



S.GŁÓWCZYŃSKA
KONSULTANT HR / PSYCHOLOG

Analysis of chosen mechanisms and techniques in social psychology on the basis of behaviours of employees in HR services private company

Social life is putting masks, using the words of Bogdan Wojciszke, professor of psychology.

In professional life there are a lot of occasions, circumstances and reasons to do that. Individuals in their workplace fulfil their different needs using purposely or unconsciously self-presentation and influencing others techniques.

Imitation is one of such behaviours of social influence consisting in copying others' behaviour in own activity. Even kindergarten pupils suffering from shyness, more often get in touch with peers if they had an occasion to watch the film showing active behaviours. The effect can last up to 3 weeks after the presentation of the film.

In adult life, an employee subordinate to the boss in a workplace using the gestures similar to his/her superior's gestures while negotiating a pay rise, makes the contact with the superior more pleasant although he or she does not do anything that the superior would find desirable or in agreement with the expectations. In spite of that, a subordinate gains what he/she wanted to get and in longer perspective is more liked by the superior.

Observing persons behaving aggressively intensifies, at least for a short time aggression of observers in their behaviours. How often can we witness the following situations? Two co-workers are talking about the current, urgent business matters to be dealt with. One of them (X), displays huge aversion, disrespect and even hostility to the other one (Y). There is also the third co-worker – the observer only, not taking an active part in the discussion. The latter one, in the future, will surely more often than before allow himself/herself to behave towards co-worker Y in the similar way he/she witnessed before.

On the contrary, observation of persons efficiently coping with their problems, may have the positive influence on behaviours and feelings of observers. A woman, the Director of the Commercial Department that earlier seemed to be an introvert in contacts with her male colleague holding an equivalent position in the other department of the company, may overcome her shyness and social fears, being frequently a witness of talks between the other, self-confident woman, the President of the company where the both directors work, and the mentioned man.

The longer we work in one and the same company, the more as the time passes we identify with the group of co-workers we belong to. And we also become more and more loyal to the organization whose member we are. The group we care about and that we call "us" becomes a reference group. From that point it is only a small step towards conformism – being influenced by the real or imagined pressure from the other people – the majority in the particular situation.

Most employees of a company usually want to be liked or accepted, and making own behaviour similar to that of others allows to achieve the goal.



The need of acceptance and being liked is usually a motivation for external conformism. Despite having a different opinion from others, we do not reveal our view. Such normative influence, appeared, among others, in Solomon Asch experiment in which the subjects were shown two cards with lines: X and A,B,C whereas B line was of the same length as X. The task of the subjects was to indicate which of the three lines is the same length as X line. The more often secret cooperators of the experimenter purposely gave the wrong answer to the asked question, the more frequently the real participants, despite the correct functioning of their eyesight, also gave the wrong reply. Similar behaviours in professional life allow us to avoid being ridiculous or rejected we could be exposed to, presenting an opinion different from the expressed opinion of the greater part of co-workers even if the latter would be wrong.

We say yes and agree with a groundless opinion while confronting our superior if he or she is the authority in the field. However, such obedience may also result exclusively from a delicate hallmark of authority which is the name of the position held in the company by our boss. Orders of a superior in such a case automatically trigger obedience (Wojciszke 2006, p. 254). Similar to the subjects in Stanley Milgram experiment, we “give an electric shock” to those pointed out by our superior. Strong, but not always beneficial as it might seem, mechanism of social influence is engagement in activity. The best example is a director of commercial department who continues cooperation with the inefficient salesperson only because he devoted a lot of time to the salesperson’s training and preparation for work. Despite the considerable costs he risks (loss of potential benefits meant as gaining new clients, holding the position by the inefficient employee), he does not make a decision to terminate the employment contract with the inefficient salesperson because he values too much the effort put in preparing the employee to perform certain activities for the company. Process of intensifying engagement consists in arousing one’s desire to present himself/herself as a consistent and internally harmonious person. Public engagement in any activities leads to stronger clinging to them than in case of private involvement that is not known to others. (Wojciszke 2006, p. 257). That is why the director of customer service department will remain adamant about his innovative project, which was praised by him a few months earlier as a brilliant idea aimed at improving activities of the company, but turned out to be a false business move.

Fulfilment by an individual his/her needs and desires is crucially important for fully beneficial and profitable functioning of a firm. Understanding and being aware of existing social mechanisms gives us a chance to succeed in professional life, if wisely and without misuse we will apply assertive self-presentations tactics.

Ingratiation is one of them. It consists in winning somebody’s favour or gaining sympathy of somebody through:

- presenting own, not necessarily existing features that arouse sympathy,
- flattering others and paying them compliments,



S.GŁÓWCZYŃSKA
KONSULTANT HR / PSYCHOLOG

- conformism, i.e. presenting opinions similar to a partner's opinions,
- doing favours (Wojciszke 2006, p. 257).

Managers of private, profit-oriented firm use ingratiation tactics in numerous situations moving forward on their professional career path. They use these tactics towards their superiors in order to achieve different goals, such as reaching the expected finalization (complete implementation) of the idea connected with the reorganization of the subordinate department or their promotion. Thanks to gaining superiors' sympathy, managers increase their chances to finalize already started work and prove their efficiency in undertakings, however not without obstacles (bootlicker dilemma, multiple audience dilemma).

Mentioned above, there are a few examples of the mechanisms available and functioning in society, and based on them tactics of operating, aimed at achieving intended goals in professional life. For an employee of a private firm in the world of the rat race it is both mastery and challenge to choose such solutions which, without misuse of the surrounding and damage of employees will lead to desired profit.

S.Głównyńska-Muszyńska

Bibliography:

Wojciszke B. (2006). *Człowiek wśród ludzi Zarys psychologii społecznej*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR
and
own materials