

8. LEADERSHIP'S INFLUENCE ON COMPANY SUCCESS AND EMPLOYEES' WORK SATISFACTION AS INDICATED BY THE MLQ QUESTIONNAIRE (THE CASE OF AS CIBUS)

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Abstract

This article analyses leadership differences and leadership styles. Also opinions are expressed about how they influence personnel's work satisfaction and company success. Similar surveys have so far been undertaken in developed industrial countries, thus our research methodology could be developed on the basis of earlier studies. One of the most developed and tested as well as criticised among them appeared to be Bernard Bass's leadership theory and the associated questionnaire MLQ (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire).

The goal of the survey discussed in this paper is to give an overview of the research, analysing leadership's influence on company success and to develop a specific methodology for investigating leadership styles used by middle and top company managers, which enables us to express opinions about its suitability and effectiveness for this particular company.

The research methodology for leadership studies has mainly been developed by Anglo-Americans. Therefore it is culture-specific and meant for researching developed industrial countries. Preparing and use of Bass's research methodology in Estonia requires

knowledge of the Estonian cultural environment and adaptation of the methodology to the Estonian conditions. The basis for the results reported in this paper is a two years long research conducted in an Estonian production company, AS Cibus.

The hypothesis tested in this research and found to be correct was: the work satisfaction level of transformational leaders' followers is higher than that of transactional leaders' followers.

Introduction

In the recent years, due to economic reasons, questions concerning the management and leadership of Estonian companies have become excessively important. This has lead researchers to undertake various surveys covering a vast range of topics around management and leadership. Effective management is more and more the main lever enabling Estonian economic growth to continue and break through to European markets. Human resources and organisation culture have become paramount in the development of any company, so it has also become excessively important how they are used.

Changes in management paradigms have brought to light many new directions and dilemmas in management. In modern organisation management practices it is stressed that people can be influenced by setting examples, ideas and specific actions. If a leader has got ideas and a vision about the future of the organisation, s/he can become an accepted authority. In the modern globalising world it has become very important to discuss the questions of company leadership. This article aims to analyse leadership differences and leadership styles. Our research methodology was developed on the basis of research carried out so far; the most interesting appeared to be MLQ (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire) developed by Bernard Bass in 1985, but tested and corrected since then several times (Shackleton, 1995; Bass, Avolio, 1999). Interest in surveys of this kind has grown not only among the scientists of the USA and Western-Europe, but also in Estonia.

The use of Bass's research methodology requires thorough knowledge of the Estonian cultural environment and adaptation of the methodology to suit the local conditions. One goal of the research discussed in this paper is to develop a specific methodology for studying the leadership styles used by middle and top managers enabling one to judge its suitability and effectiveness for this particular company. The empirical research based on Bass's MLQ was conducted in the company named AS Cibus.

Theory

Leadership is based on the relationship of influence between a leader and (a) follower(s), the purpose of which is to create real changes in the name of shared purposes (Rost, 1993: 102).

It is not about pushing people into doing things as some managers still believe it to be because it has worked for them. These developments usually have a historic background and are based on the followers' temporary credit giving to the manager. This is why managers need to start changing their manager status to leadership position. This is possible only by constant development of managers who need support, directions and time for achieving it. It is impossible to become a leader in a short time as it takes hard work; moreover, leadership power needs to be earned. The top manager of Estonian Energy, Gunnar Okk, has said (Postimees, 01/02/2002) that ... successful top management of big modern organisations is impossible without managers becoming actual leaders.

People like changes that are not only dictated by leaders (managers) but also reflect their shared goals. In leadership the main attention is focused on the vision of the organisation, it is made clear and understandable along with customisation of changes with organisational goals. The first step while choosing leadership direction is to set up a vision for the organisation and the team, meaning – to create an ambitious and desirable picture of the future. Leadership assumes a dialogue and participation of the personnel in everyday actions. It enables them to work in a

coordinated way, participate in teamwork and experience fair relations while moving towards the goal.

Managers are interested in raising the level of work motivation of their subordinates, which is closely influenced by subordinates' work satisfaction. Employees with a high work satisfaction level accomplish their tasks better and faster, thus the organisation profits directly from them. The organisation often needs to make big investments in order to raise the level of work satisfaction. Usually these costs are repaid by positive feedback stemming from a higher level of work satisfaction. Such results are: fewer employees absent due to illness, more long-term work relations with employees, fewer employees looking for a new job and better kept means of work. Thus the company benefits from increasing the level of work satisfaction and its work environment is also better (DuBrin, 1992: 87).

Many authors divide the factors affecting the level of work satisfaction into three groups (Hodgetts, 1991: 89):

- organisational factors – the most important of which are salary, promotion opportunities, the essence of work, organisational procedures and working conditions;
- group factors – individual's work satisfaction in a group can be influenced by co-workers as well as by the direct Boss;
- personal factors – individual needs and expectations can also influence the work satisfaction level.

From the point of view of the current paper, group factors appear to be the most important ones and more specifically – how is the level of employee work satisfaction influenced by the leadership style of his/her manager (direct boss). Group factors are dependent on the cooperation and moral of the group, which stem from every person's relationships with his/her co-workers and direct boss. Good relations with co-workers and direct boss are very important from the point of view of work satisfaction. Helpful and supportive co-workers appear to have a positive effect on work satisfaction. Research has shown that lack of a good work team affects negatively the level of work satisfaction, but its

existence does not necessarily mean an instantly high level of work satisfaction (Hodgetts, 1991: 89).

Leadership is usually not associated with organisational stability. A stable organisation requires a leader who would unite different people into one group and achieve success through this process. Thus it is too one-sided to say that leadership and the leader are always associated with changes. Changes for the sake of changes are not the right context for a leader, which does not mean that a leader doesn't think about the future. A leader sees the need for changes and innovations as the prerequisite for prolonged organisational existence.

The main task of leadership is to energise and motivate people and not through the use of punishments or rewards. Leadership functions require that a leader should set up and realise long-term goals, which are new and change the status quo. The essence of leadership is to challenge status quo, creating an organisational vision and causing changes in the followers' values, attitudes and behaviour. For this purpose, various followers' empowerment strategies and tactics are used. (Daft, 1999: 39; Conger, Kanungo, 1998: 8–9)

Leadership (management) styles are handled differently and there is no one specific typology. Even the key terms of the subject, such as "management" and "leadership" are being used inconsistently. One of the first general and more accepted typologies for leadership styles is from Kurt Lewin, who classified them into three groups: autocratic, democratic and *laissez-faire* leadership styles (Skinner, Ivancevich, 1992: 62). Hersey-Blanchard (1993: 194–210) based their leadership theory on four leadership styles: telling, selling, participation and delegation.

Laissez-faire describes non-leadership and typical behaviours include being absent when needed, avoiding responsibility, being ignorant, etc. (Larsson *et al*, 2003: 16–25) Bass labels *laissez-faire* as well as passive management-by-exception or passive-avoidant leadership (Bass, 1999).

Management is understood as everyday pragmatic activities, leadership, on the other hand, stands for dealing with changes.

Pragmatic leadership (also known as transactional leadership) is based on the exchange- or transaction process between a leader and a follower. A pragmatic leader proceeds from his/her followers' needs and offers them compensations in exchange for a certain amount of work. The followers do certain tasks and move towards the goal.

Pragmatic leadership is similar to the system of economic and social activities necessary for goal achievement. Pragmatic leaders (managers) focus their attention on the present and through it maintain effective action of the company. They know well the traditional management functions, such as planning and budget calculation, and pay a lot of attention to abstract (non-personal) work related aspects. A pragmatic leader can be effective, as the main needs of the personnel are met and it raises work efficiency (Bass, 1995: 463–478).

Transformational leadership is mainly about generating change. Transformational leaders change the vision, strategy, organisational culture and also goods and technology. Transformational leaders concentrate mainly on ideas and shared values. Due to that, it is possible to give the actions broader and shared meaning, based on which followers can enact the changes. Transformational leadership is based on a leader's values, beliefs and characteristics and is not based on the exchange process between the leader and the followers. Transformational leaders empower their followers, develop their independence and encourage them to be more self-confident. They look for opportunities to improve individuals as well as organisation and society. (Boehnke *et al*, 2003: 5–15; Politis, 2002: 186–197)

Transformational leadership differs from transactional leadership in four categories. Firstly, transformational leadership enables developing leaders from followers, because they are given more freedom for taking action. Secondly, transformational leadership directs the attention from meeting followers' lower-level needs to meeting their higher-level needs, primarily to self-esteem and self-fulfilment. Thirdly, transformational leadership inspires followers to go further for the greater good for the group instead of

self-centredness. And additionally – transformational leadership creates vision and presents it in such a way that it is acceptable to the followers. Changes will take place only if employees have a clear idea about the future and know where the organisation is headed. (Bass, 1995: 463–478)

The authors are convinced that it is not wise to contrast the classical management concept with the modern leadership theory, as both roles (manager and leader) are important prerequisites for a successful company. A successful manager has to use both roles in a balanced way.

Managers can get recognition mainly based on their many years of work while they have developed together with the organisation. One of the characteristics of a modern manager is competence which consists of his knowledge, skills and values. Recent research in the USA has found that top managers are expected to be highly capable of working hard and paying more attention to appreciation of the personnel and its development. The research results published in *Harvard Business Review* show that charismatic leaders have not earned their glory, as the companies led by them have not become successful. On the basis of the research of 59 US top managers, which analysed charisma and company success, it was concluded that there is no relationship between charisma and company success. Unsuccessful has also been massive replacing of managers by new ones, who have mainly been hired from outside the company. New managers have not been more successful. (*The Economist*, 2002: 76)

Despite managers' relatively high salaries, their achievements have not been very big, that is why charismatic leaders have been replaced by classical managers in many US companies, even in the entertainment sector. Even more, some of the new leadership paradigms, including the importance of vision, have turned out to be unimportant and have been declared to be unacceptable. (*The Economist*, 2002: 76; 2003: 75)

A successful modern leader uses management and leadership basics in a balanced way. He earns his leading position thanks to hard work and skilful planning and execution of changes.

Managers/leaders are more goal-oriented than ever and motivate employees by uniting the company and employee goals. This trend can be seen also in Tartu University's seminars for business managers. Estonian managers pay more attention to motivating people and many organisations have worked out special work measurement and compensation systems.

Estonian managers' competence and leadership styles used are similar to the management theory and practices of other democratic countries. At the same time, we need to try to avoid the mistakes made by other, e.g. US companies, where too much was expected from charismatic leaders and too many managers were replaced constantly.

Some of the disturbing similar trends in Estonia's recent past can be pointed out, such as the forced resignation of Meelis Virkebau (Narva Kreenholm) and others, primarily in public sector organisations. From the point of view of the public sector overly hasty and often rash decisions to replace leading top professionals can lead to employees' lower work satisfaction. That due to, on the one hand, their need to adapt to another managers' leadership style and on the other, their lessened willingness to work, in case the new leader is seen as an inappropriate successor.

Methodology

Leadership style largely determines a company's success opportunities. Which leadership style is suitable depends on the company, environment, leader, followers, etc. It is necessary to have a methodology for determining the right leadership style, in order to facilitate selection. Original questionnaires were problematic in their content and didn't take account of the Estonian cultural environment, they needed to be re-adjusted. They also appeared to be too abstract and hard to be tested in practice.

We found several questionnaires that could have been translated into Estonian and adjusted to Estonian conditions, but Bass's MLQ was chosen for the following reasons. Firstly, several theories were too complicated to be tested in practice. This is one of

the main negative criticisms about situational leadership theories (Yukl, 1989). Therefore, we chose the group of leadership style theories that are both informative and easier to be tested.

The second major problem was the difficulty to find an original full-length questionnaire. Although many of the questionnaires had been tested by different scientists and also revised in many cases, several questions or blocs of questions were still criticised. In the best case it was possible to find an already changed/revised questionnaire, but as the changes were either culture or situation specific, it was not the best option to use such an altered version of an original questionnaire in the particular adjustment project discussed in this paper. At the same time, it is also important to be aware of the criticism made and to use it in a creative way. Thus there was one more criterion for choosing a suitable questionnaire – a sufficient amount of previous testing and research done with it.

So the most suitable questionnaire appeared to be Bernard Bass's MLQ. Most of the leadership style theories are based on a two-dimensional approach – goal orientation versus relationship orientation. Recently a new trend has appeared based on the fact that charismatic leadership is separated from transformational leadership, while transformational and transactional (or pragmatic) leadership are also different phenomena. The terms “transforming” and “transformational” were first used by Burns in 1978 and then by Bass in 1985. (Hooijberg, Choi, 2000)

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire has been used in many cases to research leadership styles in connection with work satisfaction. Leaders see work satisfaction as an important indicator of organisational efficiency (Cherrington, 1989: 308).

Bernard Bass has done a vast amount of research on transformational leadership which his Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) is based on. It enables followers to describe their formal leader by seven leadership styles, among which two are transactional and four transformational styles. The leadership styles are (Bass, Avolio, 1999: 441–463):

- *laissez-faire*,
- management-by-exception,
- contingent reward,
- individualised consideration,
- intellectual stimulation,
- inspirational motivation,
- idealised influence.

Laissez-faire style was described already by Blake and Mouton and Bass's understanding of it is the same. It is a style in case of which the leader does not show any interest in or take action regarding the work of his/her employees. Such behaviour results in conflicts among the followers due to misunderstanding of responsibilities and attempts to take over the leader's role.

Management-by-exception is a style in case of which the leader mainly deals with the errors made by the employees. The leader takes action only if a mistake is made or a goal is not met and never attempts to make any changes in the work methods if the set goals are met. The style has two forms – passive and active. In case of the passive form, the leader sets the standards and does not get involved any more; in case of deviations from the standards, the leader is forced to take action but does so unwillingly. In case of the active form, the leader monitors the work process closely and in case of deviations from standards he takes action immediately. He is alert all the time and looks for the reasons why the deviation occurred. Followers react to both forms with avoidance to initiate changes, preferring to maintain the status quo, which is not the most wanted situation for most of the modern organisations. (Shakeleton, 1995: 106–108)

Contingent reward is a leadership style that basically means an exchange process in which the leader rewards his/her followers according to their work results. The leader promises rewards for particular work to be done and explains the tasks needed to be taken care of. The followers get rewarded only if the expected tasks are done. The leader supports and praises them if they have earned it. In MLQ this style has two options: actual rewards and promised rewards. Actual rewards is a form a leadership style,

according to which the leader increases the rewards based on work results. Promised rewards is a form of leadership style according to which the leader motivates his/her followers by promising rewards before actual work.

Transactional leadership consists of four leadership styles, among which the first one is individualised consideration. This style is used when the leader helps the follower to develop him/herself and takes care of him/her. The leader is heedful of his/her followers' needs, offering them difficult tasks and learning opportunities, and delegating tasks. This results in the followers' readiness to develop competence and show initiative.

Intellectual stimulation is a style in case of which the leader stimulates the followers to think. S/he encourages them to use their imagination and to come up with new ideas. The main feature of this style is that the followers are free to express their ideas and think creatively. The use of this style is inevitable if changes are needed and innovation is supported.

An inspiring leader creates a clear picture of the future situation, which is optimistic and achievable; s/he encourages others to dream even more, lessening the difficulties by naming the key aspects and using simple language to explain the mission. This results in the followers' readiness to make extra efforts for the mission.

Idealised influence is mainly about the leader's charisma. It means that the leader acts as an example, showing tenacity while achieving the goals, takes the responsibility for his actions and expresses great confidence in his/her vision of the future. The leader sacrifices his own good for the sake of the others and shares his success. The followers like their leader, trust him/her and try to be like him/her (Shackleton, 1995: 108).

According to Bass, transactional and transformational leadership are different processes, but don't exclude each other. A leader needs to use both in a balanced way depending on the situation.

Our research was conducted at AS Cibus in 2000 and in 2002, the interval being approximately one year. Cibus is an Estonian bakery, where at the time of the research worked about 180

employees. The company has four departments: pastry (30 employees), bakery (80 employees), *kama* (Estonian national food; flour made of different grains) (15 employees), and marketing (12 employees). The strength of the personnel is considered to be a long average service record as it means a good level of skills. On the other hand, the personnel's high average age and little work done to hire younger people appear to be the weakest points.

The sample of the research was 75 people, which were the employees randomly chosen as the workforce that happened to be working on the days when our research was conducted. At the first stage we received 85% and at the second stage 78% of the questionnaires. The goal was set to have the opinions of at least 1/3 of the personnel, which was attained. Seven different managers' leadership styles were tested and each manager was described by at least 10 people. The same questionnaire was used to collect the opinions of the managers and their direct subordinates.

Results, discussion and conclusions

Bass's work on transactional leadership has stimulated a lot of research from other scientists, for example, Bryman, Bycio, Hackett, Allen, Yukl, Podsakoff, House, etc. The main tool of research has been MLQ, which has been used for determining the relationships between leadership and, for instance, work satisfaction and leader efficiency. The hypothesis tested by the current research and found to be confirmed was: the work satisfaction level of transformational leaders' followers is higher than the work satisfaction level of transactional leaders' followers.

Bryman has previously noted that inspirational motivation and idealised influence or charismatic leadership tend to be those components of Bass's theory which are most likely related to the desirable results, such as efficiency, satisfaction and additional efforts. Individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation are usually the next two most important components after the results mentioned earlier. At the same time, individualised consideration is typically more important, the only exception being

the case when it is paired with extra efforts. Contingent reward helps to increase work satisfaction, efficiency and occurrence of extra efforts. Management-by-exception does not have one steady outcome as shown by research, although its passive form is usually less effective than the active form. *Laissez-faire* style has always highly unwanted outcomes (Alvesson, Deetz, 2001).

In keeping with these results, our current study showed the negative effect of *laissez-faire* styles on work satisfaction, which was predictable. Fortunately, only one out of seven leaders used this as the main style. Comparing the active and passive forms of management-by-exception, the active form appears to be more desired by followers. It is most probably because in this case the leader shows more initiative and interest towards work and his/her relations with the employees.

In addition to explicit criticism, Bass's theory has been seen differently by different authors. Many have pointed out that the phenomenon of charisma has been viewed too narrowly. By Bass it is justified to separate charisma from transformational leadership. And this despite some authors' (Bryman, Conger, Kanungo) understanding that charisma is more likely the sum of the all components of transformational leadership (Avolio, Bass, 1999).

One of the most interesting research results appears to be the one that concludes that intellectual stimulation is equally important at all levels of management as far as work efficiency is concerned. This stands in contrast to the widespread understanding that intellectual stimulation is more important at higher levels of management, as pointed out by Bennis and Nanus (1985), and Tichy and Devanna (1986). By our current study, more intellectual stimulation appears to be preferred by most of the followers involved in the survey, and especially in the form of personal and group discussions with the leader.

Considering the criticism of MLQ and the research results obtained so far we decided to take the following steps to adjust MLQ to the Estonian conditions:

- to translate MLQ into Estonian, maintaining the exact meaning of original questions;
- to conduct pilot research to test its comprehensibility and to draw first conclusions about whether or not the criticism applies to the Estonian economic environment;
- to revise and adjust the translated questionnaire and to conduct a more extensive research to test the MLQ in the Estonian conditions and to compare the results with those obtained by previous research;
- to rephrase MLQ in accordance with the Estonian conditions.

We don't exclude the possibility that it may be necessary to repeat the pilot research. Currently we are at the second stage of the process described above.

To test whether Bass's questionnaire by category (transactional versus transformational) and every leadership style separately measure the same thing, Cronbach's α was calculated (see Table 8.1). The accepted value for Cronbach's α in social sciences is 0.80 or bigger. As can be seen, the values for transactional leadership overall are better than for transformational leadership, thus these questions need more adjustment to the Estonian conditions.

Table 8.1. Cronbach's α by leadership style

Leadership style	Cronbach's α
Idealised influence.	0.97
Individualised consideration	0.85
Inspirational motivation	0.88
Intellectual stimulation	0.82
Promised rewards	0.80
Rewards	0.82
Management-by-exception (passive)	0.64
Management-by-exception (active)	0.56
Autocratic-democratic leadership	0.77

On the basis of the research results, it can be concluded that transactional leadership is more likely to be used at higher levels of management. The results of 2000 and 2002 both reveal that transactional leadership prevails among the top and middle management. This finding contradicts to Tichy's and Ulrich's (1984) research results, according to which it is transformational leadership that prevails at higher levels of management (Shackleton, 1995).

For most of the managers, we succeeded in pointing out their leadership orientation, but in case of some leaders it was difficult to track down one leadership style. The reason for that is the leaders' normal tendency to use two or three main styles. This kind of result was predictable and logical, as it points to the historical trend of leadership theories to develop from leadership style theories to situational theories.

One of the anticipated results was that mainly autocratic leadership style is used and it was also proven. This expectation was based on Estonia's historic background and on its specific organisational culture. No confirmation was found to the idea that autocratic leadership and transactional leadership are related. Although it can be said on the basis of our two years' results that most leaders are still transactional leaders, a comparison between the two years revealed that three out of seven had changed to become transformational leaders. We believe that this fact points to the leaders' increased readiness for changes in their work environment.

Similarly to Bryman's research results, work satisfaction proved to be most strongly related to inspirational motivation and idealised influence. As expected, in case of *laissez-faire* style work satisfaction was the lowest.

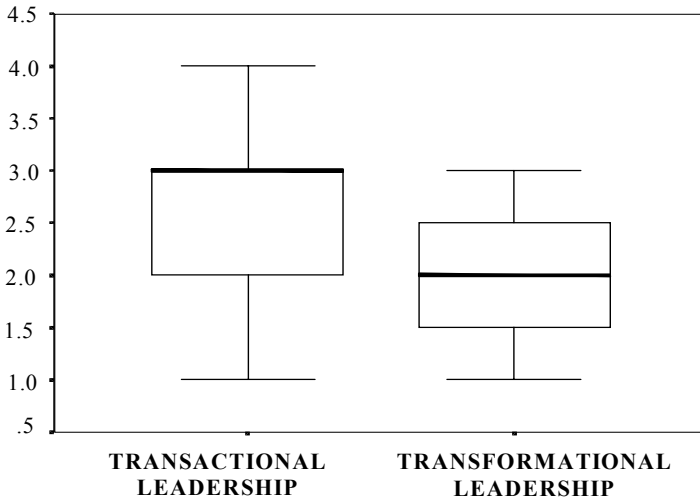


Figure 8.1. Work satisfaction of transactional and transformational leaders' followers (1 – I'm very satisfied with my work, 2 – I'm satisfied with my work, 3 – I'm not satisfied with my work, 4 – I'm not satisfied with my work at all).

It can be seen that opinions about work satisfaction vary more in case of transactional leaders' followers (from 1 to 4). In case of transformational leaders' followers, the answers are more marked with smaller values, meaning that they are more satisfied with their work.

In conclusion, it can be said that the followers of transformational leaders are more satisfied with their work than the followers of transactional leaders. As work satisfaction is the basis for work motivation and relates to the possibility to shape motivated staff, it is one of the success factors of a company. Frequent changes in personnel lead to increased direct costs on hiring, training, etc. Also the so-called social costs like damage of company reputation among clients and future staff may become important.

It can be concluded that there is a need to research other Estonian production companies to make generalisations about management of manufacturing industry. This would allow us to get a deeper insight into the specifics of management and leadership prevailing in the Estonian manufacturing industry and would thus enable us to make better suggestions about how to develop Estonian microeconomic policy and organisational culture.

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KOKKUVÕTE

Eestvedamise mõju ettevõtte edukusele ja töötajate tööraahulole *MLQ* küsimustiku rakendamise alusel (AS Cibus näitel)

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Artiklis analüüsitakse juhtimise iseärasusi ja eestvedamise stiile ning antakse hinnang nende mõjust ettevõtte edukusele ja töötajate tööraahulole. Uurimismetoodika väljatöötamisel tuginesime antud valdkonnas varasemalt tehtud uuringutele, millest huvipakkuvaim oli Bernard Bassi *MLQ* (*Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*) mitmefaktoriline küsimustik eestvedamise uurimiseks. Nimetatud küsimustik töötati välja ameerika teadlase B. Bassi poolt 1985. aastal ning seda on teaduslikes uurimustes korduvalt kasutatud ja täiendatud. Küsimustik võimaldab alluvail/järgijail oma juhti iseloomustada seitsme juhtimisstiili kaudu, kus eristatakse kahte pragmaatilist, nelja ümberkujundavat ja *laissez-faire* juhtimisstiili.

Vaadeldava uurimismetoodika ettevalmistamine ja rakendamine nõuab Eesti kultuurikeskkonna ja organisatsioonikultuuri tundmist, mis on eelduseks meetoodika kohandamiseks Eesti oludele. Läbiviidud uuringu eesmärgiks on välja töötada spetsiaalne meetoodika, millega saaks uurida ettevõtete kesk- ja tippjuhtide poolt kasutatavat juhtimisstiili ning anda hinnang selle sobivusele ja tõhususele. Selleks viidi läbi uuringud 75 AS Cibus töötaja hulgas 2000. ja 2002. aastal. Korduvhinnangud saadi 7 kesk- ja tipp-tasandi juhi kohta, keda igauhte hindas vähemalt kümme töötajat.

Uurimustulemustest võib kokkuvõtvalt järeldada, et ümberkujundava eestvedamisega seonduvaid juhtimisstiile kasutavate juhtide alluvad on tööga enam rahul kui pragmaatilise eestvedamisega seonduvaid juhtimisstiile kasutavate juhtide alluvad.