ideas	Between Groups	.912	5	.182	.766	.577
	Within Groups	23.815	100	.238		
	Total	24.726	105			
Motivation	Between Groups	1.119	5	.224	.902	.483
	Within Groups	24.815	100	.248		
	Total	25.934	105			
Continuous information on performance	Between Groups	7.507	5	1.501	2.529	.034
	Within Groups	59.370	100	.594		
	Total	66.877	105			
Application of new methods in the workplace	Between Groups	2.424	5	.485	.880	.498
	Within Groups	55.132	100	.551		
	Total	57.557	105			
Encouraging high performance	Between Groups	7.027	5	1.405	2.428	.040
	Within Groups	57.879	100	.579		
	Total	64.906	105			
Creating motivational work environment	Between Groups	4.537	5	.907	1.767	.127
	Within Groups	51.359	100	.514		
	Total	55.896	105			
Client centrist organizational policies	Between Groups	10.559	5	2.112	2.337	.047
	Within Groups	90.356	100	.904		
	Total	100.915	105			
Application of control systems	Between Groups	10.853	5	2.171	3.286	.009
	Within Groups	66.062	100	.661		
	Total	76.915	105			

Collaboration among managers	Between Groups	7.137	5	1.427	3.007	.014
	Within Groups	47.467	100	.475		
	Total	54.604	105			
Knowledge of processes and procedures in the organization	Between Groups	5.456	5	1.091	2.298	.051
	Within Groups	47.487	100	.475		
	Total	52.943	105			

H3: Skills have the same relevance for all managers ($\alpha=0.05$).

Table 12 data shows that 3 skills manifest significant statistical differences. Concretely, on staff collaboration, innovation and vision of the future. Managers in different levels do not attach similar significance to the above skills. However, Sig value for the other skills shows that there do not exist significant statistical differences among them. Hypothesis H3 is rejected.

Table 12: One Way-ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Staff collaboration	Between Groups	6.280	5	1.256	2.380	.044
	Within Groups	52.777	100	.528		
	Total	59.057	105			
Communication	Between Groups	3.241	5	.648	.765	.577
	Within Groups	84.768	100	.848		
	Total	88.009	105			
Staff development	Between Groups	3.929	5	.786	1.726	.135
	Within Groups	45.515	100	.455		
	Total	49.443	105			
Innovation	Between Groups	7.868	5	1.574	2.416	.041
	Within Groups	65.123	100	.651		
	Total	72.991	105			
Future vision	Between Groups	15.486	5	3.097	5.064	.000
	Within Groups	61.156	100	.612		
	Total	76.642	105			
Continuous improvement	Between Groups	2.618	5	.524	.895	.487
	Within Groups	58.486	100	.585		
	Total	61.104	105			

Monitoring competition	Between Groups	3.133	5	.627	.822	.537
	Within Groups	76.273	100	.763		
	Total	79.406	105			
Employee empowerment	Between Groups	3.940	5	.788	1.179	.325
	Within Groups	66.824	100	.668		
	Total	70.764	105			
Client service	Between Groups	1.502	5	.300	.561	.730
	Within Groups	53.592	100	.536		
	Total	55.094	105			
Organizational culture	Between Groups	1.202	5	.240	.361	.874
	Within Groups	66.656	100	.667		
	Total	67.858	105			
Control systems	Between Groups	.815	5	.163	.273	.927
	Within Groups	59.723	100	.597		
	Total	60.538	105			
Information coordination in the organization	Between Groups	2.447	5	.489	.904	.482
	Within Groups	54.119	100	.541		
	Total	56.566	105			

H4: Skills are effective the same for all managers ($\alpha=0.05$).

Managers perceive not all skills as similarly effective. There exist significant statistical differences about the competencies of top-level management (Table 13). Whereas for the other skills there are not significant statistical differences. Since there exist differences for one of the skills, hypothesis H4 is rejected.

Table 13: One Way-ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Staff collaboration	Between Groups	3.266	5	.653	1.242	.295
	Within Groups	52.592	100	.526		
	Total	55.858	105			
Communication	Between Groups	2.252	5	.450	.612	.691
	Within Groups	73.606	100	.736		
	Total	75.858	105			

Staff development	Between Groups	2.181	5	.436	.730	.603
	Within Groups	59.781	100	.598		
	Total	61.962	105			
Innovation	Between Groups	2.253	5	.451	.708	.619
	Within Groups	63.606	100	.636		
	Total	65.858	105			
Future vision	Between Groups	5.441	5	1.088	1.563	.178
	Within Groups	69.625	100	.696		
	Total	75.066	105			
Continuous improvement	Between Groups	5.150	5	1.030	2.115	.070
	Within Groups	48.699	100	.487		
	Total	53.849	105			
Monitoring competition	Between Groups	3.679	5	.736	1.055	.390
	Within Groups	69.765	100	.698		
	Total	73.443	105			
Employee empowerment	Between Groups	1.488	5	.298	.590	.708
	Within Groups	50.474	100	.505		
	Total	51.962	105			
Client service	Between Groups	3.834	5	.767	1.322	.261
	Within Groups	58.015	100	.580		
	Total	61.849	105			
Organizational culture	Between Groups	4.784	5	.957	1.809	.118
	Within Groups	52.877	100	.529		
	Total	57.660	105			
Control systems	Between Groups	7.667	5	1.533	1.884	.104
	Within Groups	81.390	100	.814		
	Total	89.057	105			
Information coordination in the organization	Between Groups	5.400	5	1.080	1.843	.111
	Within Groups	58.600	100	.586		
	Total	64.000	105			

Competencies of top-level management	Between Groups	11.163	5	2.233	4.082	.002
	Within Groups	54.695	100	.547		
	Total	65.858	105			

Conclusions

The skill that is most valued by managers is motivation. This conclusion is in line with the conclusions of other researchers. Low-level managers evaluate the same motivation and the application of new methods in the workplace. Middle-level managers evaluate most the generation of new ideas. Motivation is evaluated most by top-level managers. Management skills are an impactful factor in career development. Concretely, there exists significant statistical correlation with Pearson correlation coefficient 0.712 and $p=0.002$. Management skills play an important influencing role in the managers' perceptions about the future in the organization. Managers in different levels use skills that are relevant to their managing position. The relevance of skills changes between managers. Similarly, their effectiveness changes as well. Organizations must implement programs in order to develop the skills of their employees. Also, it is recommended that they use research instruments in measuring the skills of their human resources, and the conclusions on how to apply policy development to the benefit of professional growth within the organization.

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