

The Manager and the Managerial Tools: Job Description

Ion VERBONCU¹
Luise ZEININGER²

Abstract

The management specialists and the management literature often mention the decisive role played by the methodological component of management (i.e. the managerial tools, the design methodologies, reengineering and support of a functional management systems) in the scientism of manager's, work. In the context of professionalization of both managers and management, treating scientifically, the management processes, becomes a major subject with impact on both quality and efficiency of management. This paper is going to approach one of the apparently common managerial tool, many times overlooked, known mostly as just an organisational document: job description. How many managers consider it important? How many managers do really know what is its content? How many managers know how to write one? How many know when a job description should be updated and how to do that? These are some of the questions we aim to answer next and at the same time pinpoint the need of turning this organisational and legal document into a real managerial tool.

Keywords: managerial tools, management processes, job description, individual objectives, managerial methodology, official authority, personal authority

JEL classification: M10, M12

Introduction

Regardless its level within the organisation, top, medium, line, a manager is exerting a special type of work related processes, the management processes, and by doing that is actively influencing the efficiency and effectiveness of the other 2 major groups of processes that any organisation have: the core processes (business processes) and the support processes (the additional processes). Every step along the managerial process - forecast, structure, coordination, motivation, control - appraisal - decisions are fundamental and adopted, decisions through which objectives are set, resources, responsibilities and means are set, the human, structural and procedural resources for their fulfilment are set, it is ensured via the

¹ Ion VERBONCU, The Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania,
Email: iverboncu@yahoo.com

² Luise ZEININGER, The Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania,
Email: luise.zeininger@gmail.com

right communication harmonisation between personnel decisions and actions, staff is motivated, gradually and in differentiated, to set and achieve its own objectives and last but not least the degree of achieving objectives is monitored and controlled, periodically and at the end of the process together with causes that generated positive deviations or malfunctions.

Implementing decisions of adequate quality implies effective use of three critical variables: information, management tools and people; Information should be high quality, managerial tools (systems, methods, managerial techniques) should be quantitatively and especially qualitatively adequate to all requirements set by each job position and people, and by people we mean managers, should have the right competencies, the official authority for the job and the personal attitude doubled by a set of skills and abilities, professional and managerial, needed to make use of the decision power their job ensures.

2. Managerial tools and their role in management

Management literature and management science have listed a very rich assortment of over 350 systems, methods and management techniques that could be used, after adequate customisation, to most of the organisations. Hereinafter, we'll name below some of the best known that if operating accordingly, will improve by far decision's quality by giving them the scientific needed support:

- Managerial systems: management by objectives, management by profit centres, management by projects, management by budgets, management by exception, participative management, system cost-hour-production (SCOP).
- General management methods and techniques: diagnosis, delegation, control panel, meeting, SWOT analysis.
- Specific managerial methods and techniques:
 - Decision making: additive method, global utility method, ELECTRE method, decision tree, mathematic hope methods, pessimistic technique, optimistic technique, optimality technique, proportionality technique, minimization regrets technique.
 - Creativity: brainstorming, Philips 66, Delphi, discovery matrix.
 - Management by costs: classics and evolved.
 - Analysis and design of an informational and organisational system: employee manual, organisation chart, job description, flux diagrams, process map, centrality indexes method.
 - Analysis and design of a decision-making system: decisional-informational card.
 - Managers labour efficiency: time-management, job enrichment, development and rotation - as methods to improve motivation.

Obviously, the first issue regarding managerial tools it is not about using all known systems, methods of managerial techniques known and described by the management literature, but to select the ones really effective in helping managers dealing with decisions in their activity. For example, if a large company choose to

apply management by profit centres should by no means use management by objectives or management by budgets since these are component of the chosen one. Similarly, if a specific decisional issue needs ELECTRE method, obviously there is no need to use other decisional methods also mathematically fundamental, and so on. The second issue is about using and promoting managerial tools, i.e. the methodologies managers should apply to maximise the benefits of using them. Any system, method or managerial techniques has its specific methodological scenario and knowing and operating that makes the difference when it comes to success in applying managerial processes. People involved in managerial methodology should be aware of all these already tested and verified methodologies.

At the core of the work on managers' professionalization, one should place the managerial tools and the other methodological elements that are consistent with the methodological component of management; their roles, on their own, as presented below, being an evidence in favour of this:

- The role to discipline the managers and subordinates;
- The role to empower managers and their subordinates;
- The role to induce order, discipline and rigour;
- The role to facilitate normal functionality or other managerial components: decisional, informational, organisational, human resources management;
 - The role to make more efficient the managed operation by creating and maintaining optimal conditions to achieve objectives;
 - The role to facilitate practicing managerial roles and managerial processes, as a whole;
 - The role of professionalization of both managers and management;
 - The role to evaluate management and organisation efficiency; most of known managerial tools start methodologically from objectives and end with results.

3. Job description- critical assessment

Job description, the managerial tool that could be found in every organisation, at the fingertip of each manager from general manager to base line manager, from worker to engineer is so overlooked that for all the above almost doesn't exist. What is important about it is just to have it, and have it, on paper because it's compulsory. So it is everywhere but almost by everybody it is used mostly as an excuse like: "I did that this way because it is like that on my job description" or "if my job description stipulates it I'll do it just as it's written". The labour legislation bounds employers to prepare a job description for every employee, and the job description itself it is an annex to the work contract. At this point, we would like to state that this work is looking at job description solely from the managerial point of view and not from the juridical or bureaucratic perspective; hence the accent will be on the job description for a management position, by for more complex to elaborate comparing with a job description for an entry level.

What is a job description?

At the first glance a job description is a document related to position, describing it in detail - sometimes too much of detail - and commonly states the requirements of the job to which the person that will fill the position would have to comply. The human resources literature is mentioning job description as a formal document just like (*Manolescu, Lefter, Deaconu, 2007, p.218*) who state regarding job description that it is " one of the formal documents of a organisational structure, that defines a specific job's role in achieving both organisational and individual objectives, essential to an individual, an organisation as it forms the basis of the work contract". When considering such approaches it is easy to notice the general view related that is that a job description is elaborated after a thorough analysis and it relates with describing responsibilities and job specifications. Although it comes in many forms (one could actually buy a job description form the internet) it is our opinion that many of the ones involved in filling in and using job descriptions would not know it all so well. Beyond its meaning as a organisational document reflecting the organisational structure, as a juridical document, a human resources document, or just a document, job description should be treated as a managerial instrument. Job description is a dynamic reflection of the content and requirements for a position of any kind. It's content is all about individual objectives and support-elements needed to achieve objectives: processes (tasks), official authority (limits of competencies) and responsibilities (for the actions initiated and decisions made). Job requirements or job specifications should deal with personal authority (the competencies required from the job holder) and other restrictive elements about setting-up, functioning and changing the job.

What does a job description consists of?

Most of the training companies, management consultancy companies, speciality literature promote the similar structure for job descriptions insisting on several elements some arguable form their content point of view some arguable because of their format. This basic elements of a job description ("fishe" or "description du poste" in French), were described by (*Boyer, Equilbey 2003, p. 224*): job title, job mission, dimensions characteristics, position within organisation, general context, nature of the activities, expected results. Similarly a typical Romanian job description consists of following main components:

- Job title;
- Department/section;
- Hierarchical level,
- Employee name,
- Relationships:
 - internal: (hierarchical relationships: functional, cooperation, control, representation);
 - external (with authorities and other public entities, international organisations, other private entities).
- Responsibilities;

- Duties (daily, weekly, periodical); here other duties could be mentioned, duties that may occur during work and that might be required to be performed by the direct supervisor, within authority and job descriptions stated responsibilities;

- Based at ;
- Resources;
- Abilities required for the job holder;
- Education level/ trainings/ authorisations/certifications;
- Foreign languages;
- Skills and qualifications;
- Evaluation criteria.

Below few on-topic comments on the above:

- Job description is about job not about people! As such, holder name should not be on it.

- Relationships: it should be described according to management science in the sense that positioning a job within an organisation layer structure should be set by the connection with other jobs taking into account: authority relations (hierarchical, functional, general) cooperation relations, representation relations, control relations).

- Objectives: only very seldom could be found and described as individual objectives of the job, in most of the cases objectives don't even get mentioned. Even when they are usually they are not as a result of cascading from the high-level organisational ones. Romanian organisations do not typically use a "top-down" cascading objectives starting from the fundamental objectives , going down to level I and II, then to the specific ones and finally ending up with individual objectives. We insist on this aspect because many specialists invoke a job objectives without having any higher level objectives. Is this not a real red flag when writing a job description? How could one set a job objectives without having department objectives or organisational objectives?

- Tasks: if individual objectives would be set and dimensioned correct then so would be the support elements to achieve them i.e. tasks, competencies and responsibilities. This is one of the most sensitive and vulnerable area for the several types of job description used by practitioners and theoreticians in Romania and we need to state, at this point, that achieving individual objectives needs simple work processes defined as tasks that should be written in the job description as decisive procedural element. Unfortunately, in most cases, one could found in a job description either duties (a component that is above tasks. directly involved in achieving compartment objectives according to any Organisational and operational regulations and rules or Operations Manual either activities (which is much worse, since activities are involved in achieving level II objectives and should be allocated to a group of organisational compartments).

- Wording: no matter what are the components described in a job description the wording is most of the times inadequate! tasks, competencies,

responsibilities are all a giant confusion, the words to describe them being confuse, ambiguous resulting in a similar confusing job description;

- Responsibilities: too many times are set before the elements related to achieving objectives, which proves that no correspondence was even considered with those not to mention the decision right;

- Limitations: also described as official authority describes the decisional freedom level of the job, the right to take decisions or to be involved in the process. Most of the Romanian job descriptions either don't even have this mentioned or it's description is generic to say the least with wording such as: "makes decisions in his/hers authority limits" or "within limits set by direct supervisor" or "in line with job description". In our opinion, the authority limit should be correlated with tasks and with the responsibilities in forming that is described by managerial literature as "the golden triangle" of an organisation;

- Competencies: job holder abilities, skills, qualifications needed for the position, are usually widely described. Even more, some job descriptions have also expected targets written down, which shows the job specifications are richer than its description;

- To conclude, we consider that the widely used Romanian templates of job descriptions, compulsory for every work contract, consist of a large number of ambiguities, creates confusions even to the owner of the job, they are not product of a thorough negotiation process and have no managerial importance.

Hereinafter we'll be providing a new job description template, that, especially for the managerial positions, would help changing mentalities on how a manager role is perceived for all its managerial duties, in general, and for the ones related to human resources in special. At the same time, we hope it would ease the transition from the status of a organisational document to the one of a managerial tool, able to answer, even in part, to "how do we manage?" question.

4. A new approach of job description

Adopting job description as member of the wide family of managerial systems, methods and techniques require it's approach from different angles and an updated content reflecting most of the exigencies imposed on the future job owner, pinpointing his/hers managerial performances that is his/hers contributions to practicing management processes. In other words, due to its content, a job description should be fit for use as managerial tool by everyone that, to a higher or lesser extent, manage and lead an organisation or structural parts of it. But, what are in this case the differentiators?

- The two main parts are the same with no changes in wording: first part is about describing the job and second part is about requirements of the job;

- Describing the job needs to describe data and identification information of the role within organisational structure: title, compartment, hierarchical level, span of control, organisational relationships (as types), individual objectives, tasks, decisional competencies/accountabilities and responsibilities in achieving the set

objectives. At the core of this managerial tool are the individual objectives and tasks, accountabilities and responsibilities are the support elements needed to achieve them. We draw attention to the ones elaborating and updating job descriptions that individual objectives should not be mistaken as tasks and that the individual objectives should be quantified realistically not idealistically and that dimensioning and defining them is the result of cascading from fundamental objectives to level I and II objectives and to specific objectives for a specific time frame (usually comprises a year) and that this is the fundamental condition of being successful in using this managerial tool and obviously of strengthening the job position in the economical hierarchy of the organisation;

- Management specialists and the direct manager should be involved in writing job descriptions to avoid ambiguities and to be sure individual objectives are defined and the 3 support elements are presents. if the in-house managers do not have management competencies it is advisable to look for external contractors, management specialists, that would accomplish the task in an objective, professional manner;

- As starting point in developing a manager job description we recommend to use the managerial functions the manager will be involved with respectively: forecast, structure, coordination, motivation, control-evaluation so that all 3 components of the "golden triangle" - tasks, accountabilities, responsibilities are approached in a correlative manner;

- The second part of a job description pinpoints the job requirements and it's all about the personal competencies (personal authority) professional and managerial, given by the sum of knowledge, qualities, abilities that are required by the job during delivery;

- Job description update should be done as often as needed respectively when organisational objectives, processes or organisational structure change so to say when major changes occur;

- To exemplify the above we'll present hereinafter a simple version of a management position job description:

Job description-Manager

A. Role description

- A1. Job title
- A2. Department
- A3. Hierarchical level
- A4. Span of control
- A5. Organisational relationships
 - A5.1 Authority
 - A5.1.1 Hierarchical
 - subordinates to
 - has as subordinates
 - A5.1.2 Functional
 - A5.1.3 General.....

A5.2 Cooperation with similar positions on the same level.....

A5.3 Control - not applicable

A5.4 Representation - if represents organisation in relationship with other organisations, financial institutions, banks, authorities etc.

A6. Individual objectives

- over 75% decisional intensity
- 100% of direct manager decisions applied
- contribute with min 30% in reaching company turnover
- contributing with min 20% to the targeted company profit margin

Table 1 Job description: tasks, accountabilities, responsibilities

No.	Tasks	Accountabilities	Responsibilities
1.	Makes sure policy/strategy are elaborated	Aproves objectives, measures to achieve, resources, deadlines	Responsible for the volume, structure, quality of the information needed to elaborate policy and strategy
2.	Establishes and cascades objectives for subordinated positions	Decides regarding objectives for subordinated positions	Responsible for equitable repartition of objectives depending on their official competencies
3.	Involved in elaborating policy/strategy	Provides objectives, measures to achieve, resources, deadlines	Responsible for the volume, structure, quality of the available information to elaborate policy and strategy
4.	Establish material, financial, human and informational resources needed to achieve objectives	Decide on allocated resources volume and structure	Responsible for quantitative and on-time availability of resources
5.	Makes sure both objectives and allocated resources are timely space out accordingly	Decides on intermediate and final deadlines for resource allocation and objectives achievement	Responsible for proper timing between deadline-resources-objectives
6.	Establishes ways to achieve objectives	Decides on how to achieve objectives	Responsible for objectives opportuneness and necessity

No.		Tasks	Accountabilities	Responsibilities
7.	Structure	Ensures managerial conditions to achieve objectives	Decides for its organisation section/ department on management configuration and functionality	Responsible for management system efficiency and efficacy
8.		Provides dimensions and limits for work processes required to achieve objectives	Decides on main and secondary work processes	Responsible to ensure the process dimension of objectives
9.		Establish the human dimension of work processes	Decides regarding on filling in managerial and line vacancies in its department	Responsible with positions and job holders consistency
10.		Provides organisational-structural frame for proper work processes within department (position number and structure, organisational relationships among them)	Decides on structural components size of the department	Responsible for correlation between structural components and work processes within department
11.		Elaborates process-map for department	Decides regarding on process-map	Responsible with department process-map fitting into organisation process-map
12.		Elaborates and updates job descriptions for subordinates	Advices on subordinates job description	Responsible for job description content
13.		Ensures Organisational and operational Rules and Regulation Book is known and applied	Decides on correct and proper operation within Organisational and operational Rules and Regulation Book prescriptions	Responsible for applying Organisational and operational Rules and Regulation Book
14.	Coordination	Whenever needed convenes harmonisation meetings (to transfer and synchronise subordinates actions)	Decides when and about harmonisation meetings	Responsible for operative transfer to subordinates of specific information

No.	Tasks	Accountabilities	Responsibilities
15.	Ensures proper work environment	Decides on work environment, internal communication, inter-human relationships	Responsible with organisational culture improvement
16.	Promotes an adequate managerial style fit to achieving objectives	Decides on managerial style adopted	Responsible with organisational culture improvement
17.	Ensures proper conditions for subordinates to establish and achieve their objectives	Decides on organisational climate and involvement on objectives achievement	Responsible to ensure a quality work life and enjoyable experiences
18.	Motivation Establishes job profile: abilities, knowledges, skills	Decides job profile draft	Responsible for sensible dimensioning of jobs
19.	Evaluates subordinates against established performance criteria	Decides qualificatives and score after evaluation	Responsible to set and comply with establish performance criteria
20.	Evaluation and control Evaluates and reports to top management regarding objectives, dysfunctions, positive deviations, causes etc.	Proposes ways of functional improvements of the organisation	Responsible for reported information quality and accuracy
21.	Executes managerial control of objectives achievement and methodological recommendations account specific to the activity field	Decides rewards and sanctions following evaluation	Responsible for opportuneness and necessity of adopting and applying such decisions

B. Job requirements

B1. Professional competency

Education: economical or technical graduate

Experience: minimum 5 years on similar position

B1.1 Professional Knowledge

- adequate economical or technical knowledge

- juridical knowledge

B1.2 Abilities and distinctive features

- adaptability to changing working conditions
- ability to distinguish and select urgent matters from important matters
- self-improvement capacity
- informational abilities
- perseverance
- courage
- high degree of involvement
- positive attitude

B2. Managerial competencies

B2.1 Managerial knowledge

- in depth knowledge of managerial roles and processes, their functionality
- knowledge about management systems configuration and utility
- knowledge about managerial tools, techniques, systems
- computer literate

B2.2 Managerial abilities and distinctive features

- abilities such as: talent, intuition, flair, wish to lead, leadership
- distinctive features such as: organisational skills, health, skilfulness, imagination, ability to notice, accept and promote new, synthetic and analytic thinking, intelligence, character features: honesty, steadiness, openness, sociability, confidentiality etc.

B3. Specific requirements

- graduation of minimum one training program management related in the last 5 years
- good command of minimum one international foreign language

Conclusions

Approaching job description as a managerial tool, ensures, basically, it's rediscovery through managers and management professionalization and amplifies its efficiency and effectiveness. The use of job description provides a round managerial experience to any manager regarding the main functions of management; establishing objectives facilitates the operation of the forecasting function, setting tasks in order to achieve individual objectives makes use of the structure function, individual objectives negotiation with position holder and employee motivation based on achievements is associated with the motivational function and along the way of fulfilling tasks to achieve objectives there must be evaluation and control.

The managerial valence of job descriptions are obvious as long as it's content is designed and updated by specialists, management professionals. Also, we can't help noticing the important contribution of the human resources specialist, the one that designs the job description template and from this perspective, has

functional authority over management, top, baseline, any level, supplying them with methodological elements regarding how to fill in a job description, how to update it, whenever needed for example when objectives change.

The proposals we have formulated in this article are meant to mitigate or hopefully eliminate a managerial paradox - the one of an obscure document that despite its Cinderella role is compulsory and must exist together with any legal work contract. Let's add managerial value by promoting this new job description template.

References

1. Boyer, L., Equilbey, N., (2003) *Oganisation. Theories, Applications*, Editions d'Organisation, Paris
2. Manolescu, A., Lefter, V., Deaconu, Al., (2007) *Managementul resurselor umane*, Editura Economică, București
3. Nicolescu, O., Verboncu, I., (2008) *Fundamentele managementului organizației*, Editura Universitară, București
4. Nicolescu, O., et al., (2004) *Managerii și managementul resurselor umane*, Editura Economică, București