

## **THE QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE ACTIONS DIRECTED AT EMPLOYEES ON THE EXAMPLE OF A SERVICE COMPANY\***

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**Abstract.** The aim of the study was to describe the implementation of socially responsible business actions addressed to employees in five areas. The two hypothesis has been assumed: 1. The analyzed company acts in social responsibly way towards the employees shaping their quality of work life; 2. Social responsible actions aimed to employees are influencing their quality of life and are important factor of financial success of the company. The original internal data from enterprise and data from other research were analyzed. The main method of research was case study. Data have been obtained through in-depth interviews. Elements of human resource management (HRM) in the enterprise have been characterized. The research found the level of implementation of the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) towards internal stakeholders and its importance in shaping the quality of work life.

**Key words:** quality of life, quality of work life, corporate social responsibility, human resource management

### **INTRODUCTION**

The quality of work life as a research problem is now considered fairly often. This issue is related to the concept of human resource management, which is growing in recent years. In particular the problem is related to the issues of sourcing, development and maintenance of human capital in organizations, which constitute the essence of HRM. This modern concept of management is based on the assumption that employees are the most valuable asset of an organization and its competitive potential. According to that the quality of life is exaggerating about the quality of this resource and its efficient use. Studies of quality of life of Polish people show how important this problem is. Much of the

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\*Research Grant MNiSW 1708/B/H03/2011/40 (Head: dr inż. M. Gotowska).

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respondents, about 61%, believe that work affects their health and wellbeing, at least in a small degree, and 14% of them admit that the impact of work on their health or wellbeing is significant. A high level of stress at work is indicated as the main source of deterioration in the quality of life [Philips... 2010, pp. 9, 23]. Stress has various causes and different consequences for workers' health, both physical and mental health and can affect their productivity [Brun 2005a, p. 3]. Approximately 20–30% of the population of working people suffer from occupational stress. This stress causes symptoms that start from simple anxiety, going through depression, causing physical illness, and in extreme cases leads to death from overwork, or as a result of an attempt on own life [Praca... 2011, p. 1]. International Labour Organization estimates that more than 2,2 million workers died of occupational accidents and occupational diseases in 2005 [World... 2007, p. 1]. The inadequate quality and standards of work, including work organization and communication, are set out among the causes of stress at work [Philips... 2010, p. 30]. The style of management plays an important role in shaping organization of work and communication. Other causes include mobbing, professional burnout and discrimination. How should organizations counteract these negative phenomena to human capital, which is the source of effectiveness of the organization, so as to it be able to develop? Changes in management are necessary. These changes must be systemic and typed in a culture of the organization and have to held at a strategic level. A good solution to a given problem seems to be doing business in accordance with the concept of social responsibility (CSR) [Borkowska 2006, pp. 1, 10–11, Szczęsna et al. 2010, p. 22]. However, the concept of CSR, as a expanding one, it is implemented differently in business practice. Entrepreneurs learn of social responsibility for their business. It is evidenced by the small scale corrected deployments to the practice [IPSOS... 2002, p. 2, Dżoga et al. 2010, p. 3]. Therefore it is important to present examples of implementation of CSR in relation to workers and its usefulness in shaping the quality of work life.

The main aim of this work was to study the implementation of socially responsible actions aimed at employees in selected service company. The two hypothesis has been assumed:

1. The analyzed company acts in social responsibly way towards the employees shaping their quality of work life;
2. Social responsible actions aimed to employees are influencing their quality of life and are important factor of financial success of the company.

There were three research tasks in the work:

1. The presentation of the activities of HRM in the service company;
2. The characteristics of socially responsible actions directed to the staff on the background of the results of research on corporate social responsibility;
3. The assessment of the level of implementation of social responsibility in the area.

## RESEARCH METOD

The research method was case study. This method allowed to obtain detailed information and conduct in-depth analysis of the research problem. The research object was selected in a targeted way. Selection criterions were the number of employed persons and

implementation of an integrated quality management system. A private company with foreign capital from a group of SMEs from the developing industry of service was selected, which operates on the area of a large city and neighboring municipalities. The company employs approximately 200 employees, including 30 white-collar workers.

A directly in-depth interviews were used as a method of obtaining the data, with using a questionnaire consisting of five parts containing open-ended questions. Interviews were conducted in June and July 2011, with 5 workers occupying top management positions in the company and the employees personnel department. Another method was the analysis provided by employees of the company documentation, including "Book of the Integrated Management System", "Collective Labour Agreement" and "Rules of Work".

An objective measure have been used for survey the quality of work life [Woźniak-Krakowian 2004, pp. 1–2]. The way of wages and other activities to motivate employees and working conditions and work organization were analyzed.

The results of previous studies conducted in the company in September 2010 have been used in this work. These studies concerned the problem of leadership styles and the phenomenon of mobbing. Description of the methodology in these studies is in the publications: Jakubczak [2009, pp. 43–53], Gotowska and Jakubczak [2011a, pp. 76–78], Gotowska and Jakubczak [2011b, pp. 237–241].

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE EMPLOYEES – AN OBJECTIVE MEASUREMENT OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE**

The results of research on consumer attitudes towards corporate social responsibility suggest that the appropriate treating and fair rewarding the employee take a significant position in the hierarchy of actions expected by the society of entrepreneurs. Shaping a fair industrial relations is mentioned in the second place on the list of expectations and it is on the list just after the quality of products or services. Implementation of tasks connected with the employees took in total 43% of the indicated answers on the question: what actions are characterized by a socially responsible company [IPSOS... 2002, pp. 3, 5]. Activities aimed at employees in the company can be divided into several areas [Borkowska 2005, pp. 12–13]. For the purpose of the article they were divided into five groups: the organization of working conditions, the way of rewarding, forming partnerships at work, investment in human capital and balance work-life with the help for staff in difficult situations.

### **The organization of working conditions**

Organization of working conditions in the company proceeds on a highly formalized way. The most important are legal requirements included in the external basic legislation and statute books governing the organization of work. The company also operates an integrated management system (IMS), its essential element is the management of occupational health and safety. The system applies in business since 2005 and is based on standards: ISO 9001:2008, ISO 14001:2004 and PN-N 18001:2004. The system is subject to evaluation and improvement. All employees know the policies of IMS and have to use them. It is declared in politics of IMS that one of the pillars, on which it is built

development of the company, is a worker and his job safety. The tasks in the enterprise are carried out with regard to current law, including labour law. The working environment is regularly monitored and it is assessed the level of occupational risk to reduce harm and annoyance at workplaces and prevent occupational accidents and occupational diseases. A list of hazards in various processes affecting the work environment was developed for this purpose. The management fully supplies the necessary protective equipment to employees on an each workplace. Investments are directed to the work environment, including infrastructure and means of work, based on modern techniques and technologies that ensure an adequate level of safety and health. The company aims to ongoing training, awareness and involvement of staff in the implementation of the policy of quality, including safety and health. Employees are trained in this field according to plan training and according to needs arising from changing the rules, conditions and technology.

Declarations contained in the description of IMS policy are reflected in the “Book of the Integrated Management System”, which describes the individual processes. One of the processes in the IMS is the “P-10 – Health and Safety Management”. The purpose of the system is continuous improvement of occupational safety and health. As part of the process are carried out risk assessment for each workplaces, the assessment of harmful factors, research of staff, a register of accidents and occupational diseases, and training. Four activities have been identified in this process:

- identify hazards and job risks, planning and supervising the implementation of the objectives;
- identify potential failures, prevention and planning for dealing with accidents at work and failure;
- monitoring;
- internal and external communication.

The changes in the Book of IMS may be requested by all employees.

### **The remuneration policy and motivational system**

The remuneration policy in an enterprise is set in a formalized way in the form of “Collective Labour Agreement” (CLA) between the company and the trade unions. Monthly rate of basic salaries is varied according to the work place. Complementary components of remuneration is:

- statutory bonus,
- incentive bonus,
- allowance for overtime work,
- supplement for Sunday work and holidays,
- foreman supplement.

In addition to that, the remuneration rules in specific cases have been set out:

- employees working at night are entitled to a night supplement, which equal 30% of the basic hourly rate;
- for employees in the operation of equipment which do not require constant supervision and workers constantly do additional work or perform services outside normal working hours may be established salary as a lump sum;

- employees performing a task outside of the place in which the head office is, is allocated amount to cover the costs associated with business travel;
- seniority of work amounting to over 20 years empowers the employee to retain 100% of salary in case of absence from work due to illness lasting a total of 33 days;
- jubilee awards, retirement and disability and survivors bonuses are awarded.

Generally, a way of shaping salary is different according to sort of positions of employee. Both workmen and white-collar workers receive base salary, but its height depends on the grade category of a worker. All employees are covered by the principles of rewarding, but they are different for these two groups. Rules of Creation and Sharing of Bonuses, which is annex to the CLA, lays down detailed rules for the loss of individual premiums. Workers in blue-collar are remunerated in a mixed system. The employees without the norms of a task are entitled to receive the statutory bonus, but the employees with set out the standards of a task are entitled to receive the incentive bonus. For employees in managerial positions and separate positions bonuses are determined by the President of the company taking into account the additional non-standard criteria, such as: proper supervision, ensuring the coordination of work within the organizational units and appropriate interaction with other organizational units

Incentive system is equipped mainly in financial instruments. The positive motivation dominates. Although the Labour Regulations allows the use of sanctions in the form of warning, reprimand or in cash for behavior not complying with the established order, work regulations, safety regulations and fire protection. The Rules set out in detail the violation. Not fulfilling the obligations or intentional damage done to the employer causes the withdrawal of privileges according to the damage suffered. The statutory bonus is 20% of basic rate, the incentive bonuses reach 50% of basic rate, and thus play a significant role in motivating employees to better performance and accuracy. Discussed way of rewarding is only possible through monitoring labour productivity, which in turn is conditioned by the implementation of new technologies and techniques in business. Clear criteria for evaluating productivity and armament in the innovation performance of IT ensure the effectiveness of the system.

### **Shaping partnerships at work**

The culture an organization fosters forming partnerships in work. The organizational culture consists of many elements, among which is the management style. The studies have shown that only democratic styles, that are oriented to high intensity of the relationships, exist in the enterprise. Therefore, there is no doubt that the needs and goals of company employees are an important area of interest of managers in the analyzed company. In the company is also used mobbing prevention. Employees are familiar with basic information about how to deal with bullying situations on the occasion of the mandatory safety training. In September 2010, the study was conducted among all employees about the level of awareness about the problems of violence at work, and about the size and characteristics of this phenomenon. The results show that among 100 respondents, only 22 persons know the definition of mobbing not fully, the other persons understand the concept of violence at work in a correct and complete way. Although the specifics of the work and staff diversity in terms of socio-demographic characteristics such as age, type

of education or environmental of origin, could contribute to conflict, which are initiator of mobbing, the scale of the phenomenon is small and does not differ from the levels found in other studies [Gotowska, Jakubczak 2011a, pp. 80–83].

An important issue in building the appropriate relationships at work is communication. In the organization is realized the concept of Management through the Communication. Departmental managers have the knowledge of the company's competitive position, about management plans, problems and troubles of the company and its aims and they integrate the actions of their departments. The flat organizational structure within the company promotes good communication. A reduced power distance was observed. The Management emphasizes the importance of respect for each employee and his initiative. Employees are invited to express an opinion about their problems at work and ideas of the way improve implementation of the organization's objectives. The communication between organizational units is carried out in direct and not very formal way. There is a large decentralization of authority in the field of operational management. Managers at all levels due to their competence have free to decide how to achieve the objectives. Managers, especially higher order, have, in addition to the formal and functional authority, the authority of personal. Thus, the process of directing proceeds smoothly and managers avoid passive and active resistance to authority and discontent. There are partnership relations in working among executives, which encourage the creation team. Strategic decision making occurs in a collegial way. The integration of workers team takes place beyond the professional life well. There are organized regular recreational meetings and events with the participation of family of employees.

An important element in the practice of human resource management is an appropriate hierarchy and a level of awareness of the objectives among the participants of the organization. All managers expressed clear objectives for their departments. They are also integrated into the mission and strategic objectives of the company. The proper hierarchy of objectives provides the high level of involvement of individual members of organizations in their implementation. Managers emphasize in their statements about managing people, that getting high levels of employee engagement at all levels is necessary for success throughout the organization.

### **The investment in human capital**

A work station training is mandatory and apply to new recruits. Employees also should undergo specialized training and perfecting courses, for example: administrative staff and workmen are being trained in their fields to adapt their knowledge and skills to changing the law or other circumstances. A number of training courses is mandatory and they must be take place on fixed dates. Employer's actions in this area are supervised by the Trade Unions, the Employee Council and the Social Work Supervisor and the Safety Inspector.

The investment in human capital, particularly in skills and health, are not fully completed field yet. There is a necessary to develop appropriate practices responding to the needs of workers, both in terms of topics and way of training of implementation or of choosing other forms of activity. The investment in human capital are associated with incurring monetary costs, but their effects are difficult to measure. Therefore, in the for-profit organizations, under strong competition, rational behavior is limit this sphere to the necessary minimum for financial reasons.

### **The balance between work and life and assistance to staff in difficult situations**

A very important element in shaping a positive relationship between worker and employer is to determine the time of work. It seems that the normatively determined daily eight-hour working time leaves little margin of maneuver for its flexibility. In the analyzed company, however, some rules were worked out that allowed account for both management and employees goals.

The research have been carried out among administrative staff in the company, using a questionnaire, on the regulation of hours begin and end the working day. Results of this research contributed to change rigid rules in the movable working time and matched to the individual needs of employees. The working time of workmen is regulated in a different way because of specific conditions resulting from the tasks. In general, these workers work within set deadlines, but it is also allowed more flexible working time in this framework, that is, its reduction after doing designated tasks. A flexibility working time is possible by monitoring of it and executable of tasks. This way of a control the efficiency affects on motivating of employees.

The company employ people with disabilities. Towards these workers are used the relevant provisions of the law. Workers' needs are taken into account for example by adjusting the positions and working hours.

About the satisfaction of employees with different aspects of working in a company may indirectly indicate the number and the reasons for the redundancies. Workplaces of workmen are diverse in terms of attractiveness of tasks. There is the largest rotation among employees in positions with the lowest attractiveness. The rotation on the other workplaces is small. There were three cases of redundancies in 2011. Two of them were held under an agreement between the parties. One of the employees did not receive a extension of contract of employment because of poor quality of his work.

The Collective Bargaining Agreement includes individual, random needs of workers. Among others for this purpose have been established the Company Social Fund. It were used in case of an application of an employee for assistance grants for the purchase of medicines for the treatment of cancer.

The Social Work Inspector operates in the company, who is elected by the whole crew from among the candidates presented by the Trade Unions.

### **IDENTIFICATION OF SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE ACTIONS DIRECTED AT EMPLOYEES**

Characteristic of socially responsible activities is primarily voluntary nature, that means there are not only actions which follow the legal norms that are binding and determine the minimum requirements, but they are the additional actions [Borkowska 2005, p. 12].

The results suggest that the action identified in the company, that may be included in socially responsible activities, occur in almost each of the five areas mentioned above. Usually they are not defined and identified and called as socially responsible actions, and actions consistent with the concept of CSR. But these are actions established in the organizational culture and written strictly in business strategy, with other observed activities at the field of CSR, such as ecological responsibility, and social responsibility towards the contractors and the society (Fig. 1).

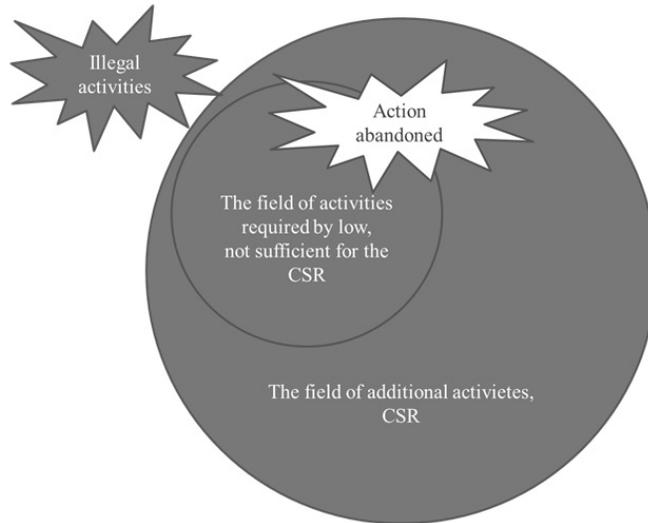


Fig. 1. Identification of socially responsible actions

Source: Own preparation.

There are three strategies, that are preventive against stress at work, realized in the company [Brun 2005b, pp. 518]. They were not identified by management yet. The first strategy of “identification with the place of work” is realized mainly through participating management style, which is reflected in the availability of the Management for employees regardless of position, and opportunities to influence the decisions of top management by all employees in the company. The second strategy consists in “to support staff”, manifested in the organization of the system of evaluation and monitoring of employees using the principle of Management by Objectives and management actions aimed at prevention of stress in professional life. Latest from the strategy, the strategy “reducing the amount of duties” is manifested in efforts to flexible working hours. This strategy is varied and adjusted to the requirements of positions and is shaped differently for employees in positions of administrative and managerial, and executive positions. In both cases it gives the employees some control their own working hours and can be a motivator, and prevent the emergence of tensions caused by imbalance between the time shared between personal life and work.

Making an objective assessment of the attractiveness of jobs in the enterprise allow to noted that obtained gratuities in comparison with nuisance work on various types of positions can be evaluated positively. Especially that determinants of local and global labour market, do not give too many better alternatives to many of the employees in the company. Most jobs do not require highly skilled workers, while the company offers a very valuable today: stability of employment, clear and fair rules of work and wages, good working conditions and working organization and a certain amount of flexible working time. Therefore, it can be concluded that the company operates responsibly towards their employees.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of research results allows to formulate the following conclusions:

1. There are carried out prevention of mobbing actions through a policy of openness and the provision of appropriate work in the company, which facilitates the flow of information within the company. There is also appropriate and transparent way of rewarding and assessing workers which reduces the occurrence of tensions and misunderstandings. Highly efficient and democratic management styles presented by the managers create the right climate which conducive to cooperation and limits rivalries in a bad sense.
2. Activities within the inner social responsibility are implemented in the enterprise at the level required by law, but there are also many examples of implementing these actions over the requirements set out by the normalization of legally. Often these actions are not identified and called as socially responsible actions. Their initiation takes place in an intuitive way. Improving awareness about the importance of these activities and the formulation and implementation of the objectives in this area can contribute to improving the quality of life of workers and thus increase productivity in the tested company. The activities should be preceded by subjective measurement of quality of work life in the enterprise.
3. Activities directed at employees are varied individually and in groups by type of occupied positions.
4. The least action that goes beyond the minimum was noted in the area of investment in human capital. This sphere requires a diagnosis by examining the needs of workers and developing appropriate practices.
5. Employee commitment to the goals of the organization is greater when they perceive the socially responsible actions carried out in business.
6. There are used all the strategies against stress at work which affecting the quality of life in the company. Such behavior is the key to business success. By cultivating the involvement of employees a company can achieve a high level of satisfaction of employees, which translate into their higher productivity.
7. The success of strategies chosen by the company is confirmed by objective and subjective conditions. The objective measure the success of the organization's activities for the employees, so as to keep and raise of their quality of life, is the company's financial condition. The business is growing by investing in the production potential and expands business profile. The company has gained leadership and continues increasing its share in the market in systematic way. The activities of the enterprise are often noticed by the environment to promote business in accordance with the principles of CSR and they are rewarded with prizes such as for example: "Gazele biznesu" and "Przedsiębiorstwo Fair Play". Members of the Management Board have also received state rank honors for his services associated with the performance of social functions to employees.
8. Action in a socially responsible way does not mean the implementation of the same variety of activities in each company (organization). The implementation of CSR conception, including actions aimed at the internal beneficiaries, should be differentiated by type of activity (manufacturing, services), the type of industry and specific characteristics of business organization, which consists of variables such as for example the size (number of employees), quality of employees and their specific needs and expectations.

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## JAKOŚĆ ŻYCIA ZAWODOWEGO I DZIAŁANIA ODPOWIEDZIALNE SPOŁECZNIE SKIEROWANE DO PRACOWNIKÓW NA PRZYKŁADZIE FIRMY USŁUGOWEJ

**Streszczenie.** W pracy poruszono kontynuowany od niedawna problem badawczy, którym jest jakość życia zawodowego. Celem opracowania był opis realizacji działań odpowiedzialnego społecznie biznesu skierowanych do pracowników w podziale na pięć obszarów. Sformułowano dwie hipotezy: 1. Przedsiębiorstwo stosuje społecznie odpowiedzialne działania skierowane do pracowników i wpływające na jakość ich życia; 2. Społecznie odpowiedzialne działania firmy są istotnym elementem wpływającym na sukces finansowy przedsiębiorstwa. W badaniach analizowano pierwotne dane wewnętrzne pochodzące z przedsiębiorstwa oraz wyniki badań innych autorów. Główną metodą badawczą było studium przypadku. Dane uzyskano za pomocą wywiadu pogłębionego. Scharakteryzowano elementy zarządzania zasobami ludzkimi w przedsiębiorstwie. W wyniku badań ustalono poziom realizacji koncepcji odpowiedzialności społecznej biznesu wobec interesariuszy wewnętrznych i jej istotność w kształtowaniu jakości życia zawodowego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** jakość życia, jakość życia zawodowego, społeczna odpowiedzialność biznesu, zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi