

Manager's image as a cornerstone of a successful career

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Abstract

The topic of image is an extensive and current issue because it concerns everyone of us. A large amount of books is published, a great number of articles is released and various conferences and trainings are organized. The aim of the paper is to determine the basic characteristics of successful managers with the focus on image and its active component parts. We will consider the importance of manager's image and its influence on managerial work. Furthermore, we will consider advantages and disadvantages, opportunities and threats of manager's behaviour which results from personal image.

Key words Image, manager, career, behaviour.

1. IMAGE AND A MANAGER

Nowadays, more than ever before, the image of a company determines the behaviour of its employees, whether among themselves or towards the customers or business partners. The one, who represents the company, represents its brand, image, good reputation and at the same time his/her own position and professionalism. A good impression can be damaged quick as a flash but to win it back again can last for years (Štefko a kol., 2012).

The important step is to know the importance of manager's image in any area and to focus on basic rules that are valid in the world of "big business". We have to put emphasis on faux-pas and it is better to avoid them. It is also needed to know the individual components of personal image and we will concentrate on manager's outer appearance into more details. To look good also means to find a job more easily or to be more successful in doing business. It is important for a manager to realize the importance of outer appearance and his/her performing. A neat manager feels better and more confident (Lieskovská, 2000).

It is also important to point out why image is important for a manager. Personal style affects people's decisions. It decides whether a customer will accept the manager, consider him/her to be a person who is

likeable or whether the customer will refuse the manager. People also have tendencies to believe what they see. Nowadays, we all have little time and therefore we rely on the first impression. The neat outward appearance is always a plus and it is often just the appearance that decides whether the other person would show his/her trust in us (Plamínek, 2005).

The following figure shows how a good appearance or better to say image can influence success. It is the so called success spiral.



Figure: Success spiral
Source: Lieskovská, 2000

According to the educational centre of Bavarian economy in Munich, the successes of companies in international markets are often threatened by insufficient knowledge of their managing employees by organization administration. They are also threatened by unfamiliarity with the problems in a given area, foreign languages incompetence and a very low sensitivity in interaction with culture. A survey of more than two hundred medium and large enterprises showed that the corporate strategy focused on European and international economy could only be successful when it would be possible to increase the professional level of managing employees. It was found out that the need of further education is present in the field of foreign languages, in the field of law, in the field of market, in cultural competence and the companies see the greatest need in mediating the interaction forms and management style in a given country.

1.1 The components of personal image

If a company or an entrepreneurial subject wants to maintain its good name, its reputation, it has to know its environment very well. Image presents not only objective vies of reality but to a great extent also

subjective perception in the forms of visions, expectations, attitudes and emotions about a particular object. Image connects real physical features with its symbolic meaning (Lieskovská, 2000).

Appearance

It includes a figure, clothing and neatness. The dressing style is important according to the type of an event. Neatness is the most important from all.

Body language

Whether we realize it or not, our body talks. Its language are gestures, mimics, look, posture, walk and other signals which we include under the term nonverbal communication. It sometimes makes up to 90 % of a conversation. Body language creates a very significant part of an outward personality picture and impression which the person or better to say a manager leaves. By body language, we can create sympathies or antipathies more evidently than by what we are saying (Borec, 2007).

Eye contact

If we look peacefully into the business partner's eyes, we raise the trust by doing so and at the same time, we signal our attention and interest. The person, who looks away, can give an impression of being shy, bashful, refusing or he/she can raise the impression of hiding something. The eye contact between strange persons is usually registered if it lasts for approximately three seconds. If it lasts much longer, it appears to be numb and from a short distance even threatening. Therefore, the person, who talks, should look away from time to time. And on the other hand, a hearer should look at a speaker in order to show the interest and to encourage the speaker to continue (Borec, 2007, s. 28).

Communication style

It is about a spoken and a written form of communication as well as the style of performing. Borec (2007) claims that everyone has his/her personality boarders which are individual. Someone has a favourite seat by a coffee table or a seat in a train, simply, everybody wants to protect his/her delimited territory and by crossing the boarders, he/she reacts spontaneously. According to an American expert in intercultural communication Edward Hall, it is possible to distinguish approximately four primary distance zones which should be respected:

- Intimate distance zone – in this zone, we communicate with people who are close to us
- Personal distance zone – in this zone, there are conversations with colleagues, when meeting somebody in the street or at a company party
- Social distance zone – it is a space for non-personal opportunities like the interaction with a cleaning woman or a currier. You are in this zone when you are in an entrance hall, at a reception desk when you are waiting for your business partner. There is an interaction but you do not detain the other person from work.
- Public distance zone – we are in this zone when we meet in a big room, e.g. at a team meeting or when attending a lecture (Borec, 2007, s. 30).

Reputation

Here, we can include manager's experience and qualification.

Performing

It includes terms such as charisma, trust and self-confidence.

General rules of behaviour are based on social priority principles which are used by everyone of us in everyday life. It is true that older persons are prior to younger ones, women to men. There is a rule observed in business relations according to which a senior employee has a priority over a junior employee. When travelling abroad, it is very important for a manager to respect the culture of a given country. The manager has to spend time on preparing himself/herself for their customs, traditions and certain norms which are required by the given country (Gajdoš, 2007).

2. SWOT ANALYSIS OF SELECTED HOTEL MANAGER

Based on theoretical knowledge about image and its component parts, we will subsequently show strengths and weaknesses of a manager of a selected hotel together with the opportunities and threats which relate to image. The SWOT analysis was elaborated in connection with the hotel's manager. According to subjective consideration, weights and factor forces were allotted to every analyzed part. The scale is from 1 to 10, where 1 represents the least important feature and 10 the most important feature.

Table 1: Strengths

Strengths	Weight (%)	Force	Factor value
Clothing	20	10	200
Neatness	10	9	90
Sense for details	15	7	105
First impression	10	9	90
Previous experience with management at a high position	10	5	50
The ability to run business meetings and negotiation abilities	15	9	135
Knowledge of social etiquette	20	10	200
Total	100		870

Source: own elaboration

Table 2: Weaknesses

Strengths	Weight (%)	Force	Factor value
Language competence	25	10	250
Computer skills	5	6	30
Excessive distance	15	7	105
Completed special courses	25	8	200
Writing skills	10	6	60
Dislike for social events	20	9	180
Total	100		-825

Source: own elaboration

Table 3: Opportunities

Strengths	Weight (%)	Force	Factor value
Confident performing supported by good appearance	10	8	80
Raising the feeling of trust and significance by business partners	20	10	200

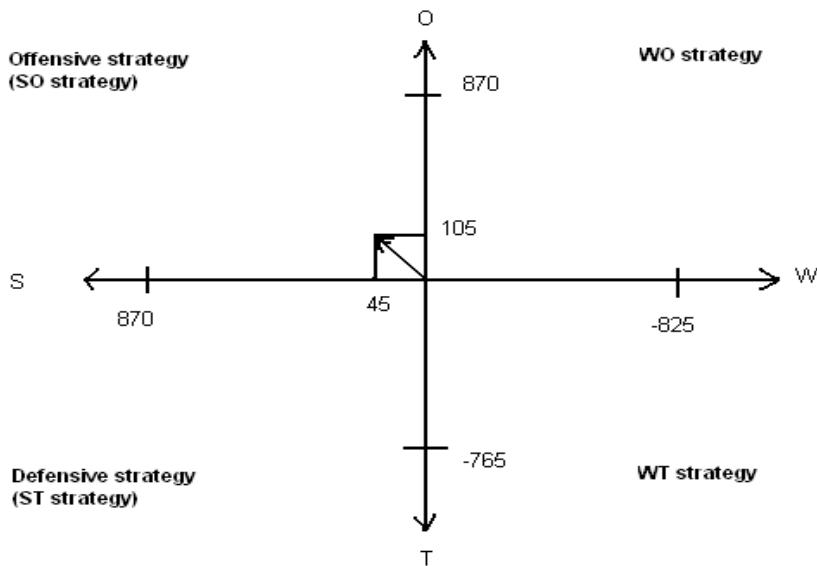
Raising the respect of the surroundings	10	6	60
Perceiving the surroundings	10	6	60
Positive thinking and perception	10	7	70
Building positive hotel image by its representative	20	10	200
Education of employees about image	20	10	200
Total	100		870

Source: own elaboration

Table 4: Threats

Strengths	Weight (%)	Force	Factor value
Haughtiness	10	7	70
Hypocrisy of the surroundings	15	7	105
Loss of real judgement	25	8	200
Qualification in the field of tourism	15	8	120
Condemnation by the surroundings	10	7	70
Different perception by employees	25	10	250
Total	100		-765

Source: own elaboration



Graph 1: SWOT analysis of the hotel

Source: own elaboration

Based on the results of the SWOT analysis, we can claim that the manager's image is in offensive strategy where the strengths prevail over the weaknesses and the opportunities over the threats.

We consider clothing to be the major strength of the manager by the analysis of his personal image. We can state that he represents the top position and he dresses properly according to the principles which we

aimed to analyze. He comes to the company solely in a suit, shirt and tie. The second most forceful strength according to the analysis is the knowledge of social etiquette. We appreciate that the manager is aware of the fact that a good appearance and clothes do not guarantee success. But if we combine clothing and social manners, the success is more probable. The manager had acquired the knowledge of social behaviour by personal experience as well as by self-study and education. Applying these principles is common in every single working day. These rules and principles are used by the manager especially at business meetings and negotiations but also by a personal contact with the hotel guests. He considers the personal contact to be an important part of his job duties. For example, at a dinner, he gives the guests a certain feeling of appreciation and significance and it could be one of the most decisive criterions by hotel evaluation and by next decision making. Such personal contacts will surely please the hotel guests and they can mean a strong competitive advantage of the hotel.

We put the language competence at the first place among the weaknesses. The hotel manager can speak only two world languages, i.e. English and German language. Although we can consider these competences as momentarily sufficient, there is an assumption that with the rising tendency of globalization at all levels, these language competences will not be sufficient in the future. This handicap can be reflected in foreign business negotiations. Foreign-business negotiations are connected to the completion of special courses focused on foreign business partners and their culture. The manager has some basics but we consider education with experts in this area to be important because trifles often decide in business and they can be lost in self-study. We consider the dislike for taking part in social events as the third weakness of the manager. But we are not saying by this that the manager does not take part in social events where his participation is expected. Properly dressed and with good manners, the way to success is open. It is confirmed by the threats in the SWOT analysis.

The major threat resulting from image is raising the feeling of trust and significance by business partners. At business meetings, it is important to be accepted by your business partner seriously and respectfully. You can reach this aim by the help of image. Every manager is a representative of his/her company. This is true also for the analyzed manager. If a manager gives a positive impression to the surroundings, he conveys the feeling and the surroundings will perceive the hotel in a positive way as well. But the image of a hotel is not only built by a manager himself but also by the hotel staff. Therefore we consider the staff education and training in the field of image as an opportunity. In the hotel, there is of course the dress code that is valid for the staff.

The major threat is seen in different perception of the manager by the employees as we would like to be and the loss of real judgement. By the term of real judgement we mean wrong manager's conclusions that can be caused by a superficial view on occurred situations. At the same time, it happens in a real life that if people treat you in a different way and they persuade you about things, you can believe it in some time even if the truth is different.

The best way to prevent the negative perception of the manager by the employees is for the manager to behave to them as a good superior. This principle is very simple but its application is not easy to follow even for the experienced managers. If a manager will behave too arrogantly, snobbish, haughty or patronizing only because he/she is well dressed and he/she is familiar with etiquette, it is obvious that employees will not perceive him/her in a positive way. The employees can come to such perception also in some other case. Therefore it is important for a manager to have a right attitude and behaviour towards employees which helps to create a pleasant working environment.

We suggest certain possible solutions to the discovered weaknesses and shortcomings. We pay attention to continuous education in this field and it is important to follow trends in this area. The perception of the manager by the employees is also very important. From the point of view of maintaining the right

running of the hotel, it is important to educate and train the employees and to create a pleasant and positive atmosphere at work. To be a manager is not only a job but a life style.

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