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Assumptions to the model of managing knowledge workers in modern organizations

1. Introduction

Technological, economic, social and political changes have completely transformed the direction of the world economy in the 21st century. We live in times when the basis for building a competitive position and economic success are the skills to acquire and use knowledge. Contemporary companies must focus on results to meet growing globalization. In order to achieve this, they have to work very strongly on partnership, with external and internal clients. They must be credible in the environment (they have an honest opinion), integrate within themselves the staff that should be entrepreneurial and properly selected and managed.

In addition, there has been a liberalization of world trade, which forces competition-based action and eliminates barriers to international trade. On the other hand, for developing countries, this is not just a benefit but also a problem. Companies in these countries need to look for other ways to build their competitive position in the global marketplace. These methods are not linked to financial means (Cieślak, Hagemmejer 2011, pp. 518-519).

Therefore, in the 21st century, companies cannot build competitive advantage on the basis of cheap labor, which often is not

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competent. Business owners need to understand that qualified staff is not a cost or even a resource, but a capital without which no organization can handle it anymore. It is people who have a significant impact on the market power of businesses.

At present, knowledge workers are responsible for finding new solutions that are designed to influence the development of their business. They do not just initiate new products or services, but they create business strategies and they set the direction for its development.

As T. Davenport stated: for modern economy knowledge workers are the sacks of economic progress. He also claims that if companies are to be more profitable, if strategies are to succeed, if society is to grow - this will only happen when knowledge workers do their jobs in a more productive and effective way (Davenport 2005, pp. 3-4).

We can create a thesis: that the knowledge management model of employees, which is tailored to their needs, has a great impact on their performance at work. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to set the assumptions for the knowledge management model so that companies can better leverage their potential. The author of this article will do so based on the analysis of literature and research. In addition, the author will try to describe the direction of the improvement of the management models selected by the researched enterprises, where knowledge workers were identified. This is very important, it leads to build competitive advantage based on potential.

2. Conditions for managing people in the modern economy

Companies that operate on the market today have more and more complex turbulence on the way. These include: innovation and speed of change, complexity and intensity of the environment, new competitive requirements, dynamic processes of globalization and unprecedented technological progress. Therefore, to be successful (often only to maintain the existing market position), every company must not only effectively use its existing material and financial resources, but also must effectively manage the potential of its employees. All these elements mean that companies throughout their development process are constantly evolving, continually adapting their goals and methods of operation to changing market conditions.

This also means that companies must adopt the rule of the customer's main role. This is a basic element of a comprehensive approach to quality. Companies must perfect this process, which means they must eliminate errors in the services and products they sell (Fun, Ku, 2010, pp. 212-213).

In this situation, the process of globalization of enterprises in practice is a consequence of changes that take place in the world economy. This is not the fault of the aforementioned changes, which are a consequence of technological progress. These are also social changes in people's lives - changing quality of life, changing politics, changing the whole world.

Globalization of enterprises causes them to be internationalized, meaning the involvement of companies in international production and trade and the ability to provide a full package of services (Adamkiewicz 2010, p. 389). From the perspective of business management, the essence of globalization is to change the perspective of perceiving events, behaviors, actions, values (from national to global). The main categories of management in the future are: diversity and flexibility, adaptability, ability to respond to the environment, focus on meeting customer expectations - products and services must meet their needs. Technological, social and economic changes in the environment of the company are new challenges for the creation of management systems. Companies need to implement new ideas in knowledge and information technology because their competitors do the same (Grudzewski & Hejduk 2011, 95). So modern companies operate in a knowledge-based economy, and they must look for tools that will help them improve or maintain their competitive position. Companies must also be flexible and they must base their business on the quality of intangible assets that increasingly determine the value of the company.

An enterprise that wants to be competitive must shape internal flexibility and adaptability to changing conditions (only so it can have tangible profits). Modern concepts of gaining competitive advantage relate primarily to the ability to use knowledge (Cetindamar & Kilitcioglu 2013, p. 20).

Under such conditions, companies must focus on non-material means, including intellectual capital and human capital. An important group of employees has become the knowledge workers who pay for thinking. For business owners it is important to have intangible assets (including human capital) and to make them effective because they allow (Olak 2011, p. 172):

- maintaining good customer relationships and effective service to new customer and market groups,
- introduction of innovative products and services (expect target groups),
- fast (cost effective) making new products and providing new services of high quality.

Companies must be able to anticipate and accurately assess their situation, and they must be able to function effectively and develop in a constantly changing environment. In addition, they need to make very important decisions that

define the manner, form, pace of implementation, scope, depth, and complexity of structural change. Companies have to do it to survive and stay on the market. These are the main determinants of a company's survival in the marketplace and the restoration of a company's balance in a changing environment. Moreover, only in this way can any company plan activities that will ensure its efficient and effective operation - only so it will gain a competitive edge (Grzebyk & Kryński 2011, p. 115).

We can say that the main determinant of the current market is competition on the one hand, and on the other hand competing for the environment in which they operate. Therefore, companies that want to operate in such a specific market, must have internal adaptability to permanently changing conditions. They have to be flexible - change quickly because the time factor is also very important. This new concept of building competitive advantage also emphasizes the use of all intangible assets and the necessary knowledge in all activities.

3. The modern knowledge worker

In the new business models, people are their main asset because they have a good knowledge that will be well used to help make optimal use of the remaining resources.

Contemporary companies are generally smaller, their employment is less stable, and employment can be limited to one particular project. Therefore, the employee is required to know the tasks they perform without the need for detailed instruction before performing each task. In the 21st century companies reduce costs by reducing the number of employees. At the same time, they want to provide the qualifications they need to function (Antczak 2004, p. 99).

P. F. Drucker (1999, p. 82) argues that in the future there will be an increasingly visible division of the professionally active into two groups: knowledgeable professionals and service workers. The leading groups in the modern knowledge society will be skilled workers - well educated practitioners who can use knowledge for production purposes.

Similarly thoughts of B. Mikuła (2010, p. 26), who divided human resources into three basic groups: knowledge workers (combining above-the-ground intellectual and intellectual competences), personnel (which differed from the first group in that their participation in creation and dissemination of knowledge is limited) and partners. They participate in the value creation process.

On the other hand, T. H. Davenport (2005, p. 10) defines a knowledge worker as an employee who has a high level of expertise, education or experience, and

the main goal of his work is to create, distribute, or apply knowledge. In turn, P. F. Drucker (1999, p. 122) believes that the result of the work of knowledge workers are not physical objects but knowledge and ideas. On the other hand, G. Davis and A. Parker (1997, p. 26), writing about knowledge-based work, state that this is a human-minded work done to generate useful information. During this work, knowledge workers find data, use knowledge, engage thought models, apply concentration and attention.

There are a lot of definitions of this group of employees. However, the main problem is how to identify employees who are knowledge workers. This issue causes a lot of controversy, because knowledge workers' productivity is about the competitive advantage of companies in the modern economy. Therefore, we must correctly identify the specific features of their work (knowledge-based work) and their personal qualities and predispositions as groups. On this basis, we can develop and implement actions that will enable us to tap into the potential of this group of employees and make them more productive. We can create an optimal working environment and a management model for them. Therefore, we must necessarily have information on the factors that determine the affiliation of employees to knowledge workers.

Consequently, the author must once again refer to T. H. Davenport (2005), who created the classification of employees based on the quantity, quality, application and knowledge creation that accompanies the operations performed by individual workers. This classification very well shows what F. F. Drucker has to say and brings us closer to the consensus on the differentiation of employees because of the share of knowledge in their work (figure 1).

Therefore, human capital is a strategic competitive asset of a company, which helps to win a competitive battle and take a good position in the market. Human capital also helps to acquire organizational knowledge and helps to create a strategy to respond flexibly to changing circumstances. However, we cannot forget that in the management model of this group of employees, the knowledge worker is not the position that employs an individual, that is, the position we can gain if we acquire problem solving skills and we reach a high level of understanding of the organization for which we work (Czubasiewicz, 2009, p. 247).

This picture shows that certain types of work require more knowledge, experience, expertise, autonomy, independent, non-standard thinking than others. On the other hand, most tasks now require a minimum level of thinking and knowledge, but not all of the same type and scale. It is important for employers to discern these differences and take appropriate action. On the one

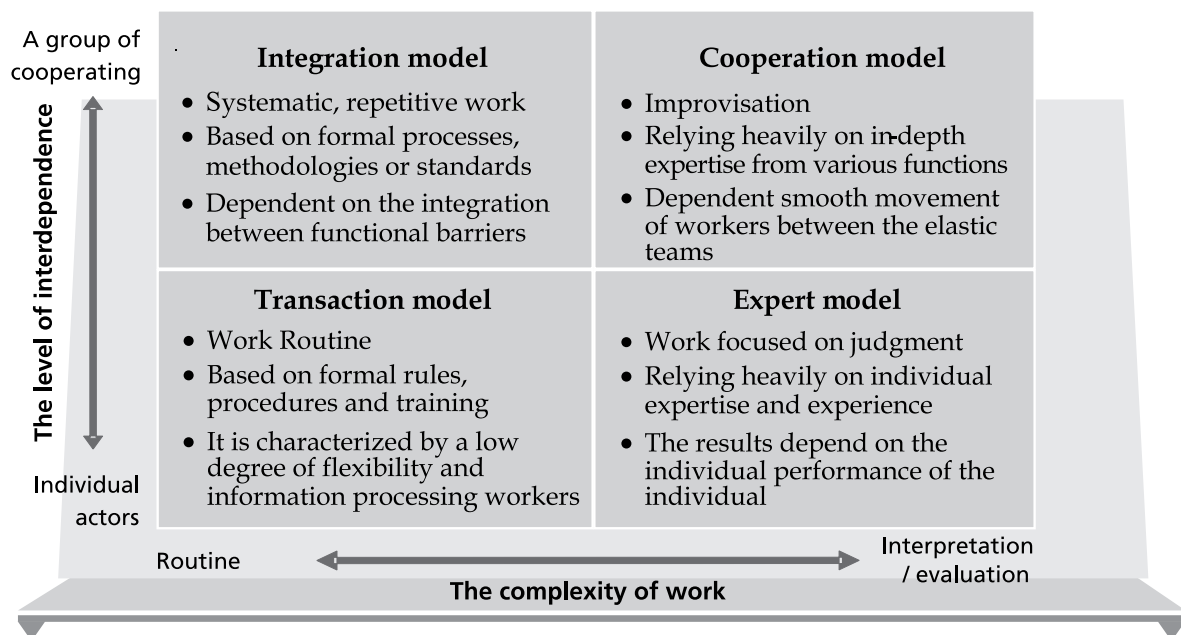


Figure 1. Classification of processes absorbcency knowledge

Source: Davenport (2005, p. 27)

hand, it is important to increase the productivity of these groups of workers, which are the most numerous in the organization (such practices usually fall into the traditional management of industrial workers - cyclical assessment and planning of staff development and structural management). On the other hand, if companies want to compete in the global market, they must poison and motivate employees, who, by leveraging their knowledge, will determine the company's long-term market success. These are the knowledge workers.

4. Model management knowledge workers

The knowledge that is collected and stored by people is very important to the organization because it has a large scope and we can configure it very differently. We can describe it like this (Karpowicz 2001, p. 127):

- knowledge of each employee is different - this is independent of their potential,
- knowledge may be outside the organization (e.g. studios),
- knowledge can come from acquired organizational experience (contacts with other employees, training),
- every employee's knowledge is constantly changing,

- knowledge of each employee is a source of innovation in the company,
- managed internal knowledge of the organization is a source of competitive advantage because it is unique, conditional and difficult to copy,
- the employee has to build up his knowledge - the rule: the more you know, the more you learn,
- knowledge is hidden by the organization's competitive advantage - the choice of people with attractive attributes of intellect and hidden knowledge is a challenge for organizations.

Therefore, according to the author of the article, the knowledge management model (he has a lot in common with the knowledge management model), can be treated as a complex of measures, methods, principles, information sets, people and networks of their interrelations that allow to adopt and implement the strategies of the given company.

We can say that this is a system composed of many subsystems in which the actions responsible for:

- sharing knowledge workers or knowledge workers with other employees of the company,
- knowledge transfer from knowledge workers to other employees of the enterprise;
- understanding by other employees the knowledge provided by employees,
- receiving and using the knowledge transferred.

Therefore, if we believe that the most important knowledge, skills and competences are currently knowledge workers, then each individual management model must be based on universal rules (individual - because each employee's knowledge is unique, the behavior and expectations of each employee are also unique):

- partnership interaction - no hierarchical structures,
- creation of knowledge transfer mechanisms,
- all the time we need to encourage sharing of knowledge (according to the author, employees who do not share knowledge because they do not know, do not want or do not have the conditions, are not knowledge workers),
- we must go to the learning organization,
- we need to initiate conditions for learning the whole organization,
- we must stimulate knowledge workers to initiate,
- we need to use tools to systemically build human potential,
- our strategic task is to optimize human capital management.

And so say G. Kobyłko and M. Morawski, (2006, p. 133), who have created a knowledge management model, we have to solve many of the emerging

dilemmas that have a whole enterprise problem that build their competitive advantage based on knowledge workers' competence:

1. How to trust professionals for whom work in the company is very often the next step in their career and acquiring new skills?
2. How to give them confidential information, which are often invaluable for market competitors?
3. How to get, keep and what to offer professionals who know more than others and can easily find an even better job?
4. How to encourage transfer and sharing of knowledge, so as not to cause a growing sense of the loss of uniqueness and importance as the sole owner of specific knowledge resources?
5. What are the elements to build a space to mobilize the intellectual and entrepreneurial activity?
6. How to enforce and evaluate the effects of tasks performed? Managers do not have a narrow expertise and knowledge of all the consequences of the adopted and approved solutions.
7. How to ensure that the expert used in his work all their personal capacity? We have to get him so that he benefited from the deepest of their experiences and thoughts, he showed full commitment of intellectual and creative, creating new knowledge and creating technological innovation, functional, organizational?
8. For what values we have to appeal in exceptional circumstances?
9. How do we have to force him to extra effort and sacrifices emotionally unrelated to the organization?
10. How can induce zeal and enthusiasm among confident specialists?
11. For these people, is the professionalism self-control and emotional distance to the employees and the employer?

The same situation is in economic practice. This situation was confirmed by the author of the article during the analysis of collected data in the conducted research process. This study is a continuation of the study that the author made in the years 2013-2015 in the area of the Baltic Sea Region. This time the research process from 2016 took over 100 medium-sized enterprises from the Pomeranian province operating in various industries. The author wanted to apply random sampling on the basis of enterprise information contained in GUS data for 2015. Unfortunately, business owners did not want to take part in the survey - the author sent a call to 800 companies. Therefore, the author has adopted the principle of selection based on his own declaration of participation. Unfortunately, the research sample does not

have the features of the whole group. Therefore, the described test results are not a complete set. The author also wants to draw attention to the fact that the results described in the article described here are a small part of their whole (the kind of work does not allow for more). The author describes the whole in another book.

The study had two main objectives: on the one hand, the author wanted to do an analysis of knowledge management models in the research companies (of course, after their possible identification). On the other hand, the author wanted to determine the level of existence of the concept of human capital management in the surveyed companies. In addition, the author wanted to indicate the main determinants (and barriers) of its development and to define the main aims of applying this concept in practice.

The author of the study has prepared a generalized standardized survey that describes the researched organization. In addition, the author created an individual interview, which he conducted with the owners of companies (110 people) and with indicated employees at various levels employed (210 people). Of course, as in the 2013 research process, there was no knowledge worker in any organization. This situation again made the research process more difficult for the author. Fortunately, the author already has experience in this area and established criteria (conditioning) that affect the employee's affiliation to the knowledge workers. Accordingly, the author successfully identified 141 such persons - they worked in 59 research organizations (59% of the study group). Therefore, the entire description will only concern this group of people and companies.

The author distinguished and described the features of the knowledge management model in companies in which he identified knowledge workers - a detailed distribution of responses in the examined entities is presented in figure 2.

All expectations we can translate into concrete actions in an enterprise that involve modifications to existing management models. Most often, these changes related to introduction (detailed description of the distribution of responses in the examined entities is presented in figure 3):

- incentive system based on financial incentives,
- incentive system conducive to innovation, generating ideas, sharing knowledge,
- motivational system based on individual praise,
- incentive system based on promotions,
- training incentive system.

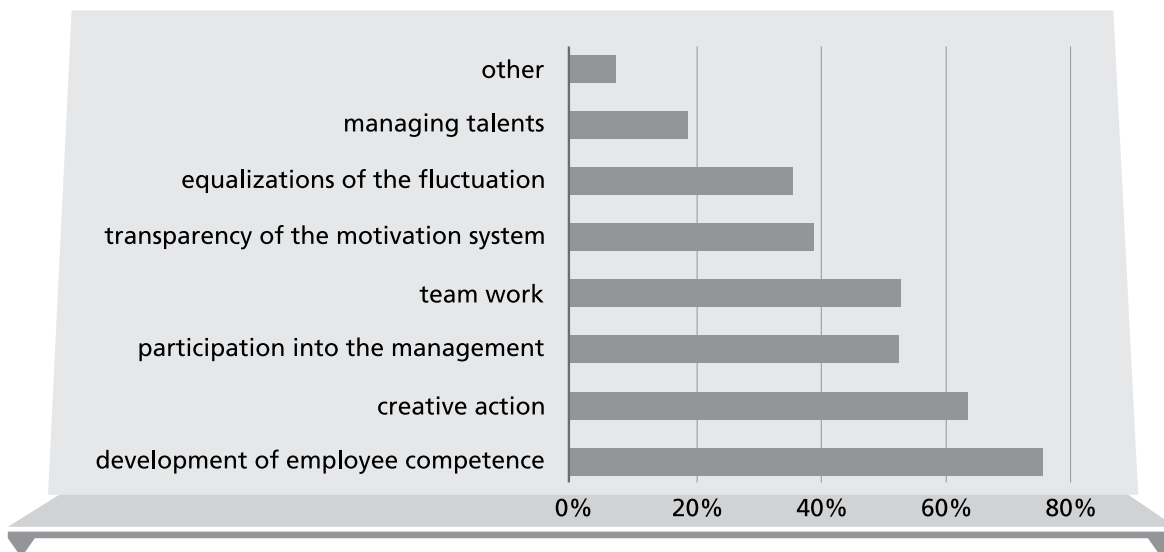


Figure 2. The goals implemented models of knowledge workers management in the surveyed enterprises

Source: own study

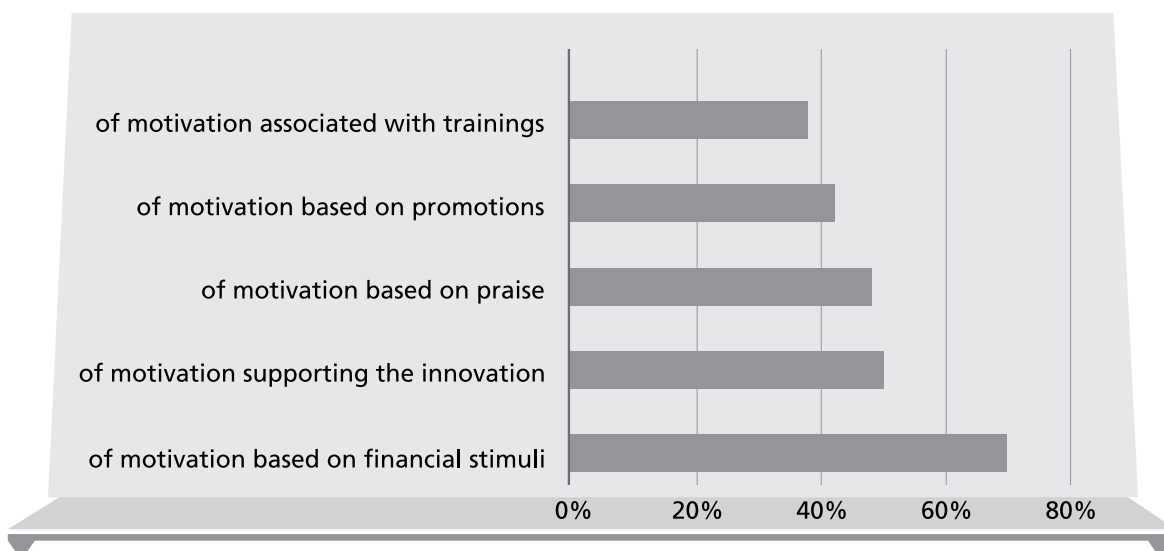


Figure 3. Types of implemented changes in management models of knowledge workers among the surveyed companies

Source: own study

In the organizations studied, all the changes and improvements made were not the end of the effort to make the best use of the potential of knowledge

workers. These companies have also introduced various programs to encourage employees to operate in different organizational areas. Examples include:

1. Buddy program - Promote a friendly atmosphere in the company is to strengthen the commitment of employees - open days for families, volunteering, integration events, management participation.
2. Employees improve their experience and skills in courses, educational programs, workshops - the employee chooses what to do.
3. Bank of ideas (stimulating creative activities) - bosses encourage employees to present their ideas, advice, comments and place them in one place.
4. Flying teams - employees can change the scope of tasks, employees can participate in different projects - bosses want to level the monotonous work.
5. Green workplace - employees are more likely to identify with the company values - promoting environmental values, integrating employees - is to give them a sense of participation and co-creation.
6. Convenience and high standard of workplace, travel, private parking spaces, possibility of promotion - it is additionally strengthened motivation.

In sum, the author's statement that every process of creating an individual model for managing knowledge workers in an enterprise must be based on these universal rules:

1. The entire staff must be involved in a comprehensive manner in the affairs of the company.
2. We must create and maintain an organizational culture that is focused on strengthening human relationships.
3. We need to introduce an open and flexible organizational structure.
4. We need to introduce new remuneration (as far as possible).
5. Our approach to each employee must be individual.
6. We must leave plenty of space for our own actions.
7. We need to change the management style - from manager to coach / coordinator / mentor.
8. We have to agree to create informal teams.

5. Conclusions

If we take into account all the considerations that apply to the management of knowledge workers in an enterprise, we can see the specific goals that the created management model for this group of people must achieve: Model must:

- change the organizational culture to „learning culture”,

- reduce the cost of running a business - improve its productivity, quality of service / products, customer service,
- introduce innovation in the enterprise,
- develop new business,
- develop employees,
- improve communication,
- make the organizational structure more flexible,
- improve external cooperation,
- manage the knowledge very well.

By analyzing the goals (the author wants to refine them in the next stages of the research), the author stated that they are identical to the tasks of strategic knowledge management in an enterprise. This, in turn, allows us to conclude that we need to carry out these activities together, as a whole.

At the end, the author wants to ask a question (as a final summary): How to put in practice the competence of identified knowledge workers (they are the core intangible asset in a company - thanks to a unique system) to its competitive position on the market. Searching for the answer to this question will be the purpose of the article's author in a further research process - he will want to identify those areas of business that are most influenced by knowledge workers.

Summary

Assumptions to the model of managing knowledge workers in modern organizations

Changes in the twenty-first century are faster, suddenly appear, not always desirable for the smooth functioning of the company. This is the domain of globalization, in which new events - opportunities or threats, forcing the company all the time to act. More and more things depend on the intangible assets of the undertaking, its strategic potential. Certain types of work require more knowledge, experience and independent thinking, and custom than others. Therefore in this article the author has taken up the subject of knowledge workers in contemporary organizations. The aim of the study is to attempt to create assumptions about the knowledge management model in these organizations, based on literature analysis and empirical research. In this regard, the author describes the contemporary conditions of employee management and the skills and competences of knowledge workers. In addition, he conducted research (2016) in 100 medium enterprises in the

province of Pomerania, using a tool in the form of a questionnaire and an interview. Already at the beginning of the analysis of the data collected, it turned out that for all employers it should be important to discern differences in the creation of a new category of managers who have knowledge useful for the functioning of the company. Moreover, with the experience gained in a similar research process previously carried out in companies from the Baltic Sea Region, the author knew about the positive influence of these people on creating new solutions or improving the quality of already existing products or services.

Keywords: *management model, market conditions, knowledge, knowledge worker.*

Streszczenie

Założenie do modelu zarządzania pracownikami wiedzy we współczesnych organizacjach

Zmiany w XXI wieku zachodzą szybciej, pojawiają się nieoczekiwanie, nie zawsze w sposób pożądanym dla sprawnego funkcjonowania przedsiębiorstwa. Jest to domena globalizacji, gdzie nowe zdarzenia - szanse bądź zagrożenia, powodują wyzwania zaistnienia bądź utrzymania się na rynku, przed którymi stawiane są obecnie permanentnie wszystkie przedsiębiorstwa. Coraz więcej zależy od zasobów niematerialnych przedsiębiorstwa, które stanowią o jego potencjale strategicznym. Pewne rodzaje pracy wymagają przy tym większej ilości wiedzy, doświadczenia oraz samodzielnego i niestandardowego myślenia niż inne. Stąd też w niniejszym artykule autor podjął tematykę pracowników wiedzy we współczesnych organizacjach. Natomiast celem opracowania była próba stworzenia założeń do modelu zarządzania pracownikami wiedzy w organizacji, w oparciu o analizę literatury i badania empiryczne. W związku z tym autor opisał m.in. współczesne uwarunkowania zarządzania ludźmi oraz umiejętności i kompetencje pracowników wiedzy. Dodatkowo przeprowadził badania (2016 rok) w 100 średnich przedsiębiorstwach z województwa pomorskiego, za pomocą narzędzia w formie ankiety oraz wywiadu. Już na początku analizy zebranych danych okazało się, iż dla wszystkich pracodawców powinno

być ważne dostrzeżenie różnic przy tworeniu zasad zarządzania nową kategorią specjalistów, posiadających wiedzę użyteczną dla funkcjonowania przedsiębiorstwa. Ponadto mając doświadczenie zdobyte w podobnym procesie badawczym realizowanym wcześniej w przedsiębiorstwach z Regionu Morza Bałtyckiego, autor zdawał sobie sprawę, że pozytywny wpływ tych osób na kreowanie nowych rozwiązań czy też na podnoszenie jakości już istniejących produktów czy usług, jest niepodważalny.

Słowa

kluczowe: *model zarządzania, uwarunkowania rynkowe, wiedza, pracownik wiedzy.*

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