



TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR INNOVATION MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF A COMPANY WINNING THE BRAZIL'S NATIONAL INNOVATION AWARD

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ABSTRACT

The literature on innovation indicates that it can be considered a factor of economic sustainability in a constantly changing environment. However, innovation does not happen by chance, it is understood as a process and should be managed as such. Thus, the innovation process demands the efforts of the organization as a whole, but especially of its leaders, since organizational changes depend on the people involved, and they need a direction, a direction for their actions. In this context, this study sought to understand the role of leadership in innovation management processes in a company winning the National Innovation Award, adopting a qualitative exploratory and descriptive approach through the case study method. Data collection took place through semi-structured interviews, non-participant on-site observation and secondary documents, which involved National Innovation Award reports, company presentation videos, product portfolios, as well as publications in magazines and television news. Content analysis was performed according to Bardin guidelines [3], using the Atlas.ti software. The results show that the company's main leadership has a prominent role in creating partnerships for the development and training of the team in the innovation process. Another relevant point is the approach of users and customers to the company's innovation process, promoted by leadership in the company. The results also point out that the main leadership is a source of inspiration and influence for other leaders and company leaders, aligning the mission and objectives of the company and team. The theoretical and empirical implications of this study help to understand that it is possible to manage innovation through the performance of transformational leadership in small and medium-sized companies and which generally have difficulties in large R&D financial investments.

Keywords: Innovation Management. Transformational Leadership. Brazil's National Innovation Award. Case Study. Leadership.

Introduction

The literature on innovation indicates that it can be considered a factor of economic sustainability in an environment of constant and rapid change. This importance of innovation in the global context makes organizational leaders pay special attention to innovation management and processes [8][11][15][23][30][31].

Innovation can be classified into multidimensional form, innovation as a process, innovation as a result, and the determinants for innovation. In innovation as a process, it is considered that it starts and develops in the organization, and is understood as the “how” response occurs and which guidelines are followed [11]. Innovation as a process is still poorly developed in the literature and is the focus of

this study. According to the authors, managers and leaders need to have the characteristics, knowledge and ability to motivate and direct creative efforts to generate innovation. Thus, Leadership for Innovation is considered a dimension of the determining factors for innovation [11].

The uncertain nature of innovation processes and the different contexts that can be applied makes it difficult to identify a successful innovation management pattern, but not impossible, when using a standard, even if the process fails, the organization learns about mistakes and successes to improve and increase their effectiveness [28].

It must be understood that innovation is not an event that occurs in isolation and independently, but is a process that must be managed as such. The innovation process goes through three major phases: a) The search for signs of the environment with potential for use, thus generating opportunities for the organization. b) Selection from the opportunities found, observing the ones that can bring the best results with the acceptance of the risks. c) After selection occurs the transformation of ideas into reality using knowledge to execute the project and launch innovation in the market [27].

The leadership is a determining factor for innovation to occur, regardless of the dimension of innovation as a process or as a result [11]. And for innovation to take place, it takes energy and initiative from leadership and advocates to invest and convince about the possible success of implementation [27]. For the authors, senior management commitment is required to translate ideas

into reality with enthusiasm and support, but also risk acceptance.

That innovation is a social process, that is, based on the interaction between people. The leader influences the activities of the led and the opposite is also true [14]. When subordinates are encouraged to have their own initiative and thinking, the window is opened for the development of creativity, which is the basis for innovation [22]. The leadership is responsible for the sustainability of innovation processes in an organization [20].

There is an international interest about the relationship between Leadership and Innovation, studies seek to identify the relationship of leadership and its styles with organizational performance, or innovation performance in the organization. The authors of their study diagnosed the positive relationship of CEO leadership with innovation in the organization [8]. Studies point out that there is a close connection between leadership, innovative climate and innovation performance [32]. Performing a meta-analysis on different countries in their findings, suggest that employee innovation is enhanced through leadership [30]. On the other hand, argue that the size of the organization is crucial for the success of a leadership style for innovation, transformational or transactional, for the authors, larger organizations with more processes [29]. Complexes outperform innovation with the transformational leadership style, but in smaller, simpler organizations, transactional leadership yields better innovation results. On the other hand, studies have found that transformational leadership increases team

participation and thus promotes innovation in small and medium enterprises [10] [17]. Still in the context of innovation in small companies, the leadership in the company plays an important role in innovation efforts [26]. In Brazil, small companies have considerable national relevance, according to Sebrae (2018), 98% of companies in the country fall into this modality, generating 50% of jobs and 27% of GDP.

Despite the widespread dissemination of transformational leadership, there is a growing interest in addressing new multidimensional and multilevel aspects that seek to capture the relationship between different variables and the dynamism of contemporary organizational environments [25]. The authors, still in their study about the Brazilian executives' view on the leadership theme, highlight a wide list of behaviors and characteristics expected by the leader in the current context. It is not possible to fail to relate the list of characteristics expected by the leader to the superman-building syndrome [25].

The case studied here had as its unit of analysis Delta Indústria, which is a small company (Small Company - EPP), with 21 employees located in the municipality of Concórdia in the west of Santa Catarina. Delta Indústria competed for the National Innovation Award in the 2016/2017 Edition. The company competed in the micro and small industry modality. The Award has 5 categories, Innovation Management, Product Innovation, Process Innovation, Marketing Innovation and Organizational Innovation. Delta Indústria was a finalist in 3 categories, Innovation Management, Product Innovation and Marketing

Innovation, winning in the Innovation Management and Product Innovation categories, and second in Marketing Innovation.

In this context, this study aimed to understand the role of leadership in innovation management processes in a company that won the National Innovation Award. This article is structured with the following topics, introduction, theoretical framework, methodological procedures, presentation and analysis of results and final considerations.

Innovation Leadership

Generating innovation in an organization requires the efforts of the organization as a whole, but especially its leaders, as organizational changes depend on the people involved, and they need a direction, a driver for their actions.

Within an organization there are different cognitive, behavioral and structural forms of available human resources, each with the ability to defend ideas or refute risks. For innovation to occur, it takes energy and initiative from leadership and advocates to invest and convince about the possible success of implementation [26][27]. For the authors, senior management commitment is required to translate ideas into reality with enthusiasm and support, but also risk acceptance. On the other hand, innovation studies can be classified in a multidimensional way, innovation being understood as a process, innovation as a result, and the determinants for innovation [11].

In innovation as a process, it is considered that it starts and develops in the

organization, and is understood as the “how” response occurs and which guidelines are followed. The multidimensional analysis, leadership is a determining factor for the invocation to occur, regardless of the dimension of innovation as a process or as a result [11]. According to the authors, the determining factors for innovation can still be classified into three dimensions: a) Leadership for innovation, where managers and leaders need to have characteristics, knowledge and ability to motivate and direct creative efforts. b) Management levers, supported by theory of dynamic capabilities, that the organization's resource base is the source of innovation, and the company must combine resources to meet market aspirations and thus capture new opportunities. c) Business processes, explained by process theory, considering that they are patterns of certain events.

The studies have been detaching the leadership process linked only to high level, it can occur in different contexts and levels in the organization [27]. When it comes to leadership for innovation, the organization is transformed into a new context, uniting senior management and leadership at different levels, learning from past experiences and glimpsing new perspectives.

The transformation of the organization at different levels becomes the object of these new studies as it seeks to understand the role of leadership in transformational style, which, in addition to understanding the aspirations of the led, also helps in the development of the same. to achieve these goals, and thus achieve higher maturity rates in the team [4]. However, despite the own

development of the led, in the transformational approach, subordinates primarily work for the organizational good, often above their immediate goals [5] [17]. Studies have been seeking to relate transformational leadership to innovation in organizations. CEOs with transformational leadership style have an important effect on corporate innovation, not only sharing their ideas hierarchically, but also by interacting at different levels encouraging employee cooperation to develop innovative solutions [10]. In conducting a meta-analysis study, show that transformational leadership influences innovation regardless of its hierarchical level, leading individuals, teams, or the organization itself. In their results, there is a significant influence of transformational leadership on organizations' ability to innovate [30]. For the authors, leadership provides not only support for maintaining the climate of innovation, but also an effective way to promote innovation [21].

Methodological Procedures

In this research a qualitative descriptive and exploratory approach was used. Thus, understand the performance of leadership in innovation management processes in a company that wins the National Innovation Award.

The evidence of data collection was described in depth so that it can be further analyzed according to categories of analysis defined in mixed grid, ie *a priori* and *a posteriori* [3]. The descriptive character also appears due to the need to describe the behavior of the leader in terms of sharing goals, motivating the team, influencing and

being influenced, and describing their actions regarding the empowerment and creativity of the members, as well as describing the actions of recognition of achievements made. or earned by the team. The innovation process is also described, in its three stages, of the search, selection and development of market opportunities, as well as this process generates knowledge and learning.

The case study had as its unit of analysis Delta Indústria, which is a small company (Small Company - EPP), with 21 employees located in the municipality of Concórdia in the west of Santa Catarina - Brazil. The ten-year-old company specializes in the development of agribusiness equipment producing mechanical metal capital goods with solutions in the standardization of cleaning, disinfection and food safety processes.

Delta Indústria competed for the National Innovation Award in the 2016/2017 Edition, the Award obtained the number of 3,987 entries from all regions of the country. The Award is aimed at Brazilian companies in the industry, as well as micro and small companies in industry, commerce and services. It aims to encourage and reward companies that with innovation make the country more competitive. The award also returns the evaluation by which participating companies went through, presenting the best points and new opportunities [9].

The company competed in the micro and small industry modality. The Award has 5 categories, Innovation Management, Product Innovation, Process Innovation, Marketing Innovation and Organizational Innovation. Delta Indústria was a finalist in

3 categories, Innovation Management, Product Innovation and Marketing Innovation, winning in the Innovation Management and Product Innovation categories, and second in Marketing Innovation.

The selection of the size of the company as micro and small companies is due to the national relevance that companies of this size have in Brazil, according to Sebrae (2018), 98% of companies in the country fall into this modality, generating 50% of jobs and 27%. of GDP. In addition to national relevance, the selection of this modality occurs because innovation is often studied in the context of large organizations and famous success stories, a reality that may differ in smaller organizations [15].

The selection of the southern Brazilian region is known nationally in terms of innovation, a highlight that may be explained by the various incentives that the region offers for technological development [2].

The definition of the award edition took place looking for the most current cases, being the 2016/2017 edition the most recent, in this edition also occurred changes in the evaluation methodology, reflecting a more modern view of the innovation process, as well as a more holistic and unified assessment of the internal environment, as well as the impact of these innovations on the external environment, the award now places more emphasis on Innovation Management and Innovation Outcomes [9]. Thus due to methodological changes between other years, the use of cases from other editions was discarded.

The case studies should pay special attention to data collection techniques, so that it is possible to prove and give reliability and quality to the information [31]. For this, data triangulation through different sources of evidence is used. In this research we used the interview, observation and documentary techniques.

There are different variations of interviewing techniques, in this study a semi-structured interview was used, allowing to follow the research line to answer the questions raised a priori, and also based on the collected evidence, generate new categories for analysis, considered as *a posteriori*, adjusting then categories begin as new pertinent information and discoveries.

For this research were interviewed the leaders in the company that won the National Innovation Award to understand the behavior of people in the innovation processes in the organization and thus understand the leadership for innovation. But the leaders in the organization were also interviewed, thus understanding their vision and behavior. The interviews took place on site visits at different opportunities, having the opportunity to get to know the company, structure and organization. On February 7, 2019, at the company's headquarters in Concórdia / SC / Brazil, interviews were conducted with three people, these two leaders and one led. On February 12, 2019 another visit to the company was made, interviewing four more people, two leaders and two led. The selection of people occurred according to their performance of the innovation management process. [Table 1](#) describes the interviewees and their interview time.

At first, the contact took place by telephone and then by e-mail, sent to the company's management, presenting the master's degree, the advisor, the institution and the referred work, and was then authorized to carry out the research and interviews. The interviews were all conducted face-to-face, in order to understand more personally and humanely the context and activities of each interviewee. The interviewees authorized the recording of the interview. All interviews were transcribed using the online tool otranscribe.com. After transcribing the interviews, the Atlas.ti version 8 software was used to assist in the organization of information, coding and categorization of the data. It is emphasized that the software does not eliminate the researcher's work, it only assists in this process that when executed manually, can become more time consuming and complex.

The research also uses as a data source the observation technique that occurred on the same dates of the interviews, in different areas and sectors of the company. It was possible to identify the activities performed, routines and tools used in the day to day of the organization. visual characteristics of the company, allowing, by way of evidence, to validate what is said and what is expressed in other ways. Observations were recorded along with the transcript of the interviews, recording through comments within the document, which was written with Microsoft Word software, and thus also imported into Atlas.ti software for content analysis.

Another source of evidence for this research is documentary analysis. For this research, several articles were used for documentary analysis as publications of the National

Innovation Award website, which has reports of the winning companies, as well as the evaluation methodology itself. The data used for evaluation in the award stages are also analyzed. As documents, were also analyzed videos of the company's presentation, products, as well as publications in magazines and TV news. These documents were also imported into Atlas.ti software, which allows you to attach different types of files and media to generate links between citations and categories and subcategories, according to [Table 2](#).

Table 2 shows the categories of analysis, which were generated by the theoretical framework, and served as a guide for the interviews with the company's leaders, and later complemented with the evidence of data collection via interviews, observation and documentary, as shown in [Table 3](#).

Table 3 represents the research protocol performed. The reality studied in this research determines as the object of study a single case, which due relevance, is studied in depth.

4 Presentation and Analysis of Results

4.1 Innovation Management

The Innovation Management category is made up of the subcategories of “search for ideas”, “selection of ideas”, “implementation and dissemination of ideas”. These subcategories were defined a priori [\[3\]](#) and according to the theoretical framework for innovation management and its process models such as Tidd, Bessant and Pavitt [\[26\]\[27\]\[28\]](#). The collected data showed the relevance of this category and subcategories. To understand this process of innovation in the company, people from all

sectors of the company, administrative, commercial, engineering and production were interviewed.

Delta Indústria has a process of searching for ideas on two fronts, the customer and the employees, and the main source of ideas for the innovation process is the customer himself or his prospect. According to information from all respondents, the business sector, in customer visits, seeks to understand with them, what their difficulties and anxieties, and he already provides his ideas on how to solve the case. These ideas are captured by the seller and they can later turn it into opportunity.

She started to go to the producers [...], see other demands, [...] that was when the egg disinfection machine, which is the machine that washes and disinfects eggs, came up on one of those visits she had to the producers. , she realized this need was a handcrafted process, that they would take laying eggs and fertilized eggs, first [...] it was a handcrafted cleaning, in the hatcheries, so they were very manual, so they were not very efficient good (GA).

Today people arrive, as we work with innovation, they come to look for a machine that doesn't have on the market, or they have a machine that oversized, and want a smaller machine because it does the same process, and the market doesn't produce (ER).

The idea usually comes from the customer, so he has an idea, there is some mishap he doesn't even have, he needs to wash some kind of tray, so he comes up with the idea, that he wants it (P2).

The issue is also reinforced by the director's speech in an interview with a local television

channel about the emergence of the idea of the company's first product, the disinfection arc, which was produced due to the problem of H1N1 influenza virus contamination in poultry houses, producers needed an efficient solution to disinfect trucks entering and leaving their properties, the director captured this idea according to the needs of future customers.

In the innovation process, the selection of ideas and opportunities for innovation occurs by performing an analysis of the generated ideas, verifying their viability. At Delta Indústria, the idea selection process is very clear, after the search and generation of ideas, they are consolidated with the leaders, so they are selected according to their feasibility, chance of the project being approved by the client, and possibility of financial return as available market. This understanding is reinforced by the speech of the manager.

And there are a lot of ideas, but not all of them are made, and that's why there is that little corner of innovation, is to gather those ideas, go there and debate, prioritize, what's feasible, and see if it's the time, sometimes the idea is good, but at the moment does not close [...] check if it is financially viable, because there is no use putting a lot of project on paper, and soon no one will want, then they analyze it a lot (RA1).

When asking the manager about who makes the selection of these ideas that will be implemented, he responded by quoting those responsible, who are leaders in the company. At Delta yet, the idea selection process can in some ways merge the development stage,

as project engineer, the prototyping phase is still during idea selection, since the prototype is sent to the customer for Validation and approval, if validated, will proceed to development.

The prototype is with the engineer in charge so he makes the initial design, the carcass, if approved comes to me. If the customer closes, like, he gives an idea to the customer, if the customer closes, then passes it to me, I detail everything, screw, bearing, everything that goes, the technical drawing, to move to production (EP).

In the development and diffusion phase, the largest number of people with different qualifications are involved, as it requires the largest financial investment, technical staff for production, and commercial staff for diffusion. Thus, this stage of the innovation process is widespread in the company's team, and cited by all the people interviewed by the researcher, the administrative manager cites several innovative projects developed and disseminated.

Then we developed Delta's first equipment, which was a disinfection arc, [...] so this contamination from one location to another cut off and then eliminated this problem, so Delta started there, came up with this project, some people even today with that still, and then began to make a little money for Delta to start to appear the industry, and from the mechanics separated about 5 square meters, just to make these arches (GA).

It was also possible to make this observation at various times, constantly the engineers are

in the production sector, talking with the production team, as well as it is possible to observe that on several occasions, members of the production team meet in the engineering room debating about of production. It is also possible to observe that the production team has a much more technical view, and a greater contact with the engineering, being a little more distant from the administrative and management team. Within the development and diffusion phase of the innovation process, the diffusion part is assigned to the sales team, which has the most contact with the customer, although production also has to be later implemented and installed. At this stage, the sales team seeks in the same region where the idea arose, to find other potential customers, spreading the innovation that may still be in the final phase of implementation, as administrative manager.

4.2 Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership category is comprised of the subcategories, “commitment and motivation,” “leader inspiration for the led,” “team empowerment and trust,” “team development,” and “team recognition.” The categories were defined a priori, according to theoretical foundation about transformational leadership, being the characteristics of this style of leadership. On the other hand, after data collection, the categories were reevaluated according to the coding in Atlas.ti software and their relevance according to quotes from interviews, documents and observations, thus the subcategories were reorganized *a posteriori* [3], mixed grid definition).

In Delta Indústria, some leaders are very clear and defined, others are informal, but

constantly engaged in important decisions or directing a project or demand. For this study, 4 leaders and 3 leaders were interviewed, thus allowing a data analysis with different points of view.

The main leadership is under the director of the company who is constantly cited in the interviews. The director has an influence on people in Delta Indústria due to her entrepreneurial vision and seeking opportunities. In addition to its direct performance that generates changes in the company. This case is constantly cited as a source of inspiration among leaders, so in the assessment of these leaders, due to the influence of the director, the company has its characteristics and a vision of shared results. The company director is also envisioned as a visionary, inspiring the team to move from the current state to a state considered ideal in the future. Is evidenced according to the speech of the administrative manager (GA), “the director with everything she has to add, [...] she gives lectures at universities, tells her case, the staff has good references from her, in terms of entrepreneurship, women in leadership, innovation, environmental issues, all this Delta was able to encompass all in one company”.

The analysis of the perspectives of the internal and external environments of the organization, making it possible to determine where the company is and developing a clear vision of where to go is a characteristic of visionary leadership [25].

However, some of the sub leaderships in the company also have characteristics and behaviors to be highlighted, the business management and the responsible engineer are also cited as being able to analyze the

environment and visualize opportunities so that goals can be set, on the other side, with an entrepreneurial vision, and aligned with the director.

Thus, it is possible to perceive a charismatic appeal in the leadership of the company, this charismatic aspect, is also called idealized influence, and is the factor where leaders are admired and respected, a characteristic that is present in the leadership style. transformational because it arouses in the followers a sense of identification with the leadership, and thus, sharing goals [7].

At Delta Indústria, the commitment of the leaders to the company's objectives is a point that deserves attention. The innovative company bias gives people a motivation to work on so-called "new things", a situation that is highlighted by different interviewees, including citing who are proud to be working on an innovation and being able to give suggestions and ideas for improvement. The leadership considered transformational exerts the intellectual stimulation of the team, that is, encourages the contribution, the generation of ideas and creativity to work on innovative projects, as the company's vision is focused on innovative ideas, occurs again. the sharing of goals [7]. As the Administrative Manager speaks (GA), "The vast majority get involved, the director appreciates it, the commercial manager also, to bring the team together, all embrace the cause".

From the data collected at Delta Indústria, it is possible to observe that the leaders give confidence and empower the team, allowing them to think about solutions and implement them in their area of activity, ideas for process improvements and activities in the

company, or even technological improvements are welcomed. and debated, if feasible, are implemented, so most staff feel comfortable contributing to different fronts in the company. In the event that top management has the transformational leadership style, followers are encouraged to discuss solutions, experiment with ideas, and adopt innovative approaches, and thus drive organizational innovation [19].

There is a need to reinforce the understanding of the team's perception of leadership support and involvement with the led, authors point out that in the team with more creativity and successful projects, the leader involved the team in important decisions, different from the team in which the team leader. project failed, the leader was authoritarian and basically monitored the team's activities [1]. Interviews with Delta Indústria's leaders and employees also reveal this aspect, when it is mentioned that leaders call employees to participate in decisions about innovative ideas.

Still in Delta Indústria, the data refer to learning from the mistakes made, and so, in new projects the team gets less wrong due to the expertise developed, where innovation-oriented leaders do not understand that error or failure is irrevocable, and yes, tolerate to the point that it can be learned, and thus reduce the risks for future innovations [6]. A disproportionate rebuke over the failure or failure of an innovation will likely inhibit new and potential ideas that may be successful. As the Responsible Engineer (ER) says, "so today you can say that you can not go so far wrong, because we already have an experience, but in the past, had much more field testing, than today, today has

developed the expertise, has created a vision of that kind of activity, and how I have to work”.

At Delta Indústria, the involvement of leadership with those led is also noticeable in the learning and team development aspect. Leaders create and promote people empowerment and learning opportunities, which may in turn feel involved and committed to providing the company with a return on the learning opportunity. According to Morales, Barrionuevo and Gutiérrez (2012), transformational leadership is related to organizational learning for better performance. The transformational leadership style is positively related to learning and organizational innovation, enabling companies to achieve satisfactory results in a competitive business world through knowledge sharing and transfer.

The director made a partnership with IEL, which was where she leveraged there, so we had follow-up [...] 8 months I think it was, so came a team every month to give guidance, since then in the beginning, since as we did this management [...] they call it, they leave the person free to participate, people are involved, the management doesn't do everything on their own. I feel that, because even the director when she comes, when she has a new project, she calls us (RA1).

Thus it is worth highlighting another point in Delta Indústria, which is the access to public-private entities and agencies generating partnerships for team development and learning. In the case of

Delta, the leadership sewed up a partnership with the IEL Institute, FIESC and Exporta SC, in order to develop team skills to promote the growth of people, the company, and the region.

By empowering and developing the team, Delta Indústria's leaders challenge the team to look for new opportunities, ideas and solutions, increase their responsibility, but also increase the recognition of people who, due to their capabilities, promote improvements and innovations. There are reported that in the most successful team, the leader held public meetings and demonstrated recognition of the team's progress in the project [1].

4.3 Leadership for Innovation

The Innovation Leadership category is comprised of the subcategories “approaching technology users and producers”, “market expansion”, “growth with sustainability”, “acceleration of knowledge production”, “mission alignment, goals, and strategies”. innovation process” and “building partnerships”.

The categories were constructed a priori, but after data collection there was a reevaluation and reorganization of the categories, generating new points of attention and analysis, conceiving the categories *a posteriori*.

At Delta Indústria, the leaders have characteristics and behaviors outlined by the main leadership, the director. The interaction between people and the alignment of the vision and objectives makes visible the bias in which they are inserted and the maintenance of an enabling environment for

the innovation process to occur. The innovation is a social process, that is, based on the interaction between people [14]. The leader influences the activities of the led and the opposite is also true. Innovative leadership has the mission of maintaining an innovation-friendly environment among its staff. The leadership is responsible for the sustainability of innovation processes in an organization [20]. Leaders' perception of the influence of the innovative leader is also a motivating factor for the innovative environment [14].

A feature of Delta Indústria's leadership activities, and which is very evident in conversations with people, is the closeness between users and customer prospects and the innovation developer itself. Leadership seeks contact with potential users and thus understanding their problems and needs, by understanding these issues, opportunities for innovation and business are generated. According to the interviewees, the main people who make this kind of contact and approach are from the commercial sector, in the figure of the commercial manager and the company director. Evidenced in the speech of the Administrative Manager (GA), "We have a very close relationship with the customer, so we go there and ask, what do you need. [...] The customer comes to Delta and says a difficulty he has, which until then had not in the market".

For Delta Indústria, the approach and contact with potential innovation users is fundamental, because in its core business, the main generator of innovation ideas is the potential customer. Thus, in its director-led business model, as a company that develops innovative products, this rapprochement

with customers maintains its business vision. Nowadays there is a rise of users of innovations, and thus there has been a considerable increase in the number of active users, for the authors understanding these is a challenge and opportunity for innovation [26].

The company should democratize its innovation process, in his view, the company should seek a group of customers that can effectively contribute ideas for the generation of innovations and also assist in their development [18]. The performance of potential customers is not limited to the generation of ideas, but can act in other phases of innovation [18]. At Delta Indústria, the leaders also approach users in the validation of the implementations, in the prototyping phase and after the tests, the leadership in the figure of the responsible engineer seeks this contact to verify if the innovation is really meeting the need that it was proposed.

The popularization of the internet has allowed users to have access to a much wider range of information and resources, as well as facilitating the communication between the innovator and the potential client [24]. Delta Indústria also makes use of the internet to approach the customer, on its website has an environment where potential customers can enter their needs, which will be later evaluated by the company's leaders and returned.

Thus, for Delta Indústria, the customer is seen as a partner in the construction of innovations, including the building of partnerships is a relevant point of the main leadership of the company, the director acts in building partnerships on different fronts

for the team development, innovations and their dissemination. Evidenced in the speech of the Responsible Engineer (RE), “the customer is also a partner, because when you develop a new machine, you still have no machine in the field that is running, so you have to make the first machine, put it on the customer, and make the adjustments, so the first machine you has 2 or 3 months of follow up.”

The acceleration of knowledge production and flexibility is another point encouraged by Delta Indústria leaders, for the company leaders, a lean structure with less rigidity and separation of sectors directed to the innovation process brings greater benefits to the company, especially in the aspects of agility and information exchange. The innovative leadership also aims to make a team agile in the face of market changes [13]. New solutions do not stay new for long if the release team is not respected. Thus the innovative leader optimizes the team's ability to produce with high performance and delivery. Confirmed by the administrative manager (GA), “So the company is small, it is not a large company that has several sectors that have to communicate and such, so this is great advantage, we are very dynamic the thing here, is not plastered the process that is sectored, so we can have a very agile communication”.

4.3 Transformational Leadership for Innovation Management

From the content analysis it was possible to highlight some of the aspects that were most relevant or that made constant references and generated links between categories and

subcategories. With the perception of the link between the categories it is possible to understand that the interaction between the points is part of a dimension that can be called “Transformational Leadership for Innovation Management” as Fig 1.

The study suggests that the interaction of categories in the dimension of Transformational Leadership for Innovation Management demonstrates the role of leaders involving the Transformational leadership style being directed to the context of Innovation Management.

The innovation needs links between organizations, and these links do not happen naturally, without human intervention, leadership action in building links and partnerships is important for the innovation process. occurs in a company with a lean structure. Partnerships can still work at all stages of the innovation process [26].

Companies with lean and small structures have less resources to invest in innovation, and thus make use of other solutions to minimize this situation, such as cooperation with different stakeholders diluting these investments [12].

In the process of innovation, in the phase of generation and pursuit of ideas, the user or customer is an important source, the partnership built and the consequent approach of the producer of innovative technologies with users and customers is a relevant aspect of leadership performance in the process. consolidated innovation in the company. Customers who can effectively contribute ideas for the generation of innovations and also assist in their development. But ideas are often presented in a still rudimentary manner, requiring

leadership and entrepreneurs to cut it [16]
[18]

This approach between users and producers of technology is treated as one of the important aspects and challenges of innovation management today [27][28], can still be used in the selection phase of ideas in the innovation process. In the company, you can validate the selected idea with the potential customer or user. If approved, it can be developed with less risk. However, it is important to highlight that possibly different people from the company are involved in each of the innovation process stages, so it is up to the leadership to influence people to seek contact and approach so that this validation can be done. On the other hand, in addition to inspiring leadership to approach and build this partnership in the innovation process, another important aspect of leadership that should be highlighted is that people need to be empowered to have confidence in doing so without fear. to be punished. People who are encouraged to discuss solutions and experiment with ideas drive innovation in the company, and this discussion and experimentation can be with partners [19]. The company culture must be adequate for people's creative potential to be activated, even among the most introverted [16].

But customer engagement is not the only partnership that can be built to streamline the innovation process or determine the viability of an innovation. Leaders can visualize the need to develop competencies in the company, and the search for partnerships for the development of these competences can happen at different levels of the company. According to Morales, Barrionuevo and

Gutiérrez (2012) knowledge sharing and transfer allows companies to have better results. Partnerships such as Instituto IEL, FAPESC and Exporta SC develop team competencies so that the company can achieve better performance both at the organizational level and in the innovation process.

Another link that can be built by the leadership is with the company's suppliers, building a partnership with them allows the exchange of knowledge and experiences, especially in the development phase in the innovation process, with the suggestion of materials and their best use for to solve the need of the company, as a construction of networks that facilitate and expedite innovation [28].

The involvement of the leadership and its action, closely with those led by the company, promotes the alignment of the organization's mission and goals with the team, makes sharing goals happen, and everyone can work towards the same end, This type of action also promotes motivation among the employees, generating commitment, speeding up the innovation process in the company. The performance of transformational leadership is positively related to employee innovation, thus obtaining better returns [30].

The leadership characteristics and performance cited in this topic, such as leadership inspiration and involvement, transform the team towards the organization's goals, making them common between company and team, generating commitment and motivation through empowerment and trust in the team, developing and recognizing it for its

performance. These are crucial points of a leadership style called transformational, as the name says it transforms people by generating greater maturity and consequently increasing team performance towards common goals, thus raising the self-esteem of those involved. This leadership model in a team has the constant presence of empathy between all sides and aims at sharing goals, growth and development of the team and the organization [7].

Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the contribution of leadership in the innovation management process in a company that won the 2016/2017 National Innovation Award, in the innovation management category. In this aspect, the study allowed us to understand that the performance of leadership in the company, and one of the main results found was the attention that leadership gives in building partnerships to share the weight of work applied in the innovation process. By sharing the activities of the innovation process with different stakeholders, the company promotes the development of competencies that its team natively did not have to successfully generate innovation. This partnership building also generates sources of ideas for innovation and streamlines the process itself, where different actors interact in the 3 main stages of the innovation process.

By analyzing the innovation process it is also possible to understand its functioning. Initially, the search and idea generation phase for innovation is triggered. At this moment, users and potential customers are brought closer to the company itself, users are the main source of innovation ideas for

Delta Indústria, with Direct contact with these users seeking to understand their problems, difficulties and anxieties, thus seeking to visualize the opportunities from this feedback. With the scope of ideas formed, the ideas selection phase is triggered, where the debate takes place between leaders and key people from different sectors and areas of the company, aspects such as viability, risks and profitability are discussed. prototype of the innovative idea, and user is again triggered for idea validation. If approved, and idea for innovation follows for development and further dissemination, at this stage occurs the contact of other partnerships to promote the knowledge that the project demands. Upon completion of the first product, the user is again triggered for product testing, and then finally markets it.

In the company, the main leadership acts similar to the transformational leadership style, as the inspiration and involvement of the leadership transforming the team towards the goals of the organization, making them common between company and team, generate commitment and motivation through empowerment. and trust in the team, developing and recognizing it for its performance.

In the present study, it was possible to notice that the leadership performance in the company's innovation process is closely linked to the construction of strategic partnerships for the development of team competencies in the most different aspects and stages of the process. The building of these partnerships demonstrates that small companies, because they do not have the financial investment power to individually

train, develop and structure, can also meet their innovation goals, not just restricted to large companies.

Leadership also works to bring users and potential customers closer to innovations at different stages of the innovation process. Leadership makes contact with these users seeking to understand their desires and thus seeking opportunities with them. In the selection phase of ideas and opportunities, leaders from different sectors of the company come together to discuss them, selecting the ones to be developed. At the development stage, the leaders work to connect with partners to streamline and promote the knowledge demanded so that they can spread innovation.

The empirical contribution of this to society can be given by the way innovation management and leadership performance in the innovation process in a small company that was recognized by the National Innovation Award, a form of management that in this paper is called Transformational Leadership. for Innovation Management.

Thus, this study allowed a breakthrough in the discussion of leadership and innovation management in small organizations by understanding that the transformational leadership style has a consistent role in maintaining innovation management in the organization. Leadership performance with transformational style characteristics assists in sharing goals and thus, in a way, dividing the burden of the innovation process in the organization, reducing centralized efforts and minimizing investments that are often constrained in small organizations. The performance of transformational leadership also promotes the training and development

of the team so that it can give feedback on the process of innovation in the company. This investment in training and development is also divided into partnerships with public / private development promotion entities. regional.

Limiting factors of this study are the difficulty of contact and availability of companies to participate in the research. At first, in the present study there was the proposal to study multiple cases of companies in different editions of the award, but the difficulty of contact and change in the award evaluation methodology led to a change of strategy for this research, choosing by case study of the winning company in different categories in the most recent award edition. An important point to be highlighted in the aspect of difficulty in contact that was mentioned at different times by company managers is that due to a lean structure, people in the organization are often tied to tasks that cannot be delayed and so unable to make time available for research, despite the recognized contributions that scientific research can make to the object of study itself. Another limiting factor is the subjectivity of the different actors involved in the process, but this factor is attenuated with the triangulation of data from different sources. As future studies, it is suggested the analysis of companies that win the other modalities of the National Innovation Award, such as medium and large companies, allowing us to visualize the difference in innovation management and leadership performance in different sizes of companies. It is also suggested as a future study the application of a Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

(MLQ) to leaders and followers focused on the aspects of innovation management in the company.

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List of Tables

Table 1 - Respondents

| Interviewee | Position / Function | Duration |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| GA | Administrative Manager - Leader | 65 minutes |
| ER | Responsible Engineer - Leader | 39 minutes |
| P1 | Production 1 - Led | 15 minutes |
| RA1 | Administrative Officer 1 - Leader | 26 minutes |
| RA2 | Administrative Officer 2 - Leader | 25 minutes |
| EP | Project Engineer - Led | 15 minutes |
| P2 | Production 2 - Led | 15 minutes |

Table 2 - Analysis Categories

| Dimension | Category | Subcategory |
|--|------------------------------------|--|
| Transformational Leadership for Innovation Management | Innovation management | Search for ideas |
| | | Selection of ideas |
| | | Development and diffusion |
| | Innovation Leadership | Approaching technology users and producers |
| | | Market Expansion |
| | | Sustainable growth |
| | | Acceleration of knowledge production |
| | | Mission and strategy alignment with the innovation process |
| | Transformational Leadership | Partnership Building |
| | | Commitment and motivation. |
| | | Leader Inspiration and Influence for Leaders. |
| | | Empowerment and trust of the team. |
| | | Team development |
| | Appreciation of the team. | |

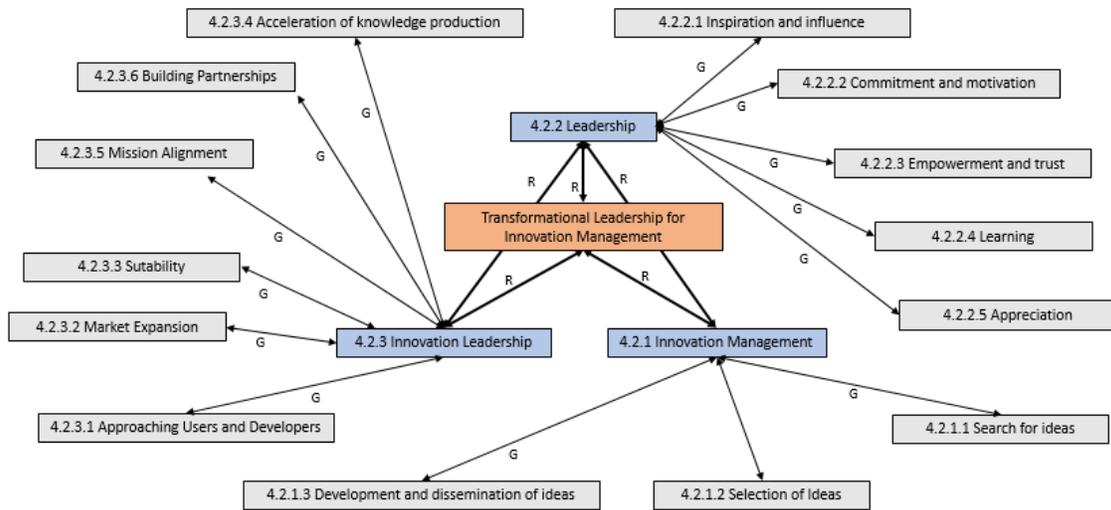
Table 3 - Search Protocol

| Stage | Description |
|-------------------|---|
| Guiding Questions | How does the innovation management process occur in the company? How does leadership act in the organization? How does leadership contribute to the innovation management process in the organization? |
| Analysis Unit | Delta Indústria, the company that won the 2016/2017 National Innovation Award in the Micro and Small Enterprise category in the Innovation Management and Product Innovation categories. |
| Schedule | The study was conducted between March 2018 and February 2019. |
| Data collect | - Semi-structured interviews with leaders and leaders from different sectors of the company. - Observations on <i>site</i> visits - Secondary documents, magazine publications, television interviews, institutional videos, national innovation award reports, award evaluation methodology. |

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Data analysis | - Content Analysis according to Bardin (2011). - Using Atlas.ti Software version 8. |
| Data Reliability | - Multiple data sources according to Yin (2010). - Triangulation of data according to Yin (2010). |

List of Figures

Fig 1 - Analysis and Dimension Categories



Source: Authors with Atlas.Ti (2019)