

## EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: SOCIAL NETWORKING IN LITHUANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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**Abstract.** This study examines effective performance management, which is actualised by enabling the use of social networks in the management of higher education institution of the country. Social networking is revealed in the aspect of effective performance management by analysing the social network Facebook, which is coordinated by a particular Lithuanian higher education institution. The research results show that the higher education institution uses actively the social network for dissemination of its internal communication; simultaneously, it creates positive presumptions for enabling effective performance management in the organisation.

**Keywords:** effective performance management, social networking, higher education institution management

**Jel:** D8, I2.

### 1. Introduction

The tendencies of knowledge society creation and globalisation encourages Lithuanian higher education institutions search for innovative ways to make the learning process more efficient and ensure quality; and thus uptake necessary development mechanisms for the management of the mentioned performance. Political, technological, social, economic and other current affairs have created conditions for constant education change; in this context, higher education institutions must find the most optimal ways to prepare the specialists that would satisfy the needs of Lithuanian, as well as society and economy.

Lithuanian higher education institutions play especially important role in the constantly changing society, which helps to ensure the growth of economy and sustainable development both in Lithuania and in the European Union. This leads to the specific political attention, as well as new regulations or rules (i.e. laws or other legislations), which create opportunities to improve the quality of higher education institution ser-

vices. Distinct attention to human resources is emphasised when examining the legislation of the European Union: “employees need better skills and abilities to adjust to the changes. Therefore, investments into human resources have a decisive value in pursuance for strengthening the efforts of scientific research and innovations“ (Competitive European regions through research and innovation, COM/2007/474), as well as innovations: “for better personal, family and professional life arrangement, by optimising ICT knowledge and optimally using ICT, as well as new work organisation forms“ (Renewed Social Agenda, P6\_TA(2009)0370). In this context the main role is played by effective performance management, greatly emphasising external and internal factors of higher education institution management development.

The concept of effective performance management varies in the works of different scientists, however often are emphasised communicative (Bacal 1999), developmental, monitorial and other important (Cardy, Leonard 2011; Paliulis, Uturyte-Vrubliauskiene 2010; Axson 2010; Chatterjee, Segars 2006; Hale, Whitlam 2000 and others) aspects. When analysing effective performance management an important role is given for a holistic approach to learning in the organisation, which helps to move to the learner organisations that are dominant in the knowledge-based society (Davidaviciene 2008; Hinton, Barnes 2005; Neely *et al.* 1995). Precisely this is emphasised by Robert L. Cardy, Brian Leonard (2011), with a view that effective performance management involves not only employees’ developmental processes, but also feedback, employee cooperation while solving arising problems, as well as developing and improving work performance. According to Robert Bacal (1999): “performance management is an ongoing communication process, undertaken in partnership, between an employee and his or her immediate supervisor that involves establishing clear expectations and understanding about the jobs to be done”. This definition presupposes the idea that performance management can be analysed through the discourse of communication, which helps to identify the processes of improvement on the level of individual and organisation. The concept of performance management, by its content meaning definition, also can emphasise management in the organisation: “performance management encompasses all the processes, information, and systems used by managers to set strategy, develop plans, monitor execution, forecast performance, report result, and make decisions” (Axson 2010). Summarising the definitions of effective performance management, it can be named as a whole of processes, methods or systems, which maintain and improve individuals’ performance whilst simultaneously aiming to improve the performance of the organization. (Hale, Whitlam 2000). Addressing the effective performance management in education institution in Lithuania it is important to stress out different aspects of the education reform such as: the role of the teacher, changes of education and values, potentials for development of pedagogues’ competences, school learners, students, peculiarities of the future school and other relevant issues investigated by various scientists (Aramaviciute, Martisauskiene 2009; Barkauskaite 2009;

Kliminskas, Janiunaite 2009; Motiejuniene, Zadeikaite 2009; Rutkiene, Zuzeviciute 2009; Targamadze 2009, 2006; Zelvyys 2009, 1999; Bruzgeleviciene 2008; Geniene 2003). In this context it is crucial to emphasize that, ongoing communication throughout the year is backbone of effective performance management. In fact, it's an essential part of good management, period (Bacal 2007). Stressing the communication thought social network Facebook it is important to highlight the effective performance management in higher educationa institution. The aim of this research is to reveal social networking in Lithuanian higher education institution as a mean for effective performance management.

Social networks can be analysed in several different ways, firstly their substance-matter definition is formed by sociology, where this phenomenon can be analysed as a social component of social capital (Ziliukaite 2004, Bourdieu 2003; Putman 2001). Otherwise, the definition of social networks highlights one of the intercultural communication theories, naming them as facilitators to reach effective results (Kvieskaite 2011). At the same time it is important to stress out that the social network analyses highlight the aspect of social capital dimension when the social capital is created and increased through social networks (Kim *et al.* 2010; Clemons 2009; Gatautis 2008). By emphasising theories of social networks and social capital, it is possible to identify that Bordieu and Coleman notes structural resources while examining the social capital forms, meanwhile Putman focuses on trust, norms and improving networks in order to reach a more effective society. Bordieu defines social capital at a level of an individual, dissociating from a collective body, that is - social relations and communications network that is used by a person (Matonytė 2004); Coleman points out common norms and trust in social networks as social capital forms and highlights the representational useful resources (Coleman 1990). Emphasising the role of Putnam who widely analysed the topic of social capital, it is crucial to note that he defines social capital as relations between individuals, social networks, their reciprocity and trustworthiness norms (Putnam 2001). The improvement of reciprocity based on the growing inter-trust presenting the theories, oriented to the effective result that is distinguished by the theory anxiety control, which seeks to explain the effective communication of individual and group levels. In this case, the social networks that provide additional information about a specific individual, are deployed in order to reduce anxiety and increase confidence towards a particular individual or a group of people, thus ensuring effective intercultural communication. In recent decades, the research topic of social networks, especially the virtual networks on the Internet, such as Facebook are rapidly evolving (Cummings *et al.* 2006, Wellman *et al.* 2001). The popularity of online social networks is determined by the fact that they present alternatives to developing contacts and sharing common interests with other people (Ellison *et al.* 2006; Horrigan 2002). Although there is a lack of empirical works due to the social capital created by the existing social networks on the Internet, a doubt arises (Williams 2006; Bargh, McKenna 2004) con-

cerning the developed and strengthened relationships on the Internet.

## 2. Methodology

To address the questions raised above, data were gathered by exploring the case study of the one of the private college Facebook page. The data were collected during the months of January-June 2011 and the focus was the interaction from college and social network members. Analyzing the social network Facebook data from this year October 1<sup>st</sup> it is identified that there are 7 pages of the private college, that accordingly have 3667, 572, 435, 93, 3, 6 “like“ declared by the members of the social network and 2 pages that have 1 “fan“ each. When analysing the data, statistical methods and content analysis methods were applied. The questionnaire survey data were processed by SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 18.0 for Windows statistical data processing software.

## 3. Results

Summarising the information submitted in the social network Facebook of the higher education institution during the months of January-June 2011, it is revealed that the higher education institution submitted the information the most actively in April, when 36 messages were published; whereas the least messages were published in January and June, with accordingly 12 and 6 messages submitted. These results can also be associated with the specificity of the higher education institution’s activity, when in January and June student exam sessions proceed; therefore it is natural that the flow of information is not that active. Evaluating the content of the messages, it is obvious that the most sympathies of the members of the higher education institution social network were given to the information published during the first quarter of the year. The most popular message during the months of January-June 2011 was about the event of the higher education institution which was held for 14th February celebration (even 217 social network users expressed sympathy by pushing “like“). The quintet of the mostly liked messages according to the members of the social network also included college greetings for students, as well as wishes to pass the exams successfully.

**Table 1.** Correlation: interaction between number of news and “Like”.

		Number of news
Number of “Like”	Pearson Correlation	,700
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,122

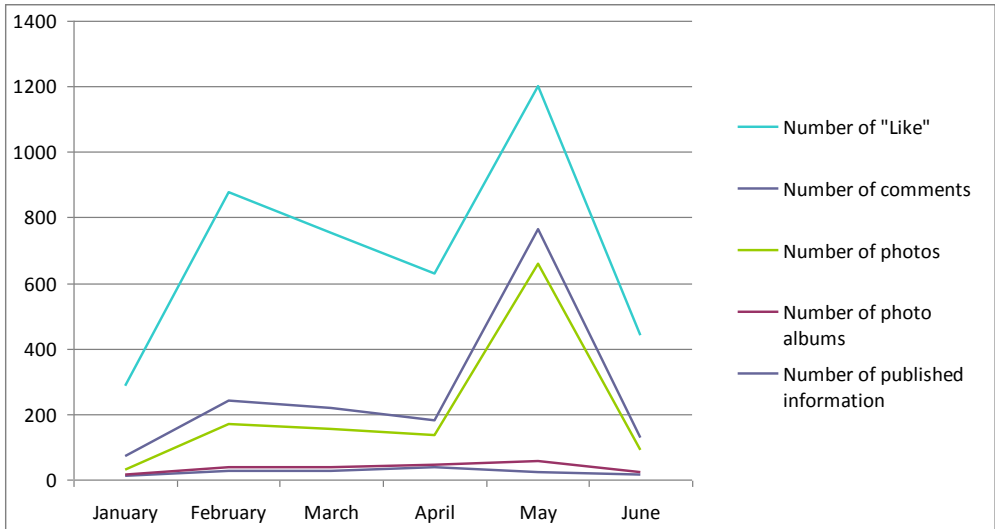
\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The significant correlation was identified by evaluating the weight between the Number of news and Number of “Like” (Table 1). Exploring the college social network pages member’ activity can also be revealed through their comments while reacting to the published information. In the first half of 2011 the most interest received the information about the events of the higher education institution – organisation of elections appointed to St. Valentine’s Day event (20 comments), presentation of sports events (14), “Erasmus“ studies implemented in the higher education institution (12) and presentation of events proceeded in the higher education institution (10). The higher education institution, in addition to the information, in its social network also loads various photographs – total 79 photograph albums published newly or supplemented during the months of January-June of 2011. It is obvious that the greatest amount of photograph albums was created in May (33), the least – in January (2). It is interesting to notice that the relationship between published photograph albums and social network member activity is marginal. It is based by the results that the greatest amount of sympathies from the members of the social network received photograph album published in March of the first half of the year, which depicts student event for the women’s day (27); however, as mentioned earlier, the greatest amount of photographs was loaded in May. During the months of January-June of 2011 the most liked photograph albums included the presentations of higher education institution events as well. The survey results show that the biggest discussion among social network members was caused by the photographs of students’ procession, held in March (18 comments) and dance festival held in May (15), however the quintet of the most interesting images also included photographs with student other events held in January and March, as well as the contest of active participation. The Pearson correlation between the publishing the new photographs or its albums and social network member interaction by commenting them stress out the significant connection ( $r=0,921$ ). Summarising this data can be noticed that during the first half of the year the higher education institution published 139 messages and uploaded 74 photograph albums, which contained 1029 photographs and 4 video stories, 3 of which present the life of higher education institution students. These numbers confirm that higher education institution devotes greater attention to news submission in images; however summarised survey results show that members of the social network more often react to the written information (Fig. 1).

Evaluating the most popular photographs and messages, which received sympathies of the social network members (“like“), it is interesting that the most liked message received even 217 “like“, the most liked photograph - 27. Taking into consideration this tendency that social network members 7 times more evaluate written or visual

information as “like“ than comment it (“like“ - 2577, comments – 364).



**Fig. 1.** The interaction in the social network

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

This study investigated the role of social networks by using Facebook in private college for effective performance management. The results suggest that observing actions of others social network members were more common than interaction (posting comments or „like“) in private college Facebook page. Furthermore the interaction of the social network members for different type of information vary, i.e. the posted information is constantly evaluated by „likes“ and photographs by comments of social network members. It discloses that social network members are more interested in sharing their thoughts by describing concrete events where they or their colleagues took part in. Also it provokes the concern that published information, involves the discussion between college students. According to other findings (Pempek, Yermolayeva, Calvert, 2009) the popularity of social networking applications could make them a powerful cognitive tool if adapted for academic pursuits and career goals. And this recommendation supports the process of the effective performance management, which could be organised by using social networks. College Facebook page supports communication management as well as develop college organizational culture by stimulating the interaction between its students and involving its academic staff. Moreover Facebook page maintains the communication between college students and in this way builds the

alumni community, which could play a significant role in effective performance management by college development or management processes, fundraising and other aspects.

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## EFEKTYVI POKYČIŲ VADYBA: SOCIALINIS TINKLINIMAS AUKŠTOJOJE MOKYKLOJE

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Santrauka

Šis tyrimas analizuoja efektyvią pokyčių vadybą, kuri aktualizuojama įgalinant socialinių tinklų panaudojimą aukštųjų šalies mokyklų valdyme. Pasitelkiant konkrečios Lietuvos aukštosios neuniversitetinės mokyklos koordinuojamą socialinį tinklą („facebook“), socialinė tinklaveika darbe atskleidžiama efektyvios pokyčių vadybos aspektu. Tyrimo rezultatai parodo, kad auštoji mokykla aktyviai naudoja socialinį tinklą savo vidinei komunikacijai skleisti, tuo pat metu sudaromos teigimos prielaidos įgalinti efektyvia pokyčių vadybą organizacijoje.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** efektyvi pokyčių vadyba, socialinis tinklinimas, aukštosios mokyklos institucinis valdymas.

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