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Personality characteristics of professional success: an analysis of the studies of the early 21st century

Statement of a scientific problem

Studying the issues attributed to professional success of a company's staff is one of the topical theoretical and applied scientific problems of modern psychology and psychological practice.

In their writings, scientists studying professional success argue that successful people display a specific set of personality traits and characteristics. In our opinion, there is a lack of research on what particular personal attributes of employees are related to success in professional activity. Referring to this problem in our study, we have tried to distinguish personal qualities that are associated with self-evaluation and assessment of professional success. The findings of the study can be applied in practice to create appropriate organizational conditions.

Problem analysis

Success is a significant factor in professional life. Success is an interdisciplinary concept which is studied by philosophy, sociology, economics, acmeology, history, etc., but it was psychology that made the greatest contribution to the notion's development. Many prominent psychologists studied professional success within the framework of various approaches. For example, in humanistic psychology this concept was explored by A. Maslow and K. Rogers, in socio cognitive theory – by A. Bandura, in individual psychology – by A. Adler and other world-famous authors. In Russia, the issues of professional success were addressed by B.G. Ananyev, K.K. Platonov, B.M. Teplov, A.A. Bodalev, V.A. Bodrov, E.F. Zeer, A.A. Derkach, E.A. Klimov, N.V. Kuzmina, N.V. Leyfrid, L.M. Mitina, N.S. Pryazhnikov, O.N. Rodina,

V.A. Tolocek, Ya.S. Khammer, et al. However, scientists have not provided a single definition of the term "career success" so far.

Let us consider the major historical trends in the development of the variety of definitions of professional success. During the 20th century, there was a progressive increase in the number of indicators that, according to scientists, affect career progress of employees.

1. In the early 20th century, F. Taylor, F. Gilbreth, H. Fayol, et al expressed a particular interest in job performance and considered it an important factor.

2. In the 1920s and 1930s, F. Gilbreth, E. Mayo, F. Roethlisberger, M. Follett, et al supplemented job performance with another significant factor, i.e. worker satisfaction.

3. In the middle of the 20th century, psychophysiological efforts and reliability were added to job performance and worker satisfaction. This hypothesis was supported by K.M. Gurevich, E.P. Ilyin, B.F. Lomov, H. Mintzberg, et al. There were also added such components as self-actualization, self-efficacy, locus of control, etc.

4. In the middle of the 20th century, E.A. Klimov, V.S. Merlin, et al proposed a theory according to which people demonstrating innate talents, inborn abilities and cognitive styles are able to achieve outstanding results in their professional activity.

5. By the end of the 20th century, the list of the aforementioned determinants of career success was supplemented by subjective assessments (self-evaluation of one's success, satisfaction).

6. At the beginning of the 21st century are considered predictors of occupational success, such personality traits as extroversion, active person [1].

7. P. B. Robinson and E. A. Sexton examine the relationship professional success between formal education, experience and self-employment, as well as other moderating variables related to an individual's life experience. [2]

Thus, the external factors of professional success (performance, reliability, etc.) were gradually complemented by personality traits and subjective attitude, and later – by a set of subjective assessments of interaction between people in the labour process [3].

Contemporary European researchers define professional success as a combination of positive results accumulated during one's career path [4; 5].

In a narrow sense, professional success is a combination of solid indicators of an employee's performance and self-evaluation of professional progress based on

the work results corresponding to the position occupied. In a broad sense, professional success means achieving the stated objectives by staff members during their professional activity and overcoming the obstacles that hamper the implementation of their plans.

Objectives and tasks of the study

Objectives: to identify personality characteristics of professional success of employees working in the service sector.

Tasks:

1. To ascertain the respondents' beliefs about personal attributes needed for professional success of the early 21st century and perform a comparative analysis;
2. To analyze the results of self-evaluation and assessment of professional success and personality characteristics of employees working in the service sector in 2006 and 2016;
3. To establish the features of professional success of employees working in the service sector.

Object of the study: employees of car dealerships. The sample of the empirical study consisted of 200 employees in 2006 (124 men and 76 women) and 110 employees in 2016 (72 men and 38 women). Age of the respondents varied from 21 to 54 years (employees of car dealerships).

Subject of the study: personality traits, assessment of professional success (self-evaluation and evaluation based on the work results).

Methods: the findings of the survey and the questionnaire were analyzed using content analysis; personality factors were evaluated by means of Big Five (Paul T. Costa Jr., Robert R. McCrae) and the questionnaire “Professional Success” designed by the authors. Assessment of professional success was carried out with the help of the questionnaire “Self-Evaluation of Professional Success” and work results of the car dealership's staff (performance, satisfaction, customer feedback) [6, 7].

Results of the study

The study was divided into three stages and two time periods – 2006 and 2016.

Stage 1. During the study (Group 1 – in 2006, and Group 2 – in 2016), the respondents were asked to determine the qualities that an employee with a successful career should possess. As a result of a pilot study, 17 characteristics necessary for professional success were obtained.

It was discovered that the groups provided different evaluations of the personality traits required for a successful professional activity: leadership skills, self-management, professional competence, cooperative skills, powerful intellect, personal development, commitment to results and positive attitude (see Figure 1).

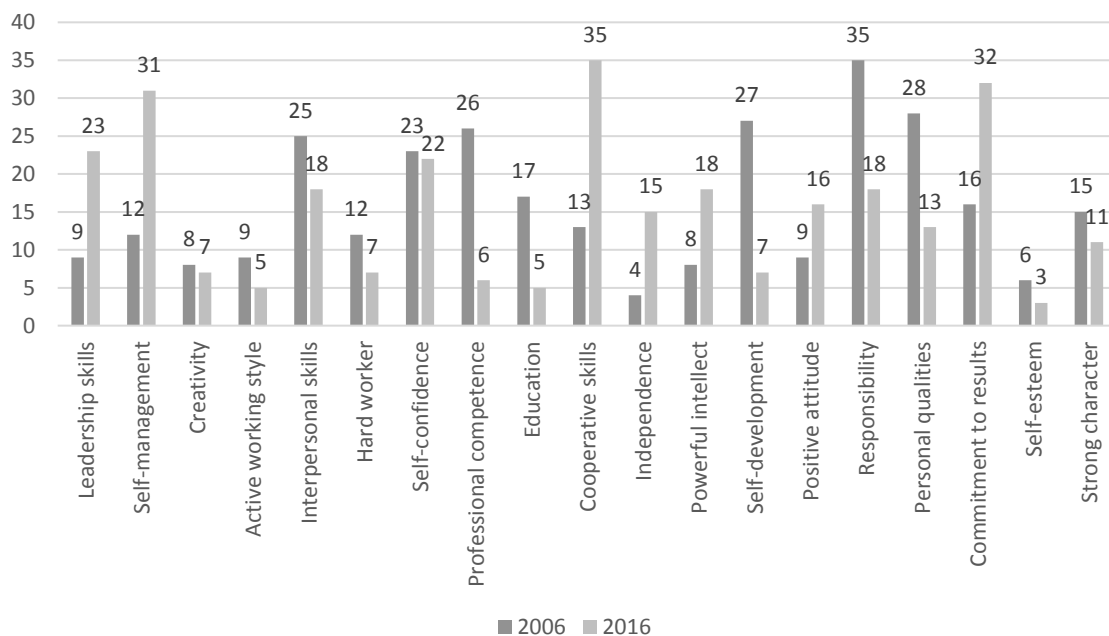


Figure 1. Personality characteristics needed for professional success (according to the surveys done in 2006 and 2016)

Modern experts in the sphere of professional success are now paying more attention to these characteristics than they did 10 years ago. This can be explained by the fact that for building up a distinguished career in today's reality it is important to show individuality, defend your opinion and deliver results in order to navigate through a stack of interchangeable tasks. Due to a constantly increasing amount of information for a specialist to deal with, the requirements for their knowledge and intellect are getting more serious. The members of the Group 2 highlighted a large role of independence and ability to make decisions without supervision and external influence. As for the rest of the qualities, both generations expressed similar views.

Stage 2. Self-evaluation and assessment of professional success. Self-evaluation was performed with the help of the questionnaire drawn up on the basis of the identified characteristics. The analysis of professional success was done by evaluation experts who scrutinized three indicators – job performance, satisfaction and

customer reviews. The members of both groups did not demonstrate statistically significant differences in self-evaluation and assessment of professional success.

Stage 3. Evaluation of personal qualities. According to the data received, there were found statistically significant differences in personality traits of successful employees (success was defined as an integral component of self-evaluation, satisfaction and job performance): warmth ($p < 0,05$), cooperation ($p < 0,05$) and self-criticism ($p < 0,05$). Nowadays a successful employee is friendlier (not indifferent), seeks for cooperation and builds up constructive relationship. At the same time, successful employees are now more critical of their achievements and qualities than 10 years ago.

Conclusions and research prospects

As a result of the current study, the following results were produced:

1. The surveys conducted in 2006 and 2016 suggest that personality characteristics of successful people are now more dynamic and oriented towards relationship management and information management, as well as dominant individual characteristics and self-criticism.

2. The members of the two groups did not demonstrate statistically significant differences in self-evaluation and assessment of professional success.

3. Today's successful employees possess such personal attributes as sociability, cooperative skills and self-criticism.

4. Some new data on the correlation between personality characteristics and the results of professional success evaluation were collected. The authors are planning to discuss this aspect in one of the forthcoming articles.

The given differences can be explained by special conditions of the socio-economic environment in 2006 and 2016 and by the gap between generations (in 2006, the majority of the respondents was represented by the generation X, while in 2016 – by the generation Y).

The findings of the research can be applied in practice during the recruitment process. The questionnaire developed on the basis of the pilot study, if validated and standardized, can be used as a method to identify the level of professional success of the staff. The study was done on the employees of car dealerships (managers, technicians, administration).

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