



## COMPETENCY MANAGEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE WORKERS IN MODERN ENTERPRISES

Michał Igielski

Gdynia Maritime University  
Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Quality Science

**Abstract:** In this article the author describes the subject of the use of the competence of knowledge workers by enterprises in the market economy in the twenty-first century. For this purpose they were presented contemporary market conditions and describes the characteristics and skills of knowledge workers. In addition, we presented the partial results of the study, whose task was to attempt to show the impact of key competencies of this group of workers on the company. Made analysis of source materials and research results showed the role of these competencies in building the competitive position of the audited entities and the need to take measures aimed at creating optimal conditions for knowledge workers to work. Of course, during the research process emerged opinions about the problems that arise in cooperation with this group of employees, but the author's opinion should be taken to a potential risk in the future to have a sustainable competitive position in the market.

**Keywords:** employee knowledge, skills, competency management

**DOI:** 10.17512/znpcz.2017.2.01

### Introduction

The processes that take place in the modern economy have forced companies to change the rules of competition in the market. They caused a need to modify the approach to management. Most companies are currently looking for new management methods that focus primarily on intangible assets. This knowledge is becoming a key business asset and the optimal management of slowly becomes their core competence. Knowledge is the main resource in the twenty-first century. It allows creativity in implementing innovative solutions, and leads to the transformation of modern enterprises in the knowledge-based organizations that focus on the management first, resource assets.

In addition to knowledge, the main determinant of the development of modern enterprises are the key skills and competencies of their staff. Now the fate and development of the organization decide outstanding individuals that create specialized teams. There is also a new category of workers - knowledge workers. These are valuable specialists who are characterized, however, independence and mobility. This forces companies to adapt working conditions to their expectations.

Therefore, in this study will be presented basic issues related to knowledge workers, their core competencies and management in modern companies - developed on the basis of their author. The main objective of this study was to

determine the effect of key competences of this group of workers on the company and indication of the actions taken by the audited entities that are knowledge workers to create optimal working conditions.

### **Conditions of the modern economy**

Modern economy is characterized by high volatility and increasing competitiveness. New challenges are forcing companies to use new solutions to grow and be open to the needs of the customer. Accompanied by intense processes of globalization and broad international links in economic and social life. This is due to the fact that operators always some external environment, or in cooperation with other organizations, in a given territory and based on established institutional regulations.

Modern feeling of indulgence has become very complex - is complex and variable, and the same change has become the only constant in this part of the environment. Imposed by that businesses need to adapt to changing conditions so permanently. It is not only a large number of emerging market organization, which automatically interact with others - affect the functioning of all the actors, but also increase the scope of relationship enterprises themselves with the surroundings. Currently, it is not just the business sphere, but also areas of socio - cultural.

On the other hand, as key determinants of the modern economy, which affect the operation of enterprises in the market, we can distinguish three main forces. The first is globalization, which is a progressive shrinkage of the markets in which until now operated company. This process forces them to prepare and implement the strategy on a global scale. And even as he says P. Ducker (Drucker 1999, p. 26), although their functioning market is regional or even local, they are already subject to the conditions shaped by global competition.

The second feature that characterizes the modern economy is the rapid technological progress, which carries with him a lot of challenges and dilemmas. This information revolution has led to a change of the whole society - changed the people who are employees, business owners and consumers. It has completely changed the perception of business issues and resources available to businesses. Thanks to the knowledge and technology it is possible to create entirely new materials: starting from new plant varieties, strains of bacteria, finishing coatings space shuttles (Morawski 2009, p. 21).

The third primary differentiator is the growing importance of intellectual capital. In the new reality, a smaller role than in the past, will play product markets and financial markets. One of the main company or region will be determined by the ability to find, arrest and ensure the development of talented people (Cielemęcki 2011, p. 201). In a situation where the most important value for the enterprise becomes the knowledge possessed by the people, they become particularly important and let t to be adjusted all the activities related to the change management systems.

To sum up in such specific economic conditions, the results and potential directions of development of the undertakings will be determined by the people and innovative activities undertaken by them. It is the nature of these new solutions, which must cope with the challenges of the market and adapt to the demands of the modern economy, will determine the company's competitive position in the market.

### **The essence of knowledge workers in the XXI century**

Enterprises operating in the market under the impact of a changing environment must look for ideas that will help them better adapt to the requirements of the modern economy. They know that they cannot continue to build a competitive advantage based on cheap labour resources, they want to achieve success through proper management of intangible assets, namely human capital and knowledge.

In such conditions, an important place falls employees who are engaged in the creation, storage, use and dissemination of knowledge and information. They are a group of educated, they are characterized by creativity, tolerance for diversity, openness to change, are aware of the continuing improvement of their qualifications. These are knowledge workers, defined as a new type of specialists who have professional skills, interpersonal skills and unique features (Skrzypek 2002, p. 679).

For the first time used the term knowledge worker in the 60s of the last century P.F. Drucker, who is considered the creator of the concept. In his definitions he emphasized that the knowledge worker is a person remunerated for the creation and dissemination of knowledge, the effectiveness of thinking. This will cause a group of these people will become in the future owners of the most important part of the production, which is knowledge (Drucker 1999, p. 13).

Contemporary definitions of knowledge workers based on emphasizing the importance of their characteristics, education or implementation of concrete actions by this group of employees. However, despite these determinants / criteria comparative analysis of this term based on the literature it is very difficult. This is due to very often extremely different views and experiences of individual authors, but also of the complexity of the topic. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the author made a presentation of the available definitions of the term knowledge worker, taking into account their main distinctions / specific features.

In summary, based on the compilation mentioned above, the definition of different authors can distinguish general characteristics of knowledge workers:

- Autonomy and independence;
- The ability to create work based on knowledge, which is the process of gaining and having the knowledge, through its collection and transmission, and ending on the effective utilization;
- Self-improvement;
- Self-confidence - a sense of high value;
- Authority to others;
- Conceptual and analytical skills;
- Technical skills;

- Interpersonal skills - above all, commitment, innovation, positive energy and team work;
- Independence in finding and solving problems;
- Full mobility.

**Table 1. Analysis of the definition of the knowledge worker**

Author	Discriminant	Definition
T. Davenport	Expertise, participation in knowledge management	They represent a high level of expertise, education and experience, the most important objectives of their work is the creation, dissemination and practical application of knowledge.
W. Kieżun	Free will, independence	Knowledge worker knows, knows how to, knows how to be, want and can.
M.U. Porat	Place in the process of knowledge	5 categories: Producers of knowledge: scientists, engineers, but also lawyers, judges, architects, consultants, accountants; Distributors of knowledge: teachers, librarians, editors, writers, authors and presenters radio and television; Market researchers and specialists of coordination: brokers, retailers, sales representatives, some members of the administration; Information workers: secretaries, accounting clerks, proofreaders; The personnel operating the machine information: operative telecommunication or electronic.
A. Pocztowski	Unique features	They are characterized by lifelong education, change professions and functions, less stability of employment, approach to work as the task and not the place of action, creative thinking, team work, managing your time and health, focus on career.
M. Morawski	Unique features	It is people specialized in his profession, having unique skills, well-informed, active, responsible and aware of their role and esteem, independent participants organization, mobile, aiming to build the image of a professional, being aware of their potential development, focused on innovation, ready to function changes in conditions, a positive attitude to the customer, having the ability to use ICT tools.
A. Pietruszka-Ortyl	Specific occupations	Specialists, senior managers, technical staff, scientific engineers.
E. Skrzypek	Involved in the processes of knowledge	They create, store, use and disseminate knowledge and information.
K. Perechuda	Autonomy	Independent nomad entering interacting network aimed at joint reading of images of economic reality.

Source: Own study based on (Davenport 2007; Kieżun 2003, p. 8; Porat 1998, p. 103-113; Pocztowski 2007, p. 39; Morawski 2003, p. 19; Skrzypek 2002, p. 679; Perechuda 2007, p. 139-140; Pietruszka-Ortyl 2002, p. 86)

## **The most important competences of knowledge workers**

In the twenty-first century we can no longer rely only on the development of business knowledge. In addition to the important role played by key skills and competencies of employees, which are based on creativity and human attitudes. In particular, this applies to outstanding individuals decisive for the development of the organization, i.e. knowledge workers.

This is another problem associated with the identification and management of knowledge workers in today's enterprise, as competencies include in its scope both the knowledge skills and abilities. Competence should be understood as all the characteristics of workers who used and developed in the work process leading to achieve results consistent with the strategic intentions of the company. It is a set of knowledge, abilities, styles of action, personality, shared principles, interests which properly used and developed, can be advantage in building competitive position in today's economic market (Skrzypek 2009, p. 10-11).

Competencies have three basic characteristics (Thierry, Sauret, Monod 1994, p. 6):

- Operational and purpose - only make sense in connection with the operation;
- The ability to adapt and effectively in a given situation - under specific conditions (adaptability);
- Combine different elements: knowledge, practical skills, reasoning and behaviour.

Speaking of knowledge workers can take as a key competence, all the elements that are necessary for proper implementation of activities related to work, learning and social behaviour. They consist of the intellectual powers and social skills related to practical. We can distinguish nine of them (Kłak 2010, p. 310-311):

- Teamwork;
- Use of modern information technology and communications technology;
- Troubleshooting;
- Listening to others and taking into account their points of view;
- The use of different sources of information;
- To communicate in several languages;
- Combining and organizing knowledge;
- Coping with abnormalities and complexity;
- Organizing and evaluating their own work;  
which have an impact on the specific action:
  - The ability to organize their work;
  - The ability to organize work to others;
  - The ability to search and information processing;
  - The ability to function in complex organizations;
  - The ability to formulate the problem and search for solutions;
- Ability to work in a team.

You could say that the potential employees who possess knowledge is very professional and unique. They are invaluable for any company that wants to achieve market success. However, the challenge for managers is to create optimal working conditions for this group of workers and the implementation of effective tools to manage them.

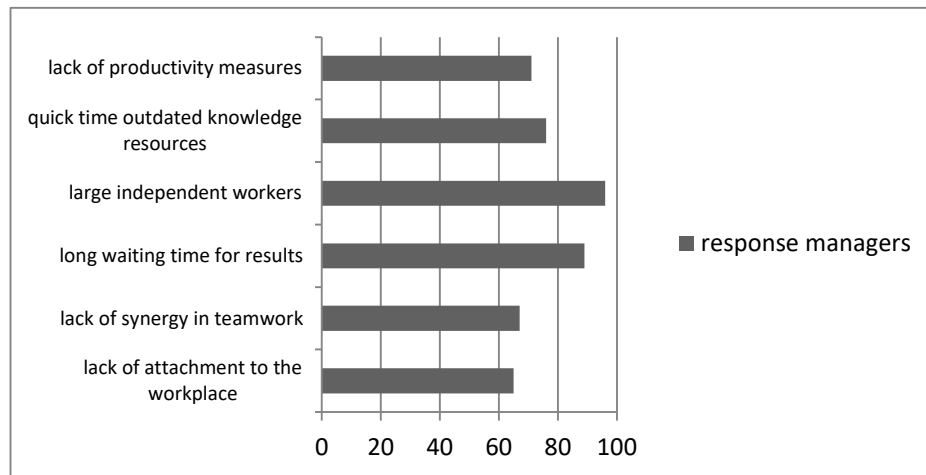
### **Analysis of the research results**

The importance of competence management knowledge workers will certainly grow, because times of building competitive advantage based on investments in material resources is the past. In the twenty-first century resources assets will play a key role in achieving the company targets.

These assumptions are also conformation in economic practice - confirmed it carried out by the author of the study - 100 large companies operating in the Baltic Sea Region in 2013-14. The main objective of the study was to determine the effect of knowledge workers on the competitive position of the company. One of the objectives details was to determine the effect of key competences of this group of employees at the company. The whole research process has two areas: the analysis of the internal documents of the companies and three groups of employees - managers (decision makers), their employees and identified key persons for the company. In total, the study involved 1,000 respondents who completed three separate questionnaires. For the purposes of this study, which represents only a small part of the whole research, analysis will focus on only one group of respondents - 250 managers.

It is worth saying that in any enterprise did not work the concept of the knowledge worker - to put a damper on the whole test, because the author had had to make an attempt to identify those employees (in Polish conditions turned out to be the most difficult). Only after re-analysis of the results succeeded, in 38 companies (38% of the group), to identify these people - there were 41 (almost 13% of all people).

Turning to the merits, however, the surveyed respondents indicated the main challenges facing them in creating a model of competence management knowledge workers in their companies. The detailed scope of answers is shown in *Figure 1*.



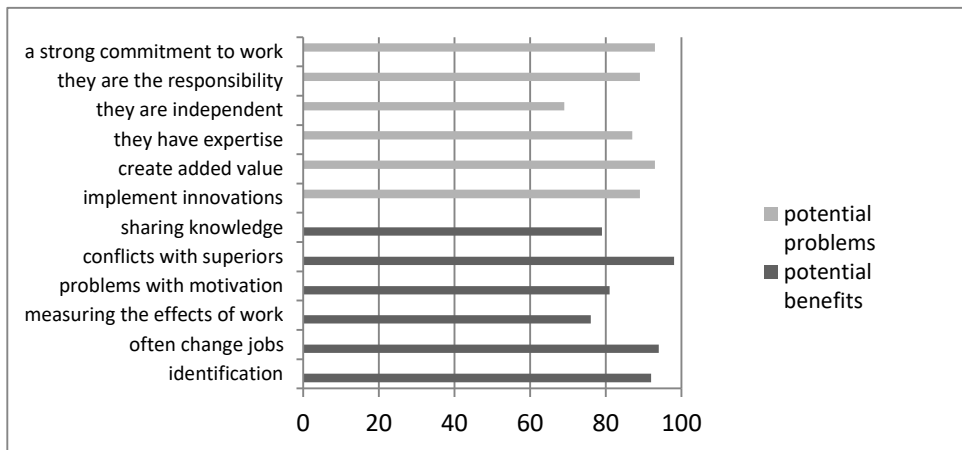
**Figure 1. Problems competency management of knowledge workers in analyzed enterprises**

Source: Own study

This collected information confirms earlier theoretical argument, which was about the characteristics of knowledge workers - they do not attach importance to the place where they work and what matters to them independence. Companies in which the identified knowledge workers, however, want to achieve their highest, so try to give them the optimal conditions that help to effectively use their competencies:

- Create a dedicated incentive schemes - 76% of the surveyed enterprises;
- Create individual path of development - 65%;
- Implement the partnership style of management - 61%;
- Guarantee a developed internal communication - 54%;
- Agree to a high degree of autonomy - 43%.

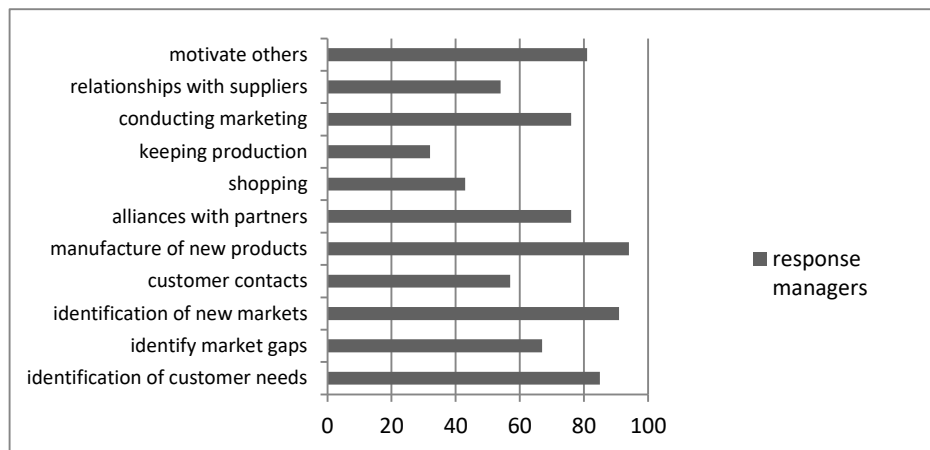
As you can see managing knowledge workers and their competence is a difficult task, which require a lot of concessions, on the one hand the company a lot of those people expect, and on the other hand they themselves have very different needs and expectations with respect to their place of employment. They do not like to receive commands to execute and terribly difficult for them to plan and organize work. It is also difficult to predict and create working conditions that enable them to optimal and efficient operation. In this process it does not work well as a high level of mobility of knowledge workers - the time and place of their work is not complete matter - they can work anywhere. Below in *Figure 2* are shown response test group managers about the problems and benefits of competency management of knowledge workers. It should be noted that the following summary of our answers is personal - are rethinking the internal individual from a group of respondents.



**Figure 2. Competence management knowledge workers – problems and benefits**

Source: Own study

In summary, in addition to appropriate incentive systems, tailored to the expectations of knowledge workers, another factor enabling efficient cooperation with them is to build an atmosphere of trust. In all the surveyed enterprises, which identified knowledge workers could be seen this type of behaviour. Visible effects were also taken action in that area, which concerned a greater loyalty and commitment of this group of workers. This has brought tangible business results - increased confidence of customers and business partners and to change the perception of the company's image on the market - friendly, attractive for employees. Below in *Figure 3* are shown areas that have the biggest impact competence of knowledge workers.



**Figure 3. Areas in which the greatest impact are competent knowledge workers**

Source: Own study



To sum up, in order to better exploit the potential of the competence of knowledge workers, the company at the beginning of the need to create favourable working conditions for this group of people, with particular emphasis on:

- Work in a team of professional people;
- Differentiation of tasks - and various ambitious goals that counteract the routine and monotony;
- Promotion of vertical and horizontal, that is: wage increases, greater autonomy or choice of tasks to be performed;
- A climate of trust based on cooperation and dialogue;
- Partnership management style - no barriers on the line subordinate - superior;
- The inclusion of all in the decision-making process;
- Changes in management roles - manager is a coach, coordinator, mentor - always available for their employees;
- Modern equipment jobs - quick access to knowledge and information;
- Access to any data collected by the company;
- Access to information about themselves - to understand their own work and self-esteem;
- Qualification and growing portfolio of competencies.

## Conclusion

From the companies that operate in variable environmental conditions and in the knowledge economy is expected ability to adapt tasks and methods of work organization to new challenges in determining their activities. To survive in the market, companies need to make many internal changes through the implementation of innovative projects and restructuring. In the new economic conditions, everything is based on knowledge, and success will reach only those who manage this knowledge - they know that this is the most important factor of production.

New challenge for boards of directors and management of modern enterprises is to identify and establish cooperation with the new group of workers who, thanks to his key competencies are able to realize business objectives based on their potential knowledge. Knowledge workers thanks to their ingenuity, talent, experience and skills to create value-added, will ensure the future success of their organization.

Of course, the identification of people, especially in the Polish conditions, the challenge and on the other hand, imperative. The key to success is, however, manage their competence and full commitment to work. New management systems need to be focused on knowledge workers and provide them with the opportunity for self-realization and development.

## Literature

1. Cielemeński M. (2011), *Pracownik wiedzy jako kluczowy zasób współczesnego przedsiębiorstwa*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczo-Humanistycznego w Siedlcach”, nr 89, p. 197-209.
2. Davenport T.H. (2007), *Zarządzanie pracownikami wiedzy*, Wolters Kluwer, Kraków.

3. Drucker P.F. (1999), *Spółczesność postkapitalistyczna*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
4. Kieżun W. (2003), *W stronę antyutopii*, „Przegląd Organizacji”, nr 2, p. 6-9.
5. Kłak M. (2010), *Zarządzanie wiedzą we współczesnym przedsiębiorstwie*, Kieleckie Towarzystwo Edukacji Ekonomicznej, Kielce.
6. Morawski M. (2003), *Problematyka zarządzania pracownikami wiedzy*, „Przegląd Organizacji”, nr 1, p. 17-20.
7. Morawski M. (2009), *Zarządzanie profesjonalistami*, PWE, Warszawa.
8. Perechuda K. (2007), *Dyfuzja wiedzy w przedsiębiorstwie sieciowym. Wizualizacja i kompozycja*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej we Wrocławiu, Wrocław.
9. Pietruszka-Ortyl A. (2002), *Kapitał intelektualny wyznacznikiem poziomu zasobów niematerialnych przedsiębiorstwa*, [in:] Cieśliński W. (red.), *Przedsiębiorstwa jako świątynie wiedzy*, Wydawnictwo Wałbrzyskiej Wyższej Szkoły Zarządzania i Przedsiębiorczości, Wałbrzych, p. 76-89.
10. Poczowski A. (2007), *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, PWE, Warszawa.
11. Porat M.U. (1998), *The Information Economy: Definition and Measurement*, [in:] Cortada W. (ed.), *Rise of the Knowledge Worker*, Heinemann, Boston 1998, p. 103-113.
12. Skrzypek E. (2002), *Miejsce zarządzania informacją i wiedzą w strategii przedsiębiorstwa*, [w:] Stabryła A. (red.), *Zarządzanie firmą w społeczeństwie informacyjnym*, Wydawnictwo EJB, Kraków, p. 672-683.
13. Skrzypek E. (2009), *Kreatywność pracowników wiedzy i ich wpływ na innowacyjność przedsiębiorstw*, <http://instytut.info/Vkonf/site/32.pdf> (accessed: 09.05.2016).
14. Thierry D., Sauret Ch., Monod N. (1994), *Zatrudnianie i kompetencje w przedsiębiorstwie w procesie zmian*, Poltext, Warszawa.

## ZARZĄDZANIE KOMPETENCJAMI PRACOWNIKÓW WIEDZY WE WSPÓŁCZESNYCH PRZEDSIĘBIORSTWACH

**Streszczenie:** W niniejszym artykule podjęto tematykę wykorzystania kompetencji pracowników wiedzy przez przedsiębiorstwa funkcjonujące na rynku gospodarczym w XXI wieku. W tym celu przedstawiono współczesne uwarunkowania rynkowe oraz opisano cechy i kompetencje pracowników wiedzy. Dodatkowo zaprezentowano częściowe wyniki badań własnych, których zadaniem była próba ukazania wpływu kluczowych kompetencji tej grupy pracowników na funkcjonowanie swych organizacji. Dokonane analizy materiałów źródłowych i wyników badań jednoznacznie ukazały rolę tychże kompetencji w budowaniu pozycji konkurencyjnej przez badane podmioty i zarazem konieczność podejmowania działań mających na celu stworzenie pracownikom wiedzy optymalnych warunków do pracy. Oczywiście podczas procesu badawczego pojawiły się opinie odnośnie problemów występujących we współpracy z tą grupą pracowników, ale zdaniem autora należy podjąć potencjalne ryzyko, by w przyszłości osiągnąć trwałą pozycję konkurencyjną na rynku.

**Słowa kluczowe:** pracownik wiedzy, kompetencje, zarządzanie kompetencjami