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EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP:  
GROWTH FACTOR IN A FAMILY BUSINESS

LIDERAZGO EFICAZ:  
FACTOR DE CRECIMIENTO EN UNA EMPRESA FAMILIAR



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## EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP: A GROWTH FACTOR IN A FAMILY BUSINESS

## LIDERAZGO EFICAZ: FACTOR DE CRECIMIENTO EN UNA EMPRESA FAMILIAR

### ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to identify the type of leadership exercised in a family business located in the city of San Juan del Río, Queretaro, Mexico, and to analyze how it influences the company's development and growth. To this end, the concepts of effective leadership and leadership in family businesses, as well as their fundamental characteristics, were reviewed in order to determine the causes associated with the company's stagnation in recent years. The study took a quantitative approach: numerical data were collected and analyzed through 13 surveys administered in different areas via *Google Forms*. The findings suggest that effective leadership is a determining factor in the success of family businesses.

**Keywords:** family business, effective leadership, growth

### RESUMEN

El propósito de esta investigación fue identificar el tipo de liderazgo que se ejerce en una empresa familiar ubicada en la ciudad de San Juan del Río, Querétaro, México, y analizar cómo influye en su desarrollo y crecimiento. Para ello, se revisaron los conceptos de liderazgo eficaz y liderazgo en empresas familiares, así como sus características fundamentales, con el fin de determinar las causas asociadas al estancamiento de la empresa en los últimos años. El estudio tuvo un enfoque cuantitativo: se recolectaron y analizaron datos numéricos mediante 13 encuestas aplicadas en distintas áreas a través de *Google Forms*. Los hallazgos sugieren que el liderazgo eficaz es un factor determinante para el éxito de las empresas familiares.

**Palabras clave:** empresa familiar, liderazgo eficaz, crecimiento

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Family businesses emerge from two distinct strands: the business and the family. The former is a for-profit organization, and the latter is a group of people bound by blood ties with the aim of instilling education and values. By combining these two strands, a legal entity is formed to carry out economic activities (Carrasco Hernández & Sánchez Marín, 2014). Family businesses play a vital role in the economic and social sectors due to their monetary, innovative, productive, and employment contributions. For this reason, the United Nations (ONU, by its Spanish acronym) General Assembly designated June 27 as the Day of Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs), in recognition of their contributions to sustainable development and the global economy. (Table 1) (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía [INEGI], 2024).

**Table 1**  
*Distribution of companies by size*

Type	Number	Percentage	Number of employees
Micro-Sized Enterprises	148,024	52.7%	0 a 10
Small-Sized Enterprises	98,917	35.3%	11-100
Medium-Sized Enterprises	19,329	6.9%	11-100
Large-Sized Enterprises	14,219	5.1%	More than 100
<b>Total</b>	<b>280,489</b>	<b>100%</b>	

It was found that micro and small businesses account for 52.7% and 35.3%, respectively. However, Díaz Bedoya et al. (2024) argued that 70% of family businesses fail, as they do not survive into the second generation. This is linked to family conflicts, administrative shortcomings, and a lack of effective leadership. Consequently, leadership has become a topic of interest for organizations, particularly regarding the role of the leader and how they exercise influence.

In this regard, Dubrin (2023) noted that the way a leader interacts with their team helps identify their leadership style. Likewise, Rowe (2007) stated that this style is typically chosen based on the organization's needs, the challenges it faces, and the characteristics of the staff under its charge. Collectively, these authors link leadership style to the leader's behavior toward human resources and to the challenges the organization is facing.

This research was conducted at the family-owned employee transportation company *RUMAR*, which employs 15 workers. *RUMAR* operates in the city of San Juan del Rio, Queretaro, Mexico, and specializes in providing scheduled employee transportation services for various organizations in the public and private sectors. Currently, the company has a portfolio of six clients; however, it has not experienced growth in the last four years and continues to face significant financial burdens. Given this context, the following questions were posed: Is the type of leadership exercised by managers in the employee transportation company a factor in growth? What leadership skills should be developed to strengthen and innovate the way the company is managed?

### **1.1. Fundamentals**

Leadership has become a driving force for change in all organizations, as effective leadership is characterized by technical skills, emotional intelligence, continuous learning, and the ability to adapt to change. Currently, companies seek to exercise effective leadership to increase productivity and development and to foster the personal and professional growth of employees. In this regard, Robbins and Judge (2017) established that leadership is the influence a person exerts over subordinates to achieve organizational objectives.

### **1.2. Leadership in Family Businesses**

Leadership in family businesses is essential to ensuring continuity across generations. However, for some owners, it may seem irrelevant, even though in practice they exercise leadership on a daily basis (Barnes, 2015). In this type of organization, owners typically assume the role of leaders; however, they do not always make decisions based on professional criteria, as personal factors often come into play. These businesses often originate from the ideas of one or more family members without a solid management foundation to guide their development. For their part, Izquierdo Vera et al. (2017) noted that leadership is paramount in family businesses, as it constitutes the starting point for management, development, and organizational growth.

To exercise effective leadership in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), it is essential to understand the different leadership styles, as these provide tools for more effective organizational management. However, it is observed that in many family-owned businesses, the business is established first, and only later is an attempt made to identify the appropriate leadership style; unfortunately, some owners apply management skills inappropriately, and the management of the SME becomes unstable and uncertain. (Howard et al., 2019).

The company under study was founded 16 years ago by two family members, without an organizational structure, formal policies, or defined leadership. Over time, the company grew in a disorganized manner, accumulated debt, and made unprofitable investments, largely due to decisions made on an ad hoc basis. In this regard, Howard et al. (2019) noted that leadership style is fundamental to consolidating a family business, as leadership principles are applicable to various organizations and can lead to favorable outcomes. Likewise, the mindset of leaders in small businesses is often associated with entrepreneurs seeking opportunities and

achievements; they tend to take greater risks than managers in other organizations and, at times, cope more easily with the consequences (Butler, 2017). For his part, Nicholson (1998) conducted studies on SMEs, in which he identified that entrepreneurial leaders tend to be curious, dominant, and insensitive to certain social situations.

On March 5, 2026, Mexican businessman Arturo Elías Ayub, who holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, was interviewed about family businesses (Moris Dieck, 2025). During the interview, he stated that many entrepreneurs fail due to a lack of professional preparation, which leads to disorganization, a lack of regulations, and, often, autocratic leadership. He also noted that a successful family business must be based on admiration, unity, and respect among its members; the presence of these values facilitates the achievement of results (Table 2).

**Table 2**  
*Leadership Skills in Family Businesses*

Skill	Focus
Emotional intelligence	Focusing on human capital to promote recognition and development within organizations, which has a positive impact on leaders.
Curiosity	Thinking critically about customer offers, motivating employees, keeping customers happy, and improving products and/or services helps identify greater opportunities and avoid failure.
Written communication	It allows leaders to communicate through this channel, eliminating the need to schedule meetings or calls.
Ability to manage one's own well-being	Holistic development has a positive impact on the team and the organization; maintaining mental, emotional, and physical balance enables assertive decision-making and fosters healthy professional and personal relationships.
Digital literacy	Mastery and consistent use of digital techniques.
Agility	Identify challenges and unexpected changes.
Ability to motivate others	Identify employees' needs in order to influence them using various motivators, inspire them, and encourage them to give their best in their daily tasks.
Creative problem-solving	Generating new ideas and approaches to problem-solving enhances a leader's ability to make decisions at critical moments.

*Note.* Taken from All Business (2024).

### 1.3. Effective leadership

O'Connor (2007) stated that effective leadership is a skill that everyone can develop; however, due to various circumstances, people do not always know how to strengthen it. This type of leadership is built through preparation, discipline, and willpower, as many leaders exercise it empirically. In this regard, Chiavenato (2009) noted that leadership is key for organizations to develop significantly and achieve their objectives. For his part, Pizzete Xavier (2019) defined leadership as the ability to influence the individual and collective activities of a group oriented toward common results. To do so, the leader mobilizes aspects such as behavior, talent, ingenuity, skill, and aptitude, among others.

In turn, Santana Ramos et al. (2019) noted that, to develop leadership, it is necessary to consider the organization's mission and vision in order to put the leader's knowledge, skills, and talents into practice. For organizations to be viable and robust, they must exercise leadership that sets achievable goals while also promoting personal and organizational growth. O'Connor (2007) proposed seven fundamental aspects for achieving effective leadership: introspection, empathy with people, command, dialogue, determination, vision, and commitment (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
*The Essentials of Leadership*

Essentials	Description
Self-reflection	A leader must look inward to understand their thoughts, emotions, and motivations, thereby identifying their strengths and weaknesses so they can work on them and achieve positive growth.
Empathy for people	A leader must understand their employees' emotions without criticism or judgment, creating a channel of communication and strengthening workplace relationships.
Lead	The ability to lead a team through motivation and positive workplace relationships is essential for the organization to maintain stability and achieve its goals.
Dialogue	Maintain open communication across all levels to foster a healthy work environment and ensure ongoing feedback, which helps resolve conflicts and align goals.
Determination	This is an important quality in an organization because it builds trust among its employees, who see that the leader is confident and decisive when making decisions.
Projection	Set clear, inspiring goals that serve as a guide for achieving objectives.

**Table 3**

*The Essentials of Leadership*

Essentials	Description
Commitment	A fundamental principle for the personal and professional development of every leader; at this stage, knowledge is put into practice, and the leader takes charge of the organization to make decisions and deal with the consequences that follow.

## 2. METHOD OF RESEARCH

To identify the type of leadership exercised by the executives of the company *RUMAR* and analyze its impact on profitability, a quantitative study was conducted with the aim of obtaining objective results. This approach made it possible to explore, using real-world data, the phenomenon of effective leadership and to describe and interpret it based on analysis and scientific criteria (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014).

The study design was a non-experimental cross-sectional study, as it was conducted by observing events in a natural setting for evaluation purposes (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014). Data collection was conducted in a single period using multiple-choice surveys to ascertain the workers' views on the leadership exercised at the company *RUMAR*. In this regard, the purpose of explanatory research is to understand why and under what conditions a given phenomenon occurs.

The family-owned business *RUMAR* has not identified the type of leadership exercised by its partners, as many of its decisions are made based on intuition and empirical evidence. This article posits the hypothesis that the leadership exercised within the company influences its growth. Based on this, the following research questions were formulated: What type of leadership do the managers of the company *RUMAR* exercise? How does that leadership affect the company? To answer these questions, observations were made and face-to-face surveys were administered to employees, with the aim of obtaining accurate information.

### 2.1. Delimitation

The purpose of the study was to analyze the thoughts and characteristics of managers in order to facilitate the identification of traits and assess the type of leadership exercised within the company. Data collection was carried out through three methods: (1) interviews with partners and employees to understand the work dynamics; (2) observation to actively study how managers and employees conduct themselves and perform their duties; and (3) a survey. It is important to note that the company *RUMAR* has a staff of 15 employees: two managers, one administrative staff member, and 12 operators. A 15-question multiple-choice survey was administered, focusing on leadership, motivation, trust, and how these are conveyed to employees (Appendix 1).

## 2.2. Cronbach's alpha

Reidl-Martínez (2013) stated that Cronbach's alpha is a statistical tool used to assess the reliability of a measurement instrument. Its values range from zero to one: zero represents no consistency, and one represents perfect consistency. This tool allows researchers to determine how similar the data points in a set are by analyzing the degree of similarity among them. Thirteen surveys were conducted among employees of the company *RUMAR*; each consisted of 15 multiple-choice questions (Table 4).

**Table 4**  
*Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient*

Subject	Items															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
E1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	2	3	1	2	26
E2	1	2	3	2	1	1	1	3	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	23
E3	1	3	1	3	3	2	1	2	2	1	3	3	1	3	2	30
E4	2	1	2	1	1	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	22
E5	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	20
E6	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	3	22
E7	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	3	2	1	23
E8	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	1	3	4	37
E9	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	3	1	2	2	23
E10	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	3	21
E11	2	2	3	2	3	3	1	3	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	28
E12	2	3	2	3	1	3	3	1	2	2	1	3	1	2	2	29
E13	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	32
<b>Variance</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>0.67</b>	<b>0.49</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.84</b>	
<b>Sum of variances</b>																<b>9.38</b>
<b>Variance of the sum of the items</b>																<b>26.99</b>

The survey was administered to 12 operators and one administrative staff member. The analysis took into account the reliability coefficient, the number of items in the instrument, the sum of item variances, and the total variance of the instrument (Table 5).

**Table 5**  
*Reliability Analysis*

Symbol	Factor	Result
$a$	Coefficient of reliability	0.70
$K$	Number of items in the instrument	15
$\sum_{i=1}^k S_i^2$	Sum of the variances of the items	9.38
$ST^2$	Total variance of the instrument	26.99

The following formula was used to analyze the product's reliability. In this regard, the instrument was found to have a reliability rating of *Very reliable* (Table 6).

$$a = \frac{K}{K - 1} \left[ 1 - \frac{\sum S_i^2}{S T^2} \right]$$

**Table 6**  
*Reliability intervals*

Interval	Reliability
0.53 Down	Null
0.54 A 0.59	Low
0.60 A 0.65	Reliable
<b>0.66 A 0.71</b>	<b>Very reliable</b>
0.72 A 0.99	Excellent
1	Perfect

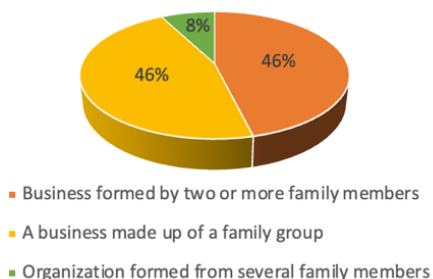
## 3. RESULTS

Employees felt that their managers are demanding, as they expect tasks to be performed correctly and to have a positive impact. On the other hand, they noted that leaders support their well-being to foster their personal growth. However, motivation is lacking, as there is a lack of communication from leaders. Finally, they believe that effective leadership is characterized by emotional intelligence and personal motivation.

46% of respondents stated that a family business is one comprised of two or more family members. On the other hand, 46% stated that it is a business composed of a family group, and 8% stated that it is an organization composed of several family members. In this regard, Carrasco Hernández and Sánchez Marín (2014) noted that it is a for-profit organization composed of family groups (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

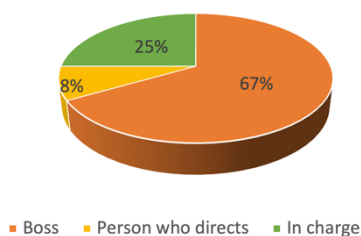
*What do you understand by family business?*



67% of respondents said that a leader is a manager who guides their team in carrying out their tasks; 25% said it is the person responsible for assigning tasks; and 8% said it is someone who leads a group of workers. Most employees associated the concept of a leader with the role of a manager. It is worth noting that leadership is essential for a company to grow and achieve its goals (Figure 2).

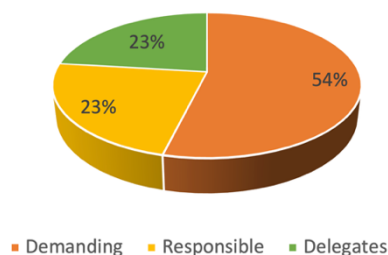
**Figure 2**

*What does a leader mean to you?*



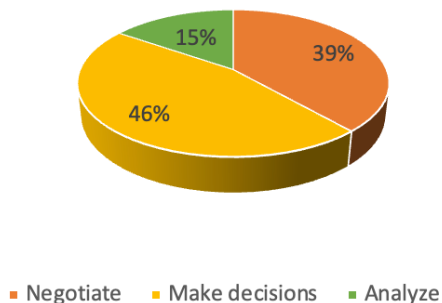
54% said that one of the traits of a leader is being demanding; 23% said it is being responsible; and 23% said it is delegating. In this regard, communication, empathy, and leadership are essential for employees to feel motivated and perform their tasks efficiently; to achieve this, leaders must align these aspects with their own traits (Figure 3).

**Figure 3**  
*What traits define your leaders??*



46% said that company leaders make decisions; 39% said they negotiate; and 15% said they should be analysts. In this regard, leaders of family businesses need to develop skills associated with effective leadership, which contributes to greater organizational retention (Figure 4).

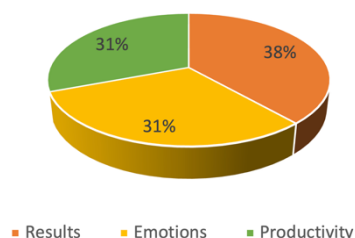
**Figure 4**  
*What skills do your leaders have??*



On the other hand, 38% said that leadership affects the company's results; 31% said it affects employees' emotions; and 31% said it affects their productivity (Figure 5).

**Figure 5**

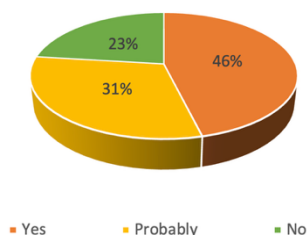
*How leadership impacts your work?*



46% of participants stated that leadership is a driver of change; 31% said it probably is; and 23% said it is not. In this regard, in family businesses, leaders can promote strategies based on culture, values, and ideologies to help achieve objectives (Figure 6).

**Figure 6**

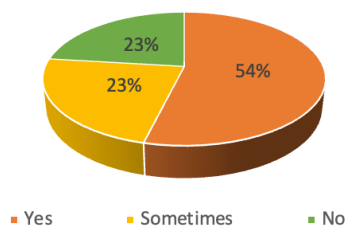
*Do you believe that leadership style is a driving force for change in your company?*



The survey found that 54% of employees are motivated; 23% said they are not; and 23% indicated that they feel motivated only sometimes. O'Connor (2007) noted that motivation is linked to self-reflection, as understanding the internal factors that affect employees can serve as a tool for growth for both the staff and the company (Figure 7).

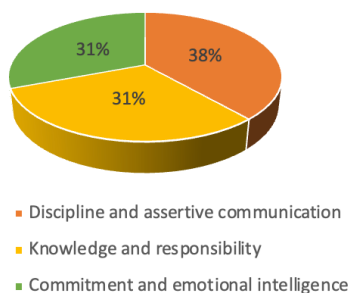
**Figure 7**

*Do you feel motivated at work??*



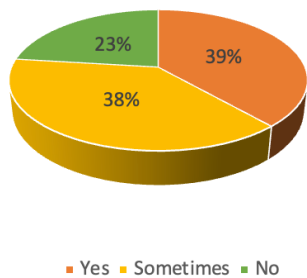
Furthermore, the survey found that 38% of participants stated that a leader must possess discipline and assertive communication skills; 31% cited knowledge and responsibility; and 31% highlighted commitment and emotional intelligence. It is worth noting that these characteristics are considered essential for effective leadership (Figure 8) (Pizzete Xavier, 2019; All Business, 2024).

**Figure 8**  
*What skills do you think a leader needs to demonstrate effective leadership?*



39% responded that their leaders care about their well-being; 38% said sometimes; and 23% indicated that their leaders do not care about their well-being. In this regard, effective management of employees has a direct impact on the organization's results (Figure 9).

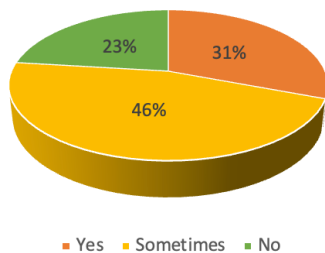
**Figure 9**  
*Your leaders look out for your well-being?*



46% said that their leaders sometimes take an interest in their personal growth; 31% said they do; and 23% said there is no interest in personal growth. In this regard, when leaders care about their employees' well-being, they put into practice skills related to emotional intelligence (Figure 10).

**Figure 10**

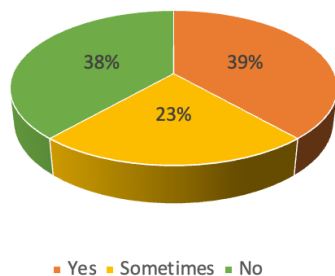
*Leaders care about your personal growth?*



39% of participants said they do work as a team during their workday; 38% said they do so sometimes; and 23% said they do not. Teamwork is linked to empathy toward coworkers, which fosters a healthy work environment and enables effective teamwork (Figure 11).

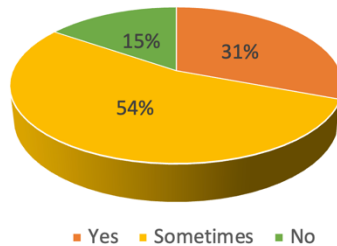
**Figure 11**

*Teamwork is a priority at the company?*



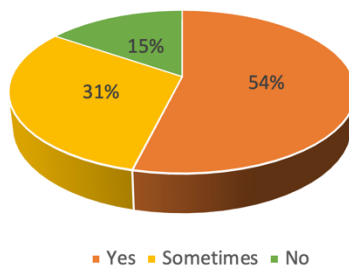
On the other hand, 54% said that their leader sometimes inspires them; 31% said yes; and 15% said no. This approach makes it possible to set clear goals with the aim of inspiring employees and ensuring they meet the established objectives (Figure 12).

**Figure 12**  
*Leaders inspire you?*



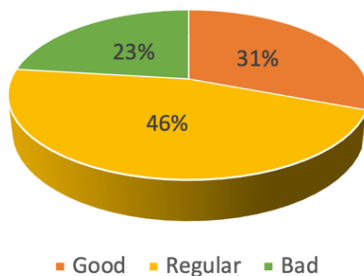
In addition, 54% responded that their leader is indeed an entrepreneur; 31% said sometimes; and 15% said no. In this regard, O'Connor (2007) stated that commitment is a principle that helps leaders become entrepreneurs, since by applying their knowledge they achieve positive results and are able to manage new ideas (Figure 13).

**Figure 13**  
*Do you consider leaders to be entrepreneurs??*



The survey also found that 46% of participants described communication with their leader as average; 31% as good; and 23% as poor. A key aspect that a leader must foster within the organization is dialogue, so that their leadership can be effective (O'Connor, 2007) (Figure 14).

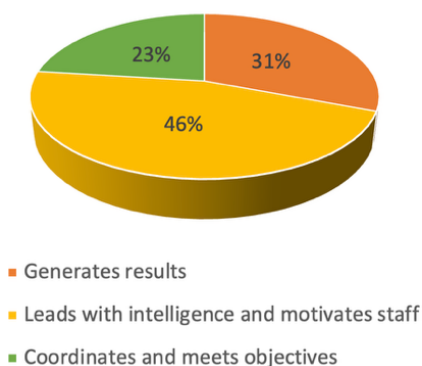
**Figure 14**  
*What is communication like with your leader??*



46% said that effective leadership involves leading with intelligence and motivating staff; 31% said that effective leadership is about delivering results; and 23% said that it involves coordinating and achieving objectives (Figure 15).

**Figure 15**

*How do you define effective leadership?*



Based on this study, it was found that the company lacks communication, teamwork, motivation, and is resistant to change, with autocratic and situational leadership styles. These findings were derived from observations and surveys conducted among employees. Furthermore, there is little cooperation from management in implementing new leadership approaches due to their established habits and empiricist ideology. This prevents leaders from acquiring new knowledge and transforming their leadership style.

Acquiring new knowledge enables leaders to implement changes by contributing fresh ideas to transform the organization and fosters a culture of constant reinvention. A leader's results within the organization will depend on the type of leadership they exercise; the leader must be flexible when exercising their leadership; however, this does not limit the organization's ability to meet its objectives, so the leader must be willing to manage changes within the organization in order to objectively achieve the established goals.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results showed that the company *RUMAR* is a family business run by two members of the same family; both are leaders and are responsible for guiding employees in their work; their primary skill is decision-making. In this regard, the owners of family businesses tend to be the leaders, although they do not always make decisions in a professional manner. Taking the above into account, Nicholson (1998) found that, in SMEs, entrepreneurial leaders are curious, strong-willed, and dominant. On the other hand, Izquierdo Vera et al. (2017) considered that leadership

is paramount in family businesses, as it is the starting point for the management, development, and growth of the organization.

For their part, employees believe that leadership impacts results, as it is a catalyst for change within the organization. In other words, leadership is essential for meaningful development and the achievement of objectives (Chiavenato, 2009). Employees noted that they feel motivated and inspired by their leaders, as they foster their well-being and personal growth. Regarding discipline and communication, employees affirmed that these are skills of an effective leader. In this regard, O'Connor (2007) established that effective leadership is a skill and is developed through preparation, discipline, and willpower.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1

#### *Survey conducted*

1. What do you mean by a family business?
2. What does a leader mean to you?
3. What traits define your leaders?
4. What skills do your leaders have?
5. How does leadership affect your work?
6. Do you think leadership style is a driving force for change at *RUMAR*?
7. Do you feel motivated at work?
8. What skills do you think a leader needs to demonstrate effective leadership?
9. Do your leaders look out for your well-being?
10. Do your leaders care about your personal growth?
11. Is teamwork practiced at the company?
12. Do managers inspire you?
13. Do you think leaders are creative?
14. How is communication with your leaders?
15. How would you define effective leadership?



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