PROXIMITY MANAGEMENT IN CRISIS CONDITIONS

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Abstract:
The purpose of this study is to evaluate the level of assimilation for the terms "Proximity Management" and "Proximity Manager", both in the specialized literature and in practice. The study has two parts: the theoretical research of the two terms, and an evaluation of the use of Proximity management in 32 companies in Gorj, Romania. The object of the evaluation resides in 27 companies with less than 50 employees and 5 companies with more than 50 employees.

Keywords: proximity management, proximity manager, leadership, leader

Introduction

The term "proximity" was associated with long ago, the close proximity of beings, processes, phenomena, etc.. Reference to people, word proximity indicate physical size of "personal space" specific work process or face to face interpersonal communication.

In the 60's, in Canada, appears the joining of terms like "proximity" and "management" that, immediately, promote in the language of management the concepts: Proximity Management and Proximity Manager. Rhetoric, we ask: Why have occurred these two terms? Naturally, we believe, from the need to respond to the new reality in the practice of management. The concepts like leadership and leader, already established, do not provide sufficient solutions for personal career development at the organizational and individual level. The presence of managers with skills to pursue the development function of career office has become a need which required a new approach. In this context, leadership and leader exhausted its resources to help organizations promote managers able to approach employees on purpose of a deep knowledge of each and the area.

In the 80s, the term of Proximity Management come into prominence in French managerial language through the training seminars. Bourion and Persson, in the study "Specificites du management de proximité en petites entreprises", say that SNCF, at the end of the second millennium, renamed 6000 caretakers in "dirigents de proximité". Today, in France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, the term proximity captured media vocabulary with phrases such as: "police proximity", "justice proximity", "policy of proximity" and "media proximity".

Bourion and Persson have accessed the Internet and sought to find out which is the development of concept "proximity management". Here are the results: on 19.08.05, the concept has appeared 8500 times, on 19.09.05 for 14,300 times and on 21.08.06 for 41,400 times. The same search operation we also realized it on 15.03.10, at 10.00. Instances of concepts: "Proximity Management", "Proximity Manager", "leadership" and "leader" in four areas of language, are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Number of instances on 15.03.10

Occurrences and the area of language	Occurrences (thousands)				Overall
Concept	Romanian	French	Spanish	English	
Management de proximitate/Management de proximité/Gestión de proximidad/Proximity management	0,006	755	8.240	5,2	9000,206
Manager de proximitate/Manager de proximité/Gerente de proximidad/Proximity manager	0,002	256	3.093	0,963	3349,965
Lidership*/Leadership/ Liderazgo/Leadership	253	1.750	6.980	120.000	128.983
Lider*/Leader/Lider/Leader	2.260	9.750	7.970	217.000	236.980

*) *In the area of Romanian language, instances of concepts are summed for leadership - leadership and, respectively, leading - leading.*

In French-speaking area, the concept of "proximity management", after 43 months, increased by 18,24 times. In the area of Romanian language, the concept "proximity management" appears 6 times, and in the Spanish language or 8240000. In the area of Latin (Romanian, French and Spanish), the concept "management of proximity" has the largest share of total instances, 99,94%. A dominant position and presents the concept of "community-based manager, 99,97%. For our country, a country with a bias (still) to the Francophonie, are prerequisites for the next years, the evolution of concepts "proximity management" and "manager proximity" to be described by an upward trend. Finally, we hold that the theory and practice of management concepts are dominated by "leadership" and "leader". In our search, the two concepts is 96,74% of total general instances.

Management of proximity - the conceptual distinction

Proximity Management belongs to the fundamentals of management. The term presents many nuances, some of them leading to some misunderstanding. A correct definition of proximity management must be based on management approach from a very broad optical of managerial mission. In this context, everyone should understand that the stakes of proximity management is independent from the hierarchical position vis-a-vis office, position, department or any entity. In other words, hierarchical position in an organizational structure is not the one that defines the proximity management. Then, the proximity management is not confined to one category of managers (top managers, middle managers or first line managers). There is a proximity management at all hierarchical level. A general manager practice proximity management at the level of functional managers; in turn, functional managers are proximity managers in relationship with the service managers, and they are proximity managers of the offices managers. In conclusion, proximity management is a reserved activity to any hierarchical level of an organization. Also, proximity management can occur

in all organizations (private or public), in the media of arts, sports, trade union or political.

Bourion and Persson stated: "A bit used in research, proximity management become a frequently presence in the area of training and job offers where, to attract young graduates with higher education, the practice of proximity management proves a very attractive environment. This enabling environment belongs, especially, to small businesses that release the hypothesis according a small business will be the first guarantee of exercise a noble proximity management " (Bourion, C., Persson, S., 2006). In the study of those two researcher we'll keep in mind the highlighting: "The proximity management constitute, above all, a new expression that designate a new reality: a management which makes to coexist an effective working relationship and a paradigm of mutual respect in the context of lack of power"(Bourion, C., Persson, S., 2006).

The defining element of proximity management is the mission. From this perspective, M. Thevenet develop the gradation of C. Bourion: "The proximity management is an expression that designate a new reality whose mission relates to the need to coordinate a collective action (group), to do so the action is efficient even if the person who is charged with this task has not the hierarchical authority to make it" (Thevenet, M., 2007). In another work, Thevenet and Bourion (2006) argue that proximity management is practiced by the proximity manager with the following skills:

- approach to collaborators;
- a good knowledge of each collaborator;
- promote frequent meetings (individual or in team);
- support and participate in the concerns of collaborators;
- known to be close to field, to concrete.

Georges Garibion, based on the gradations above stated, proposes that the definition of proximity management to be centered on how setting goals (Garibian, G, 1997). He considers that there is proximity management in two situations when the tasks take into account the priorities operational levers and when they are connected by the potential to improve the performance. Certainly, other issues may arise for specify, adopt or strengthen the consistency of proximity management, but the modality of setting goals is the central criterion and inescapable.

The need for proximity management in conditions of crisis

In the classic pyramidal organizations, the proximity management is part of a journey. Specifically, you become proximity manager during a career. The course, in these organizational conditions, is relatively long; the responsibilities of management have a low trend of development. In contrast, in organizations with flatter structures, although there are fewer formal management jobs, new opportunities for coordination of group activities within the projects, the transversally missions announce the need of proximity management.

The companies need to involve managers in both internal and external environment. H. Mintzberg cautions us that "managers read three categories of roles: interpersonal, informational and decision-making" (Mintzberg, H., 1986). For example, when an enterprise managers understood the role of "liaison" are in a position to involve suppliers and customers. Manager of proximity is central to this approach is the involvement and influence desire, initiative, excitement and personal commitment of all stakeholders from both internal and external.

The need for change in conditions of crisis is manifested with more force.

Most researchers consider that companies, through their programs of change, have to set three priorities: the values or references (strategy, principles of action, culture, values ...), systems (rules, structures, procedures, information systems ...) and relationship management (behaviors, attitudes and management practices to employees).The need for change in conditions of crisis is manifested with more force. Most researchers consider that companies, through their programs of change, have to set three priorities: the values or references (strategy, principles of action, culture, values ...), systems (rules, structures, procedures, information systems ...) and relationship management (behaviors, attitudes and management practices to employees).

M. Thévenet (2007) believes that "the involvement of managers in the proximity management is required by: consistency, reciprocity and closeness". These three requirements form the "heart" of involvement approach in any circumstances, but with much greater acuity under crisis conditions.

Naturally, in the posed problem is useful to know why managers want to become proximity managers. An argumentation response can result from the analysis of several reasons. Between these four can be assessed as priority: the desire of more power, the acquiring of a status as high, the achievement of recognition and the mission of coordination.

Becoming proximity manager, the manager earns more power on the basis of informal power added. This type of power serves either manager or collaborators. Through power, the manager acquires the force to have a greater impact, to have a greater capacity to influence the course of events. Power is a good and necessary reason which helps the manager to have a great margin and discretion. The increasing or, at least, the preserving of the power determines the proximity

manager to reduce its insignificant expressions.

To be proximity manager means that you hold a higher statute, because such statute can turn into a title, in the signs which are associated to it. High dimension of statute allows to the manager a better position against other managers. The statute brings security to the manager, and also greater decision responsibility.

Within organizations, M. Thevenet (2007) considers, "the promotion and the role of proximity manager are the most tangible responses of recognition. Certainly, the compliments and bonuses are always welcome, but promotion is the highest response. Promotion is, often, a hope of escaping a situation less attractive and to change it. The problem is that the new proximity manager will not be very pleased by... the previous.

Among the reasons to become proximity manager of a small social system (production department, office, post, etc..) are situated, even at a high rate the mission of coordinating a human group. This mission, in few words, expresses the care and the skill to "take care of the others." The human aspect of a group performance makes through the relational process of coordination to develop the group in the best harmony, whereas the group effectiveness is dependent on the coordination.

The practice of Proximity management in 32 companies from Gorj county

Peter Druker, the work, he insisted, repeatedly, that a critical situation (error, fault, difficulty, danger) can be transformed, with relative ease, in a chance meeting of mutual relationship between manager and subordinate. Management itself becomes the "key" ability to generate critical incidents without creating other more serious problems at the human level. Such capacity is the "heart" of

proximity management practice. This is because management's vision is for a proximity relationship of "monitoring" (experimental advice), by an instrument of learning in building a relationship of trust and mutual respect..

Bourion and Persson (2006), in a study of the "threshold effect" for a total of 70 employees using 445 written and oral reports of actual facts, have opined on the main constituents of community-based management: the use of relational model tutuirii, poignancy scheduling problem in critical situations, redefine the evaluation process behaviors, hierarchical and anger style.

Table 2 shows the study area and in Appendix 1, model questionnaire on the practice of proximity management. Of the 166 managers were asked to answer 40 managers of businesses with fewer than 50 employees and 90 managers of companies with over 50 employees. They agreed to answer the questionnaire released 22 managers of businesses with fewer than 50 employees and 54 managers of companies with over 50 employees. These managers are called "managers respondents.

Table 2

The study area

Company size	Less than 50 employees			Over 50 employees		
Characteristic Profile	Number of enterprises	Total employees	Total managers	Number of enterprises	Total employees	Total managers
Wood Industry	5	81	10	1	80	4
Garments	1	16	2	1	72	6
Building Materials (manufacturing)	1	5	1	-	-	-
Building materials (trade)	2	9	4	-	-	-
Civil engineering	4	36	5	1	200	11
Chemical Industry	-	-	-	1	1210	87
Metal	2	9	2	-	-	-
Metal works	1	28	4	1	73	8
Baking	2	56	6	-	-	-
Trade	5	47	10	-	-	-
ICT	4	15	6	-	-	-
TOTAL	27	302	50	5	1635	116

Distribution of respondents by type of enterprise managers, and senior positions, shown in Table 3 allows us to see that in companies with fewer than 50 employees, top-managers of young (under 5 years old) holding 42.85% share of all top managers. Managers of these enterprises will have difficulty in promoting vertical. A more balanced situation presents businesses with over

50 employees where the top young managers have a share of 28.57%. Are favorable conditions for other career development.

Processing of responses to the question: "In your company are also use the terms management and community-based management?" indicates misunderstanding proximity utility management practice. To this question one manager has made an affirmative answer, other managers have sincerely confirmed that their companies do not use the two terms.

Distribution of respondents by type of enterprise managers, and senior positions

Firm size	Less than 50 employees			Over 100 employees			Total
Function Age	TM	MM	MPL	TM	MM	MPL	
Senior manager in 5 years	3	1	5	4	5	9	27
Manager with over 5 years old	3	2	3	4	5	8	25
Manager with over 10 years old	1	2	2	6	8	5	24
Total	7	5	10	14	18	22	76

Legend:
Top-manager (TM);
Middle manager (MM)
First line manager (MPL)

On the question "Know the meaning of terms of management and manager of proximity?" responses managers respondents (summarized in Table 4) will be summarized in two reviews.

Summary of responses to the question:
Know the meaning of the terms of management and manager of proximity?

Firm size	Less than 50 employees			Over 50 employees		
Nature of response Question	know	I know in part	Do not know	Know	I know in part	Do not know
Management proximity apply in the context of lack of power?	2	2	14	6	5	34
Proximity management is practiced in the area of training and job offers?	2	4	14	6	9	34
The term manager proximity is covered?	2	-	14	6	-	34

In companies with fewer than 50 employees, only two of the 9 managers under 5 years old know the meaning of terms "Management proximity" and

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"proximity manager". Partially correct answers were other managers with a 6 under 5 years old. Another 14 managers (one manager with a length under 5 years, 8 Managers with over 5 years old and 5 managers with over 10 years old) have made a negative response. So dominant firms with fewer than 50 employees is a full knowledge of the terms of 9%, 27% partial knowledge and ignorance of 64%.

In companies with over 50 employees, the degree of knowledge of the terms surveyed is the same.

Knowing full (at a rate of 11%) belongs, almost entirely, managers under 5 years old and partial knowledge (26%) belongs to a total of 14 managers (8 managers under 5 years old and 6 managers with over 5 years old). For these firms, 63% of managers do not know the meaning of terms. Answers to the question: "Who are managers proximity?" were summarized in Table 5. Correct answer was: all managers, regardless of hierarchical proziția you deal (TTM).

Table 5

Summary of responses to the question: Who are the managers of proximity?

Answers Firm size	TM	MM	MPL	TTM	Nu răspund
Less than 50 employees	2	10	-	6	4
Over 50 employees	6	29	1	8	10

The correct answer 6 managers of businesses with fewer than 50 employees. In this group are two managers who responded correctly to the question of the fourth and four managers (of the 6 managers) who gave a partial answer correctly*.*

For companies with over 50 employees *provide a correct answer 8 managers.* In this group are the 6 managers who responded correctly to the previous question and two managers (of the 14 managers) who formulated a partial answer correctly*.*

Corroborating replies to questions 4 and 5 by the 76 managers, respondents note a lack of knowledge of 'management of proximity "and" proximity manager. Pregnanței Analysis "tutuirii (predominant use of personal pronoun" you ") or, Conversely, analysis pregnanței polite pronoun use "you" allows us to identify the dominant rule in the communication of a human collectivity.

Bourion and Persson (2006) believe that the use of personal pronoun "you" emphasizes the personal dimension, even intimate. Researchers Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1972) invites us to discern the personal pronoun 'you', on the one hand, content (background) and, secondly, the relation (form). Content requires professional status of the person and the relationship individuals.

Personal pronoun "you" is a form of address showing respect, consideration for status or position they occupy in the community in which a person belongs. Use the pronoun may signify the existence of a superior working relationships that require a "distance" to the subordinate wants to be close.

These two pronouns, applied to a collection of stories or a survey, may become useful tools to capture whether an organization is a dominant practice.

Table 6

Summary of responses to the question: As a manager you ask your colleagues (subordinates) with "you" or "you"?

Firm size	Less than 50 employees					
Addressing mode / function	"TU"			"DVS"		
Frequency mode of address	TM	MM	MPL	TM	MM	MPL
Never	-	1	2	1	1	1
In little	1	-	2	**4**	**2**	**4**
Largely	**4**	**4**	**5**	2	1	4
Always	1	1	1	-	1	1

Table 7

Summary of responses to the question: As a manager you ask your colleagues (subordinates) with "you" or "you"?

Firm size	Less than 50 employees					
Addressing mode / function	"TU"			"DVS"		
Frequency mode of address	TM	MM	MPL	TM	MM	MPL
Never	1	2	2	2	2	2
In little	**8**	**9**	**10**	4	4	6
Largely	4	3	6	**8**	**6**	**10**
Always	3	3	3	4	3	3

Analyzing the data in Tables 6 and 7 we find that the two practices coexist in the two categories of enterprises. In Gorj businesses with fewer than 50 employees, the dominant practice is to use "tutuirii" greatly. For these companies usually is okay to use the personal pronoun "you". That usually indicates a close relationship, friendship, intimacy. In the professional environment, the emergence of "you" may imply a position of superiority vis-a-vis a colleague or a collaborator. In companies with over 50 employees, is calling the dominant practice, largely the pronoun "you".

A common assessment for the two categories of enterprises is that there "are a minority" that transgresses the dominant rule. This method encourages us to believe that minority in the Romanian management practices event management professional environment is favorable proximity.

Conclusions

Our research in the 32 companies Gorj, terms of management research and proximity to area manager of the Romanian language are arguments to support the need for careful approach to the management task proximity and the proximity manager. Useful solutions will come from the classical paradigm research management and improving interpersonal communication.

The management of Romanian companies, traditional management paradigm is manifested with sufficient force. Main concern is still to define an optimal arrangement of production factors by improving specialization, coordination and formalizării. Concern for "transversalitate is weakened by all that is desired, for example, extension management projects. With new forms of work (more complex and heterogeneous), the development of informal organization is a priority. Managers need more power. This power can be increased by the addition

of informal power. A contributing factor is the practice of informal organization development management proximity.

Proximity to the practice management industry will be challenged to develop communication skills both the managers and subordinates at. Interpersonal communication develops between them when interlocutors noted that there is a close relationship, of mutual trust. As a result, better organization of meetings, their conduct in terms of an informal atmosphere of comfort turns into an important pillar of the development framework for community-based practice management.

Annex 1. Questionnaire on management practice Proximity

1. Management function occupied:
  - top manager (the first manager)
  - middle manager
  - first line manager

2. The age of the manager::
  - over 10 years
  - over 5 years
  - under 5 years

3. In your company are used terms:
  - "Proximity Management" — Yes / No
      and
  - "proximity manager"? — Yes / No

4. Know the meaning of the term:
  - „Proximity Management" ? — Yes / No

    For Yes, you ask:
  - The term is applied in the context of lack of power? — Yes / No
  - The term is used in field training and job offers? — Yes / No

5. Know the meaning of the term:
  - *"manager de proximitate"*? — Yes / No

    For Yes, you ask:
  - The period is covered? — Yes / No

6. They are managers of proximity:
  - Top-managers
  - middle managers
  - first-line managers
  - all managers, regardless of hierarchical

7. As your manager will ask colleagues to "you"?
  - niciodată
  - într-o mică măsură
  - într-o mare măsură
  - întotdeauna

8. **As your manager will ask colleagues to "you"?**

        never

        a little

        to a large extent

        always

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