

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE USE OF BENCHMARKING AND OF METHODS FOR STIMULATING CREATIVITY IN ROMANIAN ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT: *Benchmarking is one of the most used methods in quality management. Limiting the purpose of this method to the simple improvement of the strategies, processes or products through imitating competition is, however, a mistake. Today, more than anytime, after analyzing the results of the benchmarking processes, employees and managers can bring new ideas in the organization, targeted to generate value. This paper analyses the respondents' opinions, respondents from the Romanian academic environment and industry. These are opinions regarding the usefulness of several managerial methods in creativity management. The research was conducted based on questionnaires. This paper presents only the opinions of the respondents regarding some of the more usual managerial methods. The results especially highlight the possibilities offered by benchmarking and the methods of stimulating creativity to raise the creative power of the organization. The reality in Romanian organizations regarding this domain is a more complex subject that, unfortunately, is getting farther and farther away from the respondents' recommendations.*

KEY WORDS: creativity, managers, method, experts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Benchmarking is one of the most used methods in quality management. According to David Gillen, it is “a central part of quality management” ([1], p.2).

Limiting the purpose of this method to the simple improvement of the strategies, processes or products through imitating competition is, however, a mistake. Modern benchmarking should be focused to more fully meet customer needs. So, benchmarking “should be driven by customer and internal organization needs” ([2], p. 3).

Today, more than anytime, after analyzing the results of the benchmarking processes, employees and managers can bring new ideas in the organization, targeted to generate value. This paper wants to prove that modern benchmarking is a very useful method in creativity management.

2. SELECTIVE RESEARCH

The research was conducted based on questionnaires. We analyzed the respondents' opinions, respondents from the Romanian academic environment and industry. These are opinions regarding the usefulness of several managerial methods in creativity management.

The respondents were academics who teach management, PhD students in management, managers and other specialists in the Romanian industry. To one of the questions, we asked respondents to quantify with different values several methods and techniques that may be used in creativity management. The used scale had integers from 0 to 10.

We present in this paper the results regarding four of the most rated methods/techniques by the Romanian respondents: value analysis (or engineering), expert systems, benchmarking and classical methods for stimulating creativity (e.g. brainstorming).

We mention that only 79.3% of managers have answered to this question. The figures

in this paper contain only the valid responses of questioned managers. The scores accorded by respondents to the value analysis/engineering in creativity management are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 2 shows the respondents opinions regarding the usefulness of expert systems in creativity management, and Figure 3, those of benchmarking.

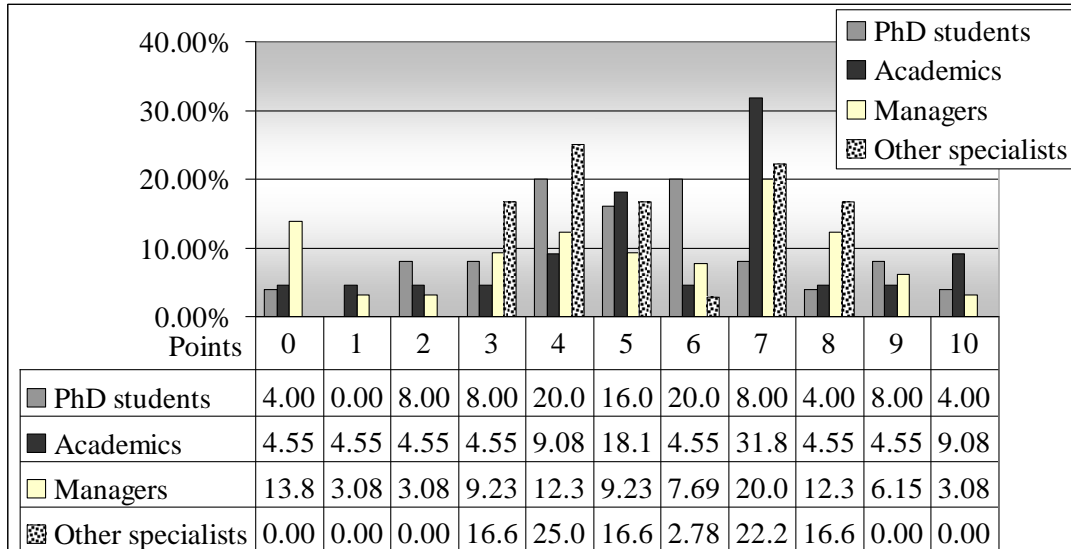


Figure 1. The usefulness of value analysis in creativity management

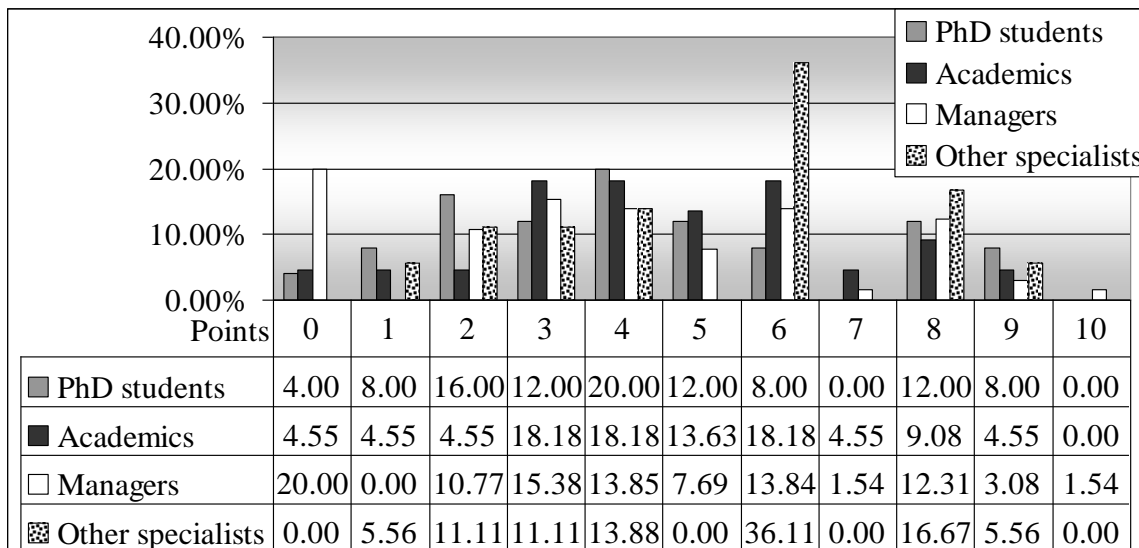


Figure 2. The usefulness of expert systems in creativity management

The respondents’ opinions regarding the usefulness of classical methods for stimulating creativity – such as brainstorming, Thinking Hats method, Delphi technique, 5W and 1H, and so on – are presented in Figure 4. The most of respondents (48% of PhD students, 59.07% of academics, 46.15% of managers and 47.21% of other specialists) are

convinced of the importance of fostering creativity in organization.

Unfortunately, regarding all four graphics (Fig. 1, 2, 3, and 4), we observe that many respondents are less concerned on the methods that could harness creativity – such us value analysis (Fig. 1), expert systems (Fig. 2) or benchmarking (Fig. 3) – than on the methods for stimulating creativity (Fig.4).

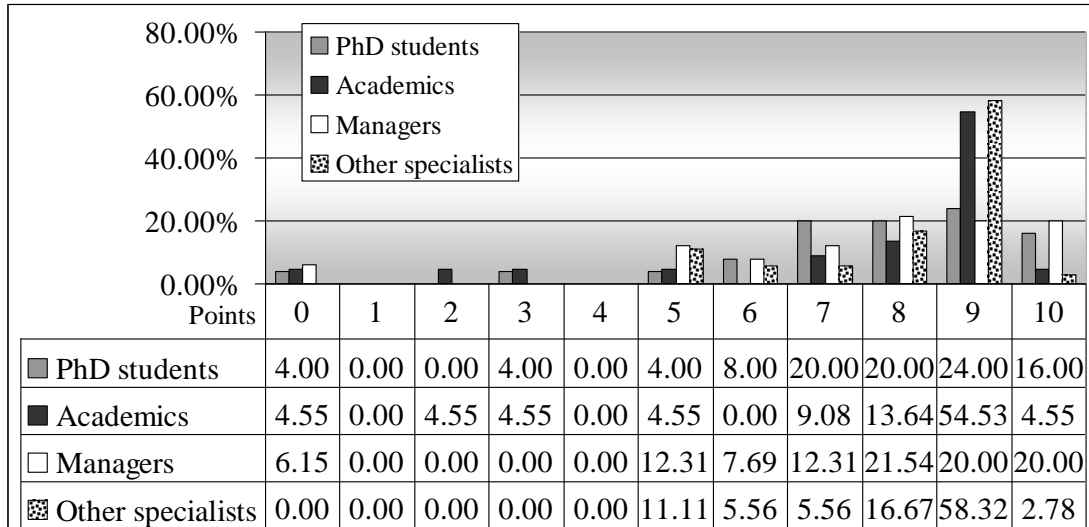


Figure 3. The usefulness of benchmarking in creativity management

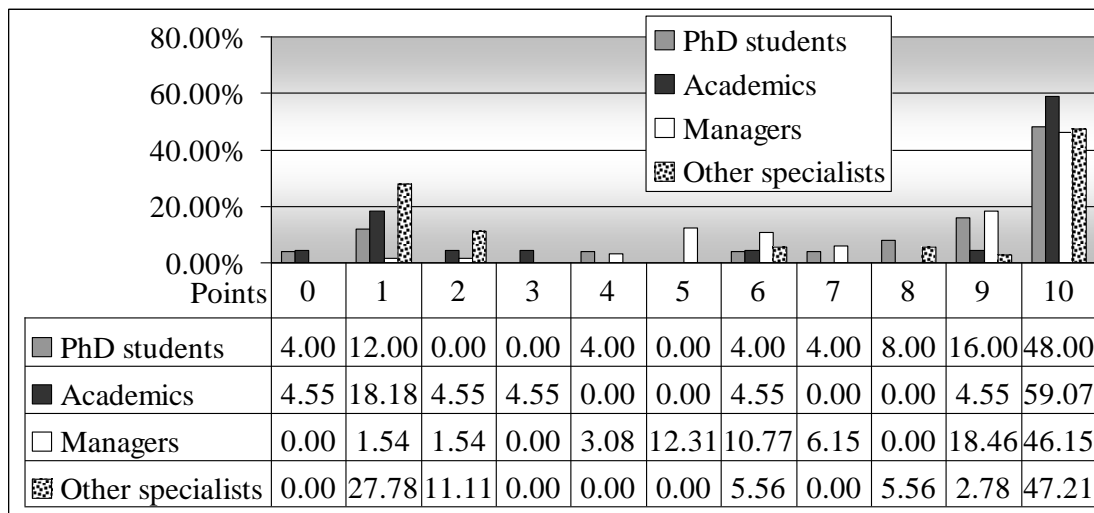


Figure 4. The usefulness of classical methods for stimulating creativity in creativity management

We consider that bringing or generating new ideas in organization is only the first step in creativity management. The finality of any creative process should consist in harnessing these ideas.

Table 1 presents the statistics of all responses (according to [3], p. 71, 81, [4], p. 348). We have to mention that 20.7% of surveyed managers did not know to answer to the question. So, we analyzed in this paper only the valid responses from 79.3% of managers.

We can observe that classical methods for stimulating creativity obtained the highest averages for PhD, managers and other specialists' samples. Benchmarking

obtained the second position for these samples. The sample of academics placed benchmarking on the first place (with the average 7.545) and the methods for stimulating creativity on the second place (with the average 7.000).

On the third place is the value analysis for all categories of respondents (Tab. 1).

To other questions, the respondents suggested us some recommendations for increase the use of benchmarking and of methods for stimulating creativity in Romanian organizations. The most three important of them were ([3], pp. 433-434): 1-stimulating, motivating and protecting creative human resource; 2-changing the

management attitudes toward creativity, knowledge and managerial methods; 3-

using a system of performance indicators (according to [5]).

Table 1. Statistics of the responses regarding the usefulness of various management systems in creativity management

Managerial method/ technique	Respondents	Average	Variance	Standard Deviation	Homogeneity Coefficient
Value analysis	PhD students	5.200	5.469	2.339	0.4497
	Academics	5.727	6.901	2.627	0.459
	Managers	5.031	8.593	2.931	0.583
	Other specialists	5.389	3.273	1.809	0.336
Expert systems	PhD students	4.320	6.508	2.552	0.591
	Academics	4.636	5.074	2.253	0.486
	Managers	3.969	7.968	2.823	0.711
	Other specialists	5.167	5.343	2.311	0.447
Benchmarking	PhD students	7.560	5.231	2.287	0.303
	Academics	7.545	6.858	2.619	0.347
	Managers	7.462	6.284	2.507	0.336
	Other specialists	7.583	1.563	1.250	0.165
Methods for stimulating creativity	PhD students	7.680	11.487	3.389	0.441
	Academics	7.000	16.558	4.069	0.581
	Managers	8.138	5.496	2.344	0.288
	Other specialists	6.250	17.164	4.143	0.663

3. CONCLUSION

The results especially highlight the possibilities offered by benchmarking and the methods of stimulating creativity to raise the creative power of the organization. The reality in Romanian organizations regarding this domain is a more complex subject that, unfortunately, is getting farther and farther away from the respondents' recommendations.

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