

# Russian leader: unsure, inflexible and demanding

We have been advising senior executives and their teams for more than 10 years. Very often, the problems that our clients come to us about are caused by low stress resistance and lack of confidence. We conducted a study using the Hogan Assessment psychometric test which was attended by more than 500 Russian top managers, and based on the study we made a portrait of the Russian leader. Below we are talking about the results and explaining what they mean and how they affect the business.

## Low stress resistance

According to the results of the study, Russian top managers have low stress resistance, low self-esteem and critical attitude to themselves, lack psychoemotional stability, they are anxious, often dissatisfied with themselves and their work results. This is typical for 57% of male managers and 68% of female managers.

Due to lack of self-confidence, Russian managers devalue their own achievements, they can hardly present themselves and their achievements competently, they may experience difficulties with public speaking. In stressful situations, such managers can become fixated on past mistakes, which would reduce their concentration, prevent them from focusing on current tasks and take a lot of energy.

At the same time they are taking feedback well, open to coaching and development, eager to do their job well and to meet the expectations of shareholders or headquarters. Often, this self-doubt becomes an engine for continuous improvement of themselves and their business results.

As our study has revealed, Russian managers under pressure often use either an avoidance strategy or an attack strategy. They either become Introverted and

self-absorbed, or clash, require privileges, dramatize or gush ideas that are unreal. They may be ineffective under uncertainty, lack of information, lack of time. Such behavior is demonstrated by 27% of male managers and 35% of female managers.

### **Interpersonal sensitivity**

The data based on the assessment of Russian top managers on the interpersonal sensitivity scale are also interesting. This scale evaluates the skills of maintaining long-term relationships, tact and diplomacy in communication. As we can see from the results of the study, more than 50% of managers in Russian companies have low interpersonal sensitivity. 20% are on average, indicating that they can provide support and are able to openly give negative feedback. 30% show excessive tact, can not directly give negative feedback, enter into conflicts and defend their position, have difficulties with making unpopular decisions, are eager to shift these tasks to someone else, for example, consultants or HR Director.

The fact that the majority of respondents demonstrated low rates in the scale of interpersonal sensitivity indicates that most of our top managers are crisis managers. These managers have low empathy but they are effective in making unpopular decisions, demanding, often come into confrontation with those who work poorly, impose their quality standards, push their goals. Such people give the impression of a tough and critical persons, they may not notice the feelings of others, easy give negative feedback personally, which certainly complicates building relationships with the colleagues. They are more result-oriented and process-oriented, rather than focused on personnel management and employees comfort. Low interpersonal sensitivity also suggests that the Russian top managers may have difficulties with teamwork.

In turn, in the West, the general trend is radically different: managers are focused more on inspiring leadership, that is, supporting and creating an environment for the development of others. Team coaching that allows to activate the potential of each employee and the team as a whole is just beginning to gain popularity. Requests for coaching from managers with low interpersonal sensitivity usually

are as follows: "Do something to get them to produce a result." While the team requests: "Please get us rid of this leader."

### **Ambition and driving force**

As for the ambition scale, only 26% of the Russian top managers look confident and pretentious. 74% have either average or low professional self-esteem compared to their Western colleagues.

The low rate of the ambition scale suggests that the majority of Russian managers are not active in their promotion through the career ladder.

Also in the course of the study, we managed to collect interesting data on what motivates Russian top managers to go forward. The first place in the ranking is taken by the desire for recognition and praise from others. It is followed by a desire for power, which means the desire to be the first, the best, grow the career and increase their influence in the company, as well as the desire to challenge and overcome. In the last among the main motivators for Russian top managers is the feeling of their involvement in the case and the desire to be part of the team.

The desire for recognition was ranked first by 52% of male managers and 38% of female managers. Such leaders would certainly bring many public awards for individual achievements to the company. They would fight for the opportunity to participate in significant and high-profile projects, as well as social activities on behalf of the company. Among the weaknesses of such managers are excessive focus on results, dependence on praise and attention, as well as difficulties with the constructive perception of negative feedback.

Power-hungry managers are enthusiastic about working on complex projects and expect the same from their team. They are united by the desire to win, to bypass competitors, to bring the work to the end. Regrettably, a strong focus on results can lead to the destruction of relationships in the team by creating an overly competitive environment. Also, leaders seeking power tend to have difficulty striking a happy medium.

## Theory and practice

In the course of our study, we found that unlike Western colleagues, Russian top managers have a more significant theoretical background. They learn quickly, are able to adapt to new conditions, focused on their own development, but may have difficulties with the transition from theory to practice, may addict to "trendy concepts" and "knowledge for knowledge", which they would transfer to practice then.

Of course, this is due to the academic approach to education, which is practiced in Russia. In the West, a different approach is used, more emphasis is placed on practice. To translate knowledge into skills, it is important to move quickly to action.

Our study involved people who have managed so far to achieve their career largely due to the qualities, the reputation and the profile that we were able to detect during testing. But strengths in one situation can be constraints in another. If you recognize yourself in our study and you feel that your strengths prevent you from achieving your goals, or simply ceased to be effective, let us please give you a few recommendations.

To become more flexible and at the same time more stress-resistant, it is necessary to leave the comfort zone more often and practice immersion in a new environment. There is no need to neglect such tools as mentoring and actor practice. In the first case, the support from a more experienced person would give you confidence and expand your horizons, as well as allow looking at the situation from a different angle. As for the actor practice, such experience allows one to achieve several goals at once. First, to expand the understanding of human nature, its possible motivations and manifestations: to work on the role the actor has to dive into such depths of psychological analysis that are hardly ever reached in business. Second, this is a good exercise for liberation, removal of clamps and, as a result, the opportunity to see new solutions that previously

were out of focus of the manager. In addition, coaching support can help in the beginning.

### **Stress resistance: questions for self-check**

Describe how you deal with stress.

- Do you receive regular feedback from your colleagues or your supervisor?
- What impact does the emotional attitude of your colleagues have on you?
- What is your common reaction to feedback from others about your work?

### **Recommendations**

1. Identify what triggers your stress (specific situations, interactions with someone, tight deadlines, uncertainty). Develop two step-plans for each situation: 1) how to do it so that the situation does not cause annoyance or stress; 2) how to act if the situation is unavoidable.

2. Sometimes you are worried about unforeseen events that may happen to you but be prepared to face possible obstacles and difficult people. This attitude will help you to be more concentrated and calmer.

3. The reaction of your colleagues to some events can be very different. Try to be prepared for that. Think through all the options. This would help you to keep calm when facing unpleasant surprises.

4. When things go against the plans, carefully analyze the causes of what is happening. Think about how you can prevent similar situations in the future.

### **Interpersonal effectiveness: questions for self-check**

How do you react to unsatisfactory results of your subordinates or colleagues?  
Do you give them feedback?

What is more of a priority for you: to meet the needs of colleagues and subordinates or to achieve results by all means?

Do you think people at work should behave in such a way that they like each other?

How do you build relationships with internal and external clients?

### **Recommendations**

1. Pay attention to the atmosphere in the team and let employees know that you care about their feelings, opinions and needs.
2. Find time for the work and personal problems of employees. This should help you improve the efficiency of your team.
3. Keep track of when it is worth joining the team work yourself. This is a very important quality for a leader.
4. Try to respond calmly to criticism, do not take a defensive position.
5. Request feedback regularly.

### **Ambitiousness: questions for self-check**

- What role do you usually take on in projects where there is no formal leader?
- In what cases it is appropriate to fight for power to move up the career ladder?
- Do you often compete with your colleagues?
- What steps have you taken over the past year to develop your career?

### **Recommendations**

1. Showing initiative, energy and ambition is the most important aspect of the leadership. Take initiative in projects. Energize your team, set ambitious goals.

2. Understand corporate policy — it is an integral part of the life of the organization, and the better you understand its nuances, the faster and more successful your career will develop.

3. Do not avoid solving acute issues, otherwise one may begin to get the impression that you are unable to defend your interests, the interests of your team and your organization.

4. If you want to build a career in the company, you will need to develop a plan specifying the positions you are applying for and the steps you will need to undertake to get those positions.

### **About the authors**

**Julia Poltaratskaya** — Head of the Odgers Berndtson consulting practice.

**Anna Pekhtina** — senior consultant at Odgers Berndtson.

### **Source**

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