

# Sports Organizations' Decision Process

Gheorghe JINGA<sup>1</sup>

## *Abstract*

*In his/ her responsible activity, a sports instructor needs to make decisions - he/she has decision making roles. Decision roles ask from sports instructor coordination between his/her personal strength and a powerful position in order to properly exert authority.*

*The following article illustrates the way in which an efficient sports instructor will use decision roles in order to create a transformation management style by using strategic planning in order to control performance levels, athlete potential, training programs contents, equipment and gear.*

*Therefore, a decision role is a part of a sports trainer's role which requires use of authority in making decisions.*

**Keywords:** *sports organizations, sports manager, strategy, decision process.*

**JEL classification:** M10, M12, M14

## **1. Decision making in sports organizations**

This article extends the complex management approach regarding sports manager activity. As shown in a previous work, one of the greatest management experts, Mintzberg (2013) described 3 major roles a manager must have:

- Interpersonal roles;
- Information roles;
- Decision roles.

In this paper we will focus on the third category of roles. The first decision role which a leading sport instructor must take is "the entrepreneur" - through which a sports instructor initiates and plans controlled shifts within his/her sector.

If real activities assigned for this role fail to deploy, no major performance boost will appear. Actually, we can consider leaders must have best marketing know-how in order to competitively lead their organization. (Bhuvanewari, Rau, 2010)

Under normal circumstances, by using their initiated program, an instructor must focus on the tiniest issues and on the latest opportunities by introducing improvement methods which work both ways. It is a process which we can consider to be rooted in CSR, as long as is manages to positively modify an organization's members' lives (Gligor-Cimpoieru, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> **Gheorghe JINGA**, The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania,  
E-mail: jingagh06@yahoo.com

The second decision role requires the instructor to become a negotiator. During training sessions, in competition and even after these are over, conflicts between athletes and staff occur. It is actually an extension of stakeholders' interactions (Stoney, 2001), (Nastase, 2010). These require a sports instructor attention and intervention. The negotiator role is most of times difficult and unique for an instructor. Sometimes, things seem difficult and delays in approaching them can lead to a conflict escalation especially because it only depends on a leader's ability of efficiently intervene in solving disputes. (Radu, Nastase, 2011).

A conflict always involves a change which is been recently described by scientists as a transformation. An organization controlled transformation is a necessary ingredient in ensuring program health and performance development (Armstrong, 2003). In fact, it is a decision making process which requires several steps to be undertaken. Unfortunately, as sports always have it, transformation also works against athletes and coaches.

Subject's specialists (Martell, Calderon, 2005) have identified multiple traditional methods which managers must consider in solving a conflict. Each method is effective in a specific situation and many cases often require a mix between two or more of these solutions.

1. Cooperation by agreement. This is a proven method which, however, does not always ensure success. It relies on a strict control, sometimes hard to bear but which in some situations enhances responsibility of employees.

2. Negotiation - both parties solves problems by negotiating leaving the conflict still open. No one has obtained the maximum. By negotiating old habits are destroyed but new ones emerge. It is temporarily created a favorable training environment.

3. Leader substitution is a common technique in which solving a conflict fails on a level but is successful on another. Although new leaders can come up with new management and training ideas, they lack experience and initiative, but can bring value boosts.

4. Athlete personnel modifications. It often happens that in a collective of athletes one or two sportsman to be superior by comparison to the rest without positively influencing the activity of the club. The only solution is bringing values close to each other in order to increase respect, appreciation and mutual help.

5. "Connection" people. Sometimes, conflicts can be resolved by a third party intervention. Although this can be positive, communication might have to suffer.

6. Flexible relationship ratios. Using flexible relationship ratios can be an effective way of resolving interpersonal arguments especially when the conflict is between an athlete and a coach. It is recommended that both yield without affecting efficiency and performance objectives.

7. Arbitration and mediation. In these conflicts solving techniques is lastly considered the help of an outside person who will propose solutions good for both sides but different from anything both parties would conceive. It is a decision process which requires time and resources.

In performance practice appear, as expected, conflicts. Solving them is not always easy. Performance means cooperation in which strategy, culture and leadership must work together (Verboncu, et. alt., 2008). One must find solutions. Here are some of the most frequently used methods:

1. Confrontation – solves conflicts by giving arguments. Essential here is that a superior position will be enforced by the instructor, which can, however deteriorate relations.

2. Adaptation – involves a concession made by a party. One of the sides adapts to the other's imposed demands.

3. Equivalence – involves intentionally neglecting a conflict in order to prevent unpleasant consequences usually associated with confrontation. This method does not always solve arguments. "Dodging" is the most frequently used method applied by instructors in all kinds of situations.

4. Collaboration – is a method which gives its best results in solving long lasting conflicts. This method requires that both parties try to solve together by investigating all sorts of possible alternatives. Collaboration requires creative solutions which solve both parties' needs at the same time.

5. Partial agreements – are similar to collaboration regarding the attempt of finding solutions for both parties. The major difference is in the negotiation process used to solve conflicts in this case. Partial agreements results from negotiation.

The third decision role assumed by a coordinative sports instructor is connected to resource distribution. An instructor has the official authority of determining in which way time, budget, external financial resources, equipment and staff should be distributed. If the instructor does not properly involve it is possible that frustration and lack of motivation appear.

Another different instructor role is that of a negotiator, who acts in the benefit of his sector. The negotiator role is a combination of multiple different roles: leadership, resource distributor and spokesman. (Mintzberg, 1973)

## **2. Sports managers approaches**

It is good to keep in mind there is no such thing as a typical manager. The variety of ways of action and factors that can influence behavior generates multiple paths to success and also many different manager types.

Useful manager traits:

- competence;
- determination;
- outgoingness;
- ability to obtain desired advantages;
- ability to tolerate uncertainty;
- positive feeling about power;
- decision;
- perseverance;
- role-switching ability;

- swiftness in advancing;
- good communication skills;
- stress endurance;
- setting categories of people aside (friends, foes, allies).

Negative impact manager traits:

- shyness and pride;
- attention to detail;
- “reason before feelings” approach;
- self-learning wish;
- wish of giving more importance to private life;
- too much kindness.

Elements that can positively influence a sports manager:

- motivation;
- setting real performance objectives;
- personal example use;
- personal relationships;
- authority delegation;
- leadership.

What does actually mean to be a manager? We can easily answer this question based on our own experience, by studying theory or by observing other managers actions. In order to be a manager, we must specialize (in our case, in sports) in a field. Then we can ask questions like: What am I supposed to do? How should I do it? How can I become a good manager? or How can I maximize people effort?

First of all, after these questions, we must connect theory and practice. By using ideas and by making analysis we can build our trust in our professional abilities.

What should we take in consideration? Perhaps the following aspects:

- language, used in people relationships which can reflect knowledge, goals and a wish of creating progress for our organization;
- professional duties sum;
- understanding challenges and situations;
- an ability to set both vertical and horizontal or linear work relations;
- external relationship ability;
- professional evolution and defining our professional strength.

Therefore, who is a manager?

A manager is that person who can obtain results with and through help received from others (sports technicians, in our case).

An efficient manager is a person who can do what they should do – fulfill goals.

A manager is considered efficient if he/she can create such conditions that all personnel feel motivated in achieving common goals.

In the end, a manager asks him/her self: how good have I done my job?

A manager is constantly influenced in his activity by not only the difficult nature of his/her tasks but also by employee competence and skills.

As a result, a manager, through his/her professional skills must dominate their working environment.

Henri Fayol, one of the fathers of modern management gives managers 5 personality traits:

- foreseer and planner;
- organizer;
- leader;
- coordinator;
- evaluator.

According to Fayol, managers must be leaders - a person who can lead by example. The sports manager, in our case, apart from ensuring staff professional working conditions, must also give enthusiasm for completing objectives and goals.

This means a good knowledge of the athletes or more exactly, a good knowledge of the company's object of work.

Concluding, following Fayol – a manager, in general, is a combination of mental strength and emotional impact.

Following another specialist – Mintzberg – a manager is characterized by a high variety rhythm as well as by his/her commitment of fulfilling company goals.

A modern manager has to deal with a series of significant factors which directly influence his/her activity.

A manager has to deal with:

- a. demands from the organization;
- b. internal and external constraints;
- c. options (freedom to choose the method of completion).

What are the demands?

- superiors' and subordinates' wishes;
- outside pressure;
- partner guidance;
- personal feelings.

What are the constraints?

- personal resources limitations;
- legal rules;
- nearby specialists' approval;
- people opinion.

What are the options?

- highlighting own potential;
- solving methods responds well to employers and subordinates expectations.
- What do I need to achieve?

- I must identify organization opportunities.
- I must set company objectives.
- I must identify company problems.
- Should I propose changes in an area?
- Additional questions I should ask...?
- What is expected of me?
- Do I do everything to solve problems?
- Do I really wish to solve what is asked of me?

Motivation varies according to circumstances and different sources for each and every athlete.

Motivational actions are different:

- material stimuli;
- to be appreciated as efficient, scorer, leader;
- to be technical;
- to be promoted;
- to prove something to colleagues, coach, instructors and friends;
- the wish of wearing a piece of equipment, color, participating in big competitions.

Motivation – major motivation ways:

Recommended:

- agree over specific goals;
- ask for suggestions;
- give sincere reasons;
- give sincere opinions;
- try to reach an agreement;
- be ecstatic - do not over do it!
- be a personal example;
- focus on future processes.

NOT recommended:

- ideas possessive behavior;
- avoidance;
- negative comparisons;
- the urge of having the last argument;
- say: do as I say, do as I do it;
- focusing on previous failures.

The stability of sports objectives is one of the most powerful management instruments and an essential element of leadership. It is necessary to know where we want to go and what path to follow in order to reach it.

Good objectives - prerequisites:

- must be defined and consistent;
- must be compatible with team's potential;

- must be verifiable - measurable is preferable;
- must stimulate;
- must be achievable;
- must be distinct; competition related, performance related and training related.

Objectives are:

- ★ short-term objectives;
- ★ long-term objectives.

Objectives accompany every management process. They are utilized by some companies as elements of management systems, system developed by Drucker – objective management or MBO. This system consists of all company objectives, all behavior objectives and individual objectives.

Performance is appreciated according to these objectives. This concept has been proven itself to be very effective.

Personal example – traits

Leaders must be: committed, honest, disciplined, courageous, aggressive, loyal.

*Commitment:* in order to make other people get involved, sports managers must involve themselves in a long-lasting and efficient effort. Do it some other way and their attitude might become poisonous.

*Honesty:* a manager works in a “glass walled room”. All eyes are targeted at him/her. A dishonest manager can have problems. Their actions must be spotless. Even minor errors can become a stability problem or even a promotion one.

*Discipline:* an essential element in motivating athletes. Delays, not sticking to the schedule and lack of tools in training and competitions lead to lack of trust. Using the right gear, behavior and leadership instruments are also crucial elements.

*Courage:* leadership requires courage. As leaders, managers cannot allow fear to settle in. In tensed moments, a sports manager needs some moral courage. Reserves in taking critical decisions or discussions with a boss or angry client will be noticed also creating a lack of trust. Those who succeed gain a lot and build up their leader status.

*Loyalty* yields loyalty. A manager must prove loyalty in relation to bosses, area, colleagues and staff. Loyalty does not necessarily mean accepting blindly all tasks. It is necessary to make the difference between open, honest disagreement and lack of loyalty.

### 3. Building interpersonal relations

One can define this by asking: “As a manager, is it hard to lead people with whom you do not have a solid relationship?” Closeness in a stable or relative relationship varies. This requires professional, performance knowledge and sometimes intimate knowledge. Some employees or athletes accept personal

sharing and even support while some others do not. These last ones must not be blamed. They still need to be read in order to be directed.

In many situations, managers work with dispersed teams. A need for knowledge exists on both sides. There are many sportsmen who wish people know their name, appearance, performances, potential, function, team role, etc.

By knowing all these, we earn points. Knowledge must be mutual. Deliberate distances towards the staff do not always work. You can be considered too rigid. Of course, all depends on a certain mentality, in order to prevent any employees from feeling “the boss”.

There are situations when managers find it hard to work with people who previously met as friends, colleagues or equals. A close relationship can seem like favoring a person, while being too far away from people means underestimating and ignorance.

As managers we are not allowed to publicly judge failures except for special gatherings on this theme. We are not allowed to ridicule people. Of course we cannot eliminate personal feelings: bragging rights, chores and opportunities must be equally divided. Just like other relationships, the manager-employee relationship depends on personal integrity.

Misleading subordinates - an attitude becomes harmful through:

- getting athlete credits for you;
- transferring faults from you to them;
- unfair reward split;
- blocking promotion opportunities;
- hiding information or deliberate winding.

Such a behavior tears apart the foundation of an efficient management. A shifty and deceiving manager will not be listened to and will not be successful. If we want our team and athletes to follow our advice it is necessary to feel they can count on us and to feel we care about them. None is critic free but our opportunities will not be an exception from this rule.

As managers, we are the one who solve the problem. Lastly, it is our duty to ensure sportsmen and specialists have the right schedule, equipment or gear they need. We are responsible for their payment and for the way they benefit from company facilities.

Supporting others does not mean taking their burden on our shoulders. Most oftenly it is good to help them solve their own problems. We can actively listen to them, ask mutual questions, shatter their shallow opinions, give them solutions, and suggesting sources of help and action. By doing like this, we help them grow and solve similar issues in the future.

A manager must be permissive and less direct. Employees must be empowered by their manager, allowing them to use their native skills to achieve their task. A manager must be a helper who can remove obstacles and pave the way for his/her athletes.

Authority delegation, an efficient leadership method, means authority transfer in a certain measure towards a different competent person. Delegation is



essential for an efficient management. Not only the best way of dealing with a high volume of work but also one of the best methods of making specialists and athletes evolve is by delegating authority.

When to give authority:

- ✓ when workload becomes too high;
- ✓ when an opportunity of training someone occurs;
- ✓ when one of the athletes or specialists possesses a higher expertise level;
- ✓ when a possibility occurs for one of our employees to shine;
- ✓ when we do not have time, while others do;
- ✓ when we want to motivate someone and to prove we trust him/her.

Delegation must be frequent. The manner in which it is done is the most important thing. Good instructions are essential.

When we delegate authority, we must explain:

- why we chose to delegate;
- why the respective person;
- what are the objectives and how success will be measured;
- what kind of limits there are;
- what resources we can use;
- we are near them to help but we leave the task into their own hands with all faith.

After we have trained the respective person, it is good to let him/her work without looking over his shoulder all the time.

Excuses for not delegating authority

- this is a task I would better do myself;
- it would take me too long to explain what to do;
- delegating means running away from problems;
- they will claim I am exploiting them;
- I want all credits for myself.

Many managers claim they lead teams. The fact they are together does not necessary means they can form a team. Team means much more than leading an individual or a group of individuals.

Additional ingredients in this case would be:

- involving the team in setting a mission and objectives;
- clear role definition;
- knowing and taking in consideration all individual strengths;
- regular team sessions;
- initiating common activities;
- ensuring an efficient communication within the team;

- collective progress evaluations according to planned objectives and collective meetings for solving all upcoming problems.

We have tried to emphasize the complexity of sport decisions, where we also have to take into consideration a wide range of factors that could impact our organizations and also to have permanently in mind the needs and expectations of sports organizations' stakeholders.

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