

## FOOTBALL AS A MODEL OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGERIAL STRATEGY

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### **Abstract**

*Football is a complex framework in which leadership, strategic planning and resource management are manifested in a dynamic and immediately observable manner. Team organization, role clarity, coordination and the ability to adapt to changing situations reflect fundamental principles of modern management. The relationship between coach and players highlights the impact of leadership on collective performance, and the processes of selection, motivation and development highlight the importance of effective human resource management. At the same time, game strategies, opponent analysis, performance assessment and external pressure management provide relevant benchmarks for the business environment. The study highlights how key concepts from football can be adapted to the organizational context, contributing to the formation of coherent, resilient and result-oriented teams. Finally, the conclusions underline the role of football as a valuable source of inspiration for leadership and management in the contemporary world.*

*Like football teams that form their identity through shared values, successful organizations are built on cohesion, discipline, and a shared purpose. At the same time, the integration of technology and data analytics, essential elements in modern football, highlights the extremely important role that information plays in optimizing managerial decision-making processes.*

*Football is a valuable source of inspiration for leadership, strategy, and continuous improvement, offering a practical perspective on how sports mechanisms can support increased organizational effectiveness in the current context.*

**Keywords:** *football, leadership, management, strategy, organizational culture*

**Clasificare JEL :** *A12, M19*

### **1. Introduction**

Football is a major social phenomenon, both nationally and internationally, playing an important role in the social and economic life of many FIFA member federations. This sport goes beyond the mere spectacle offered to the public in the stands or in front of the televisions.[2]

Football is a global phenomenon that goes beyond the purely sporting dimension, constituting itself as a complex system of coordination, strategy and human resources management. Today's football clubs function like organizations, with clearly defined objectives and facing pressures similar to those in the business environment, such as intense competition, the need for constant performance, rapid adaptability and permanent innovation. In this context, football is no longer just a sport, but also a practical environment for the development of managerial skills. Complementarily, contemporary management increasingly incorporates models inspired by the sports field, especially football, due to its dynamic nature and strong focus on immediate results.

The similarities between football and the organizational environment allow for a deeper understanding of essential concepts such as leadership, team motivation, strategic planning, conflict management, and achieving collective performance. The football team can be conceived as a sphere of an organization, in which individuals with distinct roles and responsibilities are coordinated by a leader, oriented towards achieving common objectives. The study of these similarities provides managers with a practical and applicable framework for developing organizational culture, managing external pressure, and building effective teams capable of maintaining their performance in competitive contexts.

The objectives pursued consist in rigorously examining the fundamental elements of football management, in analyzing the possibilities of transferring and adapting sports strategies in the

organizational environment, in substantiating theoretical aspects by applying them in relevant practical contexts, in articulating an integrated perspective on leadership and in highlighting managerial directions oriented towards sustainable performance and innovation.

## **2. Management in football**

Organizing a football team is a complex process that involves not only the clear structuring of roles, responsibilities and functional relationships between players, but also the integration of these elements into a coherent, performance-oriented system. From the perspective of organizational theory, the team can be viewed as a sociotechnical system in which the human dimension (technical skills, tactical abilities, emotional intelligence and collaboration capacity) interacts with the technical dimension, consisting of training methods, analysis tools, tactical strategies and managerial structure. This relationship generates a functional framework in which both the individual and the collective contribute to achieving common goals.

Efficient and scientifically based management of sports activities requires the existence of well-trained specialists in both sports and management, with clearly defined responsibilities. This requirement applies to both senior clubs and those dedicated to young athletes. [4]

Sports management has allowed for a more efficient organization of the activity and the clarification of the responsibilities involved. Performance football is not just a game of strength, but involves the development of all components of the athlete's training process, including both physical and technical-tactical aspects, even in an increasingly competitive context. [3]

The organization of the playing positions – goalkeepers, defenders, midfielders and forwards – follows the classic principle of dividing responsibilities, with each player having a well-defined role in the functioning of the team. These roles are not limited to technical aspects, but also involve making quick decisions, anticipating the actions of the opponents, observing tactical discipline and maintaining correct positioning on the field. At the same time, the social component is essential, as coordination with colleagues and effective communication contribute directly to collective play.

The performance of each position is assessed through specific indicators, such as duels won for defenders, number of successful passes for midfielders or finishing efficiency for forwards. These indicators provide a clear and objective picture of each player's contribution to achieving the team's goals.

The bonds created within the team are determined by the interdependence and association that exist between the players. The compatibility of playing styles, the matching of the rhythms of the game, the mutual understanding of tactical intentions and the level of functional interdependence define the degree of collective performance. In this sense, the team can be viewed as a structure within which performance is not the sum of individual skills, but the result of effective interactions between the components. Thus, the distribution of tasks and the establishment of collaborative relationships reflect the structural mechanisms specific to a mature organization, in which roles are clearly defined and processes are optimized to achieve the desired results.

Effective organization goes beyond simply assigning technical roles and involves clarifying individual goals, establishing a common strategic direction, and developing a culture of internal communication. Communication, both formal (tactical instructions, training plans) and informal (spontaneous feedback, adjustments during the game), facilitates coordination and reduces functional inaccuracy. Transparency in the transmission of goals and accuracy of managerial messages also contribute to building trust and increasing individual accountability.

In addition, organizing a team also involves understanding and managing the relationships between its members, an essential aspect for achieving sporting performance. Elements such as team spirit, compatibility between personalities, the emergence of informal leaders or influential players, as well as the way in which internal conflicts are resolved have a major impact on collective efficiency. In this context, the coach plays a key role, being responsible for harmonizing the group,

constantly observing internal dynamics and promptly intervening when tensions arise that may affect team unity.

The organizational structure of a football team includes all the people involved, from players and coaches, to technical and administrative staff, as well as club-specific departments such as scouting, physical training or video analysis. All these components are organized and coordinated to ensure the achievement of the team's objectives, such as sporting performance, the development of young players or success in competitions. A clearly defined structure allows for effective communication, well-established responsibilities and better management of resources, essential aspects for coordinating the team and achieving the desired performances. [1]

Thus, organizing a football team can be compared to the functioning of a complex organization, in which clear definition of roles, effective coordination, internal communication and management of relationships between members are essential for achieving performance.

The coach's leadership occupies a central place in the team's managerial structure, having a major influence on collective results, the motivation of each player and the emotional atmosphere within the group. From the perspective of leadership theories, the coach is not only a specialist in technical training, but also a strategic leader, able to shape the mentality, behaviors and level of involvement of the athletes. Through his leadership style, he contributes to the formation of the team's identity, to the development of the ability to cope with difficulties and to the proper functioning of internal relations.

Opponent analysis is an essential step in a football team's strategic planning process. It involves collecting and interpreting information about the opposing team's playing style, its strengths and weaknesses, the tactical structure used, and the individual and collective behavior of the players. Modern tools, such as video analysis, statistical data, and scouting reports, contribute to an objective and detailed assessment of the opponent.

Based on this information, the coach and technical staff develop the tactical plan, adapting the game system, defensive and offensive strategies, as well as the individual roles of the players. An effective tactical plan must be flexible, allow for adjustments during the game, and be correlated with the real resources of your own team.

Goal setting is a central element of strategic management in football. These can be formulated in the short, medium and long term and target both sporting results (rankings, qualifications, victories) and the individual and collective development of players. Objectives must be clear, realistic and measurable in order to effectively guide the team's activity.

Performance monitoring is carried out through specific indicators, such as game statistics, physical, technical-tactical and behavioral assessments. The periodic analysis of this data allows the identification of progress, deficiencies and areas requiring improvement, facilitating informed decision-making.

The competitive environment in football is dynamic and unpredictable, which requires a continuous adaptation of strategies. Results obtained, players' sporting form, injuries, changes in the squad or competitive pressure are factors that influence strategic decisions.

The coach's ability to adjust tactics, modify the game system or redefine objectives depending on the context is an important indicator of managerial competence. Strategic flexibility contributes to maintaining the team's competitiveness and optimizing long-term performance.

Players are the main resource of a football team, and their effective management is essential for sporting success. The selection process aims to identify athletes who meet the technical, physical and psychological requirements of the team, as well as the organizational values promoted by the club.

Player development involves a continuous process of training, improvement and evaluation, which includes physical, technical-tactical and mental preparation. Investing in the training of young players contributes to the long-term sustainability of the club.

Motivation is a determining factor in sports performance, influencing the level of involvement, effort and perseverance of players. The coach uses various motivation methods, such as setting goals, constructive feedback, recognizing merits and creating a climate of trust.

Strengthening team spirit is achieved by promoting shared values, cooperation, and effective communication among team members. A united team, in which players support each other, has a greater ability to cope with competitive pressures and achieve superior results.

Internal conflicts and external pressure, generated by the expectations of fans, the media or the club management, represent constant challenges in the management of a football team. Effective conflict management involves identifying the causes, open communication and adopting fair solutions.

The coach and technical staff have the responsibility to maintain the team's emotional balance, protect players from negative influences, and transform external pressure into a motivating factor. Proper management of these aspects contributes to the team's stability and long-term performance.

Leadership in football offers many lessons relevant to business, as the coach fulfills a role similar to that of a manager or organizational leader. He is responsible for setting the vision, motivating the team, making decisions under pressure, and managing human resources in a competitive context.

Although management and leadership are not the same thing, the terms are often used interchangeably. Not all managers are leaders, and some leaders, such as informal leaders, do not hold formal positions. However, the reality is that effective managers must also develop leadership qualities, relying more on influence than on formal position. [5]

A key transferable aspect in business is the leader's ability to inspire and create a common purpose. Also, adaptability, effective communication and constant feedback are fundamental skills in both sports and organizations. Leadership styles practiced in football, such as transformational or situational leadership, can be successfully applied in the corporate environment to increase employee performance and engagement.

The strategies and tactics used in football can be compared to the strategic planning and implementation processes in organizations. Just as a football team adapts its tactics according to the opponent and the competitive context, organizations must adjust their strategies in relation to the market, competition and changes in the economic environment.

Teamwork, clear distribution of roles, coordination of activities and collaboration between team members are common principles in both fields. In addition, the ability to react quickly to changes and make effective decisions under pressure is a competitive advantage in both sports and business.

Performance evaluation is an essential process in both football and organizational management. In football, performance is measured by indicators such as competitive results, individual and collective statistics, the level of tactical efficiency or player progress. In the business environment, performance indicators include productivity, profitability, employee satisfaction and the achievement of strategic objectives.

The use of clearly defined indicators allows for an objective assessment of results and facilitates the decision-making process. Comparing indicators in the two areas highlights the importance of measuring performance to optimize activities and achieve set goals.

In both football and business, success and failure are important sources of learning. Analyzing positive results allows for the identification of effective practices that can be replicated, while failures provide opportunities for correction and development.

A constructive approach to failure contributes to the development of resilience and adaptability. Teams and organizations that capitalize on lessons learned from previous experiences have a greater chance of achieving sustainable performance in the long term.

Continuous improvement is a fundamental principle of modern management, applicable to both football and business. It involves constantly evaluating performance, identifying weaknesses and implementing corrective measures.

Leadership styles directly influence employee performance, and a flexible model, adapted to the situations and needs of the team, is essential for motivation, productivity, and achieving organizational goals.[6]

Continuous improvement strategies include developing individual skills, optimizing processes, innovating and adapting to changes in the external environment. By promoting a culture oriented towards progress and learning, both sports teams and organizations can ensure long-term performance and competitiveness.

### 3. Conclusions

The analysis highlights the essential role of management in football, showing how organizational, strategic and leadership principles applied in sport can contribute to collective and individual performance. The study of team structure, player roles and coach leadership demonstrates that success does not only depend on the technical qualities of athletes, but also on the ability to coordinate, motivate and manage human resources.

In addition, the analogy with the business environment highlights valuable lessons: strategic planning, adaptability, decision-making under pressure and performance evaluation are skills that are transferable between sport and organizational management. Thus, football can be seen as a practical laboratory for the development of leadership and management skills.

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