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Organizational Resistance as the Next Phase of Improving and Building Up Competitive Advantage

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Abstract

Theoretical background: The article explores the concept of organizational resistance on the example of Supreme Energy LLC. The growing importance of company's resistance and adaptability urged the author to examine a case of the medium-sized enterprise.

Purpose of the article: The main purpose of the study is to present a set of actions, which have influence on building up company's resistance to the surrounding turbulences. However, the detailed aim of the paper is to point out those actions, which – according to the respondents – contribute the most to building up the resistance of Supreme Energy LLC (in short, known under the name of SE), one of the fastest growing and developing companies in the sector of renewable energy sources (in short, known under the name of RES) in Poland.

Research methods: In order to achieve the goal that was chosen in the study, the author decided to make use of monographic method as well as source materials, which were made available by the subject under research. Additionally, it should be noted that the author applied the original questionnaire form and the scenario of direct interview.

Main findings: The results showed the fundamental role of partnership in cooperation and the degree of motivation in building up the resistance of company to change. The research analyzes the resistance of company to the surrounding turbulences by making use of the original sales scripts prepared by SE LLC for internal use.

Introduction

For many years, one can observe deliberations on outstanding and extraordinary effectiveness of companies, sources of competitive advantage or factors contributing to the broadly understood success. Companies, which operate in turbulent surroundings need to confront crisis situations, in the face of which it is necessary to take decisions and actions allowing to overcome problems and difficulties. In specialized literature, organizational resistance is defined as the ability of a company to react and fit in the ongoing changes (Beech et al., 2019). Resistance allows organizations to react and predict threats and notice chances resulting from both sudden and gradual changes – both in external and internal context. However, many sources mention also “resistance to change” as one of the reasons behind the failure of many companies to implement changes sufficiently fast (Erwin & Garman, 2010).

Therefore, the most difficult task ahead of organization is the proper management of any change initiatives, together with emotions, which usually accompany them. For example, Prochaska et al. (2001) indicate that more focus should be put on individual behaviour change. Consequently, it can be concluded that the proper recognition of a given situation and the analysis of emotions of group or entity on a timeline that helps to determine action plan and select tools and techniques, which can prevent negative results of change that occurred.

The recent years have been particularly abundant in changes on the global economic market. The closings and reopenings of the European economy over the course of the last two years, followed by broken global supply chains, production issues, workforce problems, energy shortages demand from companies even greater resistance and quick adaptability (Antonowicz et al., 2022). How did the companies cope? Which attributes have helped them?

The main aim of the study is to present actions, which have a significant influence on developing the resistance of SE LLC to the surrounding turbulences. A research hypothesis assumes that cooperation based on partnership, motivation and dynamics of management are the forces that boost up the process of building up resistance of Supreme Energy LLC. The unanswered research question is to what extent the effect of those forces ensures achieving the company’s goals and the assumed economic results? In the study, an endeavor will be made to prove that SE LLC is the company that is resistant to the surrounding turbulences.

Literature review

In the past, companies used to compete with each other using a single attribute: it was cheaper, faster or better (Maj, 2010). Current solutions must depend on simultaneous presence of the aforementioned attributes and competitive advantage can be expressed in the categories of results obtained on the market resulting from internal strong sides of company. In the battle for gaining competitive advantage, the winning companies are the ones whose main driving force is the talent of engaged, open to innovations employees (Maj, 2010). Clayton (2001) points out that although such attributes as market position or product quality are simpler to measure and describe, they are also easier to be copied. Thus, “tacit competencies” such as patterns of interactions and collaborations among employees, are considered to be more enduring as harder to develop and copy. In other words, teamwork, in particular how team members interact, collaborate and communicate with each other, affect performance (Hwang, 2018). Kozłowski and Klein (2000) distinguish between taskwork, that is the quality of work done by the team, and teamwork, described as interactions between members. The outcome of team performance known as team effectiveness does not refer to particular tasks, but affects overall company’s resistance (Salas et al., 2008).

It is believed that the most successful team is the one, which apart from proper knowledge, skills and competences is characterized by good atmosphere and proper attitude to work, which – despite the imperfection of the existing tools – is capable of delivering its results. Menéndez Blanco and Montes Botella (2016) claim that there is considerable contribution of teamwork, including diversity and productivity, together with innovation to company’s resistance.

Research methods

Supreme Energy is a company that was founded in January 2021 by people who have a passion for RES, acting in the RES sector with local affiliates located in numerous locations across Poland. The team consists of:

- 130 energy advisors – mostly cooperating on B2B basis – a type of agreement that is set up between the two business parties,
- 20 employees employed on a basis of full-time contract of employment, who care for the speed and effectiveness of actions on a daily basis.

A strategic business partner of SE is Arago LLC based in Brodnica – one of the most innovative companies within the scope of renewable energy sources.



Figure 1. Map of sales structure of SE LLC

Source: Materials made available by the SE Marketing Department.

The company's vision was formulated in the following way:

We are going to be the company, which will be chosen by sales specialists and most frequently recommended by our clients. We want to be innovative and effective and continuously develop. We want to ensure the best possible conditions for our employees, support them at work, invest in their knowledge and develop their experience. We believe that the biggest potential can be found in people, who have energy to act. (Supreme Energy LLC, n.d.)

When the Polish Sejm adopted the amendment to the Act on Renewable Energy Sources at the turn of the first and second quarter of 2022, the Polish photovoltaic industry was facing numerous difficulties and disturbances (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 478). A change in the system of settlement with consumers came under heavy criticism from the photovoltaic market, which had predicted the market crunch, massive layoffs and closing businesses. Supreme Energy is not concentrated on this change, breaks it down into its constituent parts, prepares tools, issues an appropriate announcement, trains sales representatives and breaks another sales records (Zielonka, 2022).

According to Alexander Graham Bell, "when one door closes, another opens, but we often look so long and regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us". In SE, the new reality, which took place after the implementation of net-billing, did not cause the necessity to implement new structures and processes, the above remained unchanged. One of the few changes was a change in behavior. In its mission the company highlights that in order to achieve the goals that are set, one should build up a team of people, whose energy will reach everyone. 93.1% of the respondents declare that they get support from team/superiors/owners in everyday work and in the process of realizing their ambitions and needs. A lot of respondents emphasize that they get factual and spiritual support. Franklin D. Roos-

evelt once said: “People acting together as a group can accomplish things which no individual acting alone could ever hope to bring about”. This is the motto SE is guided in its actions, showing on its websites and company materials the belief that SE brings together people, who do not want to follow the beaten path. They want to achieve what is new, not looking at others, they want to design tomorrow. SE means relations where everyone is a partner on each stage of cooperation. SE is a company, whose priority is development understood as realization of the company’s goals and the development of employees at the same time.

The paper is the author’s original work based on the research results. It should be noted that the author made use of monographic method and carried out the analysis of the source materials, which were made available by the company under research. What is more, the author’s original questionnaire form was used in the article as well as the tool in the form of expert questionnaire form survey. Anonymous, digital questionnaire was sent on a one-off basis to all employees working at SE, but also to contractors, and companies cooperating with SE on the basis of B2B – altogether 150 people/business entities. The survey was carried out on 5–15 August 2022. 102 filled questionnaire forms were sent back, which constitutes 68% of total amount. The questionnaire form consists of 22 questions, both closed and open ones as well as imprint. The questionnaire being part of the survey was addressed to the company’s shareholders and consisted of 14 carefully selected questions, paying special attention to number, order, content and form. The research was based on completing the open, individual and categorized survey.

Results

The results of the survey showed that 91.18% of the respondents claim that SE is a company, which supports the development of employees, whereas 8.82% of the respondents neither agree nor disagree. It is noteworthy that almost 70% of the respondents claim that they have influence on the results achieved by SE, and 70.87% of the respondents define relations within organization as partnership in cooperation, understood as a sense of being a partner taking part in management.

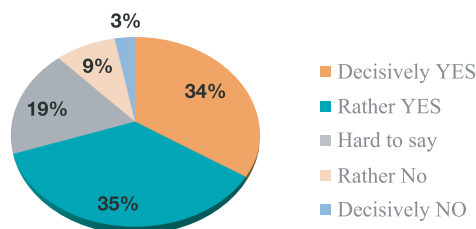


Figure 2. Sense of having influence on the results achieved by SE in the opinion of respondents

Source: Author’s own study.

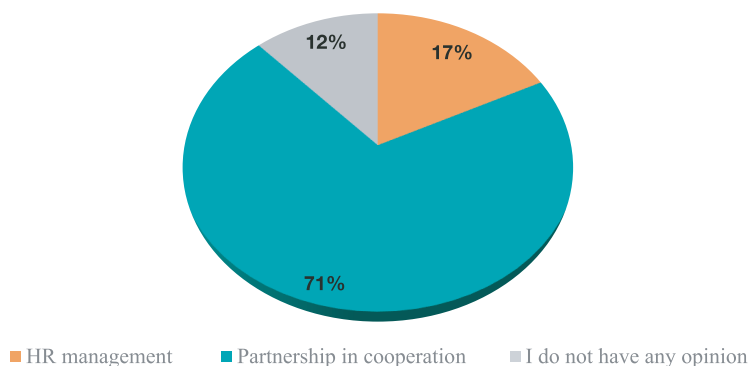


Figure 3. The way of managing HR at SE in the opinion of respondents

Source: Author's own study.

SE business activity is not only products and sales but also building up relations. On the basis of the respondents' opinions, it can be seen that there is an excellent atmosphere, a sense of safety and mutual support in the company, which is extremely important not only for the new members of the organization. Nevertheless, SE is an organization, which must fit external processes, structures and systems into the continuously changing reality. It seems that there is no other way but to develop new organizational competences, i.e. skills and competences of the members of the organization.

A really interesting phenomenon is the fact that during numerous trainings and meetings, the company does not hire external trainers. Classes are held by employees, who are passionate about a given topic, and who adapt materials and language of communication to the existing organizational culture. As a result of the questionnaire survey (research), 94.12% of the respondents claim that trainings should be conducted by people related to the company, and 5.88% of the respondents are of the opinion that the company should reach for external trainers, who can present another look at certain topics and can be more objective. Arguments given by the respondents indicating that engaging internal staff in the training process is beneficial and is connected with:

- passing knowledge based on experience gained at SE,
- building up trust of the organization – trainer is a person everyone knows and has evidence of his/her effectiveness that is reflected in a number of practical examples,
- passing specific knowledge regarding sales of specific product, without distracting attention away from the main topic (avoiding marginal topics),
- the possibility of having constant contact with trainer, because he/she is coworker at the same time, who can supplement training content, which was not provided to the trainees in a satisfactory or sufficient way;
- better knowledge assimilation thanks to the fact that trainer is coworker, who knows the whole process, uses understandable terminology and does not need to spend time trying to build a friendly atmosphere as it already exists in the company.

On the one hand, transforming team members into trainers lowers costs but what is more important, it improves morale of staff members, who are trained, giving them possibility to be acknowledged for their additional knowledge and skills (Laloux, 2015). Such employees are able to adopt the range of training to the needs that are proposed by members of the organization systematically.

The participants of the survey as well as interviewed shareholders speak with one voice claiming that one of the chief assets are permanent trainings, to which SE pays a special attention. Both to trainings dedicated to newcomers, when someone starts cooperation with the company, and to trainings dedicated to employees with certain seniority. The strength of the company and the way to build up resistance to surrounding turbulences are, among other things, coaching sessions, meetings, webinars, everyday contact during morning briefings, proper announcements and attitude. Apart from numerous trainings, which are organized permanently, one can observe events that are held cyclically, namely:

- Academy of Advisor,
- Academy of Manager,
- Supreme Day – company meeting held three times a year, where the first part is dedicated to factual trainings and motivation. However, the second part is the public prize-giving ceremony and an occasion for acknowledgment.

High level of trainings for new advisors, managerial trainings and a wide range of proposals and suggestions regarding trainings and workshops, build up the resistance and strength of the organization by gaining knowledge, competences but also by building up business ties, a sense of safety and future of many people. 86.27% of the respondents claim that apart from participating in trainings and workshops, they also work on self development by reading specialized literature, watching films and programs about personal development.

An increased level of motivation directly after trainings and meetings is observed by 99% of the respondents. Nevertheless, one should not forget about the phenomenon of disappearing training effects – a situation where behaviors shaped during trainings have a tendency to vanish or can be converted into everyday behaviors. One of the extremely important functions of management is motivation, which can be divided into two areas: (1) material motivation and (2) non-material motivation.

A lot of research show that the most significant role in the system of motivation is remuneration for work. The fundamental issue which underlines material motivation is “creating financial conditions, which allow to recruit and retain employees and engage them in realizing the company’s goals” (Listwan, 2013).

The core of the process is common engagement, present at all stages of the process. As a result of the questionnaire survey, 41.18% of the respondents described that their work engagement is 100%, however, 26.47% of the respondents stated that their work engagement is over 100%. It is difficult to explicitly answer what is the reason for such satisfying results. It is certain that the level of feeling valued at work and the level of salary satisfaction can form the basis for such high engagement.

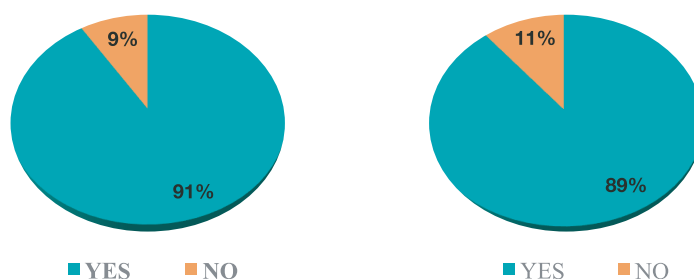


Figure 4. Level of feeling valued and salaries in SE

Source: Author's own study.

The research that were done clearly showed that 91% of the respondents are of the opinion that they are paid handsomely with reference to their involvement in work. Among the respondents who presented the opposite opinion, one could observe a prevalent opinion saying that time devoted to work was not used effectively and the respondents emphasized the necessity of changing this state of affairs (situation). It is an extremely inspirational and mature attitude, which proves the thesis that SE team builds up the resistance of the organization to the surrounding turbulences. Almost 90% of the employees working for SE feel valued at work, which undoubtedly translates into motivation and achieving the company's goals.

Apart from remuneration, one can observe the additional material motivations, among other things, bonuses, a prize in money or a prize in kind. It was also observed that the subject under research uses the system of prizing in money and in kind. The flagship prizes go as follows:

- “Boar of the week” – the rules of this program include additional remuneration given to employee, who achieves the best sales result in a given week,
- “Top Advisor” – a prize given to employees who managed to sign the highest number of agreements between one Supreme Day and the other,
- “Supreme Car” – an employee who meets requirements specified in the internal rules, receives remuneration, which is an equivalent of a monthly leasing installment, a monthly rent of a rental agreement or a monthly installment of a car loan,
- Trip abroad – an employee who meets the requirements specified in the internal rules of SE, is awarded a prize in the form of trip abroad,
- “Top salary” – a prize for employees cooperating with SE on a B2B basis, who achieved the highest incomes on sales since the date of signing a contract.

The result of the research showed that 41.7% of the respondents were awarded a prize while working at SE, and the fact that prizes are awarded in front of the rest of the colleagues (in public) was an additional incentive in the opinion of 86.36% of the respondents. The respondents, who were awarded a prize in such a way, emphasize the fact that this situation gives an opportunity to show other company employees that hard work, involvement and determination are valued and bring notable financial benefits. A lot of respondents cannot imagine the situation, in which

they are not rewarded – it determines employees' actions and aims for crossing next borders.

When constructing a motivation system for employees, it is necessary to create conditions to reach goals by employees in order to be awarded external and internal prizes. On top of that, it is also important to monitor aspirations of coworkers and create conditions, which satisfy needs of employees so that the best and the most determined SE employees will stay with the company for many years to come.

Discussion

The problem of those who are in charge of managing organization is connected with the situation of creating novelties but also when facing the surrounding turbulences, the people in charge do not know the result, therefore, they cannot plan: making out schedules, fragmenting aim, setting up budgets, defining parameters of the expected level of quality. Such an activity is risky and difficult to anticipate. Looking at this issue from the perspective of modern network economy, it turns out that fragmentation, lack of stability and uncertainty are normal phenomena and they should be accepted as attributes of reality.

The success of organization, among other things, depends on the effectiveness of actions that are taken, and hence making decision, which means problem identification and searching for a desired solution to a given problem become a priority. A lot of employees, though not all of them, make a number of decisions in their everyday work, but sometimes they fail to call a spade a spade. However, it is taking decisions by bosses that has a fundamental meaning. A Nobel prize winner, Herbert Simon recognized taking decisions as a synonym of management (Simon, 1977).

Each manager should independently develop a certain individual decision-making tactics, using the obtained knowledge within the scope of making decisions, their own intuition and life experience as well as reliable and complete information (Penc, 1999). It should be underlined that each decision is difficult due to the fact that one cannot predict a possible result of taking a given decision. Process of taking decisions in modern (present-day) organization is the most important element of the general process of managing staff and material resources, which is aimed at achieving goals. However, it should be clearly stated that decision-making is the process that is getting more and more complicated and difficult. It requires combination of knowledge, intuition, experience, originality and ingenuousness (Penc, 1999).

Time is undoubtedly an asset for making decision individually, and this process lasts shorter. However, one should take into consideration the fact that a person, who takes decisions, has limited knowledge, experience, and also his/her limited openness to new information and incentives. The respondents emphasized unanimously that in the situation when it is necessary to take a decision in a very short time, during which there is no possibility of checking many aspects of a given decision,

they take decisions on the basis of their experience and intuition (“I prefer paying for something I chose to being reactive”; “All my life I have been taking risky but constrictive decisions – this had led me to the place where I am now”). Additionally experts, who were surveyed, emphasized that they have no problems with taking individual decisions and taking responsibilities for all decisions taken. At the same time, if a given decision requires consulting with business partners or coworkers, they make use of this possibility, because they have no problem with admitting that they do not have expert knowledge in a certain area.

Without a doubt, one of the strengths of SE is the tempo of making decisions, which results from the organizational structure and the adopted model of running business. This fact is confirmed by the results of the research, in which the respondents clearly emphasize that making decisions at a right time, which is understood as the time allowing to achieve a given goal, is very important in their everyday work. The experts, who were subject to the survey, highlighted that no decision is still a decision, and wrong or incorrect decisions are the opportunity to analyze cause and effect.

More than 82% of the respondents, claim than the pace of decision-making at the company is appropriate. 13.73% of the respondents do not have an opinion regarding this topic. 1.95% of the respondents believe that the pace of decision-making is inappropriate and, therefore, it does not compliment the effectiveness of current activities of the company.

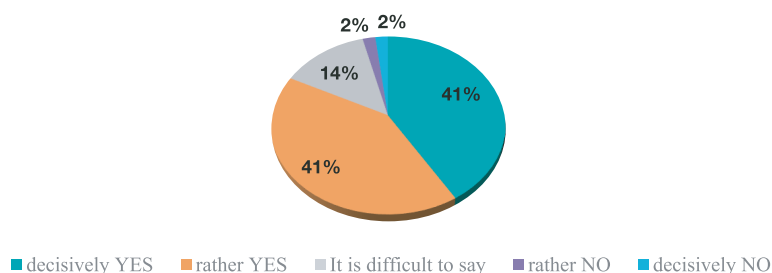


Figure 5. Tempo of making decisions at SE according to the respondents

Source: Author's own study.

The results of the research presented in Table 1 indicate that the decisions made to date bring notable results in the form of the number of signed contracts or the amount of sold kilowatts (kWp) on a monthly basis, and in May 2022, SE obtained the result of 3,213,525 kWp – the highest result in the history of the company.

As data shows, the company managed to get through the turbulences caused by an amendment to the Act on Renewable Energy Sources. Sales are growing dynamically, so does the number of signed contracts. SE gross profit at the end of the year 2021, was PLN 864,000, while at the end of the second quarter – PLN 1,664,961. One of the main goals for SE is to be in first place on the RES market in Poland, and in the future perspective, making an endeavor to enter foreign markets.

Table 1. The number of sold kWp in the years 2021–2022

	kWp 2021	kWp 2022
January	837.45	1,803.64
February	752.03	2,415.39
March	1,064.67	2,590.35
April	1,263.76	1,313.69
May	1,120.26	3,213.53
June	1,073.38	2,205.38
July	1,018.70	2,787.49
August	619.61	2,015.96
September	1,046.87	2,403.50
October	1,423.74	
November	1,299.21	
December	1,269.91	

Source: Author's own study.

One should look for the roots of sales success in numerous factors and it is the multitude of elements, which had an impact on systematic sales growth. Apart from the aforementioned conditions, one should pay special attention to original sales drafts (scripts). In the opinion of the respondents, as well as those interviewed in the survey, it is the use of those materials that influences the success of the organization in great measure. The above were drawn up within the organization and constitute an invaluable know-how and facilitate substantially everyday work in the opinion of 89.22% of the respondents. The sales model presented in the drafts allows to duplicate solutions, optimize time and involvement. The respondents, who were subject to the research, emphasized the following advantages of making use of the sales scripts developed by SE:

- they can act as model for taking actions,
- they are drawn up in a professional way,
- they are a proven tool to carry out a task completely,
- “everything was handed to me on a plate when it comes to the draft (script), so it is facilitation, which we can call a dream” (one of the opinions taken from the questionnaire survey),
- a well thought-out, logical sales material, which everybody can learn,
- the given scripts allow working according to a proven pattern.

The scripts drawn up by SE constitute unique solutions on a nationwide scale, which allows to duplicate solutions. It was Tadeusz Kotarbiński, who indicated that in order to increase activity, one should replace creative efforts with imitative actions (Kotarbiński, 2019). In the opinion of the respondents, the above scripts are interestingly constructed and serve well during field works. For people, who do not have sales experience, scripts are the basic material, whose mastering takes little time and in short period allows to put sales actions into practice during meetings with clients.

In one of the interview, the expert emphasized that “a cross section of our structure and sales experience show that the main feature, which is often behind sales success are volitional features, features related to diligence, perseverance, and high ambitions. SE massively changes cooks, courtier or warehousemen in salesmen. We offer those people ready-made sales tool, and the rest results from our individual predispositions”.

The role of shareholders in the company’s success is of vital importance as they create strategies, plan development of employees as well as their own development. On top of that, shareholders effectively support solving critical situations. They systematically participate in the process of building up the team, delegate and teach others to delegate the powers, prepare and implement new operational standards. They are always close to people, take decisions bravely not putting them off until later. Procrastination is the killer of success and SE leaders are fully aware of it. If a particular task has a fundamental meaning for potential achievements – they do not postpone this matter until later, but act instead (Lenar, 2013). “Setting priorities is an answer to problems related to time management – not computers, efficiency experts, or matrix planning. You do not have to work faster or eliminate breaks at work to be able to use your time at work more effectively. You should devote more time to the right matters” (Lenar, 2013).

The solutions that were taken up in the earlier part of the study show numerous strengths of SE. One should pay special attention to the results of the questionnaire survey, namely the attitude of coworkers towards the board. Particular emphasis should be placed on the result of the survey, in which almost 60% of the respondents treat the company founders as their authority.

44.66% of the respondents see the company founders as bosses, and 39.81% consider them to be mentors. What is interesting is that 16.50% treat them as colleagues/friends. Moreover, 28.16% of the respondents recognise the company founders as partners in their daily duties. 9.71% of the respondents do not agree with any of the above (Figure 6).

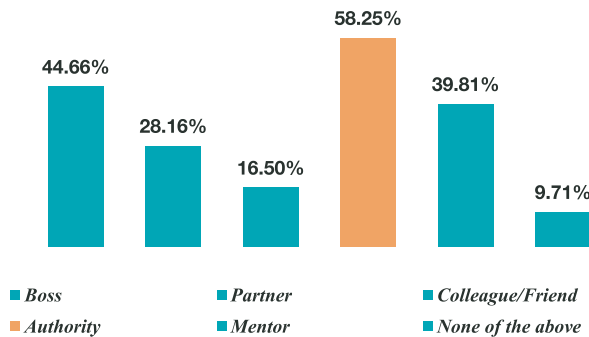


Figure 6. Image of SE board members

Modern companies function in continually changing surroundings, namely legal and political changes, tough competition, growing customer expectations and innovations. Because of that, it is absolutely necessary for organization to react to those changes if goals that were set are to be realized and achieved. One of the conditions of building up successful resistance to surrounding turbulences is building up effective and engaged team, and SE managed to build up such a team, to a large extent, thanks to the authority of the company founders.

Conclusions

Thanks to the ability of dealing with unpredictable changes, an entity can reduce a feeling of uncertainty among members of a given organization, which, among other things, results in an increase in trust and sense of belonging and the end is that one can observe an increase in the effectiveness of actions.

The questionnaire surveys that were carried out together with interviews permit to state explicitly that cooperation based on partnership, motivation and dynamic of management are the forces, which build up the resistance of Supreme Energy LLC. The effect of the above forces ensures realization of goals and achieving assumed economic results.

Taking into consideration the ambitious goals set by SE shareholders, i.e.:

- to become the number one company in Poland in the RES sector,
- to initiate the construction of photovoltaic farms,
- to enter foreign markets,
- to increase employment by 100%, and
- to continuously build up competitive advantage,

it should be clearly stated that all the actions taken so far must be continued because on the basis of the research that was done, the above lead the company in the right direction. Additionally, organizational processes in all areas should be permanently improved, paying special attention to customer care, because one of the SE priorities is the high level of customer care quality.

Arguments that were presented in the study, weigh in favor of the argument that the company is resistant to changes of the surrounding environment – those are the arguments and data that allow to draw this premise today. Because of the fact that present-day management should be defined as long periods of continual changes, disrupted by short periods of stability, the world, in which companies act and in which most of us live is the world of “temporality” (Robbins, 2001).

SE is an open system, which constantly works on developing the ability to adapt to the changes in the surrounding environment in a fast and appropriate way. The leaders are resourceful, take initiative, take risk willingly, and, above all, can create a vision of the future. Those features, combined with human relations existing within the company, allow to look optimistically into the future. Nevertheless, one should

not forget that the company has been less than two years on the market, it is the organization that is still learning, improving its processes and tools. The necessity of dealing with “temporality” makes companies function in the conditions, which are characterized by flexibility, spontaneity and unpredictability.

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