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Journal of Applied Leadership and Management

Provided in Cooperation with:
Professional School of Business & Technology, Hochschule Kempten - University of Applied Sciences

Suggested Citation: Konz, Alexander (2014) : Equivalent expert career paths in small- and medium-sized companies – chance to gain and retain good employees or a threat for managers?, Journal of Applied Leadership and Management, ISSN 2194-9522, Hochschule Kempten - University of Applied Sciences, Professional School of Business & Technology, Kempten, Vol. 3, pp. 88-103, http://www.journal-alm.org/article/view/13418

This Version is available at:
https://hdl.handle.net/10419/156745

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Equivalent expert career paths in small- and medium-sized companies – chance to gain and retain good employees or a threat for managers?

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Summary

Research questions:	Does a manager in a small- and medium-sized company accept an expert on the same hierarchy level or are conflicts the consequences due to her/his power motivation?
Methods:	Questionnaire across different hierarchy levels in a medium-sized company
Results:	Managers are aware of the need for experts and claim that both careers are equal but are motivated by power and reputation and for that reason will not accept an expert on the same hierarchy level.
Structure of the article:	1. Introduction; 2. Literature Review; 3. Research questions & methods; 4. Detailed empirical results; 5. Conclusions; 6. About the author; 7. References

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays companies and organizations are faster faced with increasingly tough competition due to permanent dynamic changes in an increasingly globalized economy and business world. Because of this situation and the "war for talent" - due to a shortage of skilled labor many companies are forced to adapt to these conditions and develop new organizational structures. Therefore companies delayer their hierarchies, change their leadership principles and increase the importance of work teams and project groups.

From a business perspective, the company´s know-how is the key to competitiveness. But this know-how is in the heads of many employees and very difficult to save in any database. In order to keep this expertise, or to be more attractive as an employer in hiring appropriate experts, companies are implementing an expert career path that is equivalent to management hierarchy levels. In order for an expert career not to be seen as a second class career alternative the focus during the implementation process is to explain to the employee the equivalence of an expert career path as a new modern form of career. The concepts for expert career paths still vary. Most companies have their own characteristic facets, designs and operating procedures. But very often the upcoming changes in the hierarchy and consequences for managers are not considered during the implementation.

Especially motivators and needs differ between expert career and management career and can lead to controversial interpretations and decisions within corporate divisions (departments, divisions etc.). Also the fact that managers will be retrenched within their areas of responsibility, in which many managers also feel technically competent, through the implementation of an equivalent expert career path can lead to a negative attitude and thus to conflicts. Furthermore, criteria for success differ between experts and managers and have to be considered.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The word "career" is derived from the Latin word "carrus" and the Medieval Latin word "carraria" – which means “driveway” and figuratively “path of life”. This defines career as professional life (Wachter, 1998). However, in German „career“ has traditionally another meaning: the rapid rise within hierarchical organizations and companies (Berthel, 2003).

The understanding of work has changed dramatically. The concept of a lifelong steady job is less common. Instead, temporary employment is on the rise. Specific work areas are outsourced and replaced by temporary work and requirements for flexibility, and employee expertise increases constantly. Thus, rigid, inflexible traditional careers die out largely (Fuchs, 1998).

The classical life cycle model by Edgar Schein from 1978 is replaced by a multi-layer model, which is characterized by the fact that careers always have to be restarted and the durations of specific jobs are getting shorter. Career as a long lasting, homogeneous, consistent process becomes obsolete, and nowadays the term “new career” has come into use (Lang-von Wins, 2006).

The term “new career” describes all types of career patterns which differ from the traditional, organizational career with long periods with one employer and passing through the given career paths by the employer. These include frequent career moves across the boundaries of different companies, industries and projects, but also frequent changes between times of fixed employment and self-employed professional activities (Zabusky, 1996). Literature with respect to “new career” as Zabusky and Barley (1996) emphasizes the subjective understanding of a successful career. Even careers that do not present themselves as an upward movement in a predefined hierarchy are successful careers when the people who run through the career perceive the steps as successful. In this way, new objective criteria for success arise, like knowledge gain or increase in reputation within expert groups.

In conclusion, the appearance of a stable, internal labor market belongs to the past. In order to make a career, different job changes need to be accepted. Career is more and more a self-determined variable in the life of every employee. Candor with respect to movements within a company is needed (Herriot, 2002).

Due to a rather flat hierarchy, horizontal movements, equivalent in relation to vertical advancements, should be accepted an also communicated by the company (Thom, 2001).

The need of new Career models

A management and leadership career is the most traditional career type. The traditional management career is a transfer within the line organization or hierarchy, wherein the vertical transfer predominates compared to the horizontal transfer (transfer of the same hierarchy level). Usually, a rise is associated with gain of expertise, responsibility, status, power and remuneration (Berthel, 2003).

Due to flatter hierarchies there are fewer career opportunities in this model. Therefore, modifications are needed; this means the creation of entirely new career paths and a basic understanding of career (Spies, 2011).

For this reason there is a trend towards expert career paths. Companies seek to “create possibilities for development” and “create employee loyalty”. (Lurse & Baumgartner, 2009).

Like the management career, the expert career also includes a rise, but more horizontally on the same hierarchical level (Bethke-Langenegger, 2009).

The expert career model can be seen as an alternative to the traditional management career path, which is characterized by a comparable hierarchical human resources system alongside the traditional levels of management (career path, management careers) for highly qualified experts. The concept of expert careers includes different ranks – parallel to various executive levels of the management career – with specific requirements, titles and incentives. The beneficiary of the expert career is called a skilled employee, skilled worker, specialist or expert. The beneficiaries have clear visions of how they do not want to shape their careers. They refuse controls concerning the execution of their tasks and complain about unnecessary bureaucratic organizational structures that hinder them (Günzel, 2009).

Discrepancy between motivations of managers and experts and its consequences

The motivation level of managers and experts depends on the individually dominant need and on the situation (Maslow, 1954). That means that the behavior of managers and experts is strongly influenced by the

individual composition of motives.

The most common motivators for an expert career are: no desire for personnel responsibility, internal intrigues and administration, followed by seeking a better work-life-balance and concerns about the loss of professional identity (Werle, 2012).

In a study about how management deals with power, it was demonstrated that especially managers have a strong aspiration to strengthen their own ego and status and that this boosts the struggle for power (Schüller, 2012).

Adler (1933) claims that the individual strives for 'perfection' and 'supremacy' and, thus, for a self-image that is endowed with as much control as possible. The power motive works according to the principle of compensation. This means that an individual experiences a lack of power and therefore feels inferior and incompetent. It then tries to compensate this inferiority by striving for power and superiority (Adler, 1933). For McClelland (1975), the power motive is, first of all, the desire to feel strong and, after that, the desire to exercise power.

Anderson and Berdahl (2002) demonstrate in different empirical studies the correlation between the exercise of power and the experience of positive emotions.

According to Büssing (1988), the aspiration of control does not only refer to the current life or work situation but also to future events. The goal of every action is the optimization of control, i.e., the improvement of future opportunities for action. Thus, every action is an attempt to exercise control. The achievement of an aim as a consequence of actions always satisfies the pursuit of control as well.

As reported by Abraham Maslow (1954), the trigger of conflicts is the violation of subjective needs of one party. An unsatisfied emotional need, like the need for power of managers, can make a rational solution impossible and leads to conflicts.

Through the implementation of an equivalent expert career path the manager loses decisive power if an expert who has veto power for professional decisions is installed as his peer. In consequence, the behavior of the expert has negative motivational effects on the manager (Wiswede, 2007).

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS & METHODS

The lack of specialists and, consequently, the lack of future leaders will increase. Even if small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) could poach experts and leaders from large corporations and companies, a shortage will be unavoidable (Heegt, 2012). But where can companies find experts and future leaders? SMEs are looking for experts and future leaders in their own companies. But not only the shortage of experts or demographic changes are reasons for the internal search. Employees from within the company already know the structures, products and/or processes; consequently, in contrast to external candidates, the learning period is much shorter. Other major reasons are the costs for job-advertisements, selection processes and job interviews. Many of the highly-skilled employees of SMEs are more interested in challenging project tasks than the traditional management career. These specialists and experts want to develop professionally and ask for the active support of their companies. For this reason companies have to offer expert careers as alternative career paths to attract and retain valuable employees. .

The major challenge of the implementation of an expert career path is not only to explain the equivalence of an expert career to the employees, but also to find an appropriate way for managers to accept an expert on the same hierarchy level. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the different motivators between experts and managers.

Finally, most managers feel familiar with technical issues within their area of responsibility and do not want to be restricted in their decision-making by senior experts.

All these reasons can result in conflicts between managers and experts and lead to the following hypotheses of the author:

Hypothesis:

"Managers are aware of the need for senior experts and claim that a traditional career path and an expert career path are equal, but are still rejecting the implementation of an expert career path due to the fear of losing control on decision-making as well as power & status to senior experts on the same hierarchy level."

In order to validate the hypothesis, a qualitative analysis based on a questionnaire was undertaken. The physical

environment for this survey was a medium-sized company in South Germany. This company was chosen due to its size and steady international growth, and thus the constant competition pressure and need of experts and managers. To receive meaningful data, only managers at the relevant hierarchy level were contacted and surveyed, i.e. group manager, department manager and division manager. The survey was designed online and the link for the questionnaire was distributed via e-mail to the members of the target group. The duration from distributing the questionnaire link to its completion was 2 weeks, with a reminder automatically sent via e-mail after one week. The survey included only closed questions, meaning that the interviewed person was limited to specified answers or scales. This was chosen to limit the scope for interpretation and simplify the analysis of the collected data.
The questionnaire contained a total of 10 main questions and can be subdivided into 3 sections as follows:

1. Personal data and corporate success criteria (Question No. 1 – 2)
2. Questions about the expert career path (Question No. 3 – 4)
3. Demographics of participants (Question No. 5 – 10)

The statements (Question No. 1, 3, 4) are measured based upon a five point Likert scale, using a format ranging from “Strongly disagree” (1 point), “Disagree” (2 points), “Neither nor” (3 points), “Agree” (4 points) to “Strongly agree” (5 points). In Question No. 2, the interviewed person has to place five different possibilities in correct order from the attendee’s perspective. All demographic questions (Question No. 5 – 10) feature checkmarks, providing the interviewed person with just one possibility to answer.

4. DETAILED EMPIRICAL RESULTS

A total of forty managers participated in the survey, 28 managers completed the questionnaire, reflecting a respond rate of 70 %. Only completed questionnaires were considered for the analysis.

Demographic results
Managers within the different hierarchy levels are approximately equal in number, thus providing an equal distribution over the important hierarchy levels. Asking the managers how many years they have worked in their current position, 39 % answered less than five years, 36 % between five and ten years, 18 % between eleven and twenty years, and 7 % more than twenty years. The result shows that only very few remain in their position for a very long time. While seventy-five percent of all Managers are older than forty, the highest proportion (50 %) is between forty-one and fifty. The manager age distribution does not prompt cause for concern, but does illustrate the need for young academics, because seventy-five percent of all managers will enter into retirement in the next 15 – 20 years, and replacements are needed. Also, more than half of all surveyed managers have a degree and the bigger part of the managers (82 %) is responsible for areas with up to fifty employees. 86 % of the managers received promotion within their company . 75 % were promoted within the same department or were nominated by their superior. Indeed, this result supports that SMEs seek future leaders in their own companies due to cost reasons and lower learning periods due to known structures and processes. There is also much experience required for becoming an expert, which is gained over the years within the same department or company. This means that most of the future experts would be also promoted within their company or even the same department.

Results of the self-assessment
The major aim of the self-assessment was to identify whether managers regard themselves as having sufficient professional competence to make technical decisions and whether they strive for power and reputation. The following table shows the descriptive statistics for question number 1:

Table 1:
Means and Standard Deviations for Question No. 1 (n=28)

Question No.	M	SD
1.1: I´m very well familiar with the technical issues within my area of responsibility.	4.39	0.629
1.2: Making technical decisions is for me very easy	4.11	0.737
1.3: I define my career as successful when I can take over personnel responsibility and make far-reaching decisions	3.89	1.100
1.4: I define my career as successful when my expertise and advice is always appreciated	3.71	0.976
1.5: Experts and managers can´t always agree in decision making processes	3.36	1.026

Scale values: 1 (strongly disagree) – 5 (strongly agree)

A One-Sample Test with a significance level of 5 % and the test value of 3 was conducted to analyze the assumption.

Table 2 shows that the confidence interval is only in the positive zone, which means that the difference between the variable and test value in the population has a certainty of 95 % between 1.15 and 1.64. In accordance with these results, the t-value is highly significant, thus is supporting the assumption that most managers feel very familiar with the technical issues within their area of responsibility.

Table 2:
One-Sample Test for statement No. 1.1

	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference	Test Value	t	df
Familiar with technical issues	.000	1.393	1.15, 1.64	3	11.720	27

*p < .05. **p < .01.

The computed mean of 4.11 for statement No. 1.2 differs significantly from the average value of 3, and the standard deviation of 0.737 indicates that almost ninety percent of all surveyed managers responded between "strongly agree" and "agree" (*Table 3*). The outcome of the One-Sample Test shows that the t-value is highly significant, which supports the assumption that it feels easy to make technical decisions.

Table 3:
One-Sample Test for statement No. 1.2

	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference	Test Value	t	df
Technical decisions	.000	1.107	.82, 1.39	3	7.946	27

*p < .05. **p < .01.

The answers for question no. 1.2 also show a high and statistically significant correlation to the outcome of question no. 1.1 (*Table 4*).

Table 4:
Correlation between statement No. 1.1 and 1.2 (n=28)

	1.1: Be familiar with technical issues	1.2: Easy to make technical decisions
1.1: Be familiar with technical issues	---	
1.2: Easy to make technical decisions	. 305	---

*p < .05. **p < .01.

This means that most of the surveyed managers feel very familiar with technical issues within their area of responsibility (see result of question no. 1.1), and thus making technical decisions feels very easy for them. These results confirm the part of the hypotheses that managers regard themselves as having sufficient professional competence to make technical decisions.

Table 5:
One-Sample Test for statement No. 1.3

	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference	Test Value	t	df
Personnel responsibility	.000	.893	.47, 1.32	3	4.294	27

*p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 5 reveals that the confidence interval is only in the positive zone, which means that the difference between the variable and test value in the population has a certainty of 95 % between 0.47 and 1.32. In accordance with these results, the t-value is highly significant (t = 4.294). According to the literature, the result of the One-Sample Test supports the power motivation theory, namely that Managers strive for a self-image endowed with as much control as possible. Furthermore, the outcome of question no. 1.3 also supports the hypothesis that managers strive for power and reputation.

Table 6:
One-Sample Test for statement No. 1.4

	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference	Test Value	t	df
Expertise and advice	.001	.714	.34, 1.09	3	3.873	27

*p < .05. **p < .01.

The results of the One-Sample Test in Table 6 illustrate that the t-value is highly significant (t = 3.873), which means that even if expertise and technical knowledge are more motivating for experts, it seems that such factors are also very important for managers.

Table 7:

One-Sample Test for statement No. 1.5

	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference	Test Value	t	df
Agreement in decisions	.077	.357	-.04, .76	3	1.842	27

*p < .05. **p < .01.

The results of statement 1.5 lead to a mean of M = 3.36 and a standard deviation of SD = 1.026. The mean of M= 3.36 does not differ significantly from the average value of 3. In accordance with the result of the computed One-Sample Test (

Table 7:) it is not possible to support the assumption that experts and managers can't always agree in decision-making processes.

To evaluate the most important goals of managers the attendees had to bring some key criteria for success in the correct order for their area of responsibility. The following table reflects the results and provides a detailed overview concerning the number of attendees, mean, standard deviation and the standard error of the mean.

Table 8:

Means and Standard Deviations for Question No. 2 (n=28)

Question Nb.	M	SD	Std. Error Mean
Cost reduction/ increase in turnover	3.04	1.401	.265
Increase in productivity	2.32	1.442	.272
Increase in innovation	3.50	1.503	.284
Personnel development	2,79	1.258	.238
Increase in quality	3.36	1.254	.237

Scale values: 1 (most important) – 5 (not important)

Table **8** illustrates that the most important goal for managers is an "increase in productivity". A One-Sample Test with a significance level of 5 % and the test value of 3 was conducted to analyze the assumption.

Table 9:

One-Sample Test for Question No. 2

	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference	Test Value	t	df
Productivity	.019	-.679	-1.24, -.12	3	-2.491	27

*p < .05. **p < .01

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The results of the One-Sample Test in Table 9 illustrate that the t-value is negative and highly significant. According to the literature, motivators of an expert career are characterized by education and development. However, referring to the result illustrated in TTable 9, the most important factor is an increase in productivity. If now assumed that these managers encounter an expert at the same hierarchy level a conflict of interests may

arise.

Acceptance of the expert career path

The aim of the third part was to identify whether managers are aware of the need of experts and specialists, in their area of responsibility, see both career paths equal and what the border of acceptance is. Also in the third part they had to evaluate some statements from their point of view. The following table provides an overview concerning the number of attendees, mean, standard deviation and the standard error of the mean for question number 3 (*Table 10*):

Table 10:

Means and Standard Deviations for Question No. 3 (n=28)

Question Nb.	M	SD
3.1: Expert career paths are an appropriate way to attract and retain good employees	4,46	0,838
3.2: Work-Life-Balance is easier with a expert career path as with a traditional manager career	2,64	1,026
3.3: Experts can make far-reaching decisions in the sense of their superior	3,29	0,976
3.4: Expert career paths could increase the expertise in my area	3,75	1,041
3.5: Experts should be on a par with their superiors	3,07	1,303

Scale values: 1 (strongly disagree) – 5 (strongly agree)

Table 11:

One-Sample Test for statement No. 3.1

	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference	Test Value	t	df
Attract & retain employees	.000	1.464	1.14, 1.79	3	9.245	27

*p < .05. **p < .01.

The result of the One-Sample Test clearly shows that most of the managers are aware of the need of an expert career path to attract and retain good employees, thus confirming one part of the hypotheses.

Table 12:

One-Sample Test for statement No. 3.2

	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference	Test Value	t	df
Work-Life-Balance	.077	-.357	-.76, .04	3	-1.842	27

*p < .05. **p < .01.

The results of statement 3.2 lead to a mean of M = 2.64 and a standard deviation of SD = 1.026. The mean of M

= 2.64 does not differ significantly from the average value of 3. In accordance with the result of the computed One-Sample Test, it is not possible to support the assumption that managers consider the Work-Life-Balance to be easier with an expert career path than with a traditional manager career. Therefore, it can be assumed that most of the managers are aware of the level of stress and experts' requirements, and that it is comparable to a manager's career.

Table 13:

One-Sample Test for statement No. 3.4

	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference	Test Value	t	df
Increase of expertise	.001	.750	.35, 1.15	3	3.813	27

*p < .05. **p < .01.

The outcomes of question no. 3.4 are largely comparable to those of question no. 3.1. Indeed, the aim of both questions no. 3.1 and 3.4 is to ascertain whether managers are aware of a need for experts in their area of responsibility. The mean score also differs significantly. Furthermore, the result of this question indicates that managers are aware of the need for experts, and consider that they would increase expertise in their area of responsibility. Accordingly, this result also confirms the part of the hypotheses concerning the need for experts.

Table 14:

One-Sample Test of statement No. 3.5

	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference	Test Value	t	df
Be on par with supervisors	.774	.071	-.43, .58	3	.290	27

*p < .05. **p < .01.

The mean of M = 3.07 for statement 3.5 differs not significantly from the average value of 3, and with the result of the computed One-Sample Test it is possible to neither support nor to reject the assumption that managers consider that experts should be on a par with their supervisors. However, the question remains as to whether the rejection of the implementation of an expert career path is influenced by the age of a manager, the number of years in their current position, or how they became a manager. In this regard, a correlation was computed.

Table 15:

Correlation between demographic results of Questions No. 6, 7, 10 and 3.5 (n=28)

	3.5: Be on par with superior
6: Years in current position	.216
7: Age	-.062
10: Way of promotion to manager	.108

*p < .05. **p < .01.

The computed correlations between the aforementioned demographic factors and the question of whether experts should be on a par with their superiors are all not statistically significant. Consequently, this means that the acceptance of experts does not relate to the age of a manager, their years in the current position, or how they came into their position. However, in the final case, it is possibly different depending on how the expert is promoted.

However, the answers for question no. 3.5 also show a highly and statistically significant correlation to the personal assessment of question no. 1.1.

Table 16:

Correlation between feeling familiar with technical issues and Question No. 3.5 (n=28)

	1.1: Be familiar with technical issues	3.5: Be on par with superior
1.1: Be familiar with technical issues	---	
3.5: Be on par with superior	.416*	---

*p < .05. **p < .01.

This leads to the assumption that the higher the feeling of being familiar with technical issues within one's area of responsibility, the higher the rejection of experts at the same hierarchy level. This confirms the hypotheses that managers who consider that having sufficient professional competence to take technical decisions do not want to be restricted in striving for power and reputation and consequently do not want any expert at the same hierarchy level. Furthermore, according to the literature, a conflict of interferences could result when experts become on a par with their supervisors. Accordingly, experts only can gain more power when managers simultaneously lose some power.

The goal of question number 4 (*With what kind of incentives should the expert career path be endowed in comparison to the manager of the same hierarchy level?*) was to ascertain whether managers would endow the experts at the same hierarchy level with the same incentives. The following table reflects the result, providing a detailed overview concerning the number of attendees, mean, standard deviation and standard error of the mean for question number 4:

Table 17:

Means and Standard Deviations for Question No. 4 (n=28)

Question Nb.	M	SD
4.1: Salary and financial incentives	3,93	0,766
4.2: Internal visibility	3,93	0,900
4.3: External visibility	3,61	0,994
4.4: Right of co-determination/ Veto right	3,96	0,793
4.5: Greater scopes of action	3,54	0,922
4.6: Special further education programs	3,96	0,881

Scale values: 1 (strongly disagree) – 5 (strongly agree)

The mean scores of all questions differ significantly from the average value of 3. A One-Sample Test with a significance level of 5 % and the test value of 3 was conducted to analyze the assumptions, producing the following results:

Table 18:

One-Sample Test for Questions No. 4.1 – 4.6

	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference	Test Value	t	df
Salary & finan-cial incentives	.000	.929	.63, 1.23	3	6.412	27
Internal visibility	.000	.929	.58, 1.28	3	5.461	27
External visibility	.003	.607	.22, .99	3	3.232	27
Veto right	.000	.964	.66, 1.27	3	6.437	27
Greater scopes of action	.005	.536	.18, .89	3	3.074	27
Education programs	.000	.964	.62, 1.31	3	5.791	27

*p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 18 indicates that the confidence interval of all statements only lies in the positive zone, which means that the difference between the variables and test value in the population has a certainty of 95 % positive. In accordance with these results, the t-values are highly significant.

The result of question no. 3.1 and 3.4 confirmed the assumption that managers are aware of the need for experts and believe that this kind of experts would increase the expertise in their area of responsibility. Consequently, the outcome of question no. 4 shows that they would endow the experts with comparable incentives as the manager on the same hierarchy level, such as financial incentives, external or internal visibility, veto-rights etc.

Furthermore, it is also important to ascertain whether any demographic factors influence the rejection to endow experts with veto rights. Accordingly, the correlation was computed.

Table 19:

Correlation between questions no. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 4.4 (n=28)

	4.4: Right of co-determination
5: Hierarchy level	.505**
6: Years in current position	-.103
7: Age	.160
8: Highest educational achievement	-.462*
9: Amount of employees	-.617**
10: How become a manager	-.253

*p < .05. **p < .01.

The computed correlations between the demographic results of questions no. 6, 7, 10 and the question of whether experts should be endowed with veto rights/right of co-determination are all not statistically significant. Consequently, this means that the endowment of experts with veto rights/right of co-determination does not relate to the age, years in the current position or how they reached their position.

However, both the highest educational achievement and number of employees are highly statistical significant, which means that the higher the educational achievement, the lower the acceptance of the manager to endow the expert with the right of co-determination; furthermore, the more personnel responsibility, the lesser tendencies to endow the expert with veto rights, and vice versa.

Furthermore, the question of whether experts should be endowed with veto rights shows a high and statistically significant negative correlation to the hierarchy level, which means that the higher the hierarchy level, the fewer tendencies to endow the expert with veto rights, and vice versa.

Summary

The results of questions no. 3.1 and 3.4 confirm that managers are aware of the need for experts, and also that experts would increase the expertise in their area of responsibility. Additionally, owing to the result of question no. 3.2, it can be assumed that most of the managers are aware of the level of stress and expert's requirements, which is comparable to a manager's career. Furthermore, managers would also endow experts with different symbol features, including internal visibility in organization charts and material incentives such as salary; however, the survey also clearly shows that they strive for power and reputation and won´t accept an expert at the same hierarchy level.

This is presented in question no. 3.5, asking the managers whether experts should be on the same par as managers. Based on the One Sample Test a clear statement is not possible, yet the correlation with the question concerning the endowment of expert with incentives is particularly interesting. Accordingly, the higher the hierarchies level the fewer tendencies to endow the expert with veto rights, and vice versa. According to the literature, this result not only confirms the rejection of experts at the same hierarchy level but also the power motivation theory. Furthermore, there is also a statistically significant correlation between feeling very familiar with technical issues and the rejection of experts at the same hierarchy level. Referring to the clear results of questions no. 1.1 and 1.2, most managers actually feel very familiar with technical issues within their area of responsibility, and are also able to make far-reaching technical decisions. Accordingly, these results clearly confirm one of the main objectives of this survey. The correlation is alarming for all companies that are planning to install an expert career path, given that most managers are promoted within their own company or even department and thus feel very familiar with technical issues within their area of responsibility. Based on these results and referring to the theory concerning triggers and kinds of conflicts, it can be concluded that many conflicts may arise due to the implementation of an expert career path with experts at the same hierarchy levels as managers. First of all, a conflict of interferences could arise due to experts only being able to gain more power when managers simultaneously lose some power. Finally, another indicator for potential conflicts between experts and managers at the same hierarchy level is derived from the result of the question about the promotion (Question No. 10). Most of the managers are promoted within the same company or even department, which will also be the case for experts. Therefore, extensive experience is required, which can only be gained through working within the department or company, which means that after a promotion the prior employee of a manager would be now at the same hierarchy level. Even if the computed correlation shows neither a correlation to the question of whether experts should be on a par with their superiors, nor whether experts should be endowed with the right of co-determination, this may differ depending on how the expert is promoted. According to the literature, this could also lead to role conflicts.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the research project was to investigate whether Managers are aware of the need for senior experts and claim that a traditional career path and an expert career path are equal, but are still rejecting the implementation of an expert career path due to the fear to lose control on decision-making as well as power & status to senior experts on the same hierarchy level. The hypothesis of the research project was derived from contemporary literature about expert career paths and motivation theories. The empirical part of this article is a quantitative survey among managers of a medium-sized company. The survey was designed online and the link to the electronic questionnaire was sent via e-mail to the persons of the target group. The survey included only closed questions and thus the collected data was easy to analyze and statistically reliable. In contrast to a

qualitative survey one of the biggest disadvantages of this kind of quantitative survey is that it is difficult to gather information about the respondents´ needs, perceptions and expectations. Through the standardized research situation and the pre-formulated questions there is no flexibility and no possibility to respond to the respondent. Another limitation of the results may be found regarding the sample size and the composition of the sample. In this study forty managers of the three relevant hierarchy levels were surveyed. There was an equal distribution of participants over the important hierarchy levels. Within all managers area of responsibility an expert career implementation project currently took place during the study. There is the possibility that managers with no or more experience about expert career path hold differing attitudes. Also, the average number of employees within the managers' area of responsibility is relatively low. Most of the surveyed managers are responsible for areas with up to 50 employees. This prompts the question of how the results would be presented through asking managers with one-hundred or more employees. It may be that these forty managers are not representative for all other managers of the company. For this reason further studies might consider using differing areas and companies to achieve a broader result. Moreover, it would also be interesting to differentiate between areas/companies that have already installed an expert career path and those that are planning to do so. In particular, areas and companies that have already installed an expert career path should be investigated more in detail.

Nevertheless, the presented results confirm the hypothesis and represent a good basis concerning the attitudes of managers regarding expert career paths, and also some motivational factors including the success or failure of implementing an expert career. Furthermore, it suggests that they regard themselves as having sufficient professional competence to make technical decisions, and consequently do not want any expert at the same hierarchy level

6. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alexander Konz is Division Manager Manufacturing at a medium-sized company in Austria. After studying Production Engineering at the University of Applied Sciences in Ulm, he graduated with a Master of Business Administration with focus on Management and Leadership. In the course of his Master´s Thesis he established criteria for the successful implementation of an expert career path in SME´s and supported such an implementation project.

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