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## Training, Evaluation and Motivation in a Basketball Organization – A Case Study Approach

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### **Abstract:**

**Purpose:** The study aims to identify the activities of sports organization in the area of motivation, evaluation and development of players and coaching staff.

**Methodology:** The case study method, was chosen as the research method. The case study method has been supplemented with a research technique in the form of an overtly structured interview and direct, partial observation limited in time. An interview questionnaire was used as a research tool.

**Findings:** The case study of a top-tier Polish basketball club highlights how structured training, ongoing performance evaluation, and a balanced motivation system (financial and non-financial) play a pivotal role in managing human capital within sports organizations. The organization combines daily technical training with individualized feedback and regular evaluations. Motivation is driven by both financial incentives (e.g., bonuses for team achievements) and non-financial factors (e.g., team spirit, recognition, fan engagement). A significant insight is that understanding and aligning players' personal goals with team objectives enhances commitment and performance. The study also points to a potential area for improvement: digitization of the evaluation system to enhance accessibility and analysis.

**Practical Implications:** The study highlights that effective human capital management in sports organizations relies on a structured approach to training, continuous performance evaluation, and a balanced system of financial and non-financial motivation. Implementing digital tools for performance tracking could further enhance decision-making and streamline evaluation processes.

**Originality/Value:** This paper provides a unique contribution by focusing on the human capital management practices in a professional sports setting, using an in-depth case study approach. It fills a gap in the literature where most HR studies focus on traditional business contexts. The integration of motivational psychology, coaching practices, and real-world managerial insights into a coherent framework offers valuable interdisciplinary knowledge for both academics and practitioners in sports and HR management.

**Keywords:** Training, evaluation, motivation, human capital, sport organization, management.

**JEL Classification:** D23, M12, M54, L83.

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## **1. Introduction**

In today's turbulent business environment, in the competitive world of sports, the success of an organization depends not only on the talent of the players, but also on how effectively they are trained, motivated, and evaluated. Development, including training, assessment and motivation, are the foundation of effective human capital management, supporting both individuals and entire clubs.

Investing in these areas allows you to maximize the potential of players, build a well-coordinated team and achieve lasting success. J.L. Chatzkel emphasizes that "*it is human capital that determines the differences between organizations and is the real basis for competitive advantage*" (Chatzkel, 2004, p. 139-145).

Training and development shape athletes' skills, improve tactical awareness, and prepare them for the physical and mental challenges of competition. According to Armstrong and Taylor, continuous development through targeted training programs increases effectiveness, taking into account technical, physical, and psychological aspects (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014, p. 123).

Motivation plays an equally important role, which is designed to drive players or coaching staff to continuous improvement. Last but not least, performance appraisal allows coaches and managers to analyze player development, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and adjust training and team strategies.

These three components – training, assessment and motivation – although not the only stages of human capital management, combined with each other create a holistic approach to the growth and proper functioning of sports organizations. By using them, clubs can build high-performing teams capable of maintaining a competitive edge both on and off the pitch.

The study aims to identify the activities of sports organization "X" in the area of motivation, evaluation and development of players and coaching staff. The research was focused on the analysis of the team evaluation process, motivation and elements related to training and development of players and coaching staff. Through interviews and observation, attempts were made to obtain answers to the bothering questions of the topic. Moreover, the work seeks to determine which of these elements are crucial for the sports organization under study.

## 2. Literature Review

Improvement, including vocational training and development, is a stage of the HCM, which aims to increase the competences, efficiency and skills required for a given position. The concept of human capital prioritizes continuous learning and development as a tool to enhance the capabilities of employees. Peter Senge, in his publication *"The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization,"* emphasizes the importance of a learning organization in which individuals constantly expand their skills to adapt to a changing environment (Senge, 1990)

The process of professional development is carried out so that the current employee, in the event of changes taking place in the organization, can easily meet the new requirements (Penc, 2007, p. 177). An approach that takes into account development and continuous improvement, and thus the desire to increase competitiveness, forces the organization to create employee development plans.

Listwan defines an employee development plan as a set of specific activities that consist in identifying and verifying the needs, capabilities, ambitions and creating a program of self-fulfillment of employees in the organization (Listwan, 1999, p. 63). A. Pocztowski presents one of the most popular models of employee training and improvement functions (Pocztowski, 2007, p. 284). It includes four basic stages: identification and analysis of training needs; training plan and program; implementation; evaluation of the training.

The aim of training and development in sports clubs is to provide players with the opportunity to improve their skills, acquire new abilities, knowledge and attitudes that will allow them to meet the requirements of both the organization and the competition in the sports market. There is a wide range of categorization of skills and tasks subject to training. Goldstein and Ford propose a division into three general categories: cognitive; Interpersonal; (Goldstein and Ford, 2002).

The most commonly used methods of development and training of players and coaching staff include, individual training, group training, parlor games, training camps, match simulations, video analytics, mental training, seminars and workshops, and theoretical lessons.

After the training and development process of the players and the coaching staff, the effectiveness of the methods used should be summarized and evaluated, taking into account their usefulness and potential impact on future results.

Evaluation is also a fundamental element, including constructive and honest performance management. Aubrey Daniels in his publication shows that regular feedback and alignment of individual goals with organizational goals has an impact on improving performance (Daniels, 1999). It is also about assessing employee

performance, developing leadership skills, systematically monitoring and promoting a feedback culture.

Employee appraisal is one of the most effective and appropriate ways to consolidate and possibly correct their conduct in the company and its adequacy in a given position and in the assigned task. M. Tyrańska and J. Walas point out that personnel evaluation is a one-time or long-term process, carried out with the intention of determining the signs of staff behavior and evaluating specific reactions to the tasks entrusted to them, superiors, the company or colleagues (Tyrańska and Walas, 1998, p. 37). According to M. Kostera, the two basic functions that should be fulfilled by employee appraisal are: the development function; evaluation function (Kostera, 1994, p. 70).

The principles of using the assessment system are important in the functioning of the organization and are created through the prism of previously developed assessment goals, thanks to which it is possible to create rational measurement standards. At this stage, the results that can be considered "*significant, good, average and bad*" are determined, taking into account the adopted evaluation criteria (*personality, qualification, behavioural and effectiveness*) (Golnau, 2007, p. 319-320). Techniques and methods are another important step in the evaluation of personnel.

Assessment techniques, on the other hand, are a narrower concept, describing a specific form of collecting, recording and analyzing results, which is the basis for personnel evaluation (Pocztowski, 2003, p. 272). Kostera distinguishes two basic, methodological approaches to personnel evaluation (Kostera, 2006, p. 72). The first of them, called absolute evaluation, in which specific standards are compared with the results of a specific employee.

The second, relative one consists in comparing the achievements of individual employees. The evaluation formula is variable because the criterion is a different employee. Among the assessment methods that are commonly used and most detailed in the literature on the subject are: the 360-degree method; management by objectives; assessment Center/development centers. The end of the personnel appraisal process will be the analysis of the results together with the employee to whom the appraisal relates.

Evaluating players and coaching staff in a sports club is a key process that allows you to monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and effectively manage the valuable capital that is your players. The most commonly used methods of evaluating players and coaching staff include:

- statistical analysis; direct observation; physical tests; feedback sessions; evaluation of the effectiveness of meetings; feedback from the players. On the other hand, the most common sources of obtaining ratings are:

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- independent observations and analyses conducted by the club's management, regular monitoring of the work of players and coaching staff,
  - conducting surveys and interviews with players and members of the coaching staff in order to obtain feedback and opinions,
  - external consultations conducted by experts in a given sports field, who will objectively analyze the situation in the club.

The literature also draws attention to the possibility of using benchmarking, auditing, indicator analysis and a balanced scorecard to measure and evaluate both players and coaching staff (Taylor *et. al.*, 2008, p. 250). The methods that actually affect the management and evaluation of a sports team also include social engineering and observation.

Maciejewski defines observation as a process of improving team management, and in the observation sheet he proposes he points out that it makes it easier for *coaches to quickly and objectively record the actions of players (information about lost duels, losses of a player within a few minutes of play, tactical mistakes made, missed 4 shots in a row, unfavorable balance of positive to negative actions of a player)*" and allows *"easy reading of information useful in the current management of a basketball team"* (Maciejewski, 2003, p. 97-105).

A positive work environment is another component of human capital management that is discussed. Employee involvement in the functioning of the organization is also sought by creating appropriate communication, creating organizational culture and taking care of work-life balance, i.e. work-life balance. An employee is an active participant who benefits the organization, not only through their skills, but also through their commitment, ideas, and innovations.

Stephen R. Covey pays particular attention to the importance of cooperation and partnership between employees and the organization (Covey, 1989). This component includes employee motivation. Its importance is clearly emphasized by David McClelland, who claims that by introducing an effective motivational strategy, you increase efficiency and improve the atmosphere in the workplace.

In addition, motivation affects employee engagement in organizational processes (McClelland, 1987, p. 219-233; Reykowski, 1972). Employees who feel motivated are more productive, creative, more loyal to their workplace and better engaged in the tasks entrusted to them. Proper motivation also affects the quality and efficiency of work, innovation and a better atmosphere in the company.

Over the years, many theories of motivation have been developed to determine what drives human behavior in the context of work. The most well-known theories include: Abraham Maslow's theory of needs; Douglas McGregor's theory of X and Y; Victor Vroom's theory of expectations; Herzberg's two-factor theory. The most

common division of means that are used in the process of motivation is divided into three groups: coercive, encouragement and persuasion (Kopertyńska, 2009, p. 41).

Both in classic organizations and in sports organizations, properly identified and effectively used forms of motivation affect the results achieved by the subject. Due to the specificity of sports organizations, it should be noted that in the case of each player, in addition to his physical condition, his mental state is equally important. In a sports organization, players and coaching staff must be motivated to achieve success on a regular basis.

The individual attitude presented by the players is particularly important. For the fans, not only the result will be important, but also the way of achievement, called the "style of action". Both fans and sponsors want their team to win, but they especially value the players' commitment to the game and the fight.

The aspect of age is also noteworthy here. Very often athletes start their careers as young and sometimes as children, which can be influenced by many influences, not always positive. In this way, they become mentally weak. Only with time and "worked" seasons on the pitch do they gain resistance to pressure in achieving satisfactory results, which shows how important it is to properly manage and motivate players. They should be faced with increasing challenges and goals with rationality and rejection of tasks that are impossible.

In the case of sports organizations, just like in classic enterprises, there is also a division into financial and non-financial motivators. The first of them mainly concern the amounts of remuneration and financial bonuses specified in the contracts. A noteworthy form of monetary motivation to achieve better results is the offer by the sponsor of the club a specific monetary gratification for a specific result.

Analyzing the second of the above-mentioned forms, i.e., non-financial motivators, we can talk about verbal motivators, planning and objectives, organizational culture, availability, significance and impact. In the case of players, issues based on the need for recognition, achievement, and belonging become extremely important.

Their motivation to continue working often results from their successes, progress, inner strength flowing from love and passion for a given sport, inspiration from other players, coaches, as well as from the significant support of fans, sports enthusiasts, family, friends and teammates.

In the new economic reality, the growth of classic enterprises and sports organizations depends on the knowledge, intellect, competence, talent or skills of the employee. Therefore, organizations of the 21st century are in some way forced to search for, update tools and forms that will give them the opportunity to properly create, diagnose, evaluate and develop the competences of their employees (Perez and Ordonez de Pablos, 2003, p. 82).

### **3. Research Methodology**

The main objective of the study is to seek to identify the activities of sports organization "X" in the context of motivating, evaluating and developing players and the coaching staff. The detailed objectives of the work include the analysis of the team evaluation process, motivation and elements related to training and development of players and coaching staff. Moreover, the paper seeks to determine the relevance of these elements to a sports organization.

To achieve this goal, the individual case method, also known as the "case study", was chosen as the research method. According to Grzegorzczuk W., it is a method containing an extensive description of the phenomenon under study, which aims to carry out an in-depth analysis and assessment. Using various research techniques, this method solves scientific and practical problems (Grzegorzczuk, 2015, p. 9-10).

The case study method has been supplemented with a research technique in the form of an overt structured interview and direct, partial observation limited in time. An interview questionnaire was used as a research tool. The study is based on the activities of a private sports club, which takes part in the highest basketball league in Poland in the hierarchy of men's classes.

The duration of the research process was from January to the end of May 2024. During this time, three meetings were held, each of which lasted an average of two hours. It should also be noted that the meetings were held one to two months apart.

The use of such a time separation allowed for more thorough preparation and a better understanding of the topic. Moreover, it was also conditioned by the availability and schedule of the sports manager of basketball club "X", who was responsible for providing answers. Each time the interviews took place at the club's headquarters.

### **4. Research Results**

The results of the survey will be presented below, taking into account the division into components such as training and development, evaluation and motivation of both players and coaching staff.

#### **4.1 Training and Development in the Audited Organization**

In the surveyed organization, the working day is not just a match. It is also training and other forms of preparation for match competitions. Both development and some training in the club can be called the entire process of preparing the team for the culmination of the match. The continuity of training during the season makes the players individually better, more experienced and trained.

On the other hand, the organization as a whole has the opportunity to increase its achievements. The team's work during the week is distributed as follows. The match with the opponent is usually played on Saturday, while Sunday remains free in order to regenerate mentally and physically.

On Monday and Tuesday, the players undergo two intensive trainings, i.e. four training units. Wednesday is a day off. On Thursday and Friday, strictly tactical, pre-match trainings are carried out, one training session a day, which is designed to prepare the body for renewed effort on Saturday. In such a planned week of training and team training, it is difficult to find time to additionally burden the player with individual classes in addition to group classes.

A coach working for an organization, taking care of a group of a dozen or so players, having the autonomy of decision, must determine priorities: whether it will be working with the whole team and accepting potential gaps or competence gaps, or rather devoting the general time to the individual preparation of the player.

Due to the fact that the players function on the market as independent staff, they are forced to take care of improving their qualifications themselves to a certain extent in the breaks between seasons. The players use the help of coaches on their own, individually work on issues related in particular to self-confidence, focus, and "mindfulness".

It should be noted, however, that the season is very exhausting for the team, which is why to some extent the aspect of physical and mental rest appears to be more important than acquiring new skills in the break between seasons.

As far as financial and time allows, the organization sends coaches and physiotherapists, especially youth ones, who can then be promoted to assistants and training. Most often they take place in stationary trainer clinics or simply online. A coach working for the audited organization may establish as a condition for qualification the willingness of the recruited assistants for further development and their aspirations for promotion to the coach's chair.

This is a mentoring model modified for the needs of the organization, because the coach "leads" the assistant in this way, allows him to participate in the introduction of training, passes on his knowledge and experience or, in some cases, allows him to conduct the action during the match on his own.

The organization also offers external support, that is, it works with two doctors specializing in sports injuries who help the staff members of the training staff in more difficult cases. With such cooperation, there is also an important exchange of knowledge and information between physiotherapists and doctors.



## **4.2 Evaluation of Players and Coaching Staff**

In the examined organization, the evaluation of players and the coaching staff can be divided into partial and complete. The first one is everyday, related to team management, which from the perspective of management is autonomous, i.e. performed by the coach. Constantly during the season, the coach receives feedback on the strengths of his work, and more importantly, those that need to be improved.

Such assessment takes place both during and after training. During individual sessions, the coach-player discusses the attitude and play of a given player, conveys both the good and bad sides of the game along with their explanation. In addition, for the purposes of such an assessment, statistics, sheets and special video materials are prepared in the audited organization, which are watched together during such a session.

The management board together with the manager expects the coach to provide a reliable assessment of the team's work: whether there are individual problems, whether the qualifications of individual players are improved, whether the qualifications of individual players are sufficient, whether there are necessary changes, additions in the team or replacement of a player, etc. An assessment of the coaching staff is also required. Meetings with the coach and the manager, who is the president's intermediary, take place once a week.

The second type of assessment concerns the whole team, how it functions in key moments of the season, how the players work, what the effects are and how effective the coaching staff is. It is regularly checked how the team's results are developing and whether they give hope for achieving the assumed success. At the end of the season, the club expects a written report from the coaches on the work done.

This document is divided into preparation and creation of the team, preparation for the season, the season as the most important phase and summary. In the last stage, that is, the summary, the elements in which the club has been decisively successful are described, but also those that have left much to be desired, along with the reasons and aspects that the organization needs to improve.

Then the club manager prepares a report for the board. It contains a detailed description and course of the current season, characteristics of individual players. At the end of the document, conclusions and recommendations for the next season are listed.

## **4.3 Team Motivation**

In the surveyed sports organization, a clear division into financial and non-financial motivation can be observed. Financial motivation is a fundamental issue, for players finances are the basic criterion for choosing employers, as well as the awareness of

the possibility of increasing earnings in the coming years. These are the so-called player motivators, i.e. elements taken into account each time at the time of signing the contract: salary, bonus, reputation, solvency of the employer and the like. The player usually signs a guaranteed contract, which includes bonuses for the team's sports achievements.

The club very rarely uses bonuses for individual achievements, believing that it is counter-effective. If a player is named the most valuable player (MVP), the best defender, it becomes highly likely that he will receive an award from the league. The club cares about team victories and these victories are rewarded. For medal places and winning the Polish Cup, the club includes bonuses for players in contracts. They are individually negotiated at the time of signing the contract.

The second type of motivation presented earlier, i.e., non-financial, its importance is just as important as financial motivation. Basketball has an important psychological aspect - a lot of emotions, satisfaction from winning, competing and proving that the team or player is better than the opponent.

In addition, in these circumstances, there is a direct, male competition, where you can prove your skills to the other person face to face, and also do it in front of fans who cheer and applaud. You rarely become a professional athlete if you ignore the above aspect. A player wants to win, you rarely have to deal with players for whom only salary is important.

Therefore, in order to win, the organization creates a group that will support each other, fight against adversities and strive to achieve a common goal. It is crucial for the club that the players understand that their individual goals can only be met by focusing on the team goal. In addition, other forms of non-financial motivation are used, including offering the players and the coaching staff company cars on behalf of the sponsor.

The last, but not the least aspect of motivation and daily management of human capital, i.e. the team, is the interior and working conditions in the club. The surveyed organization assumes that it is its responsibility to provide the best possible conditions for work, to ensure that the athlete does not have to worry about things unrelated to training, aspects such as the gym, training room or locker room.

## **5. Conclusions**

Contemporary sports clubs are thriving commercial law companies striving to multiply their sports and business successes. In order for them to operate effectively and efficiently, it is necessary to implement human capital management practices. The three components mentioned above and described in the paper (training, assessment and motivation) are elements based on recognized theories of management and psychology, they affect the development of players' potential and

the formation of harmonious, high-performance teams. Players, coaching staff and managers shape such intangible assets as the image or reputation of the organization, organizational culture and competitiveness. They are an integral part of the development and implementation of the club's values, policies and purpose.

Due to such an important role they play in the structure of the organization, they should be involved in a number of participatory programs, helped to meet their needs and aspirations, and receive appropriate forms of motivation.

Training and development processes should bring results for both the organization and the players. Motivation systems should be able to take into account the player's individualism and support the team's efforts to achieve the desired goals or results.

The study conducted in the sports organization "X" allowed to obtain important information in the context of the stated goal of the work, which is to strive to recognize the activities of the sports organization in the area of motivation, evaluation and development of players and the coaching staff.

Every day, the club faces the challenge of adapting to changing environmental conditions, each of these elements are in their essence complex areas that require constant development. What is more, the organization must be aware of the diversity of characteristics and attitudes of its employees and how to use them to achieve the assumed goal.

Due to the fact that this study indicates only the perspective of the management board and the office, and more specifically the sports manager, the perspective of the key capital in the organization, i.e. the players and the coaching staff, should be taken into account for a more complete analysis of the situation and the correctness of the activities used in the examined areas.

Their perception of the subject may turn out to be different from the existing one. Such information can be obtained by conducting surveys and interviews with players and members of the coaching staff.

Future research could include the perspectives of players and coaching staff through surveys or interviews to provide a more comprehensive understanding of motivation, evaluation, and development processes. Additionally, comparative studies involving multiple sports organizations could offer broader insights into best practices and variations in human capital management across different contexts or countries.

This study is limited to a single case – one basketball organization – and reflects only the management's perspective, particularly that of the sports manager. The lack of direct input from players and coaching staff may restrict the depth and objectivity of the findings.

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