

## **Being the boss: Management remains a very human talent**

*Elena Agaragimova is Careers & Alumni Consultant – Middle East Centre, The University of Manchester*

In a transforming business world and workplace, you are likely to find yourself at some point in a role in a changing organisation and with opportunities to manage – you could be in a supervisory role in a narrow specialism and aspire to general management; you may be in an operational role and want to focus on translating and implementing vision and strategy; you may have strong functional competence and aim to design tomorrow's organisation.

Any change will move you out of your comfort zone but if you are moving into management, then you will need to gain the skills and knowledge to take on the challenge, within an evolving or disrupted organisation.

Management is the process of dealing with or controlling things or people; it is an important skill and impacts every facet of life (because we are all managers in some way); and it is vital in business because everything we do is performed in the context of the organisation – we all live and work in a managed environment.

For the organisation, management is a necessity and perhaps lacks the 'glamour' of leadership but they are symbiotic – great leadership and strategy will only take you so far, and will go nowhere without effective management and execution.

So, what do we need from management and our managers, today?

The traditional business school MBA is the gold standard for general management and still a prerequisite for many organisations and business people looking to build a serious career in international management, so MBA trends and perceptions can offer insights into the skills required to develop today's business managers and leaders.

The Financial Times' 2018 Skills Gap Survey identifies the top 5 and bottom 5 skills that over 70 leading employers around the world are looking for in MBA graduates.

The top 5 highly ranked skills all involve working with people, in teams and networks, along with the ability to solve complex problems, and all underpinned by time management and the ability to prioritise.

The 5 least important skills identified in the survey might be described as the typical hard or technical skills - applied macroeconomics, using social media to benefit business, Accounting, Programming, Environmental Management and CSR.

Underlying the findings are some trends highlighted by the survey including the increasing

emphasis on soft skills – these are clearly hard to find – whereas the traditional harder technical skills are relatively easier to find in MBA graduates and are still essential, of course. However, the hard skill of big data analysis is rising up the wish list for employers across all sectors and is still difficult to find.

Closer to home, the latest (21<sup>st</sup>) PwC CEO survey asked CEOs worldwide to identify the key skills they are looking for – these turned out to be the very human skills that machines cannot easily match; problem solving (again), adaptability, collaboration, leadership, creativity and innovation. In the Middle East, the same skills were ranked at the top with even higher scores when comparing the regional and global CEO views.

CEOs also identify emotional intelligence (EQ) as an important and difficult to find factor which is ironic in an increasingly virtual and digital workplace, with AI, automation and robotics making inroads.

The human element is increasingly recognised as an important and differentiating factor within the business organisation. According to recent research by Robert Half, the UK recruitment company, one in four UK business leaders says that EQ is undervalued when recruiting, even though most businesses (60%) believe it is a very important skill for staff.

In its report on the 10 skills needed to thrive in the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial revolution, the World Economic Forum predicts that EQ will become one of the top ten skills by 2020, as business leaders are looking for people who have more than just technical skills. Companies are putting greater emphasis on the softer skills needed to survive and thrive in a rapidly transforming and uncertain business environment.

Managing people has never been more demanding and it's the uniquely human soft skills that managers will need (alongside the technical skills needed to do the job) that will make the difference and continuing development of management skills is essential for managers at every level of the organisation.

<https://forbesmiddleeast.com/being-the-boss-management-remains-a-very-human-talent>