

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS IN THE SELECTION OF PROJECT TEAMS IN A COMPANY IN THE AGILE TRANSFORMATION STAGE

A Importância das Soft Skills na Seleção de Equipes de Projeto Numa Empresa em Estágio de Transformação Ágil

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to understand the relevance of soft skills in the selection of teams for a project in a company undergoing agile transformation. The method adopted was based on an analysis of the literature to understand the researched phenomenon, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews with team members and the company's leadership on a pilot project. The content rose allowed us to evaluate the company's decisions at the time of the constitution of the team that would act in the project pilot for the agile transformation. As a result of this study, it was noted that the company did not take soft skills into account when selecting the team and the project manager to adapt it to agile transformation. There was also a strong presence of a cognitive bias effect called the Halo Effect, which influenced the hiring of project managers for the company studied with the most appropriate profile for the cascade approach.

Keywords: Project Management; Soft Skills; Hard skills; Agile Transformation; Halo effect.

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A IMPORTÂNCIA DAS SOFT SKILLS NA SELEÇÃO DE EQUIPES DE PROJETO NUMA EMPRESA EM ESTÁGIO DE TRANSFORMAÇÃO ÁGIL

The Importance of Soft Skills in the Selection of Project Teams in a Company in the Agile Transformation Stage

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RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é compreender a relevância das soft skills na seleção de times de projeto em uma empresa em fase de transformação ágil. O método adotado partiu da análise da literatura para compreensão do fenômeno pesquisado, análise de documentos e entrevistas semiestruturadas com membros do time e de lideranças da empresa de um projeto piloto. O conteúdo levantado permitiu avaliar as decisões da empresa no momento da constituição do time que atuaria no projeto piloto para a transformação ágil. Como resultado do estudo, notou-se que a empresa não levou em consideração as soft skills no momento da seleção da equipe e do gerente de projetos para adequá-las a transformação ágil. Ainda notou-se forte presença de um efeito de viés cognitivo chamado Efeito Halo, que influenciou na contratação de gerentes de projetos da empresa estudada com perfil mais adequado para a abordagem cascata.

Palavras-chave: Gestão de Projetos; Soft Skills; Hard Skills; Transformação Ágil; Efeito Halo.

INTRODUCTION

Available digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and big data analytics allow companies in the financial sector to increasingly develop innovative financial services (Alaassar, Mention, & Aas, 2021). To this end, companies generate a variety of types of projects, which leads them to adopt different approaches to project management. However, when a company adopts only the planning-oriented approach (waterfall), it misses market opportunities. Guinan, Parise and Langowitz (2019) point out that this situation makes room for startups to evolve faster. The authors also indicate that there was an apparently favorable situation for companies that are solid in the market, such as large financial institutions. This situation is being increasingly threatened by the adoption of a single project management approach, which privileges the complete detailing of projects, rather than the flexibility of solutions to the market.

In this context, the role of the project manager is extremely relevant, being recognized as an agent of transformation. It is worth mentioning that the understanding of this transformation agent even corresponds to a change in mindset evidenced in the evolution of frameworks and methodologies that may be associated with the success of projects (Grandia, 2015; Kendra & Taplin, 2004). Thus, when researchers and practitioners seek greater depth on this subject (Jagodick et al., 2011), the role of the project manager as a transformation agent is perceived, which can vary for several reasons, such as the project management approach, the company's operating model or the leadership style adopted.

In fact, it is worth explaining here that there is an expectation regarding the role of the project manager, according to the predictive approach, of performing skills related to the ability to lead, plan and control more distantly from the operation (Karrbom-Gustavsson & Hallin, 2014). On the other hand, in the agile approach, what is expected is that this transformation agent is more involved in the operation, with a more participatory and less directive role (Bushuyeva et al., 2018). Given these approaches, the project manager needs leadership skills that involve the ability to guide, motivate and direct a team to help the organization achieve its business goals (PMI, 2017).

Although the aforementioned situation is known to many companies, it is still necessary to further promote this discussion in order to understand why an individual's skills are so important, making the project manager's skills and behaviors a key factor in success (Creasy & Anantatmula, 2013; Hamad & Al Fayoumi, 2018). Therefore, this study is based on the premise that project managers' skills are key success factors, having knowledge, skills, and attitudes that make people move, even because tasks are still done through people (Stevenson & Starkweather, 2010; Savelsbergh, Poell & van der Heijden, 2015).

In El-Sabaa's research (2001), soft skills (interpersonal skills) are defined as the skills necessary to deal with human aspects and have an influence on the success of projects, overcoming hard skills (technical skills). For Skulmoski and Hartman (2010), project management hard skills are basic-level skills, and that in themselves do not lead the transformation agent to superior performance as soft skills could do (Thamhain, 2012).

Despite the importance of hard skills, Müller and Turner (2010) explain that soft skills bring the vision of the qualities necessary for the transformation agent to succeed. Despite this finding, the discipline of project management seems to place greater emphasis on hard skills to the detriment of soft skills, as can be seen in the PMBoK Guide (Project Management Body of Knowledge) (Pant & Baroudi, 2008). The PMI (2017) suggests that the project manager needs leadership skills that involve the ability to guide, motivate and direct a team. We infer in this study that the leader should not only emerge from a legitimized hierarchical position, but the leader must also be forged in his behaviors and leadership skills (Skulmoski & Hartman, 2010; Muller et al., 2011; Gruden & Stare, 2018).

Based on these arguments, we can infer that hard skills and soft skills influence the relationship between leadership styles and those led in carrying out tasks, which in turn results in project success (Pant & Baroudi, 2008; Bolli & Renold, 2015). However, there is a gap to be explained between the leadership exercised by the formally appointed project manager, which is focused on hard skills, and the leadership that comes from behavioral attributes, which is focused on soft skills (Drouin, Müller, Sankaran, & Vaagaasar, 2018). From this perspective, leadership styles permeate this dichotomy generated between hard skills and soft skills (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005; Muller & Turner, 2010; Hassan, Bashir, & Abbas, 2017).

Thus, the leadership styles in this research are based on the three main leadership styles studied in project management, which are: transactional, transformational, and situational (Yang, Huang, & Wu, 2011). Through these styles, it is possible to distinguish management from leadership and the relationship between tasks and people is analogous to the relationship between hard skills and soft skills in the context of project management. In the leadership literature, transactional leadership is often contrasted with transformational leadership (Muller & Turner, 2007), as transactional leaders are more focused on hard skills, emphasizing rewards, punishment, and bargaining (Bass 1985; 1990). On the other hand, transformational leaders are more focused on soft skills, as they demonstrate charisma and create pride, respect, trust, and vision (Muller & Turner, 2007; Pearce & Sims, 2002; Aga, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo, 2016).

We can infer that there is a consensus in the literature that different leadership styles are appropriate for different types of projects, as demonstrated by Muller and Turner (2007). Therefore, the best style should be delineated based on the conditions by which a leader influences the team leading toward the success of the project (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005; Tabassi, Roufechaei, Bakar, & Yusof, 2017). From these findings, if the project manager does not know how to adapt his leadership style according to the maturity of his subordinates, it can affect the individual performance that influences the result of the project (Ding, Li, Zhang, Sheng, & Wang, 2017; Hsu, Li, & Sun, 2017).

This adaptability of the project manager in certain situations is the premise of the situational leadership style. In situational leadership, the leader has the ability to adapt his leadership style according to the maturity of the leader in each situation. Based on this point of view, the leader can be more technical and authoritarian with less mature subordinates using a transactional leadership style, or he can be more flexible and focused on relationships and trust, using transformational leadership with more mature subordinates, being able to use the two styles at the same time (Hersey & Blanchard, 1974; Pilkiene, Alonderiene, Chmieliauskas, Simkonis, & Mueller, 2018).

In the project management environment, it is studied how leadership can directly influence people's engagement and project success (Kissi, Dainty, & Tuuli, 2013; Hassan, Bashir, & Abbas, 2017; Maqbool, Sudong, Manzoor, & Rashid, 2017), and this influence is exerted by the leadership style (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005; Gray, 2017). In this way, leadership styles address skills and competencies that permeate the relationship between hard skills and soft skills that result in project success (Hassan, Bashir, & Abbas, 2017). Through leadership styles, it is possible to distinguish the relationship between tasks and people, which is analogous to the relationship between hard skills and soft skills in the reality of project management.

In the analysis of the company studied in this research, the aforementioned scenario suggests that maintaining a single approach to project management may not be enough to remain competitive. In this way, the company, realizing a dissonance between its efforts and results, chose to implement, in parallel with the waterfall approach, an agile project management approach. The company studied decided to start this transformation to the agile approach in a large project, of a group of specific products of the organization. Therefore, one of the stages of this process was the selection of the project manager and the responsible team and, in this context, when realizing the research opportunity, this study aimed to answer the following questions: How to identify the most adequate resources, taking into account soft skills and hard skills, for the execution of a pilot project in companies undergoing an agile transformation phase? Which leadership style is best suited for this situation? To this end, the article also adopted as its main objective to understand the relevance of soft skills in the selection of teams for a project in a company undergoing an agile transformation phase.

Thus, from the discussion presented here, it was possible to understand the complexity in selecting teams and changing the leadership style when a private multiple bank in Brazil, which works with a waterfall approach to project management, decides to use an agile approach in a large project. To start the transformation process in this project, which served as a pilot for using the agile approach, the institution chose to select human resources that had the necessary skills using the results of evaluations carried out in the years preceding the project as a selection criterion. The assessments made by HR and endorsed by the institution's managers are based on deliveries and knowledge about the company's business, not considering soft skills as necessary aspects for selecting the team and project manager who would work on this pilot project.

Despite the evidence of failure to identify and manage the soft skills of the project manager and his team. Here, the relevance of better adapting the project manager's leadership style to lead the transition from the waterfall approach to the agile project management approach is highlighted. Thus, when exposing in this article the reality of the studied company, in the light of the researched literature, we sought to contribute mainly to practitioners who have already had contact, or may be affected, by such a transition situation.

1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Soft skills in team selection

After analyzing the literature, it was possible to identify the most relevant characteristics of soft skills that could have been considered in the formation of the project team with the insertion of the agile approach. This framework addresses with greater emphasis the agile transformation in project teams, emphasizing the balance between soft and hard skills for team building and leadership styles in this context.

Bolli and Renold (2015) separate the skills of individuals into two categories: technical skills (hard skills) and personal skills (soft skills). In contrast, for Skulmoski and Hartman (2010), project management hard skills are basic-level skills that in themselves do not lead the project manager to superior performance as soft skills do. Elliott and Dawson's (2015) research detailed situations of success and failure of projects and identified, through root cause analysis, the necessary soft skills improvements to achieve success.

For Pant and Baroudi (2008), successful project management requires a mix of skills, including interpersonal skills, technical skills, and cognitive aptitude, along with the ability to understand the situation and people and dynamically integrate appropriate leadership behaviors. Hard skills address process and tool requirements, while soft skills address the needs for effective communication, teamwork skills, adaptability, and collaborative problem-solving (Zaman, Jabbar, Nawaz & Abbas, 2019). In this line, Turner and Müller (2006) mention that project managers hard skills do not usually result in successful projects, just as soft skills can. Skulmoski and Hartman (2010) cite that unfortunately, soft skills have not received adequate attention in the project management literature. However, when uncertainties occur, what needs to be developed are the soft skills to improve the reaction of people and groups.

1.2 Agile Transformation

In general, in the waterfall approach to project management, there is a strong presence of a hierarchy in the role of the project manager, who controls the work towards the goal. In the agile project management approach, as suggested by Cruz (2016), "being agile is not being faster, but being more efficient". Thus, the responsibility lies with the team, the commitment to a self-organizing team, which will perform the tasks previously defined is what will make efficient management possible.

According to Stare (2013), the agile approach emerged for the management of software development projects and has evolved significantly since the publication in 2001 of the Agile Manifesto, a declaration created by seventeen authors who call themselves "Agile Alliance" (Beck, 2016). The authors of the manifesto say that its purpose is to find better ways to develop software and help others to do the same. This dichotomization of hard and soft aspects relating them to the approaches can be found in the literature represented by contrast or polarization of opinions, even when we draw parallels between the approaches, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table1 - Characteristics of Agile and Waterfall project management approaches

Characteristic	Agile	Waterfall	Authors
Project Impact	Low. Susceptible to failures.	Extreme. Risk for the organization.	(Bianchi <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Boehm & Turner, 2004; Riesener <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Wells, 2012)
Time Experiences	Considered to be an expert.	Adaptable to project needs.	(Boehm & Turner, 2004; Wells, 2012)
Team Size	Little.	Adaptable to project needs.	(Boehm & Turner, 2004; Cooper & Sommer, 2016)
Requisites	Changes during the project.	Stable and specified.	(Bianchi <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Boehm & Turner, 2004; Wells, 2012)
Relation to Changes	Enhances customer satisfaction.	Change is a deviation from the plan (a problem).	(Bianchi <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Karrbom-Gustavsson & Hallin, 2014; Riesener <i>et al.</i> , 2018)
Company Culture	responds to changes.	Formalized.	(Boehm & Turner, 2004; Dybå & Dingsøy, 2008; Serrador & Pinto, 2015)
Function	Negotiate.	Control.	(Frame, 2002; Wells, 2012)
Management Style	Flexible, cooperative, decentralized power (<i>bottom-up</i>).	Autocratic, prescriptive, centralized power (<i>top-down</i>).	(Dybå & Dingsøy, 2008; Karrbom-Gustavsson & Hallin, 2014; Serrador & Pinto, 2015; Wells, 2012)
Communication	Predominantly informal, oral, and personal.	Predominantly formal, structured, and traceable.	(Dybå & Dingsøy, 2008; Karrbom-Gustavsson & Hallin, 2014; Serrador & Pinto, 2015; Wells, 2012)
Knowledge management	Tacit and Extensive Iterative learning.	Explicit and Limited, sequential lessons learned process.	(Bianchi <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Dybå & Dingsøy, 2008; Karrbom-Gustavsson & Hallin, 2014; Serrador & Pinto, 2015)
Planning	Macroplanning	Microplanning	(Cooper & Sommer, 2016)
Objectives	Developed throughout the project with influence from the client.	SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound).	(Karrbom-Gustavsson & Hallin, 2014)
Processes	Iterative.	Sequences.	(Bianchi <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Karrbom-Gustavsson & Hallin, 2014)
Responsibilities	Mutual responsibility of the team.	Clear among the members.	(Karrbom-Gustavsson & Hallin, 2014)
Client Involvement	Involved throughout the project.	Involved in specific points of the project.	(Bianchi <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Karrbom-Gustavsson & Hallin, 2014)
Tests	Executable test cases of what was produced.	Documented test plans and processes.	(Boehm & Turner, 2004; Wells, 2012)

Source: elaborated by authors.

Karrbom-Gustavsson and Hallin (2014) indicate three possible reasons for this association of approaches and characteristics to happen, namely: (i) the simplicity of the explanation; (ii) attributing hard to the difficult or rigid way of managing projects as opposed to soft, which would be more flexible or smooth; (iii) the view that a hard approach can be sustained and would be easily measurable, as opposed to a soft approach that can denote the absence of control. With a focus on execution and continuous customer validation in short development cycles to ensure adherence to customer expectations, agile approaches seek product development quickly, generating a product that can be used by the customer at each end of the cycle (Cooper & Sommer, 2016). It is worth noting that the number of companies that seek to understand customer needs is growing, monitoring information and acting quickly. In this way, agile approaches gain ground, based on validation with the client at the beginning of the process, which follows with short iteration cycles (Albers et al., 2019), mainly in the software development market, but not exclusive to them.

Therefore, agile methods have evolved by simplifying the systems development process and seeking to increase productivity (Beck, 2016). For Gablas, Ruzicky, and Ondrouchova (2018), the decisive factor in project management using the agile approach is the idea that the customer will not get absolutely everything he wants. Over the years, agile methods have been used in many types of projects and are not only linked to systems development but mainly in the information technology sector as a whole.

For Vinekar, Slinkman, and Nerur (2006), although the agile approach is gaining acceptance among traditional systems development organizations, most seem to indicate a preference to sustain both forms of development. In the rhetoric of the superiority of one development approach over another, very little has been learned about the challenges organizations face in successfully sustaining opposing cultures.

Based on what has been presented so far, we can say that the agile project management approach is a type of user-led innovation, however, agile methods rely heavily on employee involvement (Bjaalid et al., 2015). In this context, Elliott and Dawson (2015) place aspects of people, that is, their skills and how well they work together, as fundamental principles of agile and, therefore, a key to its success. When examining the Agile Manifesto (Agile Alliance, 2001), the people aspects of the process are evident, providing even more evidence that soft skills are a significant factor in project success.

2 METHODOLOGY

The constitution of the research carried out in the study applied here went through three stages, the first of which focused on data collection through semi-structured interviews and analysis of institution documents, which was carried out following the recommendations of Teixeira, Nascimento, and Antonialli (2013). In the second stage, a search was carried out on theories related to agile transformation and on the subject of hard skills and soft skills. Finally, in the third stage, the data obtained regarding the procedures adopted and training provided to the company's employees were analyzed to validate the findings collected in the interviews. In this way, it was possible to map opportunities, when we compare the theory with the process the company went through.

The sources of evidence were collected in 2018. The documents raised were emails and reports available in the management phase of the pilot project. The five semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the team, the project manager, the superintendent, and the director of the pilot project at the institution. Respondents were selected in order to validate the behaviors found and opinions independently. The interviews were guided by open questions adopting in-depth interview strategies (Silva et al., 2006). The applied interview sessions sought to preserve the identity of the respondents, given the strategic character of the project and the institution. The interviews were recorded and transcribed within 24 hours so that context and non-verbal subtleties were not lost (Yin, 2013).

The questionnaire was divided into three parts (Table 2), in the First part aspects of the team's selection, training, and experience with regard to the agile project management approach were addressed. In the second part of the script, aspects related to the project and the team's priority in execution were evaluated. In the third part, we seek to identify the difficulties and challenges of leaders and the project team, focusing on the necessary skills and key characteristics for adopting one or another approach in the institution, focusing on the agile transformation and the pilot project that were the targets of this article.

Table 2 - Questions for interview

Item	Questions
Times	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How were the teams and leaders selected? 2. Were the teams selected for the pilot project trained for the new methodology to be implemented? 3. Based on your experience, what would be the strengths and weaknesses of the new approach used in the pilot project?
Project	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who defines which project management approach should be used? 2. Was the scope of the pilot project defined before the start of the project? 3. Has the team's time been fully allocated to the project?
Approach	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What aspects did the institution consider when choosing current management approaches? 2. What were the challenges in maintaining more of a project management approach at the institution? 3. Which variables should be evaluated when defining the project approach?

Source: elaborated by authors.

It should be noted that in addition to the guiding questions, other questions were applied to deepen the explanations given by the interviewees. It is worth mentioning again that, in addition to the content of the interviews, an analysis of documents from primary internal sources of the target institution was carried out to validate the speeches of the interviewees. The analysis of the collected material was carried out by consolidating and synthesizing the sources of evidence in order to respond to the objective of this research. The excerpts and documents were cataloged in an Excel spreadsheet so that they could be reread and used.

3 RESULTS

The company studied belongs to the banking sector and has more than 90,000 employees, of which more than 5,000 are in systems development areas, has more than R\$200 billion in market value, and an average profit of approximately R\$20 billion per year. In 2014, the company underwent a complete restructuring in the technology area, including the way projects were managed. The company has a mixed project management structure, i.e., some business areas have extremely functional teams, while others are fully project-based, which means that constant competition with day-to-day activities in some areas undermines dedication. total of others

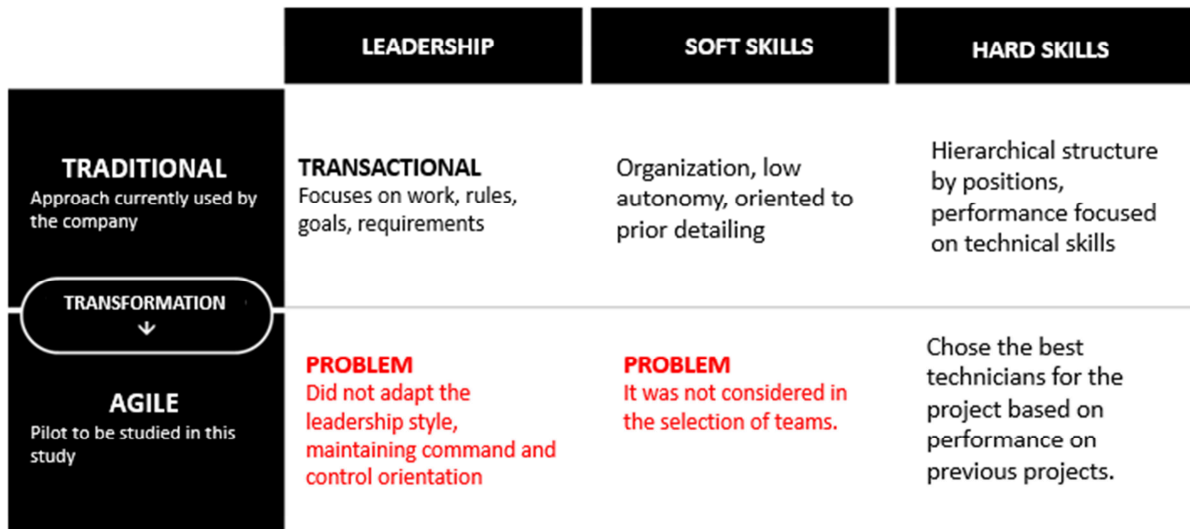
The projects carried out in this institution have different sizes involving multidisciplinary teams in functional and projectized structures. The origin of the projects may come from a need to improve the quality of the relationship with the customer, an offer or the creation of products, a change in current legislation or a revitalization of the channels. The different sizes and complexity of projects further complicate the strategic governance challenge, as do the different types of projects (Revenue, Risk, Legal, and Quality). In this environment, projects have deadlines influenced by legal dates, limited available budget, and heterogeneity of teams with little or no knowledge of these methodologies. Based on this description, the need arises to rethink the traditional way of looking at the project portfolio.

The decision on which approach to use in this institution is very much based on the complexity and scope of the project. It is worth mentioning that the decision to choose the approach in this company becomes a secondary factor, which increases the risk of the operation since speed becomes more important than the approach. Thus, since the institution chose to work with two different project management approaches (agile and waterfall), with flexibility in the scope, deadlines, documentation, and completely different processes, it was possible to verify several problems in all stages of the process, such as people allocation, prioritization criteria, cost management, accounting, test environment failure, among others.

Among the various study opportunities, when observing the agile transformation pilot project adopted by the company, we sought to understand the importance of balancing soft skills and hard skills in the selection of project teams. An important aspect perceived in the situation found was the understanding of how leadership could contribute to improving the performance of this project, especially in this transition period. Figure 1 illustrates the company's scenario and the variables that were taken into account when forming the

team, as well as the leadership style adopted in the agile transformation pilot project.

Figure 1 - Demonstration of the problem situation



Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).

The company, which used the waterfall project management approach, prioritized delivery capacity in its leaders, based on well-defined rules, goals, and technical skills that guided the performance of the teams. According to PMI, a project is a set of temporary activities, carried out in a group, intended to produce a unique product, service, or result (PMI, 2017), which must be managed in a specialized way, applying techniques, knowledge, and specific skills for the project execution effectively and efficiently. Furthermore, it could happen as part of the strategic competencies of organizations, being a means for producing results aligned with business objectives.

In this context, there was little flexibility for discussing the scope of projects during the development cycle and the interaction between customers and the company took place through long research processes that necessarily took place before the start of the project. The project that would become the organization's pilot in the agile approach, used the performance in the previous year of the project as a criterion for the selection of teams and leadership, not taking into account the soft skills necessary for the implementation of this pilot of agile management approach of projects. The same happened in the selection of leaders, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The influence of the decision on prioritizing hard skills in the selection of teams for the project was felt by the company in the first six months of the project. Pressure from the leadership for deadlines and targets made the team quickly return to the waterfall project management approach, which made the pilot application of the agile approach in a waterfall approach project, escape the main objective of the test. Another relevant point highlighted in the study was that the company's executives questioned the results and the speed with which deliveries were expected, constantly removing the team's autonomy. This situation led the governing body to recommend hiring a consultancy specializing in the implementation of the new project management approach.

In the first three months, the consultancy invested in training and monitoring the teams, since not everyone believed in the new model. The challenge was to disseminate the agile culture and its work model, focusing on implementing processes and building a sense of unique purpose. At the same time, the people involved were reviewing the way reports were passed on to the executives, which required awareness about the change in leadership style and the increase in the team's flexibility and autonomy. This situation led to a shift towards the concept of delivery in cycles and a discussion about the professional profiles and roles of the team members that the model needed to work.

4 DISCUSSION

After the analysis, it was found that one of the main difficulties in maintaining a hybrid process was the selection of teams. Both from a conceptual point of view (Guinan, Parise, & Langowitz, 2019; Grandia, 2015; Kendra & Taplin, 2004; Stevenson & Starkweather, 2010; Thamhain, 2012), and a practical point of view evidenced in the speeches and training applied by consultant contracted by the company. In the interviews, evidence of this complexity is apparent in the accounts of the director and members of the project. The interviewed director points out that "... I don't think it's complicated to train teams to work with two scenarios, I think the hardest part is adapting this behavior, the attitude that Lean has very strongly". Thus, people's attitudes are a relevant aspect of this transformation process, as reinforced by Elliott and Dawson (2015) that "in the agile approach, the focus is on aspects of people and how well they work together, in addition to the skills needed to work as a team".

The concern with changing behavior is also reflected in the project team, as a member of the team stated, "I think it is important that the team knows the methodology and the framework, it can be passed on in a simplified and quick way, but it is not possible to take five people who have always worked at the waterfall and say, now touch on the Lean model", or as another member of the team ponders "... in Agile, the positive point is the transformation of the culture, because you do not go it alone to use agile, you need to understand the mindset and couple the attitude". From this perspective, it is important to understand that project managers who are effective need to understand what makes people work well (Fisher, 2011). Furthermore, successful project management requires a mix of skills. As Pant and Baroudi (2008) point out, project managers need to have interpersonal skills, technical skills, and cognitive attitude, understand the situation and people and integrate appropriate leadership behaviors.

By evolving in interviews and bibliographic research (Guinan, Parise, & Langowitz, 2019; Hamad & Al Fayoumi, 2018), it is possible to notice that agile transformation is usually slow and problematic at first, as it involves changing the culture of the company's leaders. This situation was aggravated in the company studied, since when dealing with reality with teams with a large number of people, with complex systems such as banks, the learning curve may not be as efficient, with the risk of paralyzing the project track, which is not acceptable for a financial institution.

The problem is not related to the approach used, but rather to the necessary culture, as presented by a senior member of the team, "I don't think it's complicated to train teams to work with two scenarios, I think the hardest part is adapting this behavior, the attitude that lean has very strongly. Following a methodology, a framework for me is the easiest thing, we do it well, we do it very well, you define the steps, the chain, and how it should work, but you don't define the attitude, the behavior, this is not a business that you impose, is for each one, and I think in this sense. It's a framework that automatically pushes people towards this more collaborative model. It doesn't guarantee it, but it makes it easier. People continue to make all the difference regardless of whether it is methodology A, B, or C."

In this context, the agile approach focuses on individuals and interactions (instead of processes and tools), which allows responding to changes instead of following a plan, which can be evidenced in the superintendent's speech: "I think it's time to decide, which model we will adopt, we are in a process of acculturating the executives to change how we work with dates, how we work with deadlines, is to go to the room with these guys [executives] and say: 'in this project, we are going to work with Agile and we have no date, in this [project] we are going to work on the waterfall and we have data'. First, this situation becomes a challenge, and second, in people's minds this needs to be very clear". Another aspect highlighted was vertical communication between functional and executive leadership, this aspect is a critical success factor. As described by Stevenson and Starkweather (2010), soft skills leadership, and communication are the critical skills that executives look for to achieve successful project management. Multi-level communication, verbal and written skills, attitude, and ability to communicate, dealing with ambiguity and the ability to change are skills that contribute to this agile transformation process.

Among the principles of the Agile Manifesto, the idea that people related to business and developers should work together, and on a daily basis, throughout the project stands out as relevant to this process. The most efficient and effective way of conveying information to and within a development team is through face-

to-face conversation (Agile Alliance, 2001). Taking into account the results found in the research, it is noted that the human factor influences the opinion of the members of the institution, but this was not decisive in choosing the team. The leadership style that yielded good reviews in previous projects, based on command and control, in this project did not promote the same results. The apparent reason would be for the institution to believe that the same project manager who was successful in hard skills and business skills would have the soft skills needed to successfully manage an agile approach project. This reason is evident in the speech of the project manager of the pilot project: *“We started by empowering the teams with a certain level of decision that was not totally autonomous, I don't give you enormous decision-making power, but I don't give you a power of damage huge, given the size of the financial institution, the impact we can have is very large if a decision is made wrong”*.

Therefore, in line with the project manager's speech, it is possible to verify that the context of the company and the type of project influence the decision style. Müller and Turner (2010) discuss the importance of identifying the most appropriate leadership style for each situation, as this can contribute not only to the outcome of projects but also to the personal success of individuals, requiring emotional skills from the project manager. Hence, we infer that the concern with the process, tasks, and hard skills of transactional leadership affects relatively simple projects. Transformational leadership focused on soft skills with concern for people is necessary for complex projects (Muller & Turner, 2010; Aga, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo, 2016; Hassan, Bashir, & Abbas, 2017; Maqbool et al., 2017). Consequently, to exercise leadership, a project manager must have soft skills such as flexibility, interpersonal skills, and emotional intelligence (Clarke, 2010; Maqbool et al., 2017), but also combine them with hard skills that involve the ability to solve problems (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005; Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010), so project managers that develop skills as leaders can fulfill tasks more efficiently (Aga, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo, 2016).

Based on the aforementioned analysis, it was possible to conclude that there is a perceived dissonance concerning the decision to change the project management approach and what was practiced. This happens because of a cognitive bias effect, well known in the business world as the Halo Effect. This concept brings positive characteristics to those who bring results, in addition to evaluating the quality of the decision by its result. The Halo effect was originally identified by Wells in 1907 and occurs when raters are “unable to treat an individual as a composite of separate qualities and assign a magnitude to each of them independently of the others” (Thorndike, 1920, p. 28).

The Halo effect is present in our daily lives, when finding a person who is well dressed, or who is more visually attractive, makes the association that this person is more successful or more intelligent. In this context, the human brain assumes pre-existing patterns and follows a tendency to capture the characteristics of an individual, inferring a general impression, thus directly affecting the evaluation of the observed person. The Halo effect promotes the generalization of something in a wrong way, i.e., pre-judging without knowing (Thorndike, 1920). Furthermore, human judgments are not fully analytical and rational, rather they are biased toward the overall impression of the person and the topic at hand. Often, the first impression induces a general tendency to think positively or negatively, which prevails in all related judgments (Thorndike, 1920).

In the results of the study by Behrendt, Matz, and Göritz (2017), leaders were advised to convey personal certainty and competence when announcing any hiring decision. For measurements free of generalized observer error (in this case, the halo effect), it was necessary to go beyond convenient research approaches and take approaches that are closer to real behavior, such as video-based behavior analysis. Regarding the soft skills presented in the literature and the strengths of the research, the results of this study propose that the institution should benefit from choosing its staff based on the development of soft skills as mandatory skills, given the relevance of soft skills to performance from the project. This evidence is corroborated by the literature brought to light, which is also supported by practical knowledge as in the case of the studies by Stevenson and Starkweather (2010) and Savelsbergh, Poell, and van der Heijden (2015).

Still based on the literature presented, it is recommended to use the lessons learned in agile approaches, where soft skills will have a greater emphasis on team selection and project results, taking into account the technical aspects appropriate to projects. In this way, when identifying the priority soft skills for the project, a balance between skills will also be sought, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Matrix competencies and project approaches

	LEADERSHIP	SOFT SKILLS	HARD SKILLS
TRADITIONAL Approach currently used by the company ↓ TRANSFORMATION ↓ AGILE Pilot to be studied in this study	TRANSACTIONAL Focuses on work, rules, goals, requirements	Organization, low autonomy, oriented to prior detailing	Hierarchical structure by positions, performance focused on technical skills
	TRANSFORMATIONAL It influences motivation, inspires, is a mentor. Flexible, seeks autonomy to the extent of risk	Identify the priority soft skills for the project, seeking a balance between skills	Consider the technical aspects, appropriate to the project

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Therefore, it is understood that the studied institution, despite being considered large and well-structured, is undergoing a transformation process where the most relevant soft skills for a project may not work for all projects. Thus, it reinforces that based on what was evidenced in the interviews, in hiring a consultancy, and in the application of training, in addition to the content of the studies found in the researched literature, it denotes the influence of soft skills to accelerate improvements in the management of relationships and the effectiveness of the organization in the intended agile transition.

CONCLUSION

The survey results show that the selection of human resources is a critical procedure for companies undergoing an agile transformation phase. One aspect to be highlighted in this activity is to avoid the Halo effect, not accepting perceptions previously reflected by decision-makers. It is strongly recommended to use the lessons learned in agile approaches, where soft skills have a greater emphasis on team selection and project results. Furthermore, this study can be complemented in future research, seeking evidence of how the selection of teams based on their soft skills can influence the result of projects oriented towards the agile transition.

Although the agile transformation requires greater attention to soft skills, it can also be evidenced by the growing demand for soft skills in the adoption of the waterfall approach, which can stimulate the personal growth of those involved in the projects, resulting in the successful achievement of goals and greater profits for the organizations. Concluding this research, it is possible to demonstrate that the selection of human resources was a critical procedure in the studied company. It was possible to see that the success of agile projects is deeply linked to the balance between hard skills and soft skills, integrating appropriate leadership behaviors (Pant & Baroudi, 2008). Additionally, while soft skills are relevant in the degree of success of projects, the current style of leadership that focuses on work, rules, goals, and requirements, can migrate to a leadership style that influences motivation, inspires, is flexible, and seeks autonomy in the measure of risk, where the agile project approach transforms the leadership style as well.

It is worth emphasizing here that, in order to make the people of a team fulfill the assigned tasks and, even so, bring gains and benefits to the company's results, the leader needs to exert his influence among those led to generate results and success in the project (Shim & Lee, 2001). As a result, we can infer that in addition to the leader's influence, the leadership style permeates the relationship between soft skills and hard skills, resulting in the success of the project. Likewise, it is necessary to highlight here that the influence of the leader, in the role of project manager, directly interferes with the emotional state of his subordinates

(Hagborg, 1998; Parry et al., 2019).

This study can be complemented in future research, seeking how the selection of teams based on soft skills in recruitment can influence the outcome of projects. Due to the growing demand for soft skills, personal growth can be stimulated, resulting in the successful achievement of goals and greater profits for organizations. Another suggestion to complement this study would be to research the halo effect in hiring project teams and evaluate relevant changes in agile projects through soft skills.

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