TALENT MANAGEMENT IN A POST-PANDEMIC REALITY

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Abstract: *History shows that each crisis brings numerous challenges in many areas, from which the economic, financial or business does not make exceptions. COVID-19 altered every person's reality overnight. Individuals, cities, economies, countries, and continents have experienced the shock of lockdown and the fear of unknowing. Managers have had to make many decisions in a very short period of time – decisions about who should stay at work and who should go home; how and where people could be moved into digital space; and what the priorities are and how those priorities can best be communicated to employees. It is a time in which many paradigms can reorganize or reappear in this vast area of economy, and the involvement of IT and technology in this period, more than before, means also a new challenge in the competition for employees with high potential or talent.*
Identifying, attraction and talent retain are practices of Talent Management research area that can maintain a certain competitive advantage of companies.
Talent management does not have a rich history behind but it is requested the need of a new type of employee, the employee with a high potential, talent especially in the area of IT which comes to be the bases for so many branches.
Which are the talent characteristics that talent management deals with in order to solve the talent crisis and maintaining the competitive advantage in the IT area in this period of crisis is our research preoccupation in this study. We will approach conceptually the term of talent and talent management and how can talent management programs can apply in the IT area.

Keywords: *talent, challenges, talent management, performance, human resources.*

JEL classification: *M51, M53, J62*

Introduction

COVID-19 is the most serious health crisis the world has experienced in a century—and it could also be one of the biggest destroyers of jobs in human history. That matters greatly: when people are stripped of their work, they suffer losses not just of income but also of dignity, meaning, and hope. Leaders in the public, private, and social sectors are already taking urgent steps to manage the fast-evolving crisis of jobs and work.

If in 2019, only 20% of managers stated their organization was prepared to cope a major crisis, COVID-19 made these fears to become real. We cannot ignore human talent in which it can be observed a high vulnerability in the context of pandemic crisis.

If the financial crisis in 2007-2009 brings forward the role of leaders and experts of financial area, the pandemic context of COVID-19 sees the role of leaders of human resources as highly important. A significant member of employees were forced to work from home and this fact determines major changes in methods and practices of collaboration among members and staff of organizations, in distance management ways of so projects and activities. Real meetings, beforehand collaboration, moving life with business meetings were replaced by some restrictions as staying home, virtual meetings, virtual work.

In this crisis context also talent searching is significantly reconfigure; if beforehand it could be emphasized the searching, selection and keeping talents and the personality could make up a determinant, now in the working environment and virtual collaboration, some personality features do not become so important to be taken into account such as introversion-extroversion because introverts have equal chances with extroverts to participate into online interactions and discussion, equal chances in contributing to competitive advantage building.

Human resources directors, managers from many levels were faced to inevitability of making quick decisions in a very short time and of which all society structures were depending on, and in what the work form is concerned, managers had to decide who would stay in workplace and who would work from home, how and where people should be moved in digital space and which are the priorities, referred to how these priorities should be efficiently communicated to employees.

COVID-19 crisis overburdened organizational resources and emphasized organizational key abilities, exposed weaknesses both individually and collectively, but discovering new talents; people who seemed more reserved, introvert employee group full more comfortable in virtual work meetings, stating new ideas. So this crisis determined managers to rethink or to reconsider the issue of right man in right place. And the research in talent management area has an answer to this issue.

We will approach the IT industry situation in the COVID-19 crisis, talent issues in this context in IT industry and what we can recommend in this talent crisis in a world crisis.

The goal of this research comprises in the prominence of human resource vulnerability or talent crisis, as organizations key-resource, study of the impact that this experiences in the during pandemic work and the effects that would be left in post pandemic period, measures that organizations have to undertake during this time, in order to maintain the employees performances and efficiency.

1.   COVID-19 crisis in IT industry

The impact Covid-19 and the associated lockdowns, have had on the lives and careers of technology professionals. reflect on Covid-19's impact on the technology talent market and technology professionals. We surveyed technology professionals to ask how the lockdown and the global pandemic had affected their careers. Some

of the biggest takeaways are about how this year has changed candidates' priorities when looking for a new role.

It has broadly been acknowledged that technology professionals have been integral in enabling businesses to adapt to the lockdowns, either through supporting remote working or digitization customer touchpoints. You may have even seen headlines stating that the technology industry is not slowing down. Certainly, in April and May, Zoom and Microsoft seemed to be some of the early winners among the chaos.

Companies in this worldwide crisis spent the correspondent approximately extra 15 billion euro per week in the area of technology to integrate working from home in safe conditions during COVID-19 pandemic (KPMG Study, 2020).

These investments focused mainly on large scale implementations of assigned technologies in Cloud (42%), as well as Saas Software as a Service (34%). Furthermore, the crisis contributed to highly emphasizing of division among organizations that run their business strategies through intensive practice of technology and those that do no not do this.

The largest market study for worldly technology leaders, with over 4200 respondents from organizations in 83 countries and with a combined budget of over 250 billions euro in technology are, also discovered that in spite of this huge increase of investments, from which the security and data protection costs were the weight factor during Covid/19 pandemic, 4 of 10 leaders in informatics technology stated that their organizations experienced more hackers that usual (KPMG/Harvey Nash Study, CIO Survey, 2020).

More than half of respondents (47%) sustain that the pandemic permanently accelerated digital transformations and adopting emergent technologies. Technology represents the key-factor in organization effort to become more flexible and more efficient in the operations they accomplish. Actually, the planning, the talent and performance management are the strongest advantages of an agile organization. The conclusion results from a study realized this year by PWC and Strategy among 646 companies at a world level, that analyze 6 dimensions organizing, talents, technology, planning and performance management, working ways, risk and conformity. More than half of respondents to the PWC (57%) considered that IT is the most valuable agile function. It is an intuitive response as long as agile approach was initiated by the software developers and is usually associated to them. Technologies are essential, necessary but are they adequate for the organization change? Opposite to common perception, exceeding focus on IT is a mistake that many organizations make in trying to adopt change (PWC Study, 2021).

Agana-Burke show us how the pandemic affected careers:
- 43.9% of professionals surveyed had retained their job with no change
- 12.2% said their contract was not renewed in the first lockdown
- 14% lost their job
- 51.2% felt their employer met or exceeded their expectations in their handling of the Covid-19 pandemic (Agana-Burke, Niyonu, 2021)
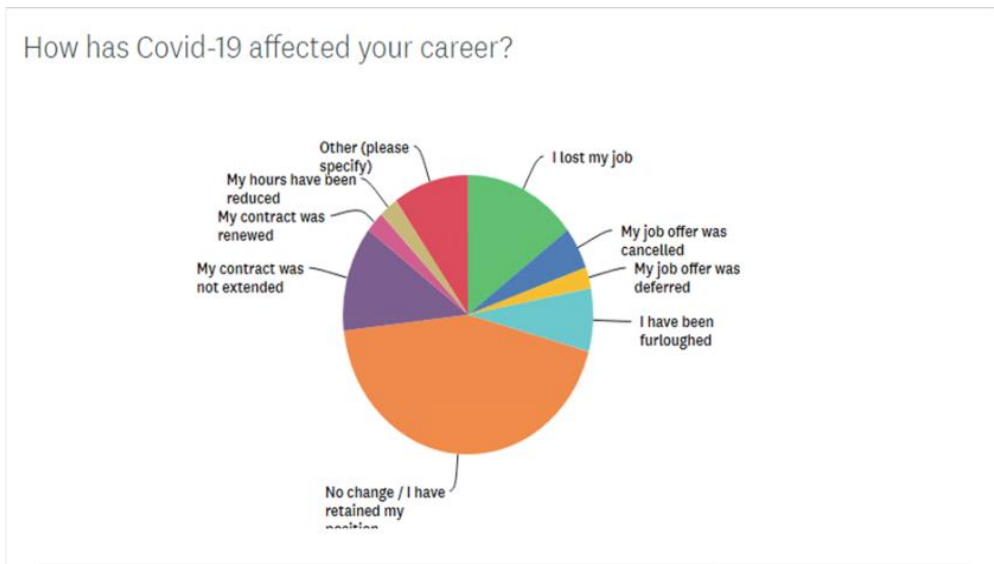
Fig. 1. COVID and career, Souce: Agana-Burke, Niyonu, (2021),

When asked to provide more detail, respondents who had been disappointed with their employer's response explained there was "total panic" "lack of clear communication" or were critical of the volume or speed of furloughs. Those who were happy with their employer's approach praised the "human approach" the "transparency" and proactivity of employers moving to home working from early March 2020.
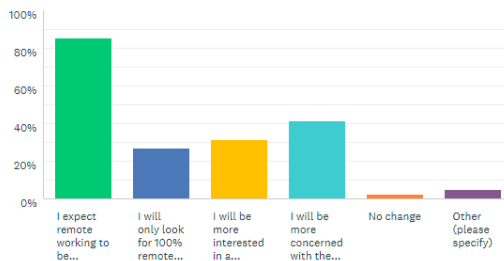

Fig.2. The impact on candidates' future expectations. Source: Agana-Burke, Niyonu, (2021),

We asked respondents to describe how their expectations had changed in the short term. Answers formed three categories; unchanged, desire for a safe and socially distanced work environment/to continue working from home and those who were more concerned about job security.
Job security was a strong theme for how respondents long term expectations of employers have changed too. 41.5% of respondents said they would be more

The Annals of the University of Oradea. Economic Sciences

TOM XXXI, 1st Issue, July 2022

concerned with an employer's financial stability. The vast majority, 85.4%, now expect remote working to be an option, but only 26.8% expect roles to be 100% remote. Only 2.5% of respondents said there had been no change in their expectations (Agana-Burke, Niyonu, 2021).

If we study which are the first 3 obstacles in the entry of an organisations towards agility, we notice that they are all related to culture and organization. Change involves more these areas that IT reorganisation which is a main component, but it has to be rounded with a set of well defined and achievable objectives: an organization must clearly understand what is working and what is not, what is a priority and what is not, in ordet to integrate technologies and to gradually remodel the way the employess work, in which they create or sell products and services that is the whole organizational culture. Thus, it results that planning, performance and talent management are the most valuable dimensions of enterprise agility (Pwc Study, 2021).

The majority of respondents (80%) confirm that digitalized transformation of their business accelerated during pandemic. The most important progress registrated at the level of digitalized transformation of operations, 30% of respondents stating that current situations is many more yearts advanced in relation to appaisals.

It it posible that 2/3 (67%) of executive leaders to invest more capital in technology than in people, this tendency being a parameter since the intial study.

Aproximately 8 of 10 IT leaders sustain that during COVID-19 pandemic, mental health of their team represents a concern, which led to implementation of an emotional support programs of personel by 58% from organizations where these activise (Pwc Study, 2021).

Teleworking is here and it will not disappear: 86% of IT leaders moved a significant part of office working „remotely" and 43% of these are expecting that more than half of their employees to work from home even after pandemic. The importance of remote working increased to become one of the most important fice factors in recruiting process and keeping the key technological talents during and after COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result, leaders will have to rethink the way they attract and hire the staff in a world in which physical location is no more an advantage or disavantage (Pwc Study, 2021).

2. I.T. Industry in Romania and Covid-19 reality

Brainspotting is the company of leader consulting in Romania focused on recruiting and selection in IT&C area and it covers positions both for our country as well as for EMEA. By studies realized by Brainspotting it was obtained a vantage point on industry IT&C situation in the software development area.

In 2014 Brainspotting company realized "Romania IT talent map" through which it wanted to offer a vantage point on IT Romanian market. According to Brainspotting study, in 2012 the value of Romania software market reached the sum of approximately 572.3 million Euros. Same year IT&C companies being in top 15

most profitable companies in industry extended working teams with almost 2700 new candidates, that is an expansion of personnel with 21%. Nowadays, in Romania work market are constantly 1500 jobs posted on the recruiting sites. Until 2014 it is envisioned that due companies expansions with IT profile will be created almost 5000 new jobs. We have a distributions of areas in which software developing in Romania work before the pandemic.
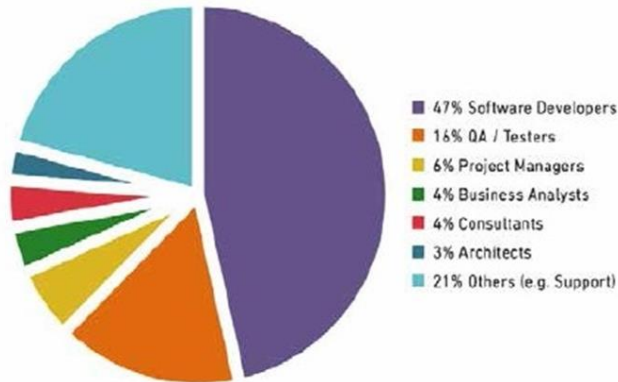

Fig. 3. Software developies areas; Source: Romania IT Talent Map

More and more hiring companies offer many benefits to motivate to work using 100% of your potential. Brainspotting realized a top of most frequent promises that companies make to future employees. The main goals of these benefits are to assure a retention as big as possible of new employees but also for increasing the satisfaction level at the job. Some benefits are: effective training programs (88%), attractive salaries (75%), personal benefits (75%), good reputations and self-image (63%), challenging job (60%), friendly job (50%).
Covid-19 crisis bring significant changes in IT area, in Romania there are significant changes when we discuss about working space with the increasing percentage of those who allow home working, appealing to talent market that are not location conditioned.
An important aspect in the welfare of own employees, giving solutions, benefits, assistance. It is observed a transformations of the recruiting way and of the stressing of talent, recruiting based mainly on attitudes rather than studies and qualifications. The actual crisis determined many companies to reduce or to eliminate systems that are not essential, and this lead to quick process of making decisions and of responding to external events

3.   Talent crisis in IT

As a consequence of COVD-19 pandemic, leaders of some of the most influential world companies consider the risk regarding talent as one of the greatest challenge for growth (talent and corporate responsibility).

We argue that the human resource of an organization is the most affected resource and requires special treatment from managers both during the pandemic and in the post-pandemic period (Cotelnic&Scarlat, 2020)

KPMG interviewed 1300 executive leaders in January and February 2020, before markets experience the pandemic effects. Between 6 July and 5 August, KPMG unrolled the second research with 315 executive leaders to obtain a perspective on changes in their thinking as a crisis result. The 2020 edition of study KPMG CEO Outlook shows that leaders agenda substantially modified since the beginning of the year, cut out for trends such as the environment, social responsibility, and corporate governance, flexible working hours and digital transformation intensified. Analyzing the growth perspectives in the next 3 years, 33% of executive leaders are presently less optimistic regarding the growth perspectives in the next 3 years in regress to the beginning of the year (KPMG study, 2020).

Bill Thomas, CEO KPMG declared „The significant change in executive leader`s priorities in the last six months is a clear indicator that business had to change the strategy very rapidly in order to face the pandemic challenges. Business leaders in the whole world try to operate uncertainty. This crisis accelerated the created strategies for digitizing and social responsibility. Although in certain areas, future planning became more difficult, especially concerning the future of work and of problem solutioning. Thus it is not a surprize that leader focus on importance of talent for sustaining and growth of future businesses." (KPMG study, 2020).

In January 2020, executive leaders put the risk concerning talent on the 11th place among those which affected the growth potential. However, since the beginning of pandemic, talent came up in the classificationn until the 1st place, becoming the biggest threat for a business, advancing even the supplying chain and the environment risk.

Organisations tried to find qualified professional in cybernetic security area to support this change towards working from home and reported that cybernetic security (35%) is now the most „appealing" technological competence in the world. It is for the first time in more than a decade that abilities regarding cybernetic competence reached in the top list of roles and scarce technological abilities withtin companies (KPMG Study, 2020).

Lack of competence - before the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of competence in IT seen in 2020 was remaining close to historic level. After that, lack of IT competences remained high, unsignificantly lowering comparing to Global Financial crisis in 2008. Besides the competences in „cybernetic scurity" (35%), the hardest to find are those in „organisational changes management" (27%), „enterprise architecture" (23%) as well as „technical architecture" and „advanced analytical abilities", both with a 22% deficit (KPMG / Harvey Nash CIO Survey study 2020).

4.   Talent management in post-pandemic reality

The concept of "talent management" was born at the end of 1990s, starting from o group of consultants from McKinsey&Company, a consulting company of global

management, who wanted a change of paradigm in human resources and invented the term *the war for talent* with the intention to underline the importance that must be granted to the organizations staff in assuring these organizations success. These focused their approach on the importance of occupying the organizations posts with "type A performers" and eliminating "type C performers", the last ones being considered nonperformers for the organizations. (Scullion&Collings, 2010).

Talent maangement is an incorporated set of processes, programs and cultural standards within an organisation, assigned and implemented with the goal of attracting, developing, unfolding and keeping talent to reach the strategic objectives and meeting the future challenges in business setting (Silzer&Dowell, 2010).

As the pandemic resets major work trends, HR leaders need to rethink workforce and employee planning, management, performance and experience strategies.

The coronavirus pandemic will have a lasting impact on the future of work in few key ways. The imperative for HR leaders is to evaluate the impact each trend will have on their organization's operations and strategic goals, identify which require immediate action and assess to what degree these trends change pre-COVID-19 strategic goals and plans.

As long as COVID-19's effects persist — and likely into the future — employers will need to adjust their tactics to a transformed talent market. HR teams have an opportunity right now to explore new, more effective ways to recruit and hire the best talent for open roles.

A world's leading research and advisory company identifies some trends postpandemy COVID-19 (Gartner, 2021):

a. Increase in remote working. A recent Gartner poll showed that 48% of employees will likely work remotely at least part of the time after COVID-19 versus 30% before the pandemic.

b. Expanded data collection. Gartner analysis shows that 16% of employers are using technologies more frequently to monitor their employees through methods such as virtual clocking in and out, tracking work computer usage, and monitoring employee emails or internal communications/chat.

c. Contingent worker expansion. Gartner analysis shows that organizations will continue to expand their use of contingent workers to maintain more flexibility in workforce management post-COVID-19, and will consider introducing other job models they have seen during the pandemic, such as talent sharing and 80% pay for 80% work.

d. Expanded employer role as social safety net. The pandemic has increased the trend of employers playing an expanded role in their employees' financial, physical and mental well-being. Support includes enhanced sick leave, financial assistance, adjusted hours of operation and child care provisions. Some organizations supported the community by, for instance, shifting operations to manufacturing goods or providing services to help combat the pandemic and offering community relief funds and free community services.

e. Separation of critical skills and roles. Before COVID-19, critical roles were viewed as roles with critical skills, or the capabilities an organization needed to meet its strategic goals. Now, employers are realizing that there is another category of critical roles — roles that are critical to the success of essential workflows. To build the workforce you'll need post-pandemic, focus less on roles — which group unrelated skills — than on the skills needed to drive the organization's competitive advantage and the workflows that fuel that advantage. Encourage employees to develop critical skills that potentially open up multiple opportunities for their career development, rather than preparing for a specific next role. Offer greater career development support to employees in critical roles who lack critical skills.

f. (De-)Humanization of employees. While some organizations have recognized the humanitarian crisis of the pandemic and prioritized the well-being of employees as people over employees as workers, others have pushed employees to work in conditions that are high risk with little support — treating them as workers first and people second.

g. Emergence of new top-tier employers. Prior to COVID-19, organizations were already facing increased employee demands for transparency. Employees and prospective candidates will judge organizations by the way in which they treated employees during the pandemic. Balance the decisions made today to resolve immediate concerns during the pandemic with the long-term impact on the employment brand.

h. Transition from designing for efficiency to designing for resilience. A 2019 Gartner organization design survey found that 55% of organizational redesigns were focused on streamlining roles, supply chains and workflows to increase efficiency. While this approach captured efficiencies, it also created fragilities, as systems have no flexibility to respond to disruptions. Resilient organizations were better able to respond — correct course quickly with change. To build a more responsive organization, design roles and structures around outcomes to increase agility and flexibility and formalize how processes can flex. Also, provide employees with varied, adaptive and flexible roles so they acquire cross-functional knowledge and training.

i. Increase in organization complexity. Companies will focus on expanding their geographic diversification and investment in secondary markets to mitigate and manage risk in times of disruption. This rise in complexity of size and organizational management will create challenges for leaders as operating models evolve (Baker, Mary, 2021).

COVID-19 crisis accelerates preexistent talent management which can be translated through finding and keeping suitable people; continual effective is very important.

Learning and developing make up an important step, especially that this crisis determined a rethinking or a reconversion of some posts, jobs and following the

effects of accelerated working force transition generated by the pandemic; postpandemic agenda for learning and development imply digital training in essential skills, competence development based on work change, leadership development.

Another aspect of talent management is performance encouragement. Crisis affected plans and projects for performance and now – the performance encouragement is realised through transparent cnnection of employees objectives to business priorities and maintaining a strong element of flexibility, investment in coaching abilities of managers, accomplishing evaluations for all employees.

Optimizing planning working force and optimizindg planning strategies involve identification of critical roles, qualities, abilities.

COVID-19 has reminded us all of the need to evolve with the times, and the traditional recruiting process is long overdue for an update. By reviewing roles with a focus on skills, exploring your internal talent pool, and using data to guide your efforts, you can create a process that attracts top talent to fill internal gaps during and after this pandemic (*Schmidt, 2021*).

Talent management can propose for I.T. industry:
- **Finding and hiring the right people.**
- **Learning and growing.** The agenda for post-pandemic learning and development extends beyond reskilling to three categories of cost-effective training: *Broad-based digital training in essential skills, Focused upskilling rooted in changing work, Leadership development.*
- **Managing and rewarding performance.**
- **Tailoring the employee experience.**
- **Optimizing workforce planning and strategy.** Components of workforce planning and strategy include:

a. *Critical roles.* Research suggests that a small subset of roles is disproportionately important to delivering a business-value agenda. For each role, identify core jobs to be done, qualities needed of leaders, and whether the role is set up for success.

b. *Skill pools.* Organizations should look at their major skill pools to understand the skills required for the future and whether they are long or short on the required talent.

c. *Talent systems.* (Narain, 2020)

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has had terrible repercussions, causing sickness and death around the world. Governments, together with semi-public institutions and private organizations, have struggled to cope with uncertainties from the strategic to the operational level.

Talent management represents a determinant factor that comes to support human resources area. Success depends on the corporation in relation with the existing human resource, in its keeping, motivating and development according to its potential even COVID-19 post-pandemic. Talent management programs helps IT

Industry to find qualified and competent professionals and develops them in digital trainings, to invests in performance.

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