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Cooperation management in Slovak enterprises

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Abstract

Cooperation management, as a scientific topic, is still not very elaborated yet. There are significant interest, from theory and praxis, to create a model approach, which could be used for building and managing of effective cooperation processes. Main goal of the study is to present actual knowledge about cooperation management conditions in Slovak companies and assign these in order to create a model of key elements, which have an important impact on effective cooperation in corporate praxis. Another important result of the study is recommendations for praxis considering effective cooperation management.

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Keywords: cooperation, cooperation management, cooperative potential, cooperative climate;

1. Introduction

Recently, a number of theoretical and practical experts became interested in cooperation management. The area of cooperation management is not yet well explored. One of the areas that received more attention is the effort to create a model of successful use of cooperation management in a company in order to ensure its competitiveness. In practice, we may identify multiple unsuccessful approaches when applying cooperation management. The reason for a lack of success is mainly lack of clear plan of activities, division of competencies for implementation and company strategy for establishing and maintaining cooperation. Managers are often the source of such errors, since they often misinterpret the concept of cooperation management and insufficiently utilize its potential in companies.

The goal of this paper is to provide a fair image of the use of cooperation management in Slovak enterprises, based on thorough analysis of theoretical sources in the area of strategic management, cooperation management, marketing and performed research. The paper also aims to transform these results into a proposed model of key aspects that influence the use of cooperation management in companies. Authors used the methods of document analysis, questionnaires and observations, i.e. visit of selected enterprises, to obtain the necessary data. For examining the data, authors used the methods of induction, deduction, synthesis, abstraction and modeling.

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2. The Current State of Dealing with the Issue

Among the professional public is currently debate about definition of cooperation management and allocation of areas of their operation. There are a few definitions of cooperation management in the literature, but each of these cover only a section of the overall role of cooperation management.

Wide explanation variability of the term cooperation management may be also documented by following theses. Lafleur (2005) understands cooperation management as way the management and development of cooperation are conducted in a competitive setting. In opinion of Ray (2002), cooperation management represents a term for framework for the integrated management of enterprise networks. Also Brown (1998) leans to this opinion by his thesis, that cooperation management is a partnership between government and industry. In opinion of Staatz (1983), cooperation management is about the cooperative decision making in the context of heterogeneous preferences, there is a need develop models that address this issue explicitly and in so doing suggest alternative ways of structuring cooperatives to deal with group choice. Zhang (2011) believes cooperation management as core of all management problems. In his opinion the cooperation management provides conditions of constructing a cooperation system are analysed which are the motivation of resource dependence, objective of effect enhancement, constraints of encouraging cooperation and possession of technology of cooperation.

Based on a thorough analysis of domestic and foreign literature, we can proceed to the following definition: *"Cooperation management is effective and pragmatic management of cooperative relations between independent organizations or individuals for purpose of raising of theirs competitiveness."*

3. Situation in Slovak enterprises – results of the empirical study

In order to explore the area of cooperation management further, an empirical study was realized between September 2012 and February 2013. The main goal of the study was to diagnose the level of use of cooperation management in Slovak enterprises. In total, 273 respondents were included in the study, including both mid-sized and large enterprises that are active in Slovak Republic.

Almost half of the respondents (48 %) plan to establish intense cooperation with another company or organization in the near future (less than 1 year). This finding can be considered to be positive. It could also be viewed positively that 46 % of included managers would repeatedly decide to cooperate with their main partner. This result indicates that the parties built a strong relationship, which can be seen as the main prerequisite for successful cooperation.

In the study we also explored the intensity of company cooperation with other companies and organizations. This was evaluated using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "almost not at all" and 10 being "very intensively". One of the findings was that the companies included in the study are having the most intense cooperation with commercial companies – here 64.4 % of included managers indicated a very high intensity of cooperation (level 8, 9 and 10). As many as 55.2 % of the managers indicated very low cooperation (level 1) with non-profit organizations, suggesting that cooperation with this group is limited. Similarly, a very low intensity of company cooperation was also identified in relation to the European Union. Here 49.7 % of managers indicated only limited intensity of cooperation with this party. Similarly low intensity of cooperation was identified also in relation to self-governing regions and upper-tier territorial units (in Slovak entitled VÚC).

χ^2 test of independence between qualitative attributes proved that a dependency exists between company satisfaction with a level of current cooperation (satisfaction index) and the size of the company.

Managers included in the study were given key aspects that are related to using cooperation management. They were then able to assign relative importance to the individual aspects. The highest priority was placed on mutual trust (9.35), adherence to contractual terms (9.35) and benefit of the cooperation (8.94). In contrast, the lowest priority was placed on the level of communication (8.52) and on the information system (7.62).

When asked about the main issues that occur during cooperation with other companies and organizations, managers identified the following: insufficient fulfillment of contractual terms (58.39 %), financial strain (35.04 %)

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