



Abstract of
Paradigm shift in considering employees
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In management we got used to think in «resources» to be leveraged as «capital» for «value creation» (= even more capital). Specifically, we may speak about natural resources, financial resources – and last but not least about human resources. Using the same term for oil, money and human beings shows the approach of looking at each of them as *means* for an end, which is profit and through it shareholder value maximization. In a typical business plan, we may read about the «labour costs» being competitive due to an attractive «labour market», about the «skill-set» of the workers as such, about the engineering or even innovation «competencies» of the well-educated so-called «white-collar» staff, about their «flexibility» for overwork.

In my paper I will show the evolvement and its limits of looking at employees as means versus ends. Historically we can classify three mainstream levels plus a fourth, as the paradigm shift. It started with looking (and treating) employees as “*tools*” or “*machines*”. At that level the phrase speaks about *human capacity*. The next level sounds more sophisticated naming and treating employees as (*human*) *resources*. The highest level at mainstream management is when the CEO speaks about his employees as “our most important *assets*”. Thus they are part of the capital portfolio, as *human capital*. In all the three cases the human beings are only means.

In case we base our approach on human dignity, the employees are considered as persons and are ends in themselves becoming part of the goal portfolio. This is the paradigm shift, based on the Catholic Social Teaching, especially on the recent encyclical letters, *Caritas in veritate* and *Laudato Si*. I will show the logic and system of such an alternative – personalistic – approach. With this approach we do not neglect or even deny the need for profitability, we increase the complexity of the company’s goal-portfolio: besides aiming economic sustainability through profit generation, the owner and the management respect and take responsibility for the employees as ends, too.

This requires an alternative leadership model, which is called “servant-leadership”. Such a leader has special characteristics, like “goal-orientation, knowing how to lead a significant life based on “faith, hope, love and gratitude,” integrity, team work, enriching the lives of others, understanding and respecting others, having grace and forgiveness for others, and being tough-minded.” (Batten, 1998, p. 39)



Consistent implementation of the related servant-leadership model results in a caring organization which not only creates financial wealth, but well-being for all the stakeholders, too. The wellness needs (physical, intellectual, occupational, environmental, spiritual, emotional, and social – according to University of California, 2014) of the employees are constantly aimed to be achieved.

Some new phenomena, like serving (instead of ruling), community (instead of work place), reciprocity, including mutual gratuity get be discovered, integrated and practiced. Indirectly having a positive impact not just on the company, but on the society in general, too, generating not just GDP, but social benefit, too.

Key words: human dignity, Catholic Social Teaching, spirituality, servant leadership, community, well-being creation, personalism