

THE VALUE SYSTEM AS A STARTING POINT FOR CREATING A MODERN COMPANY

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Abstract: A constant increase in the environment complexity forces organizations, both business entities and universities as well as science institutions to seek new analytical methods, especially in terms of creating beneficial social and business relationships. The study aims to emphasize that economic activity should be perceived as an element of culture, an area in which ethical values can be applied. A significant role of science workers for building social relations is also indicated. The authors present original analytical models stressing ethical elements which, along with empathy, can determine that the value system and the company philosophical core are recognized as the cause of success or failure of any organization.

Keywords: value system, ethics, competitive advantages.

SYSTEM WARTOŚCI JAKO PUNKT POCZĄTKOWY PROCESU KREOWANIA WSPÓŁCZESNEJ FIRMY

Streszczenie: Ciągły wzrost złożoności środowiska zmusza współczesne organizacje, zarówno podmioty gospodarcze jak i uczelnie oraz instytucje nauki do poszukiwania nowych metod analitycznych, zwłaszcza w zakresie kreowania korzystnych relacji społecznych i biznesowych. W publikacji wskazano, że działalność gospodarczą postrzegać należy jako element kultury, jako obszar, w którym mogą być urzeczywistniane wartości etyczne. Podkreślono również znaczącą rolę pracowników nauki w budowaniu relacji społecznych. Przedstawiono także autorskie modele analityczne akcentujące elementy etyczne, które wraz z empatią przesądzać mogą, że system wartości i rdzeń filozoficzny firmy mają decydujący wpływ na sukces lub porażkę każdej organizacji.

Słowa kluczowe: system wartości, przewaga konkurencyjna, etyka.

1. Introduction

The global economic crisis and the related slowdown in economies caused turmoil in many areas of social activity. However, organizations that have an encoded long-term perspective of their business are usually prepared to defend against new threats. Analysing the directions of changes in politics, nature, economy, demography, culture, technology, and the interaction between them, it is possible to build an idea of the society of the future. The vision should be the basis for reflection on the management evolution as a philosophy, a set of methods and organizations that enables effective business.

Even before the crisis, J.M. Keynes suggested that “it is not yet time to return to the clear and certain principles of religion and traditional virtues, according to which avarice is worthy of condemnation, usury is a sin and the love of money is disgusting. Economic progress is possible only if we use this powerful motor of human action which is egoism. Contemporary economy is driven by obsessive greed and unbridled envy, which are not only accidental, but on the contrary – they are the source of our success” (Schumacher, 1973, p. 42).

It is widely believed that at the basis of the recent crisis there was a cultural crisis which “root causes are connected with gigantism, ossification and bureaucracy of organizational structures in politics and economy, as well as isolation and weakening of contacts with people, matters and sense of action through mechanisms preferring things, and depreciating interpersonal relations, which in effect leads to a loss of connection between the thing and the sense of its possession” (Millendorfer, 1994, p. 12).

One of the most important goals of business organizations should be care for maintaining the demand at a sufficiently high level. It is possible only when the problem of economic inequality is noticed. Its measure is the Gini coefficient, where – on a scale from 0 to 100 – zero corresponds to the ideal distribution. According to the data from the World Bank (Hasanov, and Izraeli, 2012, p. 18), this coefficient reaches from 25 for Japan and Sweden up to over 50 for Mexico, Brazil and South Africa. Thus, the theory of an effective demand by M. Kalecki is still valid, as it allows to understand better the causes of the recent crisis and the mechanism of economic fluctuations (Lityńska, 2016).

This is accompanied by the progressive income diversification of the population. This applies in particular to the USA, where in the companies from the S&P index, the ratio of the average remuneration of CEOs to the average salary of employees increased from 40:1 in the 1970s up to 325:1 in 2010 (Frey, and Osterloh, 2012, p. 44), and in the end of 2017, the eight richest people in the world¹ possessed the wealth bigger than 3.7 billion of the poorest people in the world (Credit Suisse, 2017). Another measure of “prosperity” is per capita income. According to the Human Development Report published by the UN in the

¹ Bill Gates, Amancio Ortega, Warren Buffet, Carlos Slim Helu, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, Larry Ellison, Michael Bloomberg.

ranking of countries with the highest per capita incomes, the leaders are: Qatar, Liechtenstein, Singapore, Luxembourg, Kuwait, Norway, Brunei, Hong Kong and the USA (Fox, 2012, p. 56). In the face of a widespread criticism of existing instruments, it is suggested to adopt other indexes describing the economic and social condition of nations. Since 2007, the Legismus Institute has published the Prosperity Index annually and since 2011 the OECD has published a report on “well-being”, and the UN has been announcing the Human Development Index for decades, adjusted according to an index of existing social inequalities. The authorities of the Kingdom of Bhutan went even further searching a new formula of economic success, declaring consistently that they seek to increase the level of “Gross National Happiness” – GNH (Fox, 2012, p. 56). The possibilities of defining and measuring various indicators of “happiness” seem to be very limited, imprecise and uncertain, but they can be useful for setting directions of action, counteracting dangerous inequalities.

In this context, maybe “it's time” to counteract the crisis and its consequences, and to prevent its recurrence, to lead to rationalization of social life by promoting ethical behaviour in every area of activity. May the trends of returning to nature and to the primary ties combined with the development of technology, which have been observed for years, significantly change the image of society, its behaviour, patterns and needs? Not being sure about the scope and strength of individual trends, it is still worth analysing the likely scenarios. It can be expected that this competitiveness will be derived from modern entrepreneurship, using the achievements of management and technical sciences (especially in the IT area) to develop opportunities for honest cooperation in all areas of life.

The aim of the study is to emphasize that the area of ethics is involved when we think and talk about others, and that economic activity should be perceived as an element of culture, not only as a field of competition but also as an area of cooperation, as an area in which ethical values can be implemented and as a sphere in which it is possible to shape advantageous business relations.

The study applies the assumption that the responsibility for the state of social relations and the ways of creating them depend largely on current educational systems, and the behaviour and attitudes of entrepreneurs are related to the academic approach of academic teachers to the principles of professional ethics. Consequently, the need to construct and disseminate proprietary analytical models, which accent ethical elements as the areas of creating beneficial business relationships, has been accepted as a utilitarian goal. In a view of a universally recognized need to operate in a complex environment and a need to develop cooperation with other entities, it is proposed to name them as the areas of creating beneficial social and business relations.

2. Functioning of companies in contemporary market reality

One of the basic requirements of a modern business environment is the flexibility of a company and the time of its innovative response as a reply to emerging disorders. Every change in the global environment, even seemingly small one, causes changes in conditions in various sectors, and also exerts pressure on changes in companies. Among the rapidly changing and difficult to predict global factors that stimulate change in organizations, apart from political, demographic, climatic and natural factors, a rapid development of science and technology should be emphasized.

The increase of knowledge and information, as well as breakthrough inventions and innovations, the development of information technology, the progress in other fields of technology, genetics and material technology and their dissemination radically change the rules of the market play, as well as the methods which we use to teach our children how to communicate and to interact as individuals. Companies must adapt to function in these new conditions. However, it should be noted that only companies that are prepared for a permanent response to the changing business environment can function properly. However, the attitude towards changes in the environment will determine future competitive position of companies. It is necessary to accept a new work style, which main values are flexibility, innovation and risk (Carnoy, 2000, p. 15).

A competitive battle in each market takes place in different fields, which is a consequence of choosing a development path. These choices essentially determine the effectiveness of an implemented strategy. The more accurate and original they are, the greater the chance of success. A standard behaviour rarely leads to success (Hill, and Rifkin, 2000).

In this context, the issue of competitive advantages and the selection of resources in which such an advantage can be and should be shaped is of a particular importance. An essence of a competitive advantage is that it allows you to obtain a higher efficiency than before, not necessarily a higher one than all competitors. Competing on the market is not a race in which you have to be the best on each lap and the laurels are only for the first at the finish line – a metaphor of the “Australian cycling race” is closer to the essence of this issue, as during this race it is enough to never be the last one at the end of the lap, because the last ones fall out of the game. Competitive advantages are obtained by operating on resources, thanks to which the resource is obtained in a new, better shape, which gives the company a competitive advantage. Therefore, a competitive advantage is, in fact, nothing else but a critical resource of a company.

According to Barney (2001), in order create a lasting competitive advantage, resources should be strategically valuable, rare, difficult to imitate and substitute. Each participant of social and economic processes has the choice to either adapt to standard rules of the market game or try to change them – “There is nothing stupider than the often repeated saying that:

management only adjusts business to the operation of market forces. The Board not only detects these forces; the Board creates them with its own action” (Drucker, 1992, p. 49). The importance of decisions regarding the selection of resources, in the area of which competitive advantage is to be shaped, is appreciated only when the discrepancy between the views of entrepreneurs and the opinion of recipients on key success factors is noticed. During the research carried out in 1998, 2001, 2003, 2008, 2012 (Bielski, 2007, 2014, 2015) it was observed that resource choices were not related to the implemented strategy and were made without any analytical support regarding the desired characteristics of competitive advantages. However, apart from the mentality, the thinking style and the managers’ actions, another barrier for creating competitive advantages rationally is also the lack of analytical models based on characteristics of advantages. Despite this, in research carried out in times of economic crisis, in all cases intangible factors, especially human resources, leaders and educational mobility have clearly gained in importance (in relation to pre-crisis rankings) (Bielski, 2014, p. 355).

No organization currently operates in isolation and is no longer just an element of the chain – it is an element of the network. Because of the need to move away from the current way of resolving the dilemma “either, or” (to compete or cooperate) to a new solution “and, and” (to compete and cooperate) (De Wit, and Meyer, 2007, p. 35), the competitive advantage should be treated as distinguishing competences that allow you to create favourable business relationships. Each company is a complex structure and an element of the network which should be analysed on a multifaceted basis, as well as looking for shortcomings in the network relations between network elements.

Therefore, someone who perceives the world in only two dimensions, can be surprised by competitors who perceive and analyse areas of their activity through the prism of many other dimensions, and develop their values in them, facilitating their functioning in a complex environment. Searching for areas which enable establishing beneficial relationships, it is possible to use the list of “10E” perspectives (Ecology, Effectiveness, Empathy, Economy, Aesthetics, Emotions, Ethics, Eristic, Eclecticism). One of the most important attributes of winning companies is their ethical attitude. Considering the globalization processes and universal access to information, the question of the ancient philosophers “how to live with dignity” today should be transformed into the question “how to live together with dignity”.

In the era of widespread access to information, all activities of each entity, including innovative processes are characterized by such openness (Zedtwitz, and Gassmann, 2002, pp. 1262-1285) that the system of interaction with the environment becomes the key to success.

3. Scientific and technical progress in the face of future challenges

In the near future, knowledge will become the basic resource of any organization, while all others will be degraded to the role of complementary factors (Drucker, 1994). Sensed, even subconsciously, inevitability of the "third wave" arouses anxiety of many entrepreneurs, associated with the feeling that the coming future will not be a simple continuation of the present (Toffler, 1986, p. 35). Preparing societies to accept the inevitability of changes and the need to permanently implement innovations also requires applying innovations in the educational system.

One of the goals to achieve in this area is shaping innovative attitudes enabling processing, not just reconstructing the existing reality. In many countries, including Poland, the pace of scientific and technical progress is assessed as unsatisfactory from the point of view of the international competitiveness of the economy. In addition to structural conditions, there are also obstacles that have a psychological background, expressed in aversion to changes that are perceived by many as a disharmonizing factor in the psyche and threatening to disturb their well-established value system. All in all, it creates a climate that facilitates maintaining thinking stereotypes and can be an obstacle to innovative activities. The ease of building such obstacles is a result of a general lack of an innovative climate, a low media activity in shaping such a climate, and lack of an educational system.

A basis for the success of any undertaking are qualifications, thorough knowledge of the subject of a given activity, constantly perfected in various forms, as well as an internal state of creators, largely determined by environmental conditions.

“Considering a growing number of positions where creativity is needed, the obvious task is the educational system – the task of equipping children before they work for themselves, in original, creative minds, in addition to the high level of knowledge that will also be necessary” (Jay, 1993, p. 108). In this field, Polish educational system fails very clearly. Schools and colleges do not teach knowledge structures and independent thinking but provide ready-made knowledge that should be remembered for some exam. They teach how to answer questions, but “the art of asking questions” is not taught, although it provides the basis for progress. A contemporary educational system should meet two basic objectives:

- to prepare staff, especially in technical and economic sciences, for innovation and processing, not reproducing the surrounding reality,
- to raise the awareness of innovation of the whole society.

Academic staff, in addition to their didactic activities, should carry out scientific research leading to the development of the field and disseminate the results of such research in a way that makes it possible to use them practically. However, academics are often distinct from the views of various stakeholders on their professional ethics. It is not surprising then that in the prestige ranking of the occupation, a firefighter is ahead of a professor (Cybulska, 2013).

In a teacher's pattern created by representatives of this profession, skills useful in didactics are placed at the top of crucial features, while ethical attitudes and “perfectionist aspirations” are considered as second important ones (Rumiński, 1996). According to the opinion poll of 326 students from 7 state and private universities (Haber, 1996), professionalism and ethical attitude are the most valued feature.

According to the author's own research (Sikora, 2016), conducted on a sample of 88 graduates, the most desirable features of academic teachers are: professionalism (84.1% of respondents), fairness in assessing knowledge (37.5%) and giving a good example of proper ethical attitudes (34.1%). 78.4% of graduates assessed the knowledge gained during studies as useful in business and professional life management.

In the meantime, however, the perfectionism emphasized in research as an attribute of an ethical scientist's attitude is a feature that is too rare in science. In the Code of Ethics (ICPM, 1996, p. 26) developed by the Institute of Certified Professional Manager responsibilities were specified: “I will gather current information on the development of techniques and processes related to management practice and the field of industry which I am employed in, I will look for well-tried and tested methods and techniques contributing to productivity and productivity growth, I will support efforts to strengthen professionalism through example, education, training and constant pursuit of excellence.” However, these commitments are rather discordant with practice as for over 50 years SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) has been applied as a basic tool of strategic analysis, also applied to build strategies of well-known universities (Dyson, 2004).

The disadvantage of using SWOT analysis in a dynamic environment is that it induces entrepreneurs to create strategies based on current strengths, and do not encourage to define the optimal shape of resources considering the business opportunities that arise. Accepting SWOT analysis results (Learned et al., 1965) as the basis of built strategies leads to strategies such as “as resources, such a strategy” - instead of “such a strategy, as market requirements” (regardless of resources). It can be dangerous, because it is increasingly difficult to identify what is and what will be the core business. “What is considered to be that today, in 2-3 years may turn out to be a completely marginal function” (Desouza, 2009, p. 145).

In this context, we can assume that winning strategies are entrepreneurial strategies. The credit for the development of an important and in many ways fully modern theory of entrepreneurship is attributed to Cantillon (1755), who gained recognition, primarily in the literature focused on entrepreneurship, as an original thinker associated with this field. In spite of the fact that his theory of entrepreneurship deserves recognition, until recently it has been either forgotten or treated as an isolated part of his contribution to the theory of economics, and not as the core philosophy of an entrepreneurial attitude.

Currently, entrepreneurship is defined as an approach to management consisting in creating or using opportunities, regardless of the resources currently available (Stevenson et al., 1989; Timmons et al., 1985). An opportunity might be picked out thanks to the

association, that is the ability to see and connect two different facts with each other (Jay, 1993, p. 99). Each of the environmental factors, depending on the attitude, can be seen by some as an opportunity, whereas by others - as a threat. The consequence of the optimistic approach is the tendency to create new company resources or to modify the existing ones, so as to obtain the size and shape of resources adequate to the adopted strategy (Bielski, 2007).

Companies operate in a complex, undefined network of connections with other organisms, including universities, with which they should maintain beneficial relationships. The proper functioning of such a complicated system requires the creation of a cooperative infrastructure - the economic potential of a social network that can be described by four features: – common knowledge, reciprocity, credibility and common values (Wojna, 2003). In order to achieve an essential consistency of information bases of cooperating participants in economic processes, a specific information coordination is required. An effective and comprehensive cooperation with other participants in economic processes should be based on a highly specialized, reliable knowledge, and “Business organizations should be equipped with a strategic ability to constantly and systematically use, gather and create new knowledge in a dynamic spiral process” (Nonaka, and Takeuchi, 2000, p. 198).

In a cyclic process (see Figure 1), after absorption of new knowledge, it undergoes analysis, classification and after evaluation of compatibility and acceptance it is included in the existing resources – internalisation, creating new knowledge, which is used in development processes (experience) and contributes to the growth of the company maturity.

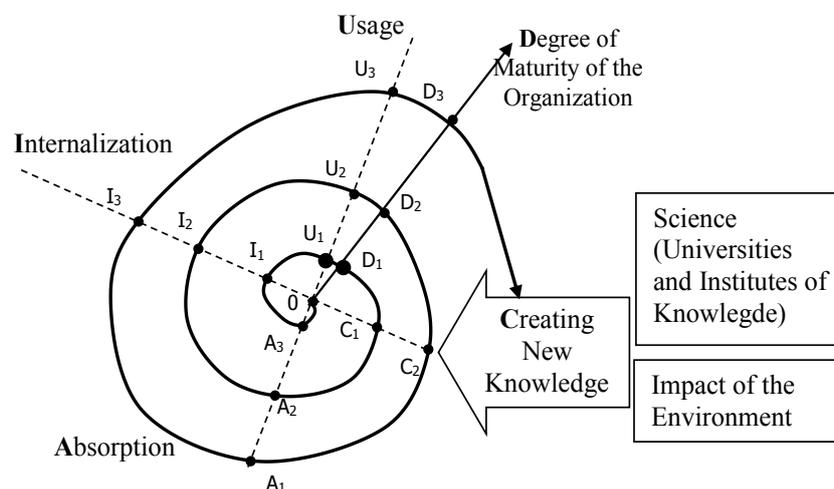


Figure 1. A model of business maturity growth. Source: own study based on Bielski (2000, p. 130).

Maturity in any field is achieved through the systematic development of its components, which are sensitivity, awareness, responsibility and ability (Bielski, 1999, p. 69). Sensitivity should be seen as the ability to see signals generated by the environment. A detector of change must be installed in the organizational structure, especially in the mental structure. Such a signal, having been absorbed and internalized, placed in the proper context of the

accumulated knowledge resources, allows to assess its usefulness for development processes. At a later stage, a decision may be made to use it to counteract adverse consequences or to strengthen the positive effects of the observed event and to mobilize the available resources in order to obtain a real, positive change.

4. Common values in the process of creating advantageous business relationships

“In a free economy, there is one and the only obligation to society related to economic activities – to use resources and to engage in activities aimed at increasing profits as long as it remains within the limits of the game rules, which means: as long as it means open and free competition without bending rules and cheating” (Friedman, 1962, p. 13). The most important thing is good will, which is the central category of Kant's ethical system, and freedom without which the will does not exist (Kant, 1971, pp. 11-13).

The market economy is dominated by different patterns of attitudes and behaviours. The increasingly accepted view is that the reference point for economic activities is the client/citizen and his needs, and the companies are assumed to “serve their clients for many years. The heads who share this belief and incline all employees to it can transform ordinary companies into unbeatable businesses” (Shaw, 2001, p. 22). Customer's loyalty is the result of arranging proper relations between the company and the environment, while the company itself must be non-anonymous, it must have a specific, recognizable personality that is visible in the sphere of influencing the environment and responding to it. At the same time, the statement that “what is moral can be at the same time economically effective” reaches the minds of entrepreneurs (Bauman, 2007, 2008).

And although people/organizations cooperate with each other not because they love each other, but for the expected benefits (Hoppe, 2015, p. 32), it should be noted that every economic entity is an element of social space and to act effectively should assume that a society is a community, not just a collective, and on this basis, it is to shape proper relations, leading to exchange, with all stakeholders, declaring to the society its main message – a mission. Fidelity to the proclaimed principles is observed by the environment and has a significant impact on the company's profit.

Philosophy and management methods will be more and more often evaluated through the prism of their usefulness. A company/an ethical person is an entity, commanded the trust that stakeholders can bestow on an organization, which can be interpreted as a perceived organization credibility estimated by the dimensions of transparency, integrity, competence, friendliness and reliability, based on personal experience, as well as reputation and compliance of behaviours with professed values (Pirson, 2008, p. 60). This is referred to in

the “3E” Rule of Honest Process (Kim, and Mauborgne, 2005, pp. 251-252): Engagement, Explanation, Expectation (clarity of expectation). These features exhibited in the action, as early as at the stage of formulating strategies, result in the expected, positive attitudes of employees characterized by high commitment, associated with trust, easy creation and development of cooperative ties, leading to the implementation of strategic tasks at a level exceeding expectation.

One of the most important “soft” success factors creating competitive advantages is reputation, a company image, also understood as the company's identity and even the “spirit” of the company, which develops in the process of creating consent and permeates all levels of the organization. “Take care of your clients and employees, and they will take care of you” – this is the main motto followed by the management of companies with high organizational culture.

Thus, a growing number of companies and other organizations demonstrates the fact of having programs and codes of ethics. The number of ethical codes increased tenfold since the end of the 1960s to the middle of the last decade of the twentieth century (Kitson, and Campbell, 1996, p. 118), which is successfully continued to the present. Unfortunately, Poland cannot boast a similar success. The economic transformation itself, far from worrying about the ethical dimension of transformation, has not yet led the business to take care of the ethical side of the economy. In addition that the Code is to fulfil its role effectively, several conditions must be satisfied: it must be the result of research, consultation and discussion conducted among and on behalf of all stakeholders involved; it must be treated by all interested parties as their own and not as imposed by the top management; it must also be supported by the employee development program and be open to corrections as the experience is gained (Kitson, and Campbell, 1996, pp. 130-131).

Therefore, ethical programs in companies are introduced mainly to facilitate the selection of a company that deals with business diligently and honestly from among many other, equally economically efficient companies. Thanks to this, such a company can gain a competitive advantage in the long run, which could not otherwise achieve. Ethical behaviour is the company's assets, demonstrating the company's responsibility towards everyone who creates and interacts with the company.

Decisions taken in a company at all positions should refer to the same set of core values shared by all employees, starting from the head of the company. Activities in the field of ethics should be placed in a wider, universal context, including the cessation of environmental degradation, the development of individuals and societies. It is important that activities in the area of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) are carried out in a way that does not rise doubts as to the true motives. Ethical programs and codes, as well as business ethics, should be treated, with all seriousness and appreciation of their importance for the success of individual companies. The purpose of ethics programs should be not only to indicate common values, formulate the company's vision and mission, determine ethical and professional

standards, develop a code of ethics, develop a manual of professional standards, promote ethical behaviour, but also to monitor compliance with ethical standards and professional standards, and to conduct ethical audits periodically.

It should be emphasized that focusing on common values is important not only for people personally, but also for the company to achieve market success (Marineau, 2000). Each modern organization is also forced to define its policy in the field of knowledge transfer and display its achievements to create the company's image in the social environment. It is a moral duty, especially for scientific institutions and scientists, to use the achievements of predecessors for processing, not just reproducing the existing reality. Each new business situation brings a chance to develop knowledge and skills. Enriched analyses, apart from being applied in the area of strategy creation, may even lead to the redefinition of their own business model (Bielski, and Sikora, 2016; Sikora, and Bielski, 2017). However, it is not worth rejecting all the classic models, just because they come from pre-crisis times. Such an attitude will allow transforming and using the model “7S” by Mc Kinsey, which is well-known but already too simple for the dynamic environment, (Peters, and Waterman, 1982, p. 41). This can be achieved by enriching it with sensibility, understood as the ability to perceive early, even delicate signals (warning or providing an occasion) generated by various entities from the company's environment. Moreover, this model should be supplemented with Esprit de corps (Fayol, 1916), one of the components of the model organization, which H. Fayol proposed more than 100 years ago. This component deserves special attention during the times of multinational organizations. By including it, along with CSR to the core philosophy of the company, a modern version of the “7S” model is created (“10S”), suitable for use in the processes of creating a perfect company in a dynamic environment (see Fig. 2).

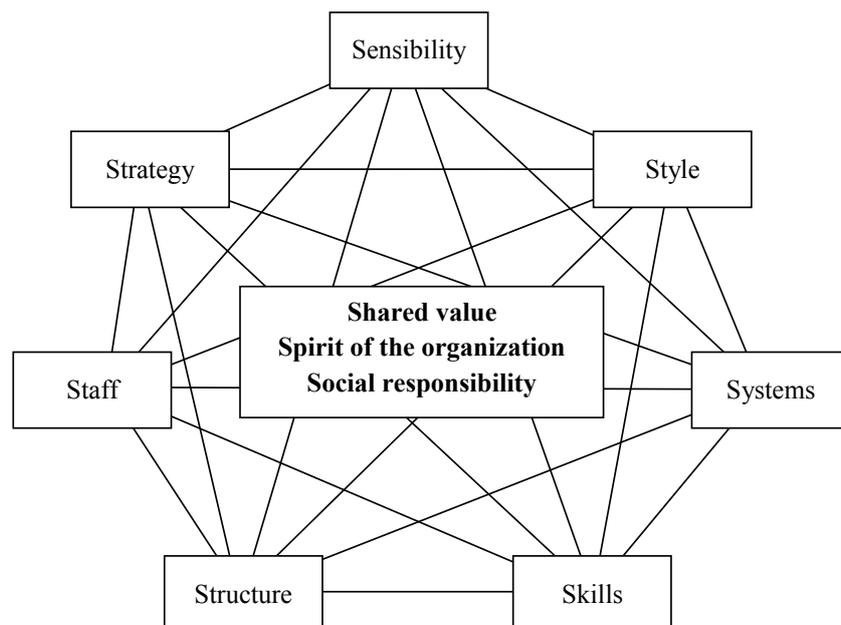


Figure 2. Components creating a perfect company: model „10S”. Source: own study based on Peters and Waterman (1982), Fayol (1916).

The universal character of this model and the possibility of using it, both in creation and healing the organization, should be emphasized. Thus, the philosophical core in this developed model have been enriched with the CSR area. Common values are specific behaviour typical of the organization (Welch, and Welch, 2010, p. 31) and the ideas which are common to most of its members related to what is appropriate and desirable the company activity from the perspective of all its stakeholders.

The philosophical core is thus a rock on which the qualities in other dimensions can be developed and improved, especially those that build the “spirit of organization”.

5. Summary

Every human activity can be conducted in a way that promotes social well-being or in an unethical way, violating good customs. Good customs are violated if an act is made against what every honest-thinking person considers to be immoral. An economic activity, including educational services, can be seen through the prism of culture as an area in which ethical values can be implemented and as a sphere in which it is possible to shape advantageous business relations. Business law is closely related to ethics and business responsibility.

Already four thousand years ago, the Code of Hammurabi, then the edict of Emperor Diocletian of 301 or the displays of Tsar Peter I, predicted severe penalties for non-compliance with the rules of professional ethics (Owen, and Montgomery, and Keeton, 1996, p. 115).

Nowadays, it is enough, in a view of the universal availability of information, that unethical entrepreneurs will stand before the tribunal in which the prosecutor and the judge will be the market and the penalty might be an exclusion.

It is necessary that universities and business entities will have to cooperate in various configurations with various business partners in order to face the contemporary challenges of the modern world on a local/global scale. Effective functioning is possible only when cooperation is based on universally accepted ethical values.

In the article a significant role of employees from the science area for building social relations is indicated. The authors also present original analytical models stressing ethical elements which, along with empathy, can serve to create advantageous business relationships and areas of competitive advantage.

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