

TIME AS A RESOURCE FOR THE MODERN MANAGER IN THE CONDITIONS OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IN RUSSIA

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Abstract

The economic crisis in Russia aggravates all the country's social and economic problems and updates the search of resources for its decision. A key figure in this process is the manager, whose one of tools is the use of time. This research is focused on innovative ways of time usage which are developing under the current conditions of Russian managers' temporal activities. The aim of the study was to examine the temporal behaviour strategies applied by managers to fit the nonlinear dynamics of social time. This includes an analysis of the three structural blocks constituting managers' temporal behaviour strategy: their 'philosophy of time', emotional, and behavioral components. The main results of the study were related to revealing the specificity of the temporal behaviour strategies of managers, determining their innovative nature. The business community, including managers, represents the social vanguard; that is, they are the first to face an economic crisis, with its new challenges and risks. They are also the first to learn to cope with these challenges and to work out ways to minimize their destructive consequences. Managers are the subjects of the new temporal properties and qualities, which provide the resources for the mobility of this social community.

Key words: managers, temporal behaviour strategy, use of time, innovative models of temporal behaviour

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Introduction

Russian managers are a socio-professional community playing a key role in the process of economic development and also are actors in initiating and implementing innovations in management. The current economic slump in Russia has aggravated all the nation's socio-economic problems, creating an urgent need to find new resources to address them. One such innovative resource is the time which managers use for professional activities and for professional development. Temporal behaviour strategies of managers can serve as a good indicator of their attitude to time as a strategic resource. Managers' temporal behaviour

strategy is a system of their life, the forms and methods of what are focused on certain properties and qualities of social time to achieve professional goals. From this perspective, managers are the social vanguard of Russian society, since they produce innovative models of temporal behaviour; and new temporal patterns, values, and attitudes. This study is targeted at examining the temporal behaviour strategies applied by managers to fit the nonlinear dynamics of social time. This task is accomplished by analysing the three structural blocks constituting managers' temporal behaviour strategy: their 'philosophy of time'; and emotional, and behavioural, components.

The methodological foundation for this study was provided by a number of theories devoted to the economic and social problems of time, especially those interpreting time in the context of human capital and the quality of human life (Becker, 1965; Giddens, 1990, Sztompka, 1993). At the turn of the XX–XXI centuries, the problem of non-linear time was raised by some scholars (Bauman, 2007; Urry, 2007). Modern studies also focus on the temporal aspects of managers' lives (Bolotova, 2000; Giauque, 2015; Vokic, Mrdenovic, 2008; Zborovsky, Ambarova, 2014) and on their innovative potential (Feniser, 2014; Verschuere, Beddeleem, Verlet, 2014; Zieba, Zieba, 2014).

1 Research Methodology

1.1 Methodology approaches

The methodology of this study combines three interconnected approaches: activity-related, community-related; and temporal. The *activity-related approach* is determined by the very subject of this study: that is, temporal behaviour strategies, which are a special form of selective participation of social actors and which are based on these actors' attitudes to social time as a value. The choice of behaviour patterns, and behavioural reactions to temporal situations, reveal people's understanding of time and the relevant social feelings.

The *community-related approach* concentrates on the subject of time and temporal behaviour strategies. This approach sees temporal behaviour strategies as determined by the socio-cultural environment of a social community: by its demographic, occupational, and other characteristics.

The *temporal approach* performs an integrating function. Following this approach, the social time and the temporal characteristics of a social community are considered as a framework within which this community functions. Time acts both as an external, objective reality which exists in a social community and as an internal, perceptual or constructed

component. The combination of all the three approaches forms the theoretical foundation of this study, comprising the principles and the system of the basic sociological categories applied (see Tab. 1).

Tab. 1. Research methodology

Methodological structure	Elements of the methodology and their description
<i>Methodological approaches</i>	1. The activity-related approach focuses on:
	1) studying behaviour of managers as a reflection of their temporal consciousness; 2) studying the mechanisms of regulation of managers' temporal behaviour; 3) identification of goals, methods, behaviour models, temporal needs of managers.
	2. The community-related approach characterizes:
	1) a community of managers as the main subject of its temporal behaviour strategies; 2) managers' temporal behaviour strategies as a means of adaptation to the changing social reality; 3) opportunities of managing social time through appropriate temporal strategies.
	3. The temporal approach allows:
	1) study of the quality of managers' activities by analysing their temporal characteristics; 2) consideration of social time as the capital of managers necessary for their development; 3) study of the innovative and progressive character of the business community through the prism of the temporal strategies of managers' behaviour.
<i>Empirical indicators of managers' temporal behaviour strategies</i>	1. Dispositions of managers in relation to social time:
	1) the value of time, its place in the system of value orientations, its correlation with other terminal and instrumental values; 2) understanding of the meaning of time; 3) temporal reference points in terms of the time mode: orientation to the present, past, future; 4) temporal needs in different types of time; time structuring; time planning (tactical and strategic; in both the personal and professional spheres); 5) the role of time in one's general life strategy.
	2. Social emotions of managers concerning time:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) perception and sense of time; 2) emotional experience of time and its increasing nonlinearity; 3) spontaneity / rationality in the formation of temporal behaviour strategy.
	<p>3. Real temporal behaviour of managers:</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) skills to organize and use time resources; 2) temporal abilities and opportunities; 3) stable behaviour models in various temporal situations (time pressure, uncertainty related to time); 4) productivity of temporal behaviour strategies; 5) principles and organization of action sequences (linear / politemporal organization).
<p><i>Characteristics of the types of managers' temporal behaviour strategies</i></p>	<p>1. Active temporal optimism:</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) active use of temporal opportunities and resources; 2) ability and motivation to optimize organization of one's own time and the time of others; 3) developed skills of strategic, tactical and short-term planning of life in general and its specific aspects; 4) understanding of time as a special value; seeing time as a limited but extremely important resource.
	<p>2. Passive temporal optimism:</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) lack of motivation to manage time actively or to consciously improve one's temporal skills and abilities; 2) positive perception of time; 3) the main motto: 'go with the flow'; 4) orientation to the present; 5) adaptation to external temporal conditions, sometimes at one's own expense.
	<p>3. Active temporal pessimism:</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) pronounced fear of time and its dynamics; 2) perception of social time nonlinearity as a threat; 3) demonstration of active desire to overcome this state; 4) developed skills of time management and motivation to develop them.
	<p>4. Passive temporal pessimism:</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) absence of need (or ability) to manage time; 2) negative emotions, particularly fear; 3) perception of time as chaotic and unmanageable; 4) no developed temporal skills and abilities.

Source: author's own work

1.2 Methods of empirical research

This article presents the results of the study of temporal behaviour strategies among managers living in Ekaterinburg, a typical Russian city. The empirical research focused on managers engaged in industrial production, construction, services, and computer technology. The characteristics of the structure and functioning of the business community determined the choice of the qualitative research methods for studying their temporal behaviour strategies. The study used the method of an in-depth, semi-formalized interview, which allows a thorough analysis of the features, mechanisms and factors shaping the temporal behaviour strategies of managers. The interview guide includes a set of forty nine questions divided into six blocks. The pressure of work experienced by executive managers and their inapproachability made it impossible to choose them as the object of this empirical research. Instead, middle managers were selected for interviewing. The respondents were selected on the basis of the 'snowball' principle, according to which they recommended their colleagues for an interview. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Some quotes from the transcripts are provided below.

2 Research Results and Their Discussion

According to the hypothesis of this research, managers belong to vanguard communities capable of producing innovative models of temporal behaviour. The evidence for this assumption is in the very fact of their involvement in the social practices of the information society; in the specific organization of their professional activities; and in their involvement in the creation and use of intellectual capital as the main resource for development and functioning.

Peculiar features of managers' temporal strategies manifest themselves in their 'philosophy of time', their emotional experience of time, and their temporal behaviour. According to the respondents, they do not tend to think about time very much. A few interview fragments illustrate this point: D.B., 43 years old: *'I don't think much about time... There is abstract time, and there is concrete time. For me it is usually the project deadline. No, I hardly ever think about time'*. Another of our respondents (A.S., 49 years old), used a phrase that clearly defines the attitude to time typical of a modern businessman: *'I would like to 'make friends' with time. I always try to do it'*. Time for him is like a *living organism, responding to friendly treatment, something that can be tamed*. Time is also seen as a source of new opportunities, but it can also destroy his life, not unlike a house of cards. This

respondent called time the weapon that punishes the majority of people who do wrong things at the wrong time.

The 'philosophy of time' is a result of work done by the manager's consciousness. It reflects the temporal pattern of the world, which operates at the level of the business community or evolves within its individual experience. K.D., 43 years old, says: *'Time means opportunities. It is a nonrenewable resource which should be used with maximum efficiency. It is a resource for my personal and professional development. You can agree that time is money, but in fact it is impossible to evaluate time in terms of money. For example, how expensive was yesterday?'*

During the interviews, the real meaning of the temporal perspective in the work of managers came to light: time is always present in the discussion of professional problems and situations, and in their personal and family life. It exists in two specific forms: business projects; and as personal biography. E.N., 34 years old: *'My profession is directly connected with time planning. I work in the area of project management. I administer projects, which means that I make schedules: the staffs have to adhere to what I have planned, down to the minute. Perhaps, it's a kind of professional deformation, and it affects my family: my Dad, my Mom and others. Of course, I manage their time as well even though they are not very happy about it. Maybe it's my type of personality, or maybe it is a professional deformation. I always try to organize everybody and explain to them who must do what and at what time'*

Biographical time is very important for representatives of the business community. When asked to give examples of the temporal assessment of situations, they often associated them with family, their own or their parental. P.G., 43 years old: *'I began to feel time not so long ago, when my daughter was born. I correlate my time with hers: she is growing, she has so much time before her, while I already have less'*

This ideological basis underlies the respondents' complex dispositional mechanisms of choosing a temporal behaviour strategy: attitudes, needs, life goals and targets, the general view of life. The nonlinearity of time was mentioned by all respondents: in one sphere, time is cyclical (a typical day at the office); in another, for instance, when dealing with clients, time is multidirectional and runs with different speeds (parallel short-term and long-term projects, for example).

The rapid changes in the economy and the crisis situations this leads to are reflected in a variety of temporal behaviour strategies applied by managers. R.M., 50 years old: *'The acceleration is very high, life is intense. Time is compressed. Now a week feels like one day, it flies five or six times faster. And it is not only us: our children also talk about it. I have no*

time to participate in their lives. Their schedule is very tight, too. My daughter goes to an art school, which she really likes. She has half an hour to get changed, have something to eat and get there. And she does it all simultaneously. I bring her clothes and food. She jumps into the car, grabs a bite to eat, changes her clothes and runs to her next class. It is great fun. This is the kind of fun we have'.

In the complex, contradictory conditions of the Russian economy, managers do their best to cope with the 'wrong', nonlinear, social time. E.S., 32 years old: *'If someone says that they don't have enough of something, these are the words of a loser. It's just a problem you need to handle. If there's not enough time, it means your time management is bad, you have taken on too much work, you haven't found the right people to whom to delegate'.* A.K., 45 years old, describes the non-linear properties of time in the following way: *'Good or bad ... it's hard to say. The laws of physics or chemistry: are they good or bad? They just exist. You have to adapt to them. Sometimes it is not convenient but sometimes it is a positive factor. Actually any changes are good, because they are opportunities to do something differently, or better. If there are changes, it means you are still alive and, therefore, you can still do something'.*

On the emotional level managers perceive time, and the way it flows, differently; they have different views about the past, present, and future. Some of them are worried about the lack of time, it makes them panic; some get a buzz out of it and perceive the lack of time as an exciting challenge. However, they generally take a proactive stance and seek to overcome the negative emotions caused by pressure of time, its polystructural quality and its uncertainty. M.K., 47 years old: *'I try not to feel anything, just to stay calm. To remain neutral no matter what happens, good or bad. How do I feel about rapid changes? I try to be positive about them, to avoid negative emotions. I am trying, of course, but anything can happen. I do not feel apprehensive about the future. What is the point? When something crops up, we'll deal with it. It's a very important advantage in life. It is wrong to wait for threats: that way you won't last until lunchtime. It is the waiting that wears you out'.*

Managers who are able to develop and implement strategies of active temporal optimism are efficient when pressed for time. They are able to regulate the speed and the rhythm of the available time as well as to synchronize it with external conditions. Sometimes they are even capable of changing external conditions to meet their own temporal needs. They can affect the carriers of other temporal strategies, making them adapt to their own strategies by combining and accommodating them. Such people have a harmonious, dynamic and flexible temporal worldview. S.N., 45 years old: *'I have noticed that the 'density' of time has*

increased. I plan everything more thoroughly now, with one thing following another very quickly. I am running out of time and have to do things faster. Yes, there is some sort of time compression... When I am really busy and my life is very intense, I get euphoric'.

Temporal activities of managers are directed to the future and/or to the present and are combined with a positive experience of time. Time in its nonlinear configuration is filled with new opportunities and competitive advantages, which they can confidently use. Adapting their behaviour to these new temporal conditions, 'active optimists' feel that they are modern people keeping up with the times or even being ahead of their time.

Managers seek to prolong their physical and intellectual life and youth. K.L., 28 years old: *'One must live joyfully. Being sad is not an option. If you start feeling sad, you are already 30, 40, or 60, and it's already time to die. My wife's grandfather was a man of positive thinking. He always did everything for everybody. I know a lot of people who can do everything for others regardless of their age. And there are people who ruined their life when they were in their 20s. Just because they wanted to. And so ... we live and rejoice that we are still alive'.*

Respondents demonstrated a variety of planning methods: from traditional notebooks in various formats and grids, to modern aids. They also apply such methods as delegating certain functions to their secretaries or relatives. Apart from the traditional forms of planning, they also constantly emphasized the role of intuition in managing time.

The analyzed data shows the prevalence of the first and third types of temporal behaviour strategies among managers (see Tab. 1).

Conclusion

The results of our study indicate that time is seen as a strategically important resource which is necessary to maintain the optimum course of daily life and to meet constantly occurring challenges. Our interviews and analysis of scripts reliably show that Russian managers demonstrate an active temporal optimism. Professional career management includes a constant search for innovative ways of using time and is characterized by a positive attitude towards time and its complex structure. Managers cope well with the non-linear dynamics of social time. They use the properties of nonlinear time for personal and professional development.

The research results have shown the specific nature of the temporal behaviour strategies applied by Russian managers, and have revealed their innovative character. As this

research has shown, managers are the social vanguard of Russian society: they are the first to face an economic recession, its challenges and risks, and they learn to cope with these issues by minimizing their destructive consequences. Managers are carriers of the new temporal properties and the qualities which provide the resources for their social mobility.

It was found that constructive and effective temporal behaviour strategies of managers are a marker of the business community in general. Managers meet the challenges of our time not only through the content and goals of their behaviour but also through its temporal characteristics. The temporal behaviour strategies of Russian managers include innovative kinds of time management and can be considered as a special type of resources used for overcoming the economic crisis.

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