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Inter-organizational relations as a one of sources of competitive advantage of contemporary enterprises in the era of globalization.

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Abstract

Changes in competition which are being observed constitute both the result and condition of globalisation. The structure and degree of strictness of competitive fight influence directly the international development strategies of enterprises. Competition in a global dimension creates new systems of connections, as well as a new dimension of the quality of technological progress and new methods of obtaining competitive advantage. It extorts, so to speak, the creation of new models of organising, different ways of coordinating and configuring activities and cooperating with the environment. An important solution that allows to increase the enterprise efficiency functioning is cooperation on the following line: business – globalisation – knowledge. The purpose of this article is to indicate that inter-organizational relations are the source of competitive advantage of contemporary enterprises. Therefore, the theory concerning the essence of inter-organizational relations has been described, as well as the problem of organizational networks resulting from them. Moreover, benefits outcoming from the existence of inter-organizational relations which contribute to the creation of competitive advantage of modern enterprises were presented. Finally, the concept of relational capital as a strategic capital related to interpersonal relations was discussed. Research used in this article were pilot study in public administration institutions in the Netherlands and Ukraine.

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I. Introduction.

The development of technology, multi-directional development of knowledge, globalisation phenomenon, the openness of borders, and intense competence contributed to a situation that the environment of contemporary enterprises started to be characterised by high changeability and unpredictability. As a result, the competitive advantage of an organization also adopts a dynamic character. Methods of achieving this advantage are the consequence of competitive activities, and more often they have their source also in inter-organisational relations and a network approach to strategies of which the basis is cooperation of organizations. Enterprises decide to join their efforts to withstand negative results of increased competition and also to use chances of present-day economy as best as they can.

II. The essence of inter-organizational relations

Many fields of the management science take particular interest in the concept of inter-organizational relations. The increase in the meaning of cooperation between independent entities tend to be considered as one of the most important developmental trends in contemporary value creation mechanisms.

In education about management and also in organizational theory there are many concepts connected with the increase in meaning of inter-organizational cooperation (network and project management) and works devoted to new organizational forms (e.g clusters, networks, partnerships, alliances).

Networking (and consequently the concept of a network) became a key category in the management science. Empirical examples of inter-organizational relations are already a ubiquitous phenomenon in the management practice. They may concern e.g relations between companies and institutions from e.g public sector, relations between corporations and companies, relations between public entities and non-governmental bodies, or relations between governmental organizations and private entities and so on[1].

In a broad perspective cooperation of companies may be understood as each form of connections that exist between given companies which serve the purpose of coordination of business activity [2].

These connections take various forms, starting from direct market contacts, through long-term contractual relationships, up to an integrated activity conducted as part of one company. P. Tomski writes that "in the broadest understanding of cooperation it includes any relations of enterprises functioning on the market: from unaware, casual, or inconstant to a close and tight tie"[3]

It may be stated that inter-organizational connections include: cooperation, interaction and working together to realize accepted purposes, including joint goals. In this definition there is a purpose of these activities. Cooperation is based on mutual benefits and an activeness of proceedings to achieve them. The connections arise from undertaken activities which are the outcome of many factors which complement one another and at the same time creating the scope and conditions of joint actions of organizations [4]

In literature of this field, there are three key attitudes which determine inter-organizational relations. They include: confrontation approach (which means a competitive attitude), neutral approach (which means that business entities are indifferent to each other) and cooperation approach (which is based on forming alliances, understanding and coordination between companies) [5]

Creating inter-organizational relations requires, above all, willingness to cooperate, engagement in mutual activities, and an eagerness to preserve these relations. But not only these factors are important – inter-organizational relations are always based on strong leadership. Only a well-managed organization is able to implement joint actions successfully, strive for cooperation and realize determined goals. Cooperation between companies is always voluntary. It is based on concluded agreements which indicate the form of ties between business entities. These bonds are examined depending on adopted criteria. They include [6]:

- form of ownership and size of an organization;
- type of an organization and of the needs which are met (private, public and social);

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