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**THE NEED OF FLEXIBLE ADAPTATION TO THE  
CONTINUOUS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE**

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**Abstract:**

In business, the flexibility is the art of work and perform within, but also outside the rules, policies or paradigms. The flexibility and freedom are key parts of the organizational culture as more and more people tend to ask for these elements from employers in order to perform to the best of their abilities. Reshaping flexibility in times of organizational changes may be crucial for companies to gain a competitive advantage on the market they operate given the fierce competition.

*Key words: organizational change, organizational flexibility*

**1. Flexibility – a competitive advantage for changing companies**

Companies are faced with the daily challenge of balancing the needs of the organization (such as productivity, shorter delivery deadlines, customer satisfaction, market share growth and innovation) and employees' needs and interests (as well as learning throughout life, professional improvement, career development and a better work-life balance). For this reason, flexibility initiatives can be an attractive option for both employers and employees, in terms of organizational change. Internal flexibility policies presents two main varieties:

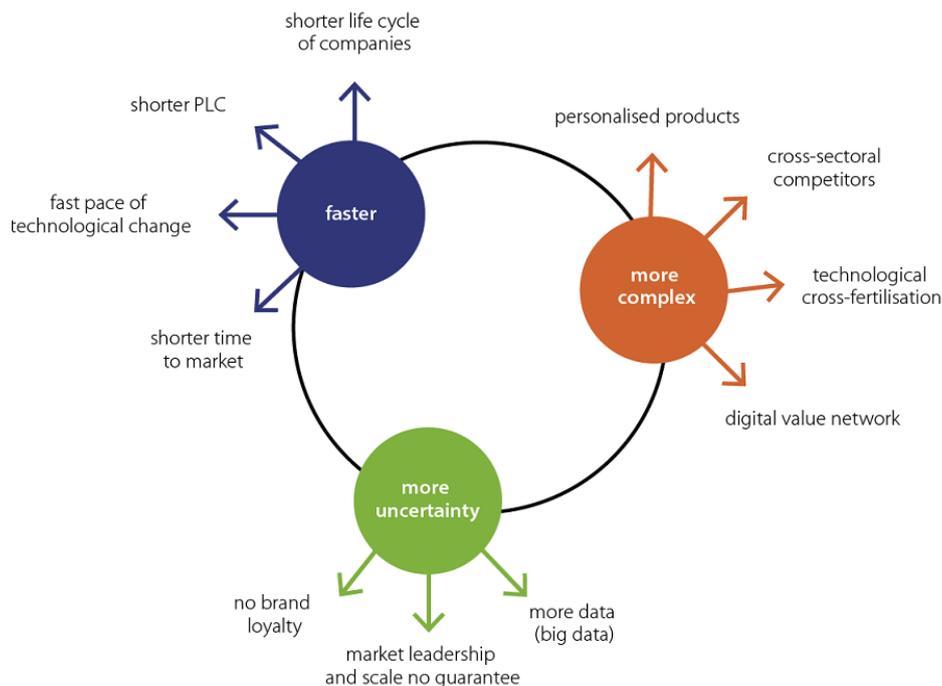
- Organizational or functional flexibility involves incorporating flexibility in the structure of work processes, work organisation and employment; and means also flexibility of the secondment of staff. First type, the production that is based on teamwork, includes measures such as the acquisition of multiple skills and rotation of tasks. Expanded teamwork includes teams with their own leadership and partnerships, including obtaining and distributing knowledge, innovation, evolutionary learning in the workplace and product development.
- The flexibility of the programme of work related to flexibility in terms of the program and the workplace. This might mean round-the-clock shifts or at certain times of the day, week or year. It also might mean working from home or on the go. It also refers to the length of weekly flexible working time (for example, part-time and full-time program).The flexibility of working hours may develop and life-long vocational training-for example, in the form of leave and training programmes.

Flexibility implies a relationship between two types of approaches: on the one hand, and control of action available to the members of the firm to operate efficiently and fast production conditions and, on the other hand, the state of resources and of the rules and ease their ability to respond to changes. The flexibility of such an action involves

# ***THE NEED OF FLEXIBLE ADAPTATION TO THE CONTINUOUS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE***

simultaneous competences of individuals and the organization's terms and conditions. In this sense, one of the most important resources available to a company is capital or humans. It can be defined as the sum of knowledge, capacities and expertise which they acquire people through education, training and experience. Approaches that allow companies the flexibility of the functional aim precisely and efficiently manage innovative human capital, this form of flexibility by making reference to a qualifying employee and stretching their adaptability and mobility within the firm.

A flexible, innovative management and dynamic human capital available to a company involves, first of all, a change in attitudes, values and beliefs. There are two major functions in a company: one is to put in relation to the "mission", and the second with "relationships". The mission involves the totality of activities related to the production and placing on the market of products and services, in the shortest time at the best price and the best quality. These activities are carried out by a competent and committed staff to produce excellent, implying a new understanding of the value of human resources within the firm, as well as the quality of domestic relations (staff and management). At the same time, it is also developing strategies to allow professional and personal development of employees, improvement and diversification of competences and expertise.



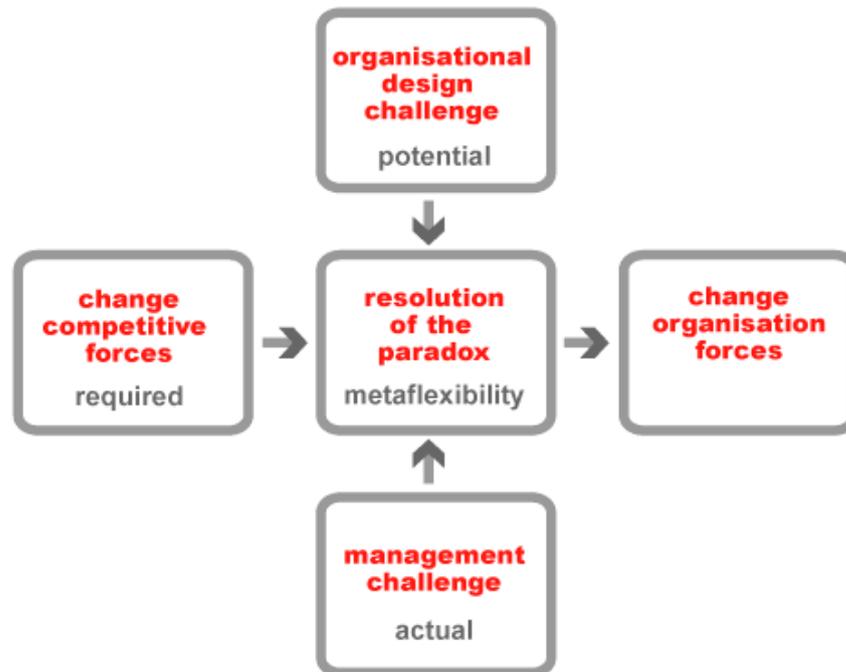
*Fig 1. The new concept of the flexible worldwide organization*

## **2. Flexibility – a global and technological challenge in organizational changes**

The European Union and its member states are faced today with major challenges stemming from the globalisation of markets and economies, and the introduction of new technologies. The consequences of this new reality are felt directly on the labour market, the organization of various activities, services and products. Promoting innovation, strengthening economic and social cohesion, access to knowledge and information, promoting social inclusion and employability are indispensable. Without the universal solution to the problems facing businesses nowadays, flexibility is considered today one of complementary methods that can sustain the diversification of services offered to

## ***THE NEED OF FLEXIBLE ADAPTATION TO THE CONTINUOUS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE***

organizations, increase the quality of labour, permanent adaptation to new requirements of customers. Thus, companies involve coexistence and intertwining of a functional flexibility with employees, increasingly better trained, multi-talented and flexible, the numerical flexibility with employees whose status is more diversified.



*Fig 2. The flexible company in a competitive market environment*

In a globalized economic environment, the states and the companies are trying to identify new opportunities for development and new keys to competitiveness. This logic led to the implementation of new policies and strategies within the companies, one of which is its flexibility. Multidimensional concept, the flexibility to designate the companies ability to respond rapidly and effectively to changes in the level of demand and aimed at organizing company and its policies regarding the management of the workforce, but also the organisation of working time and wage issues. Models and strategies developed by the firm refer to the quantitative and qualitative aspects of their operation, and the success of these should be placed in conjunction with the cultural specificities, organizational and business elements. Within the flexible approaches, a dynamic and innovative method to which they may avail themselves of the companies is flexibility. This refers to the ability of a firm to transfer employees from one post to another at no extra cost.

## ***THE NEED OF FLEXIBLE ADAPTATION TO THE CONTINUOUS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE***



*Fig 3. Workplace flexibility, how organizational and personal needs relate*

In general, increasing the flexibility and reactivity of enterprises in order to reduce costs, increase efficiency and adaptability to market requirements is a fundamental aspect of current management practices. Changes involve a new flexibility vision of work organisation within an enterprise. The model of management of labour characterized by structural and institutional rigidities (creation of a minimum wage, the importance of trade unions, labour legislation binding on) and centred on fixed term contracts has been replaced by an approach which aims to give businesses a better balance between supply and demand. Flexibility allows enterprises to adapt to the economic context in which they enable.

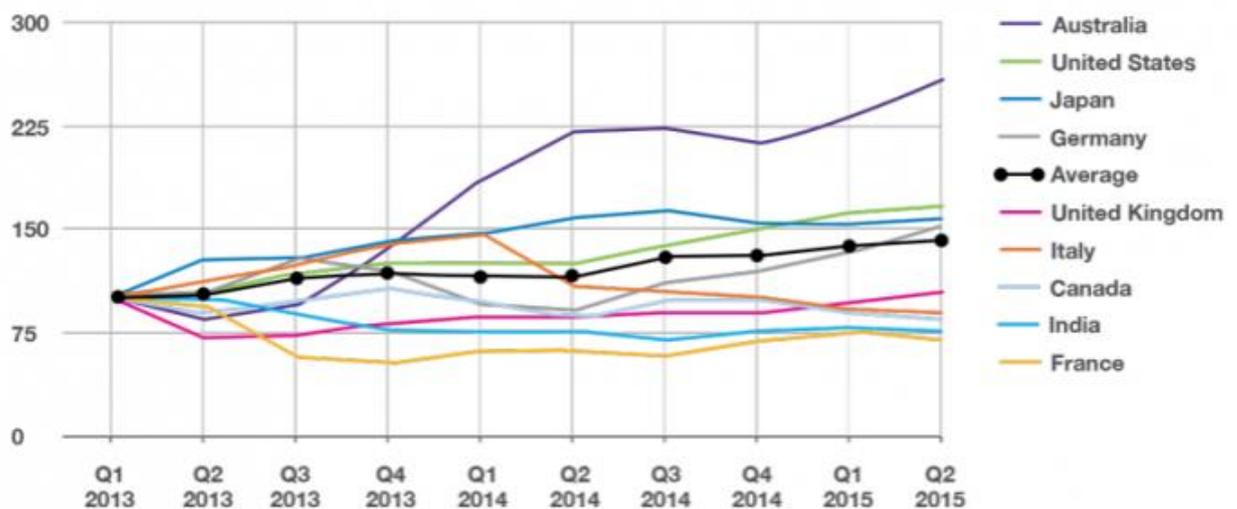
Flexibility is a labor-management component that allows companies to rapidly adapt their production and supply to changes in the level of demand. For some, real flexibility is greater than the required flexibility, given the types of flexibility: real, required and potential. Real flexibility appears when using specific resources and capabilities and is based on experience. Flexibility required taking into account the level of flexibility that is intended to be touched and which was defined in relation to the management strategies of adaptability. Potential flexibility is the flexibility that might be achieved. The relationship between the three types of flexibility can be explained as follows:

- Real flexibility is greater than the required flexibility: in this case, the potential flexibility is relevant only when the degree of flexibility the company is excessive. This will be driven by future uses.
- Flexibility required is greater than the actual flexibility: in this case, it should be used more intensively to potential capabilities.
- Flexibility required is greater than the actual flexibility and potential flexibility: in this case, management should try to influence the environment in which enables the undertaking to reduce the level of flexibility required in order to increase the level of flexibility.

## ***THE NEED OF FLEXIBLE ADAPTATION TO THE CONTINUOUS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE***

The success of the strategies chosen by the companies in times of changes depends, above all, the ability of the firm to choose those solutions that respond best to the needs and specificity of their own. They can be defined on the basis of a simple scheme, answering to the questions: what?, who?, how?. "What" refers to the identification of the problem/challenge faced by the company and depending on the nature of which will seek solutions. The question "who?", which concerns the recipients new approaches, which may be employees, management, organization of business or production mode. By asking "how?" aims to identify possible solutions that respond best to the type of problem/challenge. Elaboration of strategies adapted to the needs and particularities of the company allows and avoiding various drawbacks that entails the notion of flexibility or negative effects on the various options for flexible organization.

Flexibility is a concept that can have multiple meanings and practices that have their source in this concept. Although flexibility is considered by a large part of an answer adapted and adaptable to rapidly changing needs facing businesses in an environment in constant transformation, flexibility knows many uncertainties and areas of shadow. Flexibility remains an approach with obvious advantages for both companies and employees: allows better labour productivity, thereby reducing the risks of employee dissatisfaction, lowering production costs, so prices obtained through better adaptation of the workforce to the needs of the production process, better movement of employees from one sector to another enabling a productive re-use of favourable innovation capacities, stimulate firms to create new jobs (due to quantitative flexibility), better management of working time and the personal lives of employees.



*Fig 4. Growing interest in flexible companies (source: Indeed, number of searched keywords associated with flexibility on Indeed website)*

Another aspect that should not be neglected when it develops management strategies is the level at which lies the need for flexibility. No packet enterprises needed a greater number of flexible mechanisms than in others, as there are within the same firms, departments that lend themselves better than others at introducing flexible approaches. Moreover, legislative regulations can fall into the trap of an inappropriate degree of flexibility, which implicitly affects the entire social and economic context.

# ***THE NEED OF FLEXIBLE ADAPTATION TO THE CONTINUOUS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE***

On the other hand, at the level of firms, changes that lead to organizational flexibility do not automatically lead to an increase in a company's performance. The success of a flexible approach in the first instance consists in the ability of firms to identify the most suitable schemes of flexibility in relation to their own needs. Flexibility implies a relationship between two types of approaches: on the one hand, the inspection capacity and action available to members of the company to operate effectively and rapidly to the conditions of production and, on the other hand, the status of resources and rules and their ease to meet changes.

Flexibility involves a simultaneous action upon the skills of individuals and organization conditions. In this sense, one of the most important resources at the disposal of a company is its human capital. It can be defined as the totality of the capacities, knowledge and skills that people acquire through education, training and experience. Approaches that enable functional flexibility is aimed at innovative and effective just managing human capital, this form of flexibility by making reference to the level and extent of employee qualifications, to their robust all-round capability at their adaptability and mobility within the organization.

## **Conclusion**

The Internal flexibility of an organization combined with managers ability to lead can improve the performance of organizations in terms of increasing the adaptability, innovation and productivity in the market where the company is active. At the same time, flexibility can contribute to the balance between work and personal lives of employees, health and employment. In order to achieve this objectives, internal flexibility must be applied in a balanced, holistic and participatory way. This can be achieved by market applications: balancing short term (such as productivity and cost reduction) with long-term demand innovation and sustainability; trying to meet the objectives of the various parts of the company and seeking a convenient solution for all parties; settlement of potentially conflicting objectives of the company and employees, diminishing possible negative impact and adoption of appropriate measures in the early stage of the organizational change process.

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## ***THE NEED OF FLEXIBLE ADAPTATION TO THE CONTINUOUS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE***

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