

Preface

Due to changes in their external environment, companies are forced to evolve in order to follow demands of the market. They must meet the challenges of adapting to ever-changing conditions and introduce new solutions tailored to emerging opportunities and threats.

This selection of papers focuses on crucial challenges faced by contemporary organisations, including a search for methods stimulating their high competitive advantage.

Papers included in this selection are centered on factors supporting building a pro-innovative work environment, creation of knowledge, learning and creating relations outside and inside an organisation, social responsibility issues. In this context, it seems that the biggest attention should be paid to supporting innovation. Innovation has become an incremental term in enterprise development strategy. Not only is it a method used to preserve a positive image of an enterprise in the eyes of its clients as well as potential and attractive employee candidates, but also a distinguishing mark confirming its high production capacity and quality of services i.e. its high attractiveness for shareholders and new investors. To a large extent, innovation of an enterprise is dependent on its change-promoting potential, which includes intellectual, organisational and financial capacities necessary for their creation and implementation.

As organisations are evaluated on the basis of their social role, social responsibility of enterprises is growing in importance. Many interesting presented in this selection are focused on social responsibility issues. Their authors believe and emphasise that nowadays it is not enough to run an ethical business, but a business strategy should, apart from economic benefit, take into account social tasks going beyond legal and formal regulations, which translate into higher investment into human resources, environmental protection and care for stakeholder relations. The internal dimension of socially responsible activities include, primarily, employee-involving actions such as investment into human capital, health, safety and work conditions, higher employee satisfaction, increase of employee qualifications and skills, prevention of discrimination, protecting employees' families and open communication in company. On the one hand, these activities serve as a competition-increasing tool but, on the other hand, they respond to growing demands of stakeholders with increasing awareness. In a longer run, social commitment is beneficial as it improves company's image in the eyes of the general public and internally, as a responsible employer. Prevention of dysfunctions and pathologies in organisations is of equal importance. Standards of socially

responsible organisations support elimination of dysfunctional behaviours by creating work environment based on openly declared values and clear rules.

Globalisation, development of knowledge-based society and virtual reality coupled with changes on the labour market necessitate change of the approach to the personnel function. The importance of preparing employees for operating in continuously changing environment is growing. Development of knowledge-based economy requires improvement of competences, both in organisations and employees, which are necessary to meet new challenges. Activation of these areas of human capacities which have not been fully located and their better employment may remain the source of hidden reserves in the struggle for competitive advantage.

Let us hope that the broad range of topics covered in this monograph will provoke readers' reflection on challenges faced by contemporary organisation and indicate possible directions of development in the conditions of competitive knowledge-based economy.

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