

TITLE OF THE CASE STUDY: Small teams' leadership in the Association of Private Farming of the Czech Republic

Name of the organisation:

Association of Private Farming of the Czech Republic

Country and sector of the organisation:

Czech Republic, umbrella organization of small and medium sized private farmers

Type of organisation:

- Business company
- Public organization
- Private organization
- **NGO**
- Other:

Size of the organisation:

- small
- **medium**
- large

Brief description of the organisation:

Association of Private Farming of the Czech Republic (APF CR) is a voluntary professional organization of private farmers in the Czech Republic. All activities are based on respecting old peasant traditions and the conviction of the perspective family farms being the foundation of the modern European agriculture and lively countryside. Defending the economic, social and professional intents of the Czech private farmers in the Czech Republic and abroad is the fundamental activity of APF CR. The main aims of the Association can be seen in sustainable, multi-functional and environmentally friendly agriculture with the overall production of public and private goods, the balance between the economic and ecological concepts of agricultural production and supporting entrepreneurial environment enabling the development of competent entrepreneurs in the countryside.

Short description of the case study (500 characters)

The topic addressed by this case study is leadership. With the Association of Private Farming, we focus on the main challenges of leadership in non-governmental non-profit organization, especially the difference between leadership of small teams and big teams of employees. We also focus on leading the employees under pressure of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for good communication with the team in such times.

Key words:

Association

Non-governmental organization

Non-profit organization

Leadership

Small-team leadership

Challenges

Communication

Agriculture

BEST PRACTICE PROFILE

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The Association of Private Farming of the Czech Republic (APF CR) is a voluntary professional organization of private farmers in the Czech Republic. All activities are based on respecting old peasant traditions and the conviction of the perspective family farms being the foundation of the modern European agriculture and lively countryside. Defending the economic, social and professional intents of the Czech private farmers in the Czech Republic and abroad is the fundamental activity of APF CR.

APF CR is an association of legal entities like different regional association of private farmers, individual farmers and different professional specialised organisations, such as the Association of horse breeders' federations Czech Republic, Association of Sheep and Goat Breeders, Deer Farmers Association of the Czech Republic etc. Nowadays, APF CR is formed by 42 regional associations and 7 other professional organizations. All costs connected to the APF CR activities are covered particularly from the membership fees additionally also from the APF CR's own professional activities.

The main goals of all Association' activities are sustainable, multi-functional and environmentally friendly agriculture with overall production of public and private goods. APF CR helps to balance between the economic and ecological concepts of agricultural production and supports private goods market with minimum state interference. The core for sustainable and resilient agriculture is seen

through individual ownership and management of family farms and supporting strong and stable position of these firms in the market through healthy entrepreneurial environment in the countryside.

As a non-governmental, non-profit organization with a large members' network but of small-size in the number of office-employees, APF CZ has to balance the leadership of own employees as well as the membership base. For the employees to be able to provide proper care and services to the member, they have to be properly taken care of and led too. The leadership in smaller organization which does not focus on gaining as much profit as possible but rather on providing services and lobbying for the interests of a specific segment of population, varies from leadership in big companies and international conglomerates.

In the top management of APF CR are 3 key people, the Chair, the Secretary and the Office Director. From the bottom, the Office Director has a role of a manager of the daily run of the office. The Chair, on the other hand, comes up as a leader and a public spokesman. Finally, the Secretary combines both of the roles, leader and managers, and balance the different responsibilities, especially in the times of crisis.

RATIONALE

In a smaller team of around 10 to 15 people, one cannot apply the same leadership style as for 10.000 employees and expect it to work without any problems. Being a leader of a small team means being much more connected to your team, know each team member better and on more personal level. There is a thin line between setting an example for your employees and colleagues and being their buddy. *"Relationships evolve, get stronger, experience conflicts, people talk and gossip and so on. In a small team, these things happen as well, one might say sometimes even stronger. Or the feel of it is stronger as you are personally closer to it all. And that is crucial for a leader, to balance emotions and professionalism, to be able to disconnect yourself from it all yet still stay connected to everyone."* reflects the Association's Secretary.

In other words, what differs between leadership of large teams and small teams are the skills. In smaller team, one has the chance to develop personal relationships with each individual and throughout the time to discover their strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, one should not have "favourites". Focusing on the teams as a group, rather than a set of individuals help to promote the teams' spirit and enhances the good feeling about their work.

APF CR's Secretary describes it this way: *"We try to be as open as possible with our employees, we solve problems right away instead of dragging them with us or hiding them in a closet, even when it's not the most pleasant way how to spend your time."* One of the regular things that prevents uncomfortable or conflictual situations and helps cleaning the air is an individual meeting with each member of the staff every half a year. That is in a form of a friendly interview, asking about pros and cons of the job, finding out if something is bothering the employees and if so, solving the issue as soon as possible. The APF CR's leadership is based on approachability so in between these official one-to-one meetings, the doors are always open.

Moreover, the emphasis is put on keeping your word as well as trusting each other. To avoid micromanagement (which is a close observation and control of other people's work, showing lack of trust and freedom for the employees), these two conditions are considered crucial by the Associations.

Nevertheless, it must work both ways. The Secretary emphasizes that keeping word and being able to trust each other is what enables the work to flow. The same way she expects that for the employees, she tries to be a role model for such behaviour.

And how does the leadership change during the pandemic? The Secretary is very positive: *“As we have been treating our employees fair and with a healthy amount of freedom, they are motivated to work from homes and pitch in. I believe that that is the beauty in treating the employees well and with respect.”*

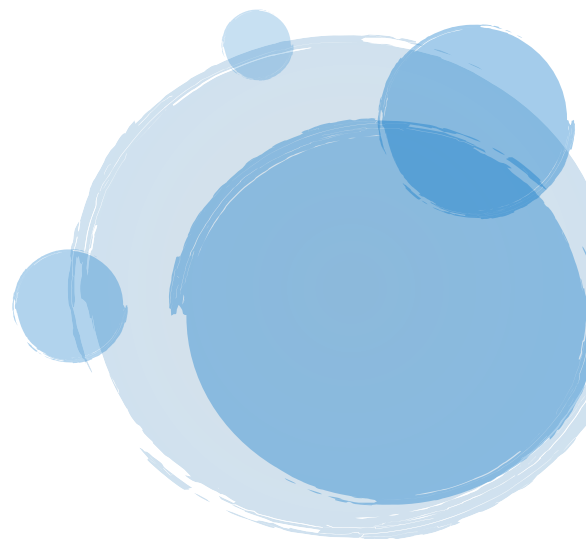
GOALS

The goal of APF CR’s leadership approach is to make their employees understand the so-called bigger picture of what the organization does as a whole rather than what each individual employee has as a work task. By weekly staff meetings, even in times of the pandemic, where everyone updates other team members on their work progress or current focus of their work, everyone is familiar with other people’s job and connect the dots himself or herself. The Association’s Secretary adds that, followingly, they want their employees to understand why is their work critical for the run of the organization and how it’s interconnected with other team members’ tasks. That way they can achieve the cohesiveness and unity in the organization’s management office and create a proper and stable name for the Association.

IMPACT

The biggest impact visible in such a leadership approach is the positive motivation of employees to participate on their own well-being as well as well-being of the whole organization. *“Thanks to the open approach that we believe in and implement for our team, we see that the employees themselves try a lot to make everything work. Especially in the times of crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic. We have noticed that being fair to our employees in the past have reflected in their motivation to help in times of crisis.”* sums up the Secretary.

Being fair to the team members and not treating each and every one differently, according to leader’s personal preferences or affection, is a crucial skill that requires some practice. People tend to have “favourites”, nevertheless, that can affect the work ethic and motivation of the rest of the team.



LESSONS LEARNED

Specify which competences and skills employees and leaders developed

- Fairness
- Approachability
- Communication skills
- Mutual respect
- Trust

MATERIAL

Pictures, tools, comments, statements, ...



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REFERENCES

Refer here any bibliography reference you use for this case study.

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- 2) <https://www.15five.com/blog/run-a-small-team-dont-just-look-to-the-big-guys-for-advice-2/>
- 3) Personal interview with the Secretary, 2.3.2021