

# Professionalism: A Key Quality of Effective Manager

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## Abstract

*Aim of this study is to highlight the importance of professional knowledge for effective management. Professionalism means the employment and usage of those strategies that a person undertakes to improve his job status and increase his social and economic condition. Professional manager knows how to increase the production of the organization. It is the degree of behavior and attitude that a person displays at workplace. Effective management is only possible when employees are perfectly managed. Professional manager gets the job done through team members. He/she meets the deadline and motivates subordinates for attaining organizational goals. Management is not an easy job. It requires certain skills and techniques that a manager must possess to facilitate effective management in the organization.*

**Keywords:** Professionalism, Effective management, Goals attainment, Work improvement.

## Introduction

Professionalism means the expert knowledge, skills and specific behavior that one person shows or behaves in work place. The term “profession” was used for specific occupation such as teaching, engineering or medicine in the past. An important and significant characteristic of these professions was that it requires a high degree of skills and expert knowledge. These expertises make a person informative and knowledgeable about that profession. Expertise and skills is not attained in short time or in single day but these are attained over a significant period of time. Practice and high standard association with other people also increase skills and knowledge of the individual and make them expert and skillful in that particular field. It gives license to an individual to work and operate in specific field in most authentic manner (May, 1998).

However, with passage of time and with the expansion of the horizon of the knowledge, there are many vocations which are claiming

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the term profession. According to Koehn (1991), the term “profession” has been used on large scale to anyone who professed of skills in a specific area. He further suggested that study of the literature relevant to profession and professionalism reveal some other picture of the term ‘profession’ which is broader one. Many occupations who claim to be profession do not meet the required conditions and skills or do not possess the essential characteristics. This is what the individual who think to be professional but does not has the expert knowledge associated with specific profession. Due to lack of high degree of expert knowledge they are not considered to be regarded as ‘professional’ (DeGeorge, 1990).

According to Friedson (1994), there is much differences among researchers and experts regarding the usage of the term “professionalism”. The reason is that there is unclear and varied assumption and incomplete usage of the term. There is lack of consensus among experts regarding the meaning of professionalism. Different people derive and refer different meaning to professionalism. It is not possible to use the term professionalism in concrete and specific term (Hargreaves, 2000).

Professionalism means the employment and usage of those strategies that a person undertakes to improve his job status and increased his social and economic condition and also increases the production of the organization. Professionalism is the attainment of control which a person accomplishes in the development of his profession (Ozga, 1995). Professionalism is the capacity of high degree standard which person needs to have in his professional career development. According to Troman (1996), professionalism is not the absolute value for a profession rather it is socially constructed and has a vast contextual meaning and concept. Professionalism means the inheritance of all those characteristics skills that give upper hand to person over other members in the organization (Troman, 1996).

Professionalism is not a static or absolute phenomenon and it is changing with the passage of time. A professional person needs getting and receiving new knowledge and skills in his professional life in order to meet the new challenges and changes brought by the advanced technology. Evett (2009) examined the changing nature of professionalism, particularly of teaching profession. It was found that there was significant difference about the concept of teaching profession. Teaching professionalism is constantly changing with the passage of time in order to achieve the rapid changing society goals (Holroyd, 2000). It is the capacity of an individual to perform duties in effective manner to accomplish organizational goals. It is the degree of behavior and attitudes that a person displays at workplace. One of the important characteristic of professionalism is the power that it possesses due to

expert knowledge. Ignorance of expert knowledge and skills make members of an organization dependable and they look towards expert for problem solution. An ordinary member of the organization cannot utilize expert knowledge; rather it has to be changed in meaningful knowledge through considerable application within a given contextual area (Gold *et al*, 2003). Professionalism is the nature of expertness that gives power to a person to control other members of the organization. All members of an organization do not solve technical problems. They are unable to address problems through procedural knowledge and therefore they rely on expert knowledge of professional (Eraut, 2000).

Professional knowledge is acquired through formal learning in the organization. It has abstract nature and it is due to this knowledge that distinguishes the professionals from non-professionals. It helps individuals to apply its abstraction in solving problems and redefining them. The combination of both type of knowledge gives more fruitful result than it is used in single term. One type of knowledge helps the professionals in obtaining information about the second type of knowledge (Gold *et al*, 2003). Experts argued that professionalism is not the characteristic of a single expertise; rather it is composed of two significant attributes. One attribute is the conceptual knowledge and the other attribute is the emotional intelligence of the professionals. The conceptual knowledge attribute is related with expertise which is displayed at workplace by an individual (Pedler & Burgoyne, 2010; Slocum and Hellriegel, 2007). The emotional intelligence attribute of professional knowledge is based on the development of competencies. It is based on three components. These components are conceptual knowledge, behavioral knowledge and attitudinal knowledge. Conceptual knowledge describes concepts and it is related to process. Acquisition of conceptual knowledge is essential for individuals it helps them in understanding what is going on. It helps individuals in adapting to different situation. However it is not essential that individuals with high degree of conceptual knowledge prove to be effective manager (McEwan, 2001).

Second component is behavioral knowledge. This component is composed of the actual behavior or skills which is important for individuals to attain and get behavioral knowledge. These are also referred to as helping skills. Behavioral knowledge has close connection with conceptual knowledge. In such circumstances, it becomes imperative for manager to adopt and change their behavior to attain fruitful result (Cameron & Whatten, 2007). Third component is the attitude of the individuals. Attitudes are described as the genuineness for effective professionals. It shows directions for individuals to interact with others and demonstrate conceptual and behavioral skills (Segon & Booth, 2010).

Professionals require specialized and comprehensive knowledge and often indulge in long and intensive preparation. This preparation includes instruction in skills and methods. It also includes scientific, historical and scholarly principles to be accomplished for high standard opinion and characteristics (Cheetham & Chivers, 2000). Professionals are committed to continuous study and hard working. On the other hand, professionalism is the characteristics of maintaining expert knowledge that is received over time. This expert knowledge provides professional with power and give control (McEwan, 2001).

### **Professional and Effective Manager**

Every organization is led by an able and effective leader or manager. These people are of high caliber and they have the expertise in running the organization in successful way. The foremost job of manager is to manage people and resources in order to achieve organizational goals. Effective management is only possible when employees are perfectly managed. Professional manager gets the job done through team members. He meets the deadline and motivates subordinates for attaining organizational goals. Professional manager continually learns from previous mistakes and wins respect and confidence of team members. Effective manager knows his subordinates and is well aware about the technique of engaging subordinates in fruitful activities (Adobor, 2006). Self-awareness of the manager is an important element in effective management. It means that manager must know his strength and weaknesses of his own and also of his subordinates. Professional managers communicate with employees in excellent and effective manner. Self-awareness is of great importance in the successful and smooth running of organization. Effective managers draw out the talent of every team members and utilize it in effective manner (Alm, James and Torgler, 2011).

### **Essential Factors for Professional Manager**

Management is not an easy job. It requires certain skills and techniques that a manager must possess to facilitate effective management in the organization. Some important and essential elements or factors for professional manager are discussed as under.

#### *Specialized and Technical Knowledge*

Professional manager gets expertise and technical skills through extensive body of knowledge. It is essential that this knowledge may not be an ordinary one, but it must be specialized and skillful. Professional manager needs such knowledge that has the characteristic of theoretical, abstract and practical knowledge. Specialized and technical knowledge is also obtained through years of work experience. Each profession requires

sound judgment and reasoning skills in the application of technical and specialized knowledge (Trevino Katherine & Nelson, 2010). Effective managers usually make judgment based on the technical and specialized knowledge and of the understanding of situation. Different factors are involved in solving a problem and there may be several acceptable solutions to the problem. Through the use of specialized knowledge an effective manager resorts to the best and most effective factors in finding solution of the problem. On the basis of technical knowledge takes sound decision and they are able to evaluate best possible alternatives (Izraeli & BarNir, 1998).

There are different ways and means which are helpful in obtaining technical knowledge. It may be obtained through academic learning, work experience and continue learning in the organization. Expert and technical knowledge makes manager technically sound and autonomous. Managers accept responsibility and are accountable to the result and consequences. This characteristic inculcates high degree of trust in managers towards his employees (Lusch & O'Brien, 1997).

#### *Maintaining Standard through Self-Governing Organization*

Self-governance means regulation of professional matters and associated responsibilities in some autonomous way. There is some profession to which government has granted the privilege of self-governance organization. Members of self-governing organization are distinct from other organization whose control rest with the government. Characteristics of professional manager and team members not only rendered effective services to protect the dear values of the society but it also encourages productivity, individual responsibility, self-discipline, ethical standard and public interest (May, 1998). Self-regulation and mutual accountability within organization and among team members is of paramount importance. Professional managers represent the true nature of the profession. They display good behavior in association with team members. Effective manager energizes team members to introduce professionalism in the organization (Segon & Booth, 2010).

#### *Continuous Study*

Learning process does not come to an end in life. It goes through out in one's life. To protect public interest and social values, it is essential for professional manager to engage in lifelong learning process. A professional and effective manager engaged in continuous learning process. Study of journals, attending technical courses, attending seminars and conferences may help manager in increasing professional competency. Regular participation in social meetings also helps manager to increase organization productivity and motivate employees. Professionalism enables manager to keep abreast with expert knowledge

and is willing to expand it through time and energy (Lusch & O'Brien, 1997).

Constant and continuous study is very much necessary for professional manager to keep up to date with the modern developments and new technologies, introduced in the field of management. It promotes organizational growth and development and use it in the service of team members. Continued study also helps team members to expand the horizon of their knowledge and identify the strength and weaknesses of peer members (McEwan, 2001).

#### *Public Interest*

With the advancement in technology and expansion in the horizon of knowledge, there is considerable change in the concept of organization. There was little concern for public welfare and public interest. But now the concept of organization is changed and it is regarded to work in the public interest. Important function of any organization is to meet and fulfill public demands. Professional managers give due importance to the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Professional manager's works to create such environment in the organization that motivate team members to increase productivity level of the organization (Trevino & Nelson, 2010).

Professional managers are accountable for the professional services in the organization. Public interest is of vital importance then personal interest with the professional managers. They give high steams to such practices that are regarded and competent. Professional duty to public service extends beyond the fixed ethical rules. It is essential for the development of society that professional managers should take active part in such activities that contribute to betterment of community behavior (Cameron & Whetten, 2007).

#### **Functions of Professional Managers**

Effective managers have distinct characteristics that facilitates smooth running of the organization. Success in the management field largely depends upon understanding of such factors that play significant role in the shaping of behavior and attitude. Different organization work for different purposes and different people are working in these organizations. There is no absolute rule to follow and there is also no magic formula to achieve organizational goals. The success of management largely depends on the characteristics of managers. Effective managers know how to exploit the talent of team members. Professional managers effectively organize the diverse practices of the employees. Following are some functions of professional managers:

*Organizing and Allocating Resources*

Resources organization and allocation is of paramount importance for effective management. Every organization irrespective of their size needs organizing the resources in decent manner. Organizing is not a simple process it consist of a broad set of different activities which the manager undergo time and again (Collins, 2009). Organizing resources is termed is the activities to collect and configure resources in order to implement plan in a highly effective manner. Generally professional managers forwards certain questions before them like what are my available resources, do these resources are sufficient to meet organizational goals etc. for effective organizing and allocating resources professional managers know the strength and weakness of his employees (Gold *et. al*, 2002). Resource organizing is also an important element of team building and helps managers and defining available resources. Team building is not an abrupt process but it takes place slowly and gradually. It goes a long way towards meeting organizational goals. It is managers' job to organize the strength of different employees in to a team and divert their strength to achieve organization goals. Building employees of the organization also help managers to accomplish challenging tasks and most suitable way (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014).

*Know the Team Member*

Knowing each member of the individually has great importance for managers. Managers must know the strength, attitudes and personality of each individual. He must be well aware about the task keeping engaged team members. As we all know that when employees are engaged in fruitful task it increases productive capacity of the organization. Consistent communication is the most important characteristics of successful group and is a good way to get to know each group member. For effective management the manager must be in regular contact with all employees. Face to face conversation or weekly group meeting is very helpful in this regard. Regular meeting with manager give an opportunities to provide feedback on what they like, don't like, and what they would to do more. Professional managers knows has team members well and this knowledge help managers to organize and allocate resources effectively (Cameron, & Whetten 2007).

*Good Communicator*

Good and effective communication is vital for effective management. Good communicator does not mean just talking but he should also be a good listener. Professional manager's displays effective communication skills and employees feel more comfortable with such communication process. Professional managers usually give clear instruction to his subordinates for the completion of work. Managers also give due

importance to the ideas of subordinates. Define the work to be done and specify the boundaries of freedom to make autonomous decisions. Professional manager set organizational goals and guide team members to achieve it. Employees consult managers and seek his help and support to attained individual goals also. Positive framework of mind is an essential characteristic for good communication. Professional managers are excellent in developing positive qualities and confidence in his employees. Managers motivate and energize his team members to put in their best effort it work place (Pedler *et. al* 2001). Effective managers reward the employees for outstanding works and give recognition to their work. Employees are awarded with favorable work compensation and incentives in order to motivate them. Managers evaluate team members on their performance and work ability to give recognition to their outstanding works (Trevino & Nelson, 2010).

#### *Planning and Selecting Priorities*

Planning is one of the most important set of activities in effective management. Without proper planning management fails in achieving organizational goals. Planning is much needed at every step. It is the setting of direction to be followed for achieving organizational goals. Planning guides the system to follow the direction. Before planning managers set SMARTER goals and objectives. SMARTER stands for specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic, timely, extending and rewarding. Effective managers plan about specific goals which are attainable and are acceptable to employees. Such goals are usually measurable and who action has scope and utility. If a goal is not measurable employees do not take keen interest in it. While making planning, effective managers also keep in mind the acceptance of organizational goals to team members. If team members take responsibility of achieving goals it should be acceptable to them (Eraut, 2000).

Sometime goals and objectives are specific and measurable but employees do not accept it because these goals are unrealistic. Professional managers always set such goals which are realistic and feasible. Unrealistic goals create disturbance and anxiety among team members and it discourage effective team environment. Realistic time framing is also essential for achieving goals. Employees take more interest and they are actively engaged in productive activities if their work is rewarded. Rewarding and recognition motivate employers to do better work (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014).

#### *Self-Awareness*

Professional managers ought to have high degree of self-awareness. Such awareness means to know about your shortcomings, strength, emotions,



attitudes, skills, likes and dislikes. Self-awareness is extremely important elements of effective managers. He is conscious about his strength and weaknesses and without self-awareness it is very difficult for a manager to handle problems effectively. Managers cannot have firm grasp on qualities and skills which are necessary for smooth running of the organizational business. A self-aware manager is more successful in getting information for making a strong and irresistible decision related creating effective work environment. Good self-awareness allows managers to build team of different individuals and match their skills and strength (Adobor, 2006).

#### *Motivating Team Members*

Professional manager not only knows the team members but he continually motivates them. Motivation works as catalyst for effective management. Continuous motivation is of great importance for attaining organizational and individual goals. Professional manager uses different ways and techniques for motivating his employees. Some techniques that a manager frequently uses for motivating his subordinates are:

- Recognition / Attention: Recognition and rewarding the good work effort of employees by the manager motivate them. When employees achieve something they have achieved something. Manager's recognition means the appreciation for that achievement (Cameron and Whetten, 2007).
- One-on-One Coaching: Coaching provides excellent opportunities for continuous and sustainable development of the employees. Coaching shows that managers care for subordinates. Coaching provides a positive feedback and this can be done in public interest. It also provides such work environment that motivates employees for giving maximum production. Coaching act as a natural stimulant for others who do not take keen interest and active part in organization business (Adobor, 2006).
- Training: Regular training facility increases employees' performance and their work abilities. It also has positive effect on the production capacity of the organization. Training session has organized and chaired a manager or supervisor who has attained the necessary skills and expert knowledge earlier. Regular training motivates the employees and this result in the better performance of the individuals. It is also helpful in developing new skills and getting new experts knowledge (Helsby, 1996).
- Career counseling: Career counseling has significant role in motivating employees. Creating new opportunities for growth and development motivate the subordinate to play active role in work place. Effective manager constantly keeps aware his team

members about the potentially and chances of development and promotion. It enhances employees pride and positive attitude and established foundation for organization success (Cameron & Whetten, 2007).

#### *Manager's role*

Manager role in motivating employees cannot be under estimated. His role is of immense importance for organization success. The success or failure of an organization largely depends upon the effective role of manager. An active manager set realistic goals and motivates his team members to achieve these goals. Most employees are stimulated and motivated by the professional role of effective manager even in spot appearance (Gold *et. al*, 2003).

#### **Issues and Consideration for Professional Managers**

There are several different issues that confront professional managers daily. These issues need immediate attention to be addressed. If these issues are not handled with care and proper attention then professional manager will be unable to perform his function effectively. If a manager is aware and skillful then he can handle these issues with great success. Most important issues that confront professional managers are:

#### *Public Trust*

Public have high trust and give great values to their organization in certain profession. Public wants growth and progress of these professions and organizations. For example, people who belong to the profession of engineering, doctor, and teacher have great respect and honor in many societies. People considered them as public servant. People have high degree of trust in them. Trust is a fragile attachment of feeling and emotions and it can be easily lost. Trust is carefully cultivated and it must be protected at every cost. Manager's ability to provide services to public is extensively dependent on their trust. Public trust greatly matters in effective management (Trevino & Nelson, 2010).

#### *Misperception of Profession as "Elitist"*

Sometime manager misperceived his profession and position. He takes undue advantages from his position and considered his position as being elitist. Although there are some similarities in the concept of professionalism and elitism but there are vast differences in these concepts. The concept of elitism some time is used in the meaning of arrogance and self-satisfaction. This concept of elitism is completely different from the concept of professionalism. Misperception of professions and position create mistrust between managers and subordinates and it leads to unfavorable environment. Manager has great

responsibility and he must use self-discipline in exercising power that comes with the position and knowledge. Misperception of profession and position is important issue before manager and its need consideration to win public trust.

#### *Misperception of Profession as a Monopoly*

Monopoly means to take complete hold without sharing any responsibility and have the power of final saying. Sometime manager misperceive the profession as monopolistic. A monopolistic administration or management is viewed with disfavor. It turns the profession into a single man power profession. A monopolistic manager turns to an authoritative one and he does not engage his subordinates into decision making process. Authoritarian organization employees are stick to stipulated rules and regulations promulgated by the authoritative manager. In such situation employees do not take keen interest in work. Misperception of profession as a monopoly kills the creative skills of the subordinates.

#### *Public Expectation*

With the expansion of horizon of knowledge now dimension of public expectation have been changed. The purpose of an organization is to serve public and that is why public expectation of professional have greatly increased. Manager's foremost job is to meet public expectation through managing and motivating his subordinates. When employee of an organization is working as a team public expectation would be easily met and fulfilled. Professional managers take great care about meeting the public expectation. He is aware about professional responsibilities and knows the strength and weaknesses of his profession (Trevino & Nelson, 2010).

#### *Increasing Complexity and Specialization*

An important issue before professional manager is that human efficiency and work ability has been increased considerably through the specialization of tasks. Work is made now highly complex and specialized. In early days a single person can perform different tasks as the work structure was simple and unspecialized. With the increasing complexity of large job the work is broken down into smaller segments and divided among different employees. Due to increase in the complexity nature job managers needs to attain skills and expert knowledge through continuous study, training, and participating in seminars. Complexity and specialization of work also increased responsibilities of the managers. Manager needs to develop and polish his communication skill, listening skill and supervision skill continually. This will enable manager to influence positively. The functions and work

efforts of his subordinates. Manager needs to keep abreast of latest knowledge and skills (Collins, 2009).

#### *Accountable to Multiple Constituents*

In previous days a professional manager was responsible for a specific task and work but with the advancement of knowledge and technology now professional manager is accountable to many different stakeholders. These different stakeholders develop relationship with manager and this relationship is especially influential on technical autonomy in work context. Manager may prefer to control when, to whom and under what conditions the employees provide services. Managers are good judges of the employee's performance and strongly influence standards, ethics, and their competency level. These competencies enable manager to maintain highly and excellent professional behavior (Ardaugh, 2010).

#### **Conclusion**

Professionalism is the characteristics of effective manager having expert knowledge and certain characteristics. Professional manager is more effective in rendering his professional duties. He is more responsible and cares for the individual needs of his subordinates. Professional manager is well aware about his own strengths and weaknesses and also keeps himself aware about the potentialities of employees. Professional manager provides positive feedback to his subordinates. He continually motivates and stimulates team members to achieve organizational goals.

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