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Typical classes of problems of a modern IT manager and ways to solve them

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Abstract. The relevance of the study is due to the progressive problem of hiring, selection, and training of managerial personnel, as well as their development in the information technology industry in Russia. The conducted research, the results of which are reflected in this article, is aimed at studying, analyzing, and systematizing the experience of practicing managers of Russian IT companies in identifying and solving typical classes of problems that a modern IT manager faces daily at different stages of his professional activity. During the research, empirical methods of cognition (observation, comparison, measurement) were used to obtain empirical data, and theoretical methods of cognition (analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, generalization and abstraction, and classification) to prepare the theoretical and methodological basis of the study and to comprehend and process the empirical data obtained. The results of the study showed that the relevance of the typical classes (groups) of problems identified in past studies that a modern IT manager faces daily at different stages of his professional activity persists to this day, while the most universal ways to diagnose the presence of a particular class of problems in the activities of an IT manager are the actual observation of actions the manager in real conditions within the framework of regular, systematic control procedures, as well as the introduction of a collection system, analysis and monitoring of feedback indicators from key management processes, and the most effective ways to solve the identified classes of problems in the manager's work is reformatting and correcting the problem process, skill or behavior pattern, changing the established management system. It is also established that the solution of more than half of the known classes of problems can be achieved only with the appropriate adjustment of the culture within the company at various levels, and more than a third of the known classes of problems have a solution in the form of a ready-made, existing tool (methodology, framework, digital product, etc). The materials of the article can be used by companies, primarily in the information technology industry technologies of Russia, in the preparation and development of qualified managerial personnel in conditions of progressive personnel shortage.

Key words: typical manager problems, IT, IT manager, shortage of personnel, manager's problem solving.

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Типовые классы проблем современного ИТ-менеджера и пути их решения

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Аннотация. Актуальность исследования обусловлена прогрессирующей проблемой найма, подбора и подготовки управленческих кадров, а также их развития в отрасли информационных технологий в России. Проведённое исследование, результаты которого отражены в данной статье, направлено на изучение, анализ и систематизацию опыта практикующих менеджеров Российских ИТ-компаний по выявлению и решению типовых классов проблем, с которыми современный ИТ-менеджер ежедневно сталкивается на разных этапах своей профессиональной деятельности. При проведении исследования были использованы эмпирические методы познания (наблюдение, сравнение, измерение) для получения эмпирических данных и теоретические методы познания (анализ и синтез, индукция и дедукция, обобщение и абстрагирование, классификация) для подготовки теоретической и методологической основы исследования и для осмысления и обработки полученных эмпирических данных. Результаты проведенного исследования показали, что актуальность выявленных в прошлых исследованиях типовых классов (групп) проблем, с которыми современный ИТ-менеджер ежедневно сталкивается на

разных этапах своей профессиональной деятельности, сохраняется и по сей день, при этом наиболее универсальными способами диагностики наличия того или иного класса проблем в деятельности ИТ-менеджера являются фактическое наблюдение за действиями менеджера в реальных условиях в рамках регулярных, систематических процедур контроля, а также внедрение системы сбора, анализа и мониторинга показателей обратной связи от ключевых процессов управления, а наиболее действенными способами решения выявленных классов проблем в работе менеджера является переформатирование и корректировка проблемного процесса, навыка или паттерна поведения, изменение устоявшейся системы управления. Также установлено, что решение более половины известных классов проблем может достигаться только при соответствующей корректировке культуры внутри компании на различных уровнях, а более трети известных классов проблем имеют решение в виде готового, существующего инструмента (методики, фреймворка, цифрового продукта и т. д.). Материалы статьи могут быть использованы компаниями, прежде всего в отрасли информационных технологий России, при подготовке и развитии квалифицированных управленческих кадров в условиях прогрессирующего кадрового голода.

Ключевые слова: типовые проблемы руководителя, ИТ, ИТ менеджер, дефицит кадров, решение проблем менеджера.

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Introduction

The information technology industry in Russia has been experiencing difficulties for a long period of time with the availability of qualified personnel in the labor market in many areas². Data on the scale of the personnel shortage vary, but they all indicate that the shortage of IT personnel in Russia persists and in the near future will at least remain at the same level, and at most will worsen. The well-known events of 2022 contributed to a decrease in the number of qualified IT personnel available in Russia, stimulated an increase in the outflow of specialists outside of Russia³. According to various estimates, the shortage of personnel in the field of information technology in Russia at the moment is from 170 thousand people to 1 million people⁴.

Difficulties with finding and hiring qualified personnel in the industry exist not only with employees of ordinary specialties but also with managers⁵, experts separately point out that the manager's profession is promising and there will be a steady demand for it in the coming decades. The shortage of IT personnel in the industry almost completely excludes the possibility of attracting candidates for manager's positions «from the outside»⁶. Some experts agree that candidates for a manager's position should be selected and developed from the internal reserve of the company (from ordinary specialists). However, according to the practice of Russian IT companies, often a newly-minted manager for many reasons experiences several difficulties when moving from the position of an ordinary specialist, IT-expert, to a manager's position – he has problems with stress, overwork, burnout, demotivation, lack of

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2 Kasmir E. «Rostekh»: v Rossii ser'eznyi defitsit IT-kadrov. Trebuyutsya spetsialisty po desyatkam napravlenii [Rostec: There is a serious shortage of IT personnel in Russia. Specialists are required in dozens of areas]. *CNEWS*: website. Available at https://www.cnews.ru/news/top/2022-08-24_v_rostehe_sereznyj_defitsit (In Russian). Publication date 08/24/2022.

3 Kotov P. Defitsit IT-spetsialistov v Rossii dostig 170 tys. chelovek [The shortage of IT specialists in Russia has reached 170 thousand people]. *3DNEWS*: website. Available at <https://3dnews.ru/1068577/defitsit-spetsialistov-itotrasli-v-rossii-dostig-170-tis-chelovek> (In Russian). Publication date 06/22/2022.

4 Defitsit IT-mozgov: kak Rossiya reshaet problemu kadrovogo goloda v otrasli [Shortage of IT brains: how Russia solves the problem

of personnel shortage in the industry]. RBK: website. Available at <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/28/07/2022/62e12c929a794747597da279> (In Russian). Publication date 07/28/2022.

5 Frolova M. Kadrovyy golod: kakikh rabotnikov ne khvataet v Rossii [Personnel hunger: what kind of workers are missing in Russia]. *Izvestiya*: electronic newspaper. Available at <https://iz.ru/1243977/mariia-frolova/kadrovyy-golod-kakikh-rabotnikov-ne-khvataet-v-rossii> (In Russian). Publication date 11/05/2021.

6 Rukovoditel': vyrashchivat' ili nanimat'? [Supervisor: grow or hire?]. *Biznes gazeta*: electronic newspaper. Available at <https://bizgaz.ru/2020/12/16/rukovoditel-vyrashchivat-ili-nanimat.html> (In Russian). Publication date 12/16/2020.

understanding of his powers and their boundaries, personal effectiveness, time management, task management, procrastination and this is just the «tip of the iceberg». Separately, it should be noted that the identified classes of problems in their work are experienced in one form or another not only by young managers but also by managers with experience. Also, often insufficient work is carried out in Russian IT companies to train and develop managerial personnel, as may be evidenced by the fact that only a quarter of employees have special education in the field of management during the professional transformation from executors to managers and only about a third make up for its lack after moving to a managerial position [Puchkin 2022].

According to experts, the Russian information technology industry expects more noticeable growth than the economy as a whole⁷. This outstripping dynamics of development is due to the general trend towards the digitalization of companies and the digitalization of their products, the development of remote work, training, communication services, an increase in demand for artificial intelligence systems, etc. Analysts separately note that the information technology industry in Russia is expanding at a faster pace than in the world, and the attention and support from the state are at a high level, especially recently.

Given these facts, we can talk about the existence of an increasing problem of hiring, selecting, and training managers personnel, as well as their development in the information technology industry in Russia, which served as motivation for conducting a study aimed at studying, analyzing and systematizing the experience of practicing managers of Russian IT companies in identifying and solving typical classes of problems, which a modern IT manager faces daily at different stages of his professional activity, the results of which can be used in the process of training and development of managerial personnel.

Materials and methods

During the scientific research, the author used empirical and theoretical general scientific methods of cognition [Bel`chik 2014; Rodionova 2017].

Empirical methods of cognition (observation, comparison, measurement) were used to obtain empirical data within the framework of the study, and theoretical methods of cognition (analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, generalization and abstraction, and classification) were used in the preparation of the theoretical and methodological basis of the study and for understanding and processing the empirical data obtained.

Results

At the initial stage of the study, several respondents were identified, consisting of currently practicing line managers and middle managers of Russian IT companies with more than five years of managerial experience for subsequent structured interviews [Kodola 2011; Cherny`sheva 2020].

The basis for conducting structured interviews made previously identified typical classes (groups) of problems that a modern IT manager faces daily at different stages of his professional activity [Puchkin 2022]:

- Group of problems 1. Personal effectiveness (time management, task management, procrastination).
- Group of problems 2. Stress (working overtime, burnout, demotivation).
- Group of problems 3. Communication (with subordinates, with management, with stakeholders).
- Group of problems 4. Conflicts (with subordinates, with management, with stakeholders).
- Group of problems 5. Fear of conflicts (avoiding conflict situations to the detriment of efficiency).
- Group of problems 6. Hiring and retaining employees.
- Group of problems 7. Interaction with subordinates (manager-subordinate behavioral model, manipulation by subordinates, etc.).
- Group of problems 8. Punishment and dismissal of employees.
- Group of problems 9. Making work plans (evaluation, decomposition, prioritization, task dependency).

7 Shamraev S. IT-rynok prodolzhit dinamichno rasti v 2022 godu [The IT market will continue to grow dynamically in 2022]. PRAIM : website. Available at <https://1prime.ru/experts/20210914/834682541.html> (In Russian). Publication date 09/14/2021. Accessed 10/10/2022.

- Group of problems 10. Organization of work execution (delegation, task setting, micromanagement).
- Group of problems 11. Control of work execution (lack of understanding of the actual status of work and its progress relative to the plan).
- Group of problems 12. The result of the work (deviation of the actual results from the planned, expectations from reality).
- Group of problems 13. The motivation of subordinates (lack of satisfaction, lack of initiative, non-performance, etc.).
- Group of problems 14. Lack of understanding of their powers and their boundaries.
- Group of problems 15. Lack of special knowledge in the field of management.
- Group of problems 16. «Impostor» syndrome (you think that you are unworthy of your position, are not too competent and smart, and are «deceiving» others by holding this position).

Then interviews were conducted with each of the previously selected respondents on the condition of complete anonymity. The plan of conducting a structured interview with each respondent included a sequential collection of data on what methods and tools it is possible to identify and eliminate a particular class of problems from a previously defined list, based on the practical experience of each respondent. The results of each interview were recorded, during the interview, a deviation from the previously developed plan was allowed to obtain more information.

Further, the analysis and systematization of data obtained during structured interviews with previously identified respondents were carried out. Summary results are presented below in the context of each class of problems.

As for the problem of personal effectivity of the manager (time management, task management, procrastination), its presence can be identified by signs that the manager is confused, systematically «loses», «forgets» tasks, disrupts their deadline, postpones solving simple tasks for a long time, often working overtime, and during the working day may have non-targeted activity. To solve this problem,

the use of various frameworks and tools for planning and managing your own queue of tasks within the day can help, which allows you to keep lists of tasks, their priorities, binding to a time window, etc. Also, the manager needs to learn how to immediately sort out new incoming tasks and plan activities on them.

Regarding the problem of stress (working overtime, burnout, demotivation), its presence can be detected by indirect signs, such as appearance, tone of conversation, behavior, health problems, and work activity outside of working hours, it is also recommended to hold a regular meeting at which special questions directly find out the current stress level of the manager. The solution to this problem can only be complex, taking into account the root cause, for example, it can be an audit and reformatting of the existing management system of a particular manager, an objective assessment of the sufficiency of resources for the tasks being solved.

Regarding the problem of communication (with subordinates, with management, with stakeholders), collecting feedback from different sides of communication and an actual assessment of communication skills, negotiations, and meetings in real conditions can help to identify its presence. It is possible to solve this problem by developing a lagging skill, introducing or adjusting requirements for the culture of communication, negotiations, and meetings, as well as introducing additional communication activities.

The problem of conflicts (with subordinates, with management, with stakeholders) can be identified by the presence of escalation of conflicts, as well as by regularly collecting feedback from all interacting parties and regularly assessing the culture and atmosphere within the team. The solution to the problem at the local level can be to carry out targeted work with a conflicted manager, which may include correcting the behavioral model, developing emotional intelligence skills, etc., and at the global level – reviewing and adjusting the culture of the company itself. A preventive measure may be a more detailed assessment of a potential candidate for the manager's role for conflictness even at the selection stage.

It is possible to determine the presence of a problem of fear of conflicts (avoiding conflict situations to the detriment of efficiency) by actually observing the manager's work and periodic target control, as well as analyzing controversial

management decisions (or their absence) in retrospect. The solution may be to educate the manager of a culture of mandatory declaration of objective objections, understanding that in some cases conflict is an integral part of his functions in achieving his goals, and open designation of the position of the inadmissibility of silencing problems as an element of the internal culture of the company can also help.

The presence of problems related to the hiring and retention of employees can characterize the indicators of recruitment (the volume of the flow of candidates, the volume of interviews, the speed of hiring, etc.) and the indicators of employee retention (average working period, number of dismissals, satisfaction, etc.). It is possible to solve the problem by implementing an understandable, transparent hiring process that allows you to control it at all stages (there are already many ready-made digital tools for this), regular assessment of retention rates of already hired employees is also required.

As for the problem of the manager's interaction with subordinates (the behavioral model of the manager-subordinate, manipulation by subordinates, etc.), its presence may be indicated by the fact that the manager does not defend the achievement of goals by his team, systematically allows violations of discipline among employees, has no leadership within the team, is not focused on achieving results. It is possible to solve this problem by changing the behavioral model of the manager, and marking boundaries and distances in interaction with subordinates.

The presence of the problem of punishment and dismissal of employees may be indicated by the lack of targeted work of the manager with problematic employees, the permission of systematic violation of rules, and discipline by a specific employee or group without the appropriate reaction of their manager. The development and implementation of an understandable and transparent model of values and rules and strict compliance with them, as well as the establishment of the process of targeted work of the manager with problematic employees, will help with the solution.

The problem of making work plans (evaluation, decomposition, prioritization, dependency) can be identified by the presence of a systematic deviation of work deadlines from planned ones, systematic overtime work of employees, lack of proper coordination and logically understandable

connectivity between tasks performed by different employees, as well as general dissatisfaction within the team. The solution to the problem can only be complex, it will require reformatting the planning process, which should include a predetermined design for planning and evaluation, criteria for the readiness of tasks for evaluation and planning, a regular process of clarifying and detailing the requirements for tasks before planning, assessing the logical interconnectedness of tasks of different employees with each other and involving the entire team in the planning process, decomposition and task evaluations. Many existing modern frameworks for planning and organizing teamwork successfully cope with this.

The presence of a problem with the organization of work execution (delegation, task setting, micromanagement) can be evidenced by the fact that the manager personally controls every step of the execution of all tasks by responsible performers, is too aware of the progress of each task in detail, imposes his ways of solving tasks, closes communication on the tasks of employees on himself, performs many tasks himself (especially the one's manager was engaged in before became a manager). Adjusting the planning system, carrying out a more detailed decomposition of tasks, introducing closer, direct communication between employees when performing tasks, setting tasks according to certain criteria (for example, SMART), introducing principles of autonomous task performance by different employees together within a single goal into the team's work culture can help with solving the problem.

Problems of control of work execution (lack of understanding of the actual status of work and its progress relative to the plan) can be identified by a systematic deviation of the actual deadlines from the planned ones in a big way, while a typical case is when the day before the deadline the manager is convinced that everything is going according to plan, and on the deadline day «suddenly revealed» problems and circumstances that affect the term. It is possible to solve the problem by introducing a transparent execution control system and feedback indicators from the execution process (with an update period of at least once a day, and preferably more often) or by configuring an existing system.

As for the class of problems related to the results of work (deviation of actual results from

the planned, expectations from reality), then discrepancies between the expected result and the real one may indicate their presence, a typical case when the task is completed, but in the end, it turned out not what was required. The solution can be the introduction of criteria for describing tasks that are understandable to the whole team, closer (necessarily direct) communication between the final performer of the task and the consumer of its result both before the start of work on it and during work, a retrospective analysis of each problem case, targeted work with specific employees, for whom the systematic presence of this problem is captured.

It is possible to identify the presence of problems related to the motivation of subordinates (lack of satisfaction, initiative, non-performance, etc.) by regularly measuring the atmosphere and moods within the team using questionnaires and surveys, as well as by regularly measuring performance in the context of each employee. The solution to the problem can be found in increasing the level of employee engagement, selecting motivating tasks for a specific employee, changing the culture of task allocation, and taking responsibility for them (not letting them down from above, but enabling the team to make decisions and, accordingly, take responsibility), regular targeted one-on-one work with each employee will also not be superfluous.

The problem of the manager's lack of understanding of his powers and their boundaries is manifested in the fact that it is difficult for the manager to take his team under control, he is afraid or does not understand how to solve and escalate the problems that arise, or vice versa, he often «overreaches» going beyond his powers, does not understand the vector of the movement of the company as a whole and his role in this movement. A clear indication of the manager's goals, functions, powers, their boundaries, and role in achieving the overall goals of the company can contribute to solving this problem.

It is possible to determine the presence of a problem of lack of special knowledge in the field of management by the absence of confirmed special education and by complaints about their lack from the manager himself. It is possible to solve the problem by filling in the missing knowledge with the help of centralized training at the company level, self-study, and the allocation of a mentor for regular work with the manager.

Regarding the problem of the manager having the «impostor» syndrome (thinks that he is unworthy of his position, is not too competent and smart, and «deceives» others by holding this position), it can be revealed by capturing certain patterns in the manager's behavior, such as uncertainty in communication and decision-making, an «apologetic» tone in communication, lack of actual leadership within the team. The solution to the problem can be working with a specialist (psychologist), developing leadership skills, and targeted work with a mentor.

Discussion

Within the framework of the conducted research, the experience of practicing managers of Russian IT companies in identifying and solving typical classes of problems that a modern IT manager faces daily at different stages of his professional activity was studied, analyzed, and systematized, the results of which can be used in the process of training and development of managerial personnel.

The results of the study show that the most universal ways to diagnose the presence of a particular class of problems in the activities of an IT manager are the actual observation of the manager's actions in real conditions within regular, systematic control procedures, as well as the introduction of a system for collecting, analyzing and monitoring feedback indicators from key management processes. Given this fact, it can be assumed that the internal system of training and development of managerial personnel in an IT company should include measures to control, analyze and monitor certain factors and performance indicators of the manager on a systematic basis, which will allow identifying most of the known classes of problems in the daily work of the manager, to make adjustments to problematic areas of activity manager and track progress in dynamics.

According to the results of the study, the most effective ways to solve the identified classes of problems in the work of a manager are reformatting and correcting the problem process, skill, or pattern of behavior, and changing the established management system. Separately, it should be noted that the solution of more than half of the known classes of problems can be achieved only with the appropriate adjustment of the culture within the company at various levels, and more than a third of the known classes of problems have

a solution in the form of ready-made, existing tool (methodology, framework, digital product, etc). Based on these facts, it can be assumed that within the framework of the internal process of training and development of managerial personnel in an IT company, regular measures should be provided for the diagnosis of the condition and development of various manager skills, audit, and adjustment of the existing management system and its processes. It is also important to note that the internal culture of the company, its divisions, and its employees can eliminate or prevent a significant part of the typical problems of a modern IT manager, which suggests that sufficient attention should be paid to the assessment, adjustment, and development of culture within the company and this process should be synchronized with the processes of training and development of managerial personnel. It is also worth considering that many of the well-known, typical problems of a modern IT manager can be solved using existing tools, frameworks, techniques, and products, which can significantly reduce the cost of training and development of managerial personnel within an IT company.

Other researchers have previously justified the need and methods of training managers [Nosov 2010], a study was conducted in the IT industry aimed at studying the competence of emotional intelligence as a factor of the success of a manager [Nekrest'yanova 2013], approaches to the training of managerial personnel in the oil and gas sector [Afnas'ev 2018], in the digital economy [Kuznetsova 2019], an attempt was made to identify the factors affecting the effectiveness of the manager [Zvereva 2018].

Conducting researches confirms the relevance of the problem of training and development of managerial personnel in various industries, and indicates the presence of typical difficulties in the daily work of both beginners and experienced managers, however, the aspect of analyzing and systematizing the experience of practicing managers of Russian IT companies in identifying and solving typical classes of problems considered in this study, which a modern IT manager faces daily at different stages of his professional activity has not been considered in the currently existing researches.

Conclusion

In this study, the relevance of the problem of

hiring, selection, adaptation, and development of senior personnel in the information technology industry in Russia was shown, a study was conducted aimed at studying, analyzing, and systematizing the experience of practicing managers of Russian IT companies in identifying and solving typical classes of problems that a modern IT manager faces daily at different stages of his professional activity, based on the results of which the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The relevance of the typical classes of problems identified in past studies, which a modern IT manager faces daily at different stages of his professional activity, remains.
2. The most universal ways to diagnose the presence of a particular class of problems in the activities of an IT manager are the actual monitoring of the manager's actions in real conditions as part of regular, systematic control procedures, as well as the introduction of a system for collecting, analyzing and monitoring feedback indicators from key management processes.
3. The most effective ways to solve the identified classes of problems in the work of a manager is to reformat and adjust the problem process, skill, or pattern of behavior, and change the established management system.
4. The solution to more than half of the known classes of problems can be achieved only with the appropriate adjustment of the culture within the company at various levels.
5. More than a third of the known classes of problems have a solution in the form of a ready-made, existing tool (methodology, framework, digital product, etc).

Recommendations

The materials of this article, reflect the results of the conducted research aimed at studying, analyzing, and systematizing the experience of practicing managers of Russian IT companies in identifying and solving typical classes of problems that a modern IT manager faces daily at different stages of his professional activity, can be used by companies, primarily in the information technology industry of Russia, when preparing and the development of qualified managerial personnel in conditions of progressive personnel shortage.

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