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**IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN POTENTIAL  
IN OPERATION OF GASTRONOMY AND HOTEL  
SERVICES SECTOR ENTERPRISES**

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Key words: human potential, competences, gastronomy and hotel services sector.

**A b s t r a c t**

This paper discusses the issues of importance and role of employees in operation of gastronomy and hotel services sector enterprises from Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship. The main objective of the presented studies was to identify the needs in the human potential aspect in the covered sector that have important influence on the operation and development of entities from the gastronomy and hotel services sector. The studies showed, inter alia, that in the evaluation of competences of the employees the employers in most cases find that the employees possess competences at the required level and financing of vocational improvement of employees aiming at increasing the competitiveness of the enterprise was based on own resources of the enterprise mainly.

**ZNACZENIE POTENCJAŁU KADROWEGO W FUNKCJONOWANIU  
PRZEDSIĘBIORSTW SEKTORA GASTRONOMICZNO-HOTELARSKIEGO**

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Słowa kluczowe: potencjał kadrowy, kompetencje, sektor gastronomiczno-hotelarski.

**A b s t r a c t**

W artykule poruszono kwestię znaczenia i roli pracowników w funkcjonowaniu warmińsko-mazurskich przedsiębiorstw sektora gastronomiczno-hotelarskiego. Głównym celem prezentowanych badań było zidentyfikowanie potrzeb w sferze potencjału kadrowego badanego sektora, które mają istotny wpływ na funkcjonowanie i rozwój podmiotów z branży gastronomiczno-hotelarskiej. Badania wykazały m.in., że w ocenie kompetencji pracowników pracodawcy najczęściej stwierdzają, że pracownicy mają kompetencje na wymaganym poziomie, a finansowanie doskonalenia zawodowego pracowników, mające na celu podniesienie konkurencyjności przedsiębiorstwa, opierało się głównie na zasobach firm.

## **Introduction**

The economic results of enterprises, indifferent of the level of automation, informatization and application of state of the art technologies, etc. finally anyway depend on the human factor. The competences of the employees, their propensity to work hard and their involvement in development and current operation of the enterprise determine whether the enterprise matches the market requirements and whether its existence is not at risk.

In the contemporary world the market success of the company is determined by the exceptional configuration of its tangible and intangible assets while the employees and the managing staff play the role of both the causative and the executive agent of the necessary activities in that field. As a consequence, human resources allowing the given organization acquisition of organizational knowledge and setting the procedures as well as methods of flexible reaction to changing circumstances are the strategic competitive strength of the company allowing the victory in competitive combat and taking a good position in the market (MANIAK 2004, p. 185). S. Sudoł draws attention to the close ties between the resources (capital) of knowledge and the employees noticing that the resources of knowledge in the enterprise are not only the written down and materialized knowledge but also, and maybe first of all, the employees capable of creating knowledge (SUDOŁ 2006, p. 189).

As a consequence, the ability to create, acquire, integrate and use the resources of knowledge represents the condition for operational effectiveness of numerous contemporary enterprises. The resources of knowledge, at the same time, form the base for the resources of competences. Competences represent the foundation for achieving the competitive advantage, which relates directly to the utilization of the intellectual capital in the enterprise. The intellectual capital, understood as the “knowledge, qualifications, experience, vocational skills and other intangible elements”, is becoming today the value that differentiates the company from its environment and allows it competing effectively in the market (NIEWĘGŁOWSKI 2008, s. 298). The above reasons and the major importance of the gastronomy-hotel services sector in the economy of Warmińsko-Mazurskie region gave the reasons for conducting the studies the results of which are presented in this paper.

## **Objective and scope of studies**

Identification of the needs in the field of human resources potential in the gastronomy-hotel services sector in Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship that have significant influence on the development of business entities from that

sector was the main objective of the studies conducted in 2009. The detailed objectives of the studies included, e.g.:

- obtaining knowledge on the general and vocational qualifications currently in demand from employees in the gastronomy-hotel services sector;
- identification of the needs in the field of vocational training of employees.

The National Official Register of the Entities of the National Economy (REGON) according to which in 2009 the number of entities operating in the sector of gastronomy-hotel services in Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship was 3346 entities was used for selecting the research sample of such entities. Out of the general population, 400 business entities, representing 12% of the entire population, were covered by the study. The layered draw was applied for selection of the test sample where 21 counties were used as the layers. From each county business entities were drawn at random using the random numbers. The share of the entities covered in the general number of entities in the county ranged from 9% (Gołdap, Nidzica, Ostróda and Szczytno counties) to 15% (City of Olsztyn). The differences in percentages of enterprises covered resulted from the difficulties caused by refusals to provide responses or the fact that in the given county the numbers (addresses) of entities drawn from the REGON database did not match the actual situation during the study. As a consequence the number of entities covered was increased in the counties with the largest numbers of the entities registered (urban counties of Olsztyn and Elbląg). The studies were conducted by applying the method of direct interview while the studies covered, among others:

- the competences of the employees (knowledge, skills, experience, personality characteristics, attitudes and behaviors of employees),
- needs for vocational improvement of employees (including shortages of personnel in individual vocations and the training needs),
- sources of financing for vocational improvement of employees,
- expectations concerning methods of support for gastronomy-hotel service sector enterprises;
- intensity of competition in the gastronomy-hotel services sector.

## **Results of studies**

First, it was identified to what extent and what employees (with what competences) are in demand among employers from that sector. The analysis was conducted considering, among other, type of activity conducted, seasonality of operation, period of functioning in the market and employment. Among 400 entities covered, 184 indicated shortages in employment resulting from difficulties with finding appropriate employees. The cook was the vocation in

highest demand among the employees indifferent of the type of the conducted activity (68.5% of indications).

The shortage of personnel in that vocation dominated independent of the company's history in the market and independent of the company size expressed by employment. The needs related to that vocation also dominated indifferent of whether the business activity was year round or seasonal activity. Shortages in the vocation of a waiter were ranked by the entrepreneurs as second (32.1% of the total number of indications) while the demand for bartenders ranked third (21.7% of indications). As indicated by the analysis of the responses the enterprises covered are short, first of all, of the people responsible for the core business of the enterprise.

Table 1  
Vocations in highest demand according to the employers from the gastronomy-hotel services sector (Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship)

Type of business	Cook	Waiter	Bartender
Hotel	52.0	32.0	28.0
Gastronomy	71.7	36.8	23.7
Agritourism	63.6	9.1	18.2
Bed and Breakfast	55.6	22.2	0.0
Holiday center	42.9	14.3	28.6
Camping	33.3	33.3	33.3
Other	50.0	16.7	25.0

$n = 184$ ; The percentages do not add to 100 as a consequence of the possibility of marking more than one response

Source: own work based on the studies.

The enterprises covered indicated shortage of auxiliary employees of, e.g. guarding service, technical service, etc. much less frequently. The responses also indicate low demand for employees with low qualifications or employees that require no special training, e.g. in hotels for cleaners, housekeepers, kitchen assistants, bakers, sweet bakers, etc.

In the evaluation of competences of the employees in individual enterprises the employees most frequently pointed out that the employees possessed competences at the required level (38.5% of the responses). Only 2.7% of the respondent companies evaluated the level of competences of their employees as unsatisfactory. The largest percentage of such responses came from agritourism enterprises (7.1%). Managers of hotels ranked the competences of their employees the highest (in total 53.4% of responses ranking competences of the employees as high or very high). Similar responses came from agritourism where 42.9% of the responses indicated high competences and 9.4% very high

competences. The competences of employees were ranked slightly lower at holiday centers (youth holiday camp centers) where 25% of the employees were ranked below standard; however, as a result of a small number of respondents in that segment (8 entities) it is hard to draw conclusions of wider nature from that.

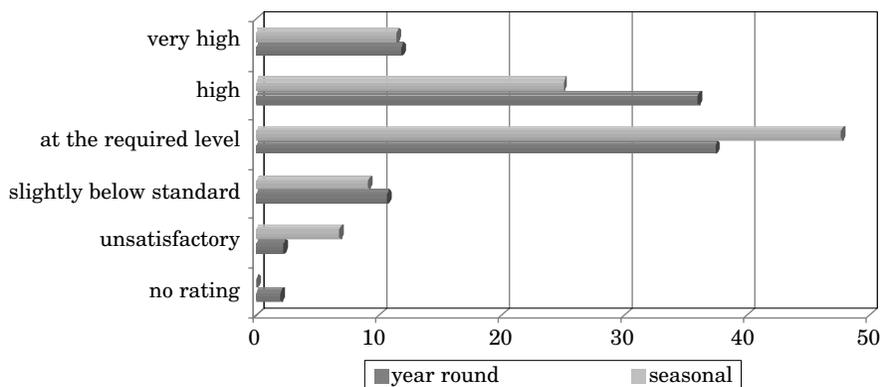


Fig. 1. Rating of competences of the employees depending on the time of activity in %  
 $n = 400$ ; year round = 356; seasonal = 44  
 Source: own work based on the studies.

Generally, however, the percentage of indications ranking competences of employees as very high was 11.8% only, although, at the opposite end of the scale, ranking of competences as unsatisfactory was even less frequent at 2.7% of the total number of responses while 1.7% of the respondents were not able to define the level of competences of their employees.

Responses concerning the competences of employees in the enterprises covered show no correlations with seasonal or year round operation, experience in business and the size of the enterprise. It can then be concluded that seasonality of operation, experience in the business and the employment have no major influence on the evaluation (Tab. 2). In all the enterprises indications at “high” level of competences and competences “at the required level” dominated.

Analyzing the responses concerning the need for improvement of specific competences depending on the vocation a trend that seems natural can be noticed. In the vocations where practical skills in performance of the vocation count and the frequency of contacts with the clients is lower (e.g. cook) the clear supremacy of skills over the other components of competences can be observed. On the other hand, where contacts with the customers are frequent (e.g. vocations of the waiter, bartender, reception clerk, sales assistant, etc.)

Table 2  
Evaluation of competences (knowledge, skills, experience, personal characteristics, attitudes and behaviors) of employees (considering experience in the business and employment)

Evaluation of competences	Experience in business				Employment (number of employees)		
	up to 1 year	2–5 years	6–10 years	over 10 years	up to 9	10–49	50–249
	number of indications						
	24	111	95	170	287	110	3
% of indications ( $n = 400$ )							
No evaluation	4.2	0.9	2.1	1.8	1.4	2.7	0.0
Unsatisfactory	4.2	4.5	1.1	2.3	2.8	2.7	0.0
Slightly below standard	8.3	14.4	12.6	7.1	10.5	10.9	0.0
At the required level	45.8	36	33.7	41.8	39	38.2	0.0
High	20.8	30.6	44.2	34.1	33.5	37.3	66.7
Very high	16.7	13.5	6.3	12.9	12.8	8.2	33.3

Source: own work based on the studies.

the components such as personality characteristics or attitudes and behaviors dominate over the skills. According to the respondents the cook should possess the largest knowledge and skills while in the vocation of the waiter the personal characteristics as well as attitudes and behaviors should be improved first of all.

Financing of vocational improvement of the employees in the respondent enterprises, according to the respondents, was based mainly on the resources of the enterprises (57.0%). Indications of the employer as the party covering all the direct costs involved in vocational improvement and the employee as the one covering the traveling expenses ranked second while indications that the employee covers all the costs or the direct costs of vocational improvement while the employer covers just the travel expenses were of marginal incidence.

As concerns saturation of the market with competing entities, 42.7% of the respondents indicated more than 10 enterprises as direct competitors in their locations and only 6.7% of the enterprises declared that they practically had no competition at all.

Obviously, the number of competing entities in itself does not determine the level of competition in the market. That is why in the studies the influence of competition on the business activity conducted was analyzed. It was found out that as much as 23.3% of the respondents indicated that the influence of the competition was insignificant (with 5-point scoring system where 1 means insignificant influence and 5 significant influence). While the responses were distributed evenly, the spread between the most frequent response (the

Table 3

Expectations of enterprises concerning support type

Expected support	Number of respondents	% of responses in relation to the number of respondents ( $n = 400$ )
In obtaining employees	110	27.5
In obtaining capital	221	55.3
In training of employees	191	47.8
In market studies	80	20.0
In promotion	209	52.3
Other assistance	5	1.2
No assistance	71	17.8

The percentages do not add to 100 as a consequence of the possibility of marking more than one response

*Source:* own work based on the studies.

insignificant influence) and the least frequent response (significant influence) was 6.9 percentage points only.

Aiming at increasing their competitiveness, the enterprises covered expected assistance from the lowest level of territorial government – the town and municipality administration offices. And although traditionally the respondents expressed the highest expectations in the field of financial assistance, the assistance in training their own employees was ranked third.

It is also worth noticing that every fifth enterprise covered did not expect any assistance and wanted to cope with the market on its own (or maybe did not believe in any assistance and that is why it indicated that option).

## Conclusion

The results of the conducted studies allow concluding that:

- the people practicing in the vocations of a cook, waiter and bartenders were the most wanted employees in the analyzed sector (according to the respondents there is also urgent need for vocational improvement in those vocations);
- the difficulties with obtaining employees with adequate qualifications are most painfully experienced by holiday centers (organizing youth holiday camps) – as much as 86% of indications from that group of enterprises;
- in evaluation of the competences of employees of the individual enterprises the employers usually conclude that the employees possess competences at the required level;

- financing of the vocational improvement of employees (according to the respondents) was based mainly on the resources of enterprises;
- the influence of competition on the conducted business activity was evaluated (on the base of the opinions expressed by the respondents) as moderate;
- to improve own competitiveness the enterprises covered in most cases expected assistance from the lowest level of the territorial government – that is town and municipality administration offices. That assistance, according to them should cover support in obtaining capital, promotion and training of employees.

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