

# DEMANDS OF RUSSIAN MANAGERS IN THE AREA OF ADVANCED TRAINING

Olga Notman

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## Abstract

In today's Russia the demand for long-term management programs continues to decline. Russian companies reduce the expenses for personnel training. Educational institutions should take into account changes in the business environment and the requirements of managers.

The purpose of our research was to identify priority motivations for improving managerial qualifications, as well as requirements for educational programs and satisfaction with the various components of the educational process. Our research was based on the survey of managers receiving the advanced training.

Our research showed that the priority motivations for receiving advanced training are professional self-improvement and provision of personal competitive advantages in the labor market. Priority requirements of the managers for the advanced training educational programs are: novelty and relevance of the discussed topics, high level of methodical support of the material, organization of effective self-learning environment, practical applicability of the information exchange.

Revealed differences in the assessments depending on the managers' age, job status and educational experience allow us to draw a conclusion about the importance of a differentiated approach to the analysis of the demands of the business audience and the involvement of the most competent managers in the development of educational content.

**Key words:** practical management education, advanced training, educational programs

**JEL Code:** I 21, I 25, I 26

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## Introduction

In the current conditions of high dynamism in modern business and the instability of the economic environment, management education in its various forms has become an

indispensable tool for building a professional career and achieving business success for managers (Gioia & Herman, 2005; Montgomery & Ramus, 2011). On a national scale, quality management education contributes to economic growth by stimulating entrepreneurial potential and activity. Unlike higher education (bachelor's, master's programs), additional managerial training is focused on the formation of practical skills of managers and entrepreneurs, and it has the ultimate goal – increase of profitability and effectiveness of organizations. The pragmatic orientation of the managerial training determines the need for its development in close connection with the immediate management practice and business tasks of managers (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2004; Bennis & O'Toole, 2005).

A critical rethinking of the experience of previous decades (Thomas & Cornuel, 2016) creates new challenges for improving the activities of educational institutions on the basis of the introduction of the responsible management education model (Cornuel & Hommel, 2015; Sobczak & Mukhi, 2016). The agenda at the current stage of development in practical management education in Russia includes the solution of the following problems: achieving productive interaction between educational institutions and the business community (Akhmetshina, 2014; Filina, 2016); mutually beneficial cooperation between corporate universities and business schools (Podsypanina, 2016); the formation of an open methodical platform based on cases and projects of Russian business (Yevenko, 2016); the formation of a system of criteria for objective ratings of business education institutions, taking into account the global experience (Zykova, 2014).

According to experts, the demand for long-term management programs - MBA and DBA - continues to decline in the Russian business education market. The demand for long-term programs has declined by a third on average since 2014 (Zayakin, 2016). Experts note that demand is unlikely to recover in the near future. In many business schools, MBA programs have become less common. A number of business schools have ceased their activity in the market or have joined large alliances to reduce administrative and marketing costs. Due to the lack of demand, many full-time MBA programs were closed or modified to a modular format even by leaders in Russian business education (Fukolova, 2016).

With the continuing negative dynamics of demand for long-term management programs and the reduction of companies' expenses for personnel training, medium- and short-term programs of advanced training are the drivers of growth in practical management education in Russia. The main factor in the competitiveness of educational institutions offering programs for managers is the speed of responding to changes in the business

environment and consideration of managers' requirements. The importance of study of the demands of managers in the area of advanced training is determined by a number of reasons:

- firstly, the need to increase managerial potential in order to overcome the crisis phenomena in the Russian economy;
- secondly, the need to bridge the gap between the theoretical and academic programs of educational institutions and the practical needs of the business audience;
- thirdly, the marketing tasks of attracting and retaining consumers of educational services.

## **1 Data and Methods**

The purpose of our study was to identify the needs of managers in advanced training. We conducted a questionnaire survey of managers who receive advanced training at the Ural Federal University in the programs "Business Management", "Personnel Management", and "State and Municipal Administration" (N-119, 2016). The survey was conducted at the end of the training program.

The questionnaire contained 3 indicators:

1) Motivation for improving managerial qualifications. Respondents were required to select no more than 3 positions reflecting their priority goals for obtaining additional education.

2) Assessment of the degree of significance of the attributes of the educational program. Respondents were asked to assess the degree of significance of 20 attributes of the advanced training program on a 5-point scale.

3) Assessment of the degree of satisfaction with the training. Respondents assessed how satisfied they were with the content of the program, the competence of teachers, the organization of the learning process and the quality of the handout materials on a 5-point scale.

SPSS 22.0 was used to analyze the data. In the course of the analysis, we used descriptive statistics and tests for the equality of means, medians and distributions. To identify differences in the assessments, we considered subgroups of respondents based on sex, age, job status and experience in educational activities.

## **2 Results**

The primary indicator of the educational needs of managers is the motives for receiving advanced training (Table 1).

**Tab. 1: Motives for improving managerial qualifications (% of respondents)**

Motives	%
For self-development, expansion of worldview, professional self-improvement	73.7
To obtain (deepen) knowledge and skills required at the current job position	52.6
To ensure competitive advantages in the labor market	31.6
To search for a new job within the industry	21.1
For career growth within the organization	15.8
To receive a diploma, a certificate	15.8
To realize a desire to change the area of activity	15.8
Employer's requirement	15.8
To improve image with the employer, business partners, colleagues	5.3
To increase income	5.3
To acquire useful connections and acquaintances to help at work	5.3

Source: data of the survey

The Table 1 data demonstrates the paramount importance of the motives for personal and professional development and for obtaining the necessary knowledge and skills for work. Purely utilitarian components (such as income increase), which traditionally occupy first place in methods for assessing the effectiveness of business education, nowadays are not perceived by managers as the main expected result.

The analysis revealed differences in the choice of a number of motives for advanced training in various groups of respondents:

- The motive "Ensuring competitive advantages in the labor market" is more typical for men (66.7 % of men indicated this motive for advanced training, while only 15.4 % of women did so). For line managers and specialists, the motive of personal competitiveness in the labor market is more significant (42.9 %) compared to middle managers (28.6 %) and top managers (20.0 %).

- "Realization of a desire to change the area of activity" as the motive for advanced training is more characteristic of men (33.3 % of men and 7.7 % of women noted this motive). An important differentiating factor for the wish to change the area of activity is the position of the respondent (40.0 % of top managers and 14.3 % of middle managers chose this motive,

while line managers and specialists did not specify it in the list of motives for advanced training).

- The motive “Improvement of image with the employer, business partners, colleagues” was chosen by top managers (20.0 %) and by the age group of 41-50 years old (16.7 %). Middle managers, line managers, younger age groups and the group of respondents over 50 years old did not specify this motive in the list of motives for receiving advanced training.

- “Increase in income” is the result of advanced training most expected by managers aged 31-35 (33.3 % of the respondents of this group), top managers (20.0 %) and those who pay their own tuition in full (6.7 %). Other groups did not choose this motive in the list of motives for advanced training.

The requirements set by managers for the content of advanced training programs and the conditions for their implementation are essential reference points for the improvement of business education institutions in the market of educational services. Managers in training assessed the significance of various attributes of educational programs on a 5-point scale: 5 - very important, 1 - completely unimportant (Table 2).

**Tab. 2: The most significant attributes of educational programs (average estimates)**

Attributes of programs	Mean
Novelty of the material	4.37
Coverage of the current trends in the development of the studied area (industry), the relevance of the discussed problems	4.37
Interesting way of presenting the material	4.26
High systematization of material on the topic, the coverage of different points of view	4.21
Possibility of a productive exchange of experience and managerial decisions between group members (students)	4.21
Practical applicability and usefulness of the received knowledge for the solution of professional problems	3.89
Dynamic organization of the learning process, the use of innovative forms of interaction	3.89
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Source: data of the survey

The analysis identified differences in the assessment of the attribute “Practical applicability and usefulness of the received knowledge for the solution of professional problems” between respondents receiving advanced training for the first time and respondents

receiving it repeatedly during the last 5 years. Four groups of respondents were selected based on their experience of educational activity: receiving advanced training for the first time, for the second time, for the third time and more than three times. The respondents who have more educational experience consider the attribute “Practical applicability...” more significant than those who have less experience. For example, the average score of this attribute for managers who received advanced training more than three times in the last five years is 5 points, while the average score for “beginners” is 3.44 points.

Satisfaction with the training following the completion of the educational program is an important factor in feedback, as it allows educational institutions to evaluate the achievement of educational goals and the prospects for implementing repeated orders from trained managers. The respondents were asked to assess the degree of their satisfaction with various aspects of the educational process on a 5-point scale: 5 - maximum satisfaction, 1 - minimal satisfaction (Table 3).

**Tab. 3: Satisfaction with training (average score)**

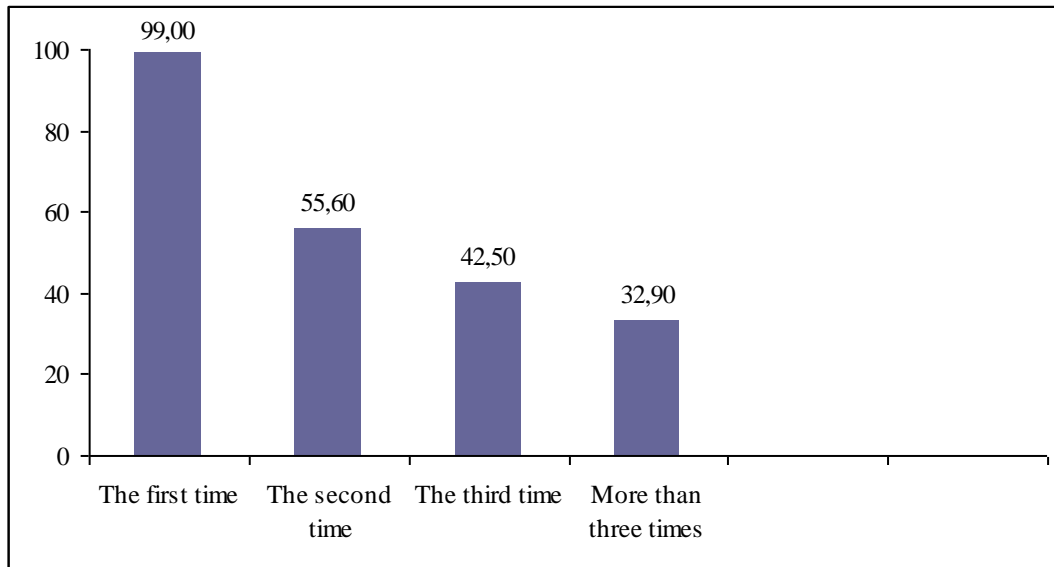
Evaluation parameters	Mean
Organization of the learning process	4.68
Content of the educational program	4.42
Competence of the teachers	4.26
Quality of the handout materials	3.63

Source: data of the survey

In general, a rather high level of satisfaction with training indicates the stable position of UrFU in the market of business education. In the current conditions of declining demand and increasing competition among the providers of educational services, the most accurate and rapid response to the business audience’s requests is a prerequisite for maintaining the achieved results.

The analysis of the level of satisfaction by groups of respondents identified differences in assessments by managers with different experiences of educational activity. The most significant differences in assessments of satisfaction with the content of the educational program are presented in Figure 1.

**Fig.1: The maximum satisfaction score with the content of the program in groups of respondents selected on their experience of receiving advanced training (% of respondents)**



Source: data of the survey

The data in Figure 1 shows that increased experience of educational activities leads to an increasingly critical assessment of educational programs. Managers who have the opportunity to compare accumulated educational experience have higher requirements for the content of educational programs and the conditions of their implementation. This fact should be taken into account by the management of educational institutions in order to keep repeated consumers of educational services and turn them into regulars.

### **3 Discussions and Conclusion**

The conducted research showed that the priority motives for advanced training among Russian managers are motives related to personal growth and the provision of additional capital in the labor market, which indicates the inclination of modern managers to continuous self-improvement and mobility in professional activities. Forced goals (the requirement of the employer) or purely utilitarian goals (increase in income) of professional development are not dominant for managers. The results of in-depth interviews, conducted by the author with actively trained managers and business owners, confirm the increase in the personal terminal significance of educational activity. “Advanced” managers perceive active and continuous education as an integral attribute of professional life, ensuring high competitiveness and

expanding their choice opportunities in the labor market (Notman, 2016). Interviews (published in business journals) with the heads of leading Russian business schools also confirm the trend identified in our study. According to S. Filonovich, the dean of the Graduate School of Management of the SU HSE, “business education is being chosen today with a primary goal of the increase of personal competitiveness, even if it does not directly affect the growth of income” (Fukolova, 2016).

The top requirements of managers for the content of educational programs reflect the specific needs of the business audience for the harmonious combination of relevant content, a high level of methodical support of the material, the organization of an effective self-learning environment, and the practical applicability of the information exchange. The revealed differences in the assessments make it possible to conclude that there is a need for a differentiated approach to the analysis of the needs of the business audience. We believe that the traditional monitoring of assessments of students after the completion of educational programs should be supplemented with a more detailed study of students with multiple training experiences. Groups of actively trained managers, as a rule, have well-formed requirements for each stage of the training and criteria for assessing the quality of educational programs. Deep diagnostics of the most critical audience will allow educational institutions to promptly correct current deficiencies in the proposed programs and thus strengthen their competitive positions in the market of educational services for the business audience. Moreover, managers who have experience in training and applying the acquired knowledge to their own managerial practice can be full participants in and co-authors of new educational programs. The involvement of the most competent group of business students in the immediate planning of educational proposals will ultimately contribute to the implementation of a model of productive interaction between educational institutions and the business community.

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**Contact**

Olga Notman

Ural Federal University

620002, 19 Mira street, Ekaterinburg, Russia

[o.v.notman@urfu.ru](mailto:o.v.notman@urfu.ru)