

The Rise and Fall of a Top Manager

Recently, several personal managerial earthquakes have occurred in Slovakia. After years of managing subsidiaries or branches of multinational companies, all of a sudden, some managers had to leave their seat as somebody else replaced them. Seemingly, nothing significant has changed for a global company.

But from the perspective of a manager who depends on success and career growth, it is almost always a personal failure - facing harsh and often previously unknown realities. For some it is a relief, but in particular for conservative top managers a sudden change in working conditions or adopting new working methods may be a big problem.

The greatest problem faced by many top managers isn't the fact that they no longer have control over companies to which they have devoted many years, but the shock of realising that they are alone. It is not always easy to find a position or remuneration comparable to their previous employment status. On the labour market, they must compete with people returning from abroad, with rich experience and ability to adjust their financial requirements to Slovak reality.

Regardless of the type of position held, people cope differently with sudden loss of work. In some, the new stress stimulates activity and performance, whilst for others it creates passivity and, on the contrary, weakens their whole personality.

In our experience we meet various types of manager reactions:

One of them is the Circulating Manager who, with glorious capability and enthusiasm, charms his future employer - they fill the position of top manager, yet during a relatively short period - within 1 to 2 years, both their enthusiasm and glory fade away. Even we wonder how such obvious job-hoppers and "limited" managers convince their future employer about their qualities. When the manager communicates directly

with headhunters who refuse to include them in the project, knowing that it is just another "trial-error" - the manager argues that they are merely project oriented. This is all right in case of an interim manager, but in the case of a stable top manager this "non-standard approach" makes one seriously consider the human qualities of such a person.

Another widespread manager type after the "fall" is the Melancholic Manager. A successful, sociable and charming individual gradually becomes a sad introvert and fails to convince those around them of their professional qualities and the 'fire in their heart'. Such managers become boring, cautious patrons who have a hard time convincing others about their own value. Such managers lack motivation and often seek a position in the sector which they left and don't see or want to see, the positive aspects of change which may await them in a completely different position.

Very often, Flying Dutchmen can be met at social events. Everybody knows them, they are remembered from the glorious prior achievements during their careers in companies, yet we do not know anything about them concerning the present. They give the impression of extremely busy businesspeople who keep working on endless projects and challenges almost as if it were top secret. When you manage to meet them in person and find out about their actual situation, a sense of disillusion follows in many cases.

Yet entirely different, is the approach of the "Manager - Predator" (in the positive sense of the word) who, although caught off guard by the change, are able to adapt, pull themselves together quickly and put up a fight. They turn over a new leaf, consider the opportunities and go for it. Often in a completely different segment they can convince those around them, not only of their management experience but in particular their potential to learn new skills and techniques without stubbornly sticking to a fixed idea of their uniqueness.

From the experience of headhunters who contact various categories and types of managers on a daily basis, we recommend a preventative strategy. Defend yourself against the "boss virus" beforehand. Practically, this means that you should know your own limitations and abilities and be able to view yourself without bias and 'get over it' with a smile. It is not necessary to hold the top position at all costs. Number 2 in a strong company may also be a challenge; new professional tasks offer the opportunity to learn new things, develop and extend your knowledge and abilities.

Waiting passively until somebody remembers a long-forgotten leader will not help, it is necessary to move on the market with your eyes and ears wide-

open, and in particular to realise that for your own healthy survival it is desirable to stop being dependent on the former employer as soon as possible. After all, the well known "out of sight, out of mind" mantra applies also to employment. No position is given to a person forever. Hired work has its beginning, a certain cycle and, sooner or later, an end.

Everyone must find the answer how to deal with such situation by themselves. But as John Donne said: "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main..."

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