

Article

Humanistic Management and Human-Technology Interaction

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Abstract: This article aims to highlight the role of humanistic management in the context of human-technology cooperation, drawing on models from specialized literature. The authors argue that there is a synergistic potential in integrating humanistic management principles into the adoption of advanced technologies and that the sustainability of businesses relies on managers' ability to effectively combine human skills with technological advantages. Managers should ensure that technology is used ethically and responsibly, thus contributing to the development of an organizational culture that supports employee well-being and sustainable growth.

Keywords: humanistic management; human-technology interaction models; CSR; workplace spirituality;

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INTRODUCTION

Humanity is currently facing various challenges related to the natural, social, and technological environment. Issues related to resilience and sustainability, concerns about inequality, questions regarding global governance, and the broad spectrum of technological progress need to be analyzed to clarify to what extent the fundamental principles of humanistic management can be implemented to address them, because a holistic, people-centered approach could provide ethical, sustainable, and equitable solutions to these complex and interconnected global challenges. Humanistic management focuses on improving relationships and working conditions for employees but also aims to support the creation of a socially responsible organization. By adopting practices that promote respect for people and the environment, managing resources sustainably, and engaging in community projects and initiatives, organizations employing a humanistic approach can contribute to creating positive social impact. Humanistic management, based on an anthropocentric vision centered around the idea of dignity, extended to all levels of human experience, contributes to the manifestation and development of various types of intelligence: mental, emotional, social, somatic and spiritual (Laszlo, 2019; Matheson *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, we anticipate that humanistic management entails many organizational changes, and this is the reason why it is implemented only to a limited extent (Nicolescu, 2021). Nevertheless, this argument should not be viewed as an impediment, particularly when considering the long-term advantages. Organizational effort should be directed towards developing best practices based on this philosophy, which emphasizes the importance of treating people with respect and prioritizes the common good. That is why we have proposed an analysis of the specialized literature to lead us to relevant conclusions regarding what humanistic management means, from both theoretical and practical perspectives. The systematized aspects are presented in the following sections: conceptual analysis, presentation of how to integrate humanistic principles into different types of managerial activities, providing examples of integrative models to highlight the benefits of humanistic management, and offering suggestions for developing best practices, in the spirit of humanistic management, to address issues generated by technological progress.

CONCEPTUAL ASPECTS OF HUMANISTIC MANAGEMENT

Definitions of Humanistic Management

Humanistic management involves caring for people, considering their needs, providing support in solving problems, encouraging ethical, virtuous behaviors (Pless *et al.*, 2017). It focuses on developing the individual's potential in a professional environment that values well-being and dignity at work. But it is not only interested in protecting dignity, but actively contributes to its promotion, being oriented towards the creation of well-being for all parties involved (Pirson, 2019). To enhance understanding of the various interpretations provided by different scholars, it is essential to first consider relevant definitions of the concept.

„a management that emphasizes the human condition and is oriented to the development of human virtue, in all its forms, to its fullest extent” (Melé, 2003);

„... a style of management that unconditionally respects human dignity in business through submitting its practices to societal critique. By engaging in an open dialogue about values business should serve to help corporate managers realize that a humanistic purpose of business is ultimately to serve people” (Spitzeck, 2011);

„... a people-oriented management that seeks profits for human ends. It contrasts with other types of management that are essentially oriented toward profits, with people seen as mere resources to serve this goal” (Melé, 2016);

„... a philosophy of management that emphasizes the interests of the employee in the manager-employee partnership” (Ferris, 2013);

„getting results, but taking great care of the means by which you get results – by Marcet Xavier's definition” (Neill, 2022, June 10).

Multiple managerial approaches developed over time form the basis of humanistic management (Melé, 2013): *person-organization fit* (aligning personal characteristics with organizational attributes through innovations in job design); *peoples' involvement in organizations* (involvement, commitment, and participation); *business as a human community* (viewing the business firm as a cohesive community of individuals); *decision-making: a comprehensive approach* (demonstrating genuine concern for individuals affected by decisions, considering their issues and requirements); *stakeholder management* (a process aimed at generating value not only for shareholders but for all stakeholders involved); *values-based management, business ethics, and corporate social responsibility* (management driven

by values and prioritizing ethical leadership); *personal competences* (a perspective emphasizing the full acknowledgment of personal skills and abilities); *positive organizational scholarship* (examining positive states, processes, and relationships within organizations, emphasizing virtues, encouraging moral behavior, as well as focusing on aspects such as excellence, success, personal growth, well-being, prosperity, and the ability to overcome challenges).

The stages in the evolution of humanistic management are a subject of ongoing discourse within the specialized literature (Melé, 2003): a first stage, developed especially towards the mid-20th century, emphasized human motivations; a second stage, starting in the 1980s, focused on organizational culture; the beginning of the 21st century marks the third stage of development, which combines previous perspectives with the idea that the organization is a community of individuals, implying unity and high moral quality.

Currently, we are witnessing a new approach that extends humanistic management area beyond organizational boundaries by integrating corporate responsibility (Aruștei, et. al, 2014). A concise definition reflecting this vision is offered by von Kimakowitz (2011): “humanistic management is the pursuit of strategies and practices aimed at the creation of sustainable human welfare”. Explanations regarding the three interdependent dimensions presupposed by humanistic management provide us with a clearer perspective on the meaning of humanistic management (von Kimakowitz, 2011):

- Treating every person's dignity as the foundation for interpersonal relationships, including in business settings.
- Incorporating ethical analysis into managerial decision-making, considering the impact on all involved parties.
- Taking on corporate responsibility through ongoing dialogue with stakeholders to gain acceptance and legitimacy.

An examination of the meanings and evolution of this concept reveals that its development has coincided with the rise of other concepts, such as corporate social responsibility and workplace spirituality. It has integrated elements of business principles and philosophy, while also advancing new strategies and best practices. To better understand the connections and conceptual boundaries, we provide further details below.

Humanistic Management and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate Social Responsibility entails taking into account the societal impact of a company's, thereby extending the obligations of companies beyond economic and legal responsibilities (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2015). Specialists also discuss various stages of development of this concept. Interestingly, the 1950s are considered the starting point, just like in the case of humanistic management.

The definitions we have selected provide a concise overview of the content of this concept:

„Social responsibility is the obligation of decision makers to take actions which protect and improve the welfare of society as a whole along with their own interests” (Keith & Blomstrom, 1975).

„Corporate social responsibility encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (philanthropic) expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (Carroll, 1991).

The integrative perspective on CSR can be recognized, considering how it involves, either simultaneously or at distinct stages, economic, ethical, social, and environmental aspects. (Zaiț et al., 2015).

The key points pursued in different stages of CSR development would be (Visser, 2011): *philanthropy, community relations, image building, and CSR departments* (CSR 1.0); *value creation, strong governance, societal/stakeholder contributions, and environmental integrity, with sustainable ecosystems* (CSR 2.0). Clearly, elements of new stages or "ages" of CSR can be identified (CSR 3.0 and CSR 4.0), with aspects related to extending involvement beyond any type of boundaries, through a profound transformation based on common purposes and values, with positive effects on all involved parties, generated because of involvement and co-creation (Munro, 2020; Carroll, 2021).

Humanistic management proposes the integration of CSR based on shared values (Pencarelli et al., 2023). The role of culture in shaping attitudes and behaviors related to CSR must be acknowledged (Zaiț et al., 2013). At the organizational level, this reflects a management approach grounded in a robust organizational culture capable of integrating CSR values and disseminating them through leadership. This ensures that the positive outcomes are acknowledged not only within the organization but also by all relevant stakeholders. From this perspective, humanistic management is oriented towards creating an environment conducive to the development of CSR's values and practices.

Furthermore, one of the objectives of humanistic management is to increase CSR (Mazur, 2017).

Humanistic Management and Workplace Spirituality

Analogous to CSR, parallels can be drawn between humanistic management and the growing focus on workplace spirituality. A concept defined as:

„a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promote employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy” (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004);

„engaging work characterized by a profound feeling of well-being, a belief that one is engaged in meaningful work that has a higher purpose, an awareness of alignment between one's values and beliefs and one's work, and a sense of being authentic; a spiritual connection characterized by a sense of connection to something larger than self; a sense of community characterized by a feeling of connectedness to others and common purpose; and a mystical or unitive experience characterized by a positive state of energy or vitality, a sense of perfection, transcendence, and experiences of joy and bliss” (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2006) etc.

The connection with spirituality also arises from the explanations provided by Matheson et al. (2021): "Humanistic management, focusing on well-being and dignity, encompasses the economic perspective but also expands to include moral and spiritual levels, acknowledging transcendent and religious motivations." Furthermore, there are models that describe workplace spirituality in very close terms to the directions proposed by humanistic management, such as the Rhodes model (2006), which includes six components: *sustainability, the value of contribution (social responsibility), creativity, cultivating inclusion, development of ethical principles, promoting vocation.*

A holistic view of spirituality emphasizes how different aspects of human nature are interconnected. This includes seeing people as complete beings, with diverse needs and forms of expression. It also recognizes how individuals connect with those in their social circles, with nature, and with the universe, perceived in a broader sense (Neculaesei, 2019).

However, it should be noted that conceptually, we may observe that humanistic management is more oriented towards practical and operational aspects of human resource management, while workplace spirituality brings into discussion deeper, transcendent dimensions of human experience, such as the search for meaning, values, and connection

with something beyond the individual self, being more of a philosophy that can influence organizational culture through the integration of these dimensions.

In practice, however, there are significant overlaps, although we can distinguish between a stronger orientation towards the individual and organizational level in the case of workplace spirituality, and towards the organizational and societal level in the case of humanistic management. The compatibility of the presented content elements leads us to the conclusion that humanistic management can integrate organizational practices related to corporate social responsibility and workplace spirituality into a holistic approach for creating a healthy, satisfying work environment. This approach encourages unleashing, development and leveraging the full human potential while also generating positive effects concerning the natural environment and all categories of stakeholders.

The content of humanistic management can be summarized by appealing to some relevant keywords that describe humanism, such as "*wholeness, comprehensive knowledge, human dignity, development, common good, transcendence, and stewardship-sustainability*" (Melé, 2016). Their meanings can be incorporated into the principles underlying managerial activities (see Table 1). These principles, along with integrative models that consider environmental changes in general, and technological changes in particular, provide guidance in the development of organizational practices from the perspective of humanistic management.

ILLUSTRATIVE MODELS FOR IDENTIFYING THE BENEFITS OF HUMANISTIC MANAGEMENT

In the context of technological advancements, new challenges emerge in the workplace, driven by the need for adaptation and the transformation of how individuals work, learn, and interact with both each other and emerging technologies. Humanistic management, through its various theories and models, offers potential solutions to these challenges. Below, we present a few examples of such models.

Socio-Technical Systems Model

The "socio-technical" term, originally coined by Emery *et al.* (1960), captures the interconnectedness between society (people) and technology, necessitating a socio-technical systems model for comprehension. People and technology are

interdependent, thus requiring a holistic understanding of their operating context to grasp their relationship (Cox, 2018).

The socio-technical systems model offers a framework for analyzing and designing such systems (Figure 1). Because the Socio-Technical Systems Model provides a value-centered approach for managing often contradictory information (Cox, 2018), humanistic management can contribute by understanding the complex relationships between the organization and its environment, the people who implement business processes, and the system that supports these processes. This humanistic orientation (in terms of ethics, responsibility, etc.) towards optimizing social and technical subsystems will generate positive long-term effects, taking into consideration all decisional consequences.

The Flow Model

Psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines the flow state as complete absorption in an activity, driven by motivation from one's vocation, talent, and the potential for self-fulfillment. Work can provide optimal experiences by fostering discovery, leading to personal growth, and promoting high performance. Seeking meaning in life and pursuing tasks with passion are crucial aspects of human experience, achievable even in the organizational context where much of life unfolds. This model can be extended to Human-Computer Interaction (HCI). For example, the flow experienced during web navigation has been characterized as a cognitive state where a high equilibrium between skills and challenges is maintained, distinguished by elevated levels of attention and concentration, as well as interactivity and telepresence (Hoffman & Novak, 1997). Humanistic management can play an important role in achieving the flow state, as an indicator of the quality of human-computer interaction, by pursuing the development/adoption of technologies with user-friendly features, considering the needs, preferences, and competencies of employees, and promoting an organizational culture that emphasizes collaboration, communication, and professional and personal development.

The Perfect Interaction Model

The Perfect Interaction Model (PIM), proposed by Triberti & Riva (2016), represents an innovative approach to evaluating and designing technology. It focuses on aligning technology characteristics with user needs, to ensure a high performance. Utilizing PIM in technology design helps anticipate user interaction, leading to enhanced presence and optimal user experience (Triberti et al., 2021). As in

the previous model, humanistic management can offer solutions through a responsible approach, focused on generating physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Cellular Organizational Structure

A Cellular Organizational Structure is an organizational design structure that involves dividing an enterprise into small, autonomous operational units called cells. Each cell functions as an independent entity and is responsible for executing specific activities, processes, or projects. This organizational model aims to enhance operational flexibility, decentralize the decision-making process, and stimulate innovation within the organization (Cuofano, 2023).

The cellular metaphor suggests an adaptable organization akin to living organisms, where cells can function independently but collaborate to perform complex tasks. Just as cells in living organisms share evolving characteristics, a cellular organization consists of autonomous units that can interact to enhance business efficiency. This balance of independence and interdependence fosters continuous innovation through shared knowledge and expertise (Miles et al., 1997).

Despite challenges, cellular structures empower organizations to thrive amidst uncertainty. Building on this model, humanistic management can support increasing employee engagement and empowerment, promoting open communication, developing leadership skills, taking responsibility, promoting values that support continuous innovation and learning, etc. Additionally, it may encourage the integration of other stakeholders into cellular structures and foster collaboration among them, in the form of a network.

HUMANIST MANAGEMENT AND GOOD PRACTICES IN THE CONTEXT OF TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS

Technological progress significantly contributes to human well-being, but also presents numerous challenges at the organizational level (Colbert et al., 2016; Dyck, 2020; van Maanen, 2022; Neculăesei & Tocar, 2023; Fioravante, 2024). These include managing both human and human-computer interactions, fostering new skills such as data analysis, critical thinking, technological expertise, and social-emotional competencies, while ensuring a positive work environment. Additionally, organizations face ethical dilemmas surrounding technology use, such as protecting human rights, addressing technological unemployment, workforce

retraining, data privacy, and discrimination. Balancing diverse stakeholder needs to promote the common good is another key challenge.

As a result, good practices developed from the perspective of humanistic management should aim to:

- *Generate network-like structures based on win-win relationships, with positive long-term effects, through the establishment of formal partnerships* (Manolescu & Neculaesei, 2014).

- *The development of practices that support ethical behavior in technological advancements, based on a bottom-up understanding of the human implications involved in each critical situation* (van Maanen, 2022);

- *Create the necessary framework for managing human interactions and human-computer interaction: the enhancement of job descriptions to motivate employees with diverse tasks, autonomy, and feedback; the understanding of the aspirations of workers and the development of career strategies and transparent policies for their advancement; the formulation of policies and strategies to balance work and personal life, investigating and mitigating negative influences, the implementation of practices and tools for efficient communication between employees and managers; the provision of training for adapting to new conditions, for both managers and employees; the promotion of autonomy and the enhancement of self-organization skills through appropriate policies and strategies* (Neculăesei, Tocar, 2023; Aruștei, Manolescu, Prodan, 2021);

- *Prevent unwanted consequences related to the use of new technologies: pay attention to the “human argument”^{vi} to support comprehensive ethical commitment* (Fioravante, 2024).

- *Support the trans-organizational involvement of ethicists in addressing ethical issues related to new technologies* (Fioravante, 2024).

The literature offers examples of best practices in humanistic management that prioritize the pursuit of the comprehensive common good. They consider implicitly the transformations that occur in the technological environment (Dyck, 2020; Talmaciu & Manolescu, 2023):

- Institutional mission and vision developed by multiple stakeholders, with increased attention to all aspects related to well-being;

- Strategic orientation focused on collaboration among all stakeholders, for a sustainable transformation of organizational practices;

- Structuring organizations in a more flexible and dynamic way, by emphasizing experimentation, awareness, human dignity and participation;

- Developing some control systems capable of contributing to the success of stakeholders, with a focus on ensuring ethics and responsibility;

- Promoting communication among all stakeholders, by facilitating the exchange of information and real-time feedback;

- Actively involving of all stakeholders in decision-making, including in the process of developing and evaluating alternatives;

- Promoting a leadership style based on trust, transparency, and responsibility in resource management, with an emphasis on creating an organizational culture that supports fair treatment and the common good.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the benefits of humanistic management are widely acknowledged (von Kimakowitz, 2011; Pirson, 2019, Laszlo, 2019; Matheson *et al.*, 2021), its adoption within companies remains limited and often confined to specific areas that enhance certain organizational functions (Nicolescu, 2021). Effective implementation of humanistic management necessitates, as previously mentioned, a comprehensive restructuring of both the organization and its management practices—an undertaking of considerable complexity. There authors have argued the synergistic potential in integrating humanistic management principles with the adoption of advanced technologies, as the sustainability of businesses increasingly depends on managers' ability to effectively combine human skills with technological advantages. We propose that a values-driven management approach, grounded in corporate social responsibility and workplace spirituality, can address this challenge. These values inherently align with the principles of humanistic management, fostering a work environment that respects human dignity while simultaneously offering solutions to the challenges posed by technological progress, ultimately yielding positive long-term outcomes.

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Table 1.

Humanism - the foundation of managerial activities

Activities	Humanistic Management (HM)
Creation of institutional statements	HM integrates humanistic values with technical and strategic elements when crafting institutional statements.
Formulation of strategies, objectives and plans for action	HM considers not only economic, political, or technical objectives, but also considers the human, social, and environmental ramifications of achieving them, alongside methods to uphold human dignity and promote human well-being.
Organization and structure	HM promotes organizational structures where individuals can cultivate themselves, uphold initiative within the organization's shared goals, and participate according to the circumstances of each organization.
Coordination and control	As modern businesses expand in size, scope, and specialization, they frequently encounter complexities that require skilled management to unify, synchronize, and harmonize operations. This involves integrating individuals, acknowledging their awareness and autonomy, and utilizing explanations and motivation in addition to simple directives to attain the desired coordination in HM.
Communication	HM mandates honesty in every communication, transparency, and the promotion of humanistic values through communication, but primarily through embodying these humanistic principles as role models.
Decision-making	HM is not confined to technical, economic, or social ramifications, but encompasses ethical and human assessment, which may prompt the rejection of certain alternatives while favoring others.
Leadership	Humanistic leadership entails establishing an interactive relationship and dialogue between the leader and their followers, where the leader demonstrates care for the followers' needs and personal development, while also maintaining an awareness of the community's requirements.

Source: *Systematization apud Melé, 2016, pp. 49-51.*

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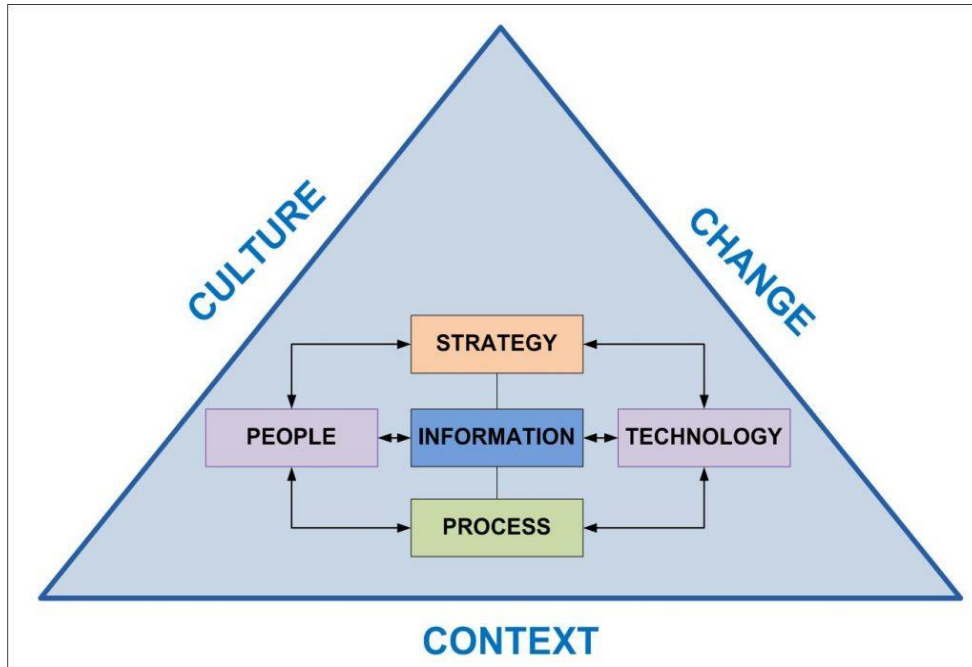


Figure 1.
Socio-Technical Systems Model
Source: Cox, 2018.

Note

¹ The "human argument" emphasizes responsibility in response to dangers like loss of tech control, the future of creative work and employment, systematic human rights erosion, and the impacted quality of interpersonal relationships, among others (Fioravante, 2024).