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# Training Managers and Owners of Private Greek Enterprises

By John Theodore

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# Training Managers and Owners of Private Greek Enterprises

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## I. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to expose the need for training owners and managers of private Greek enterprises in order to change their mentality and practices from Theory X to Theory Y. The author of this article has been examining, analyzing, evaluating, and critiquing the state of management practices in private Greek enterprises since the early 1970s. The absence of effective and efficient training of the managers and owners of Greek private enterprises was mentioned in each of the author's previous publications but no suggestions for developmental training were presented because training was not a topic of discussion in the previous works of the present author.

## II. Review of the Literature

### a) Early Concerns About the Absence of Training

The absence of training in private Greek enterprises was a noticeable disadvantage and was detected as early as the 1950s by well-known academicians and business executives like Zolotas (1964) and Damaskinidis (1961) who believed that it was caused by several factors the most, evident of which were the small size of organizations and their family ownership and control (Holevas, 1960). Even the very small number of large size organizations were controlled and owned by relatives and friends, who had limited knowledge about the importance of training (Alexander, 1964).

The mentality of the owners and managers and the small size of business organizations did not allow the development of owners and managers (Coutsoumaris, 1963). Managers and owners were not able to provide directions and guidance for the employees without having prior training because such persons were encircled in a limited and microscopic management model (Vlachos, 2008). The majority of Greek managers and owners in the private sector until the 1970s were male with limited education and training in business and economics (Theodore, 1971).

### b) The Small Size of Enterprises and the Mentality of Owners and Managers.

The absence of need and interest for training owners and managers was exacerbated when the Greek economy was de-industrialized in the 1970s and the need for large business organizations that necessitated training for owners and managers was substantially reduced (Kassapidou & Varsakelis, 2002). It is important to mention that large organizations in industrially developed nations through their training process reach the evolutionary phase of being *Learning Organizations* that operate under Action Orientation (Theodore, 2012a). Vouzas (2004) stated that the autocratic demeanor of business owners and managers in Greece was continuously resisting training which allows trained managers and owners to delegate authority and responsibility to their employees. Papadakis (2006) also wrote that creativity and innovation were missing in the minds of business owners who considered training as a superfluous activity in their enterprises (Papalexandris & Chalikias, 2002).

### c) Emphasis on Financial Gains Against Leadership Development

Manolopoulos et al. (2007) stated that the interest of Greek business leaders was how to maximize profits and avoid paying taxes to the government, and that they did not perceive training as a necessity for organizational development. Caring for developing themselves was absent (Theodore, 2011) The business ambient in Greek enterprises was inimical to

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developmental training (Komninos & Tsamis, 2008), which included the leadership, management, and the workforce in general (Psychogios & Szamosi, 2007).

*d) Sporadic Attempts to Implement the Training of Owners and Managers*

In the late 1990s and during the first decade of the present century, attempts were made to offer education and training to benefit the owners and managers in private enterprises (Publication Service of the European Union, 2012). At the end of the 1900s and the first decade of the 2010s, the European Union pressured Greece to train and promote the employment of women (Papapetrou, 2006). Because women had less education than men, the disparity in the compensation between male and female employees prevailed in private enterprises and continued through the first decade of the current century (Apospori et al., 2006).

*e) Leadership Training Still Remains Limited in the Early 2020s*

The absence of policies and procedures continued to exist during the first decade of the current century and, among other important organizational elements missing, was that of training (Hatzikian & Bouris, 2005). Empowering employees through delegation of authority and responsibility was substantially limited because of the lack of training among owners and managers (Theodore, 2021). Panagiotakopoulos (2011) noted, however, that training in a small number of private business enterprises started to appear.

*f) Areas of Training Concentration*

Training needs to be concentrated on the managerial and organizational characteristics pivoting around the business idiosyncrasy and identity of the owners and managers of private business organizations in Greece. Such needs have been detected by expert researchers, professors, consultants, and professional managers during the several decades the present author has been researching and writing on private Greek enterprises. Laconically stated, the work and contributions of those experts point at the characteristics listed below:

1. Resistance to developmental change and acceptance of a static status quo.
2. Avoidance of using professional assistance, such as consultants, who can provide them with specialized knowledge regarding ways to work more efficiently and to deal with stress more effectively.
3. Creativity and innovation are missing.
4. The decision-making process is centralized and rests on the judgment of the owners and managers; there is an absence of delegation of authority and responsibility and a lack of empowerment of employees.
5. The owners and managers do not communicate with their employees on elements that are pertinent to the operation of their enterprises and they are not able to provide directions and guidance for them because such persons are encircled in a limited and microscopic management model (Theodore, 2023).

## III. Data Methodology

The data incorporated in this article are secondary and emanate from the research of the present writer, Greek and non-Greek researchers specializing in Greek private enterprises, and other scholars whose work is dedicated to Organizational Development. The present author has been conducting research and publishing peer-reviewed articles and books on Greek private enterprises from the early 1970s to the present time. In addition, he is a Certified Management Consultant by the Institute of Management Consultants in Washington, D. C.; one of his specializations is in Organizational Development (OD) which he has been implementing in various domestic and international client organizations during the last five decades. He has also published peer-reviewed articles on OD, some of which are included in this article.

## IV. Results and Discussion

*a) The Importance of Training owners and Managers in Private Business Enterprises in Greece*

Training managers is an integral part in Organizational Development under Action Orientation auspices because it develops the human resources (Bartel 2000) and eventually creates Learning Organizations. The impact of training transcends through all the functional units of the organization (Production and Operations; Marketing and Sales; Finance; and Human Resources) where productivity is augmented, and voluntary separation is substantially diminished (Beer et al., 1990) and the utilization of the factors of production (materials, labor, capital, management, and technology) are increased.

The results of the correct, effective, efficient, and timely training of owners and managers cascade down to the level of employees and elucidate the latter on the importance of the principles of organization, and eliminates hurdles (Montes et al., 2003) and other negative elements that block the correct function of the organization. In addition, the emotional and intellectual psyche of the employees is re-adjusted (Batt & Valcour, 2003) which becomes a powerful force of motivation (Mathieu & Martinea, 1993).

The writer of this article is also emphasizing the transfer of knowledge acquired from the training of owners and managers to their subordinates. Such transfer reaches high levels when the tasks in training



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are similar to the organizations ambient. Similar tasks are important for facilitating transfer, and for implementing learning abilities that are parallel to the environment of the employees performing their work duties for facilitating knowledge transfer.

*b) Resistance to Developmental Change and Acceptance of a Static Status Quo*

Change has to do with the metamorphosis of an organization's functional units (Production and Operations; Marketing and Sales; Finance; and Human Resources). In this article, such transformation is totally focused on the owners and managers of private Greek enterprises. Change is any transformation process in the way that an individual, group, or organization acts asa whole, passing from a sum of ways and modes of acting and behaving to another, transforming relationships in the inside and outside environment-group, or organization acts asa environment (Kotter, 1995).

The main reasons for resisting change are fear of the unknown and of the change of relationships in the organizational modus operandi (Theodore, 2012 b). The resistance to change is an expected situation since every attempt to change will necessarily change relationships and the balance of power within the organization (Richard, 2014). Cognitive resistance, as is the case with the owners and managers of private Greek organizations, reflects the individuals' beliefs about the change, while affective resistance focuses on their feelings, moods, and emotions in relation to the change process, and behavioral resistance concerns actions towards change (Oreg, 2006).

The training of owners and managers in private Greek enterprises needs to focus upon the change of design, implementation, and control of their management/organizational mentality and actions. The training for change in organizations may be centralized or participatory depending on the particular physiology of the trainees which accept and treat it, but also according to the particular nature of the change itself (Hodson, 1995). The writer of this article proposes gradual change in Greek business organizations that reflects a series of continuous changes and developments; this form of change maintains its overall structural balance and affects directly and drastically only one part of the organization at a time (Collinson, 2005), such as Production and Operations; Marketing and Sales; Finance, and Human Resources.

*c) Avoidance of using Professional Assistance*

Resistance to accept professional assistance (consultants) is imbedded in the culture of the industry of Greek owners and managers, in their general culture, and in their inner cosmos and business idiosyncrasy. Training in this case needs to be focused on the benefits that can be received through the employment of consultants (Dawes et al (1992) which are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The utilization of consultants by business organizations (Payne, 1986), is positive because the latter develop abilities and knowledge to attract, absorb, and assimilate new ideas, methods, and practices that have been produced and/or acquired by consulting firms through their continuous research and development (Bessant & Rush, 1995).

Consultants through their individual practice and wide networking activities collect immense precedent data, knowledge, and experience that can be used to develop their current and future clients (Burt, 1992). Business organizations that employ the services of consultants create long-term relationships with them leading to continuous organizational development efforts (Ocasio, 1997).

*d) Creativity and Innovation are Missing*

Innovation and creativity in organizations emanate from the will of owners to apply a Theory Y culture that precipitates innovation and creativity, which is especially needed in small organizations that constitute the majority of the business enterprises in Greece.

The authoritarian nature and personality of leaders, as is the case with Greek owners and managers, is a strong force that deters the initiation, maintenance, and development of effective and efficient motivation (Nooteboom, 1994).

In addition to the idiosyncratic characteristics of small business owners and managers that deter creativity and innovation, it is wise to mention that small businesses do not have the factors of production to perform research and development which is conducive to innovation and creativity (Audretsch et al., 2020).

When small firms increase the size of their operations, their organizational structure and design, and the principles of organization are being constrained because the owners and managers who have limited managerial and organizational capability are further impeding the initiation and maintenance of innovation and creativity (Werner et al., 2018).

Organizational leaders, as is the case with owners and managers in Greece, need to initiate and propagate innovation changes both in themselves and in the entire organization (McAdamet al., 2010). Training to precipitate and sustain creativity and innovation needs to be focused on turning them from Theory X to Theory Y by inducing them to delegate authority and responsibility that create empowerment, decentralize the decision-making process, instill self- esteem sense, and precipitate and encourage creativity under Theory Y auspices (Andries & Czarnitzki, 2014). This is exactly the type of training Greek business owners and managers need.



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e) *The Decision-Making Process is Centralized and Rests on the Judgment of the Owners-Managers; there is An Absence of Delegation of Authority and Responsibility and a Lack of Empowerment of Employees*

Greek owners and managers use centralized decision-making based on their modus operandi that derives from their authoritarian philosophies and practices. Consequently, there is an absence of delegation of authority and responsibility and a lack of empowerment of employees. Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) wrote that managers that have such behavior are influenced by their personalities that feel comfortable in controlling power (Theory X) and merely giving orders to subordinates.

McGregor (1960) stated that superiors, as is the case with Greek owners and managers, view their subordinates as incompetents or lazy who do their work after they receive orders or are threatened by their superiors and also have negative feelings about their work, their superiors, and the organization in general. Such subordinates merit control through orders from their superiors. Employees under Theory X are under continuous stress and desperately seek assistance from their superiors to relieve them from such pressure and provide them with support and empathy (Vardy, 2011)

The training of Greek owners and managers in this area needs to pivot around the decentralization of control and the implementation of delegation of authority and responsibility/empowerment. Higgs (2003) stated that leaders need to enlarge their horizons and view their role from the holistic point of view and need to include in the decision-making process all those who are capable of offering their experience, education, and qualifications for the improvement of the entire organization (Marques, 2010).

f) *The Owners and Managers do not Communicate with their Employees on Elements that are Pertinent to the Operation of their Enterprises and they are not Able to Provide Directions and Guidance for them because such Owners and Managers are Encircled in a Limited and Microscopic Management Model*

Communication is the process of transmitting information from one source to another. In most cases, in the same organizational department communication is transmitted from one person to another, whereas among departments it is transmitted from one group to another. Effective communication takes place when the message suffers no or minimal distortion from the sender to the receiver (Theodore, 2003).

Due to the autocratic business idiosyncrasy and practice of Greek owners and managers, effective and efficient communication is not taking place; communication is downward moving because it includes orders and negative comments. Cropanzano, James, & Konovsky (1993) stated that the personality of individuals has an impact upon their process of information.

Training concentrations presented in the previous four characteristics will also create upward movement in the form of inputs and suggestions of subordinates/employees and will change the essence and content of downward communication movement to valuable and positive information that carries the delegation of authority and responsibility and creates empowerment. More specifically, training needs to aim at the creation of symmetrical communication which is based on the delegation of authority and responsibility, empowerment, and participative decision making (Kim & Rhee, 2011). Symmetrical communication has a strong impact upon subordinates/employees because it changes their perceptions and views of the organization in which they are employed and which they identify themselves with (Dwyer & Cruz, 1998).

## V. Concluding Statements

During the last ten years there has been an increased movement, especially by young persons, in the formation of new business enterprises of all types in Greece. These entrepreneurs are highly educated in both Greek and other European universities and also in the United States.

Four years ago, the people of Greece voted and elected as prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis who comes from a lineage of successful politicians. Mitsotakis has both Greek and American higher education, he is young, and has been active in making developmental changes for his country. Recently, he and his New Democracy Party voted to allow for the first-time foreign universities to come to Greece, especially United States institutions, with emphasis on business and economics curricula. National universities in the country, which are controlled by the government, have also increased their economics and business administration programs in both graduate and undergraduate levels.

Because of the above-cited developments in higher education, the training of owners and managers of private Greek enterprises is seriously increasing in depth, variety, and quality.

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