

**O-MI-13****HORSE-BASED PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT: INNOVATIVE METHODS FOR CORPORATIVE CONTEXT**Ute Hesse<sup>1</sup>, Claudio Garcia Capitão<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>EQUOHESSE<sup>2</sup>Universidade São Francisco – USF  
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In the current context businesses and corporations, people tend to strive for their own development by planning a singular project at work or daily life, thus making linear careers and exception. This shows that trainings need to stop being casual events with theoretical focus where techniques such as “how to achieve more performance” are shown (Moscovici, 2008). Instead, they need to fit into the company’s global planning, turning into a continuous development of the competences of every employee, each one with their own personal development. Nowadays, the best method would be motivating the professionals into a search of self-knowledge (Graminha, 2007). The relationship with the horse stimulates people’s perception, this way allowing an easier process towards self-knowledge and involving physical, cognitive and emotional aspects. Individuals search for self-knowledge when they are aware of their self-confidence, their intuitive perception, their power of will and their creative capacity. This whole process is complex, escaping from the individual’s rational control, and is directly linked to their personality traits (Hall, Lindzey & Campell, 2000). The competences that are developed with the use of the horse are interpersonal, directly related to the person’s own natural personality traits. Lampert (2005) shows that the best managers are those who focus upon boosting the personal skills of their coworkers, instead of pointing out their fragilities. This principle is based on comprehending each person’s own singularity. Most individuals have the skills needed to solve problems, but lack efficient leadership. An individual, when relating to a horse, is invited to play the role of a leader, being allowed to experiment a leadership based on trust instead of force or power. When referring to the horse’s use in the promotion of the skills inherent to leadership, it is important to notice that the animal needs to be related to with credibility, trust and respect. Because, when the leader itself lacks trust, he creates insecurity and fear among the leaded ones, regardless if person or animal (Hendrich, 2003). A careful choice of the horses that will be used during the training is important, because these animals’ reactions can have consequences when there’s a flaw in the intention and the action of a person. This phenomenon is expected during horse-based trainings. But when the horse’s behavior doesn’t clearly reflect the participant’s intentions, because of their lack of preparation towards the activities’ goal, undesired responses may lead the participants to confusion, thus blocking the learning process. This means that the training’s coordinator must have specific horse ethology knowledge, apart from a corporative educational specialization. (Büchel, 2009). Associations such as the EAHA – European Association for Horse Education, in Europe, and EAGALA – The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association, in the US, contribute for the method’s development and the international professional capacitation. The success of the horse-based training relies on the intersectorial work. The Brazilian Universidade do Cavalo (University of the Horse), in the city of Sorocaba (SP), is the nation’s pioneer institution in demonstrating the singularities in the man-horse relationship in personal development. The lack of available literature in Portuguese language and the fact that only a few specialized institutions exist, contribute to the current reality in which scientific studies at this matter are still scarce. In the Brazilian BCS-Psi database, the search for the following keywords brought no results whatsoever: *Horse-based corporative trainings, horse-based education, the horse promoting health and Horse-Based Personal Development.*

This way, the goal of this study was to verify if the use of the horse in corporate training can be considered an important resource, building up experience and allowing greater self-knowledge. This study also investigated if, in the man-horse relationship, the analogies made between the training and the working processes (especially in the organizational context) may positively contribute in the promotion of learning and in personal development.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

**Participants:** Participants of the study were a total of 60 people, being female (n=41 - 68%) and the rest being male. Their ages spun in the range between 20 and 62 years.

**Feedback-questionnaire:** The questionnaire was composed of 15 multiple choice questions, in which the participants had to rate the training's process with answers such as "excellent", "very good", "good" and "average", or "very good", "good", "average" and "poor".

**Procedure:** The trainings took place in different days, with 10 people in each group, during 8 hours each. The activities were connected with theoretical explanation and group discussions. The strategies used were the same for all the groups. The coordinators showed, for each exercise, basic horsemanship notions, in order to ensure safety. The participants did not need any previous knowledge, nor did they have to mount the horses; all the exercises were done off the horse.

## RESULTS

The results have shown that 43,3% of the participants considered the training to be "excellent", 41,7% as "very good", 11,7% as "good" and another 3,3% as "average". The activities with the horse, focused on new learning, were classified as "very good" by 71,7% of the participants, as "good" by 21,7% and "average" by the last 6,7%. None of the participants rated these activities as "poor". 60% of the participants considered the training to be "efficient in promoting self-knowledge", 36,7% answered that "the use of the animal is relevant in the acquisition of new understandings about leadership and communication" and 3,3% claimed that it "did not add any knowledge".

Table number 1 indicates the participants' previous knowledge about the themes related to the horse. Table number 2 shows how much the training itself has brought the participants new experiences and contributed with their self-knowledge.

Table 1.

*Previous knowledge of the issues discussed:*

Answers	n	%
Vague	26	43,3
Minor	20	33,3
Good	13	21,7
Wide	1	1,7
Total	60	100

Table 2.

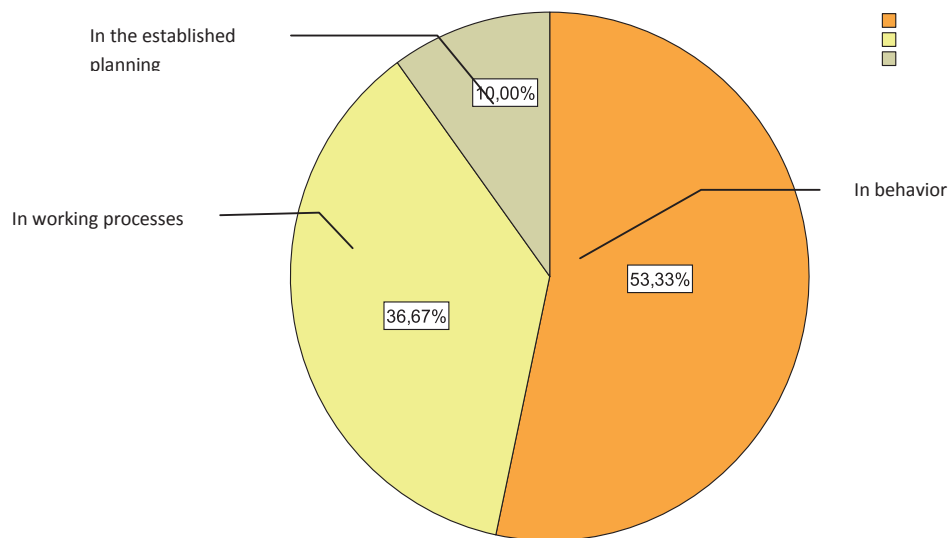
*The result of the training:*

Answers	n	%
Did not bring up any new stuff	2	3,3
Allowed for more knowledge	22	36,7
Allowed for more self-knowledge	36	60
Total	60	100

In chart 2, it is possible to see the percentage of the factors that the participants consider to be convenient to modify, at the work, based on the experience with the horse.

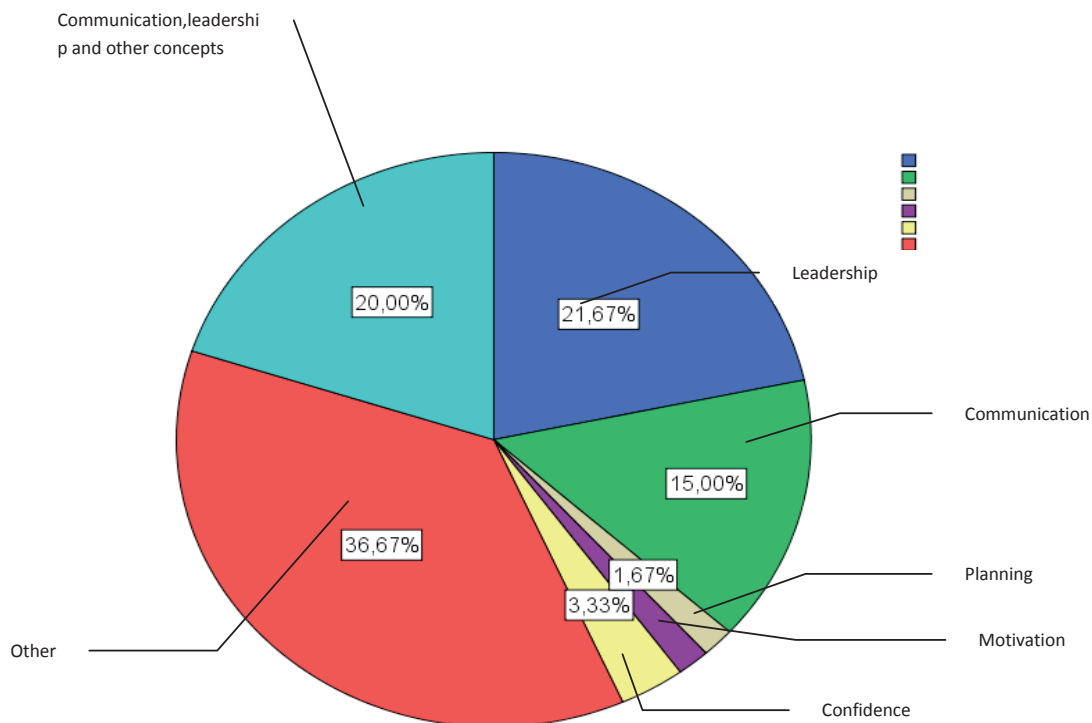


Chart 2 – Convenience at introducing modifications



The relevance of the main interpersonal skills shown during the training can be seen in chart 3. The learning and the attitude changes were related to leadership, communication, motivation, planning, and confidence, among others.

Chart 3. Learning and changes of interpersonal skills



The participants' perception towards the horse's indication as a facilitator in the development of interpersonal skills and the various sectors of the organization can be analyzed in table 3. It shows. For example, that 22,2% of the participants consider it important that the company's directors board go through training to develop their leadership.

Table 3. Sectors of the organization and interpersonal skills acquired during the training

		Interpersonal skills						
		Leadership	Com m	Plannin g	Motivation	Confidenc e	Other	Leadership Comm. Other
Sector s	Towards Directors	n 2	0	0	0	1	4	2
		% 22,2	0	0	0	11,1	44,4	22,2
	Towards Supervisors	n 2	1	0	0	0	1	1
		% 40,0	20,0	0	0	0	20,0	20,0
	Towards all employees	n 4	4	1	1	0	6	6
		% 18,2	18,2	4,5	4,5	0	27,3	27,3
Total		n 8	5	1	1	1	11	9
		% 22,2	13,9	2,8	2,8	2,8	30,6	25



The rating of the practical appliance possibilities from the knowledge obtained during the training, according to the participants, is by 58,33% "excellent", 21,67% "very good", 16,67% "good" and 3,3% "average".

## DISCUSSION

The training permitted a new level of learning, in a sensible relationship with the horse, and an innovative perspective in relation to the conventional courses and seminaries. It was clearly shown that the participants acquired experience and self-knowledge, which are relevant factors to improve interpersonal skills. It was noticeable that the participants reflected about their behavior, their plans and working processes already in course.

According to the participants' perception, the horse-based training should be extended towards all of the company's employees, including supervisors and directors (Osterhamel, 2006). Though the experiences with the horse, it was possible to watch the participants working on their personal competences, being possible to suggest changes or actions that could lead to new skills. The developed activities were significant, according to the participants, in cases where the contact with the horse and its influence brought greater perception and stretched the individual's own limits. The responses obtained through the questionnaire pointed towards the importance of authentic actions, emotional sensibility and cognitive capacity when conducting the horse. Most of the participants agreed that it was clearly possible to relate between the actions with the horse and the organizational context.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The results of the horse-based training, when looking and the promotion of new skills, were considerably positive. The fact that the horse is a powerful resource in the acquisition of knowledge for people, working processes and organizational context, makes its educational use very promising. Based on the obtained results, this form of training should face large approval in Brazil.

The study verified that the analogies made from the phenomena originated from the relationship with the horse work as an encouragement to the acquisition of new interpersonal skills. The study did not considerate the posterior appliance of these new skills in practical ambience, so it is questionable how much use these people actually made of it at work. The fact that the outdoor training methods create a "honeymoon" effect (a post-training short-lived euphoria) should also be considered during the horse-based trainings. Therefore, it is suggested that new researches are made with posterior measuring, in order to verify the appliance of the techniques learned when training. It is also important to consider some previous evaluation of the skills to be developed during the training.

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