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**MANAGING CREATIVITY IN THE ACTIVITIES
OF COMPANIES PROVIDING MUNICIPAL SERVICES.
ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES FROM POLAND**

**ZARZĄDANIE KREATYWNOŚCIĄ W DZIAŁALNOŚCI FIRM
ŚWIADCZĄCYCH USŁUGI KOMUNALNE. ANALIZA
STUDIÓW PRZYPADKÓW Z POLSKI**

**УПРАВЛЕНИЕ КРЕАТИВНОЙ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬЮ
В КОМПАНИЯХ, ПРЕДОСТАВЛЯЮЩИХ КОММУНАЛЬНЫЕ
УСЛУГИ. АНАЛИЗ ТЕМАТИЧЕСКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ
ИЗ ПОЛЬШИ**

Abstract

This article deliberates on the topic of managing the organization's creativity. Attempts have been made to define this concept with regard to its various dimensions. In order to refer to the practice of the above issues was presented and discussed in detail the methodology of Design Thinking. Its essence is brought down to the search for creative solutions to business and social problems. It includes various entities, including consumers, in finding the answers to these various issues, which contributes to better meeting their needs. The last part of this study illustrates three case studies presenting the possibilities of creative problem-solving related to the activity in the municipal services industry. Two first case studies refer to the previously mentioned Design Thinking method. In contrast, the third case study is an example of the creative approach of a company dealing with a selective waste collection for the needs of the disabled people. It is also an example of social innovation and open innovation.


Keywords: *creativity, communal services, management, innovations*

Streszczenie

W niniejszym artykule podjęto temat dotyczący zarządzania kreatywnością organizacji. Dokonano w nim próby zdefiniowania tego pojęcia z uwzględnieniem jego różnych wymiarów. W celu odniesienia powyższych zagadnień do praktyki została zaprezentowana i omówiona w sposób szczegółowy metodologia Design Thinking. Jej istota sprowadza się poszukiwania kreatywnych rozwiązań problemów biznesowych i

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społecznych. Włącza ona w znalezienie odpowiedzi na te kwestie różne podmioty w tym konsumentów, co przyczynia się do lepszego zaspokojenia ich potrzeb. W ostatniej części niniejszego opracowania zaprezentowano trzy studia przypadku pokazujące możliwości kreatywnego rozwiązywania problemów związanych z działalnością w branży usług komunalnych. Pierwsze dwa studia przypadków nawiązują do wspomnianej wcześniej metody Design Thinking. W odróżnieniu od nich trzecie studium przypadku jest przykładem kreatywnego podejścia firmy zajmującej się selektywną zbiórką odpadów dla potrzeb osób niepełnosprawnych. Stanowi ono również przykład innowacji społecznej oraz innowacji otwartej.

Słowa kluczowe: kreatywność, usługi komunalne, zarządzanie, innowacje.

Аннотация

В этой статье рассматривается тема управления креативной деятельностью организации. В данной работе была сделана попытка определить эту концепцию, принимая во внимание ее различные измерения. Чтобы обратиться к вышеупомянутым проблемам, методология Design Thinking была представлена и подробно обсуждена. Ее суть сводится к поиску креативных решений деловых и социальных проблем. Она вовлекает различные организации, в том числе потребителей, в поиск ответов на эти вопросы, что способствует лучшему удовлетворению их потребностей. В последней части данного исследования представлены три тематических исследования, демонстрирующие возможности творческого решения проблем, связанных с деятельностью в сфере коммунальных услуг. Первые два тематических исследования относятся к ранее упомянутому методу Design Thinking. Напротив, третье тематическое исследование является примером творческого подхода компании, занимающейся селективным сбором отходов для нужд людей с ограниченными возможностями. Это также пример социальных инноваций и открытой инновационной деятельности.

Ключевые слова: креативность, коммунальные услуги, управление, инновации.

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Statement of the problem in general outlook and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks.


The main problem of this article is to determine the possibilities of using creativity management in the activities of service companies on the example of entities dealing with the provision of municipal services. This issue is of particular importance due to the possibility of building competitive advantage, based on the creativity management, of

companies providing municipal services, referring to the potential of their employees, which coincides with the concept of human resource management.

From the point of view of the management theory, it is crucial to resolve the issue of effectiveness and efficiency of such activities in relations to the possibilities of better functioning of companies providing

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municipal services and better satisfaction of their consumers' needs. This article is an attempt to make this kind of analysis. It indicates potential factors influencing the creativity of the organization and discusses the use of the creative thinking method. In

the further part of the article, case studies of Polish companies providing municipal services referring to the activities and projects implemented in them of the creative nature have been illustrated.

Analysis of latest research where the solution of the problem was initiated.

Creativity, as the most important feature of human capital, influences the implementation of innovation and is the foundation of the innovation process. It can be defined as creating useful and valuable products, services, procedures or ideas by units cooperating together (Woodman, 2010, p. 293-321). Currently, it has become the domain of people who undertake daily professional and educational activity, and not only the unique, special and sublime feature of exceptional human individuals (Drozdowski, 2010, p. 16-18). The classic theories of Maslow, Rogers, Fromm, Mayo were at the basis of such an understanding of creativity, treating creativity as a human need and a manifestation of his self-realization. According to R. Florida, a change in the employment structure is taking place nowadays – there is a transition from “blue and white collars workers” to “no collar workers” – i.e. the development of the “creative class”, i.e. people whose work is based on the creation of new knowledge, transferring information or the broadly understood new forms of conducting a business, which are connected by a great autonomy of undertaken actions and a substantial freedom of functioning. This class includes journalists, artists, scholars, employees of new technologies, advisers, consultants, teachers (McGranahan, 2011, p. 529-557). According to E. Necka, the concept of creativity includes not only the features of the intellect, but also the motivational aspects and personality traits of a particular person. The concept of creative human

capital (i.e. capable of generating new/original and at the same time valuable solutions in terms of cognitive, aesthetic, pragmatic or ethical), both in macro- and micro-scale, refers to both regular employees and managers of companies (Necka, 2003, p. 13-17).


Despite the frequent use of the adjective “creative” characterizing, e.g., people, works of art, or books, there is a great confusion in the proper interpretation of the category of creative thinking. It is “an important feature of all aspects of decision-making in business. It involves stimulating new thoughts, reformulating the existing knowledge and analysing assumptions in order to formulate new theories and paradigms or creating awareness. It is a process that involves disclosing, selecting, exchanging and combining facts, ideas and skills”, (Proctor, 1998, p. 30-35).

M. Wertheimer characterized creativity as “breaking or reorganizing thoughts on a given subject, undertaken in order to obtain a new, deeper insight into its nature” (Wertheimer, 1959, p. 22-24). In turn, T. Rickards defined creativity as “an escape from mental stagnation” (Rickards, 1998, p. 60-70), emphasizing the role of creative thinking in the decision-making process and problem solving (Proctor, 1998, p. 30-35).

The development of individual and team creativity depends not only on the skills, talents and individual actions of the individual, but also the conditions prevailing in the organization. In traditional organizations, there are many

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organizational barriers, such as bureaucracy, rigid hierarchy and autocracy in management, too much control, dishonesty of management at all levels, anxiety and suspicion, and insecurity that prevents the discovery and use of the creative potential of employees (Brzeziński, 2009, p. 9-10). According to M. Brzeziński, contemporary organizations rarely have the atmosphere conducive to individual, team and company creativity, so it is necessary to “(...) create a new organizational form in which creativity becomes one of the basic paradigms (Brzeziński, 2009, p. 9-10).

The first condition of creativity in the organization is the elimination of organizational barriers, such as: lack of resources and support to try new concepts, bureaucracy and myopia, resistance to changes and fear of tasking risks, tendency to conformism, too much control from the management, meticulous analysis of the concept, rigid hierarchy within the organization, ineffective interpersonal communication, the tendency to search for one winner and stress that leads to anxiety or loss of the sense of security, which results in complete loss of creative possibilities of employees (Proctor, 1998, p. 30-35)

Creative people are characterized by:

- the ability to generate a large number of ideas in a short time,
- constant search for new solutions,
- originality – creating innovative connections and ideas,
- the ability to choose the optimal solution,
- perseverance in overcoming difficulties,
- motivation as a problem and a challenge,
- vitality and efficacy,

- consequence, regularity, courage,
- tolerance and respect for different views,
- avoiding taking premature positions in the case,
- openness to criticism,
- relativistic view of reality,
- independence of the courts (Nawrat, 2013, p. 32-33).


The creative achievements of employees do not depend on their outstanding mental abilities, but rather on the willingness to overcome habits, stereotypes and conventions in thinking and everyday life, and the ability to look at problems in their various aspects (Drozdowski, 2010, p. 16-18).

Important factors affecting the creative attitudes of employees include:

- surroundings, supporting the employee in his creative activity, atmosphere conducive to creativity in the enterprise, appreciating creative initiatives by the management,
- work atmosphere, especially teamwork to foster discussions that contribute to the creation of creative ideas,
- leadership style – autocratic, not conducive to the development of creativity in the enterprise, it inhibits the independence and individuality of employees, who expect the leader to solve all problems,
- selection of the right people for the right positions,
- clarity of responsibilities, tasks and expectations towards employees,
- skilfully matching the skills of employees, their interests and personality types to the entrusted responsibilities,
- constructive criticism and providing employees with clear guidelines

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concerning the expected behaviour, corresponding to the assumed

implementation of the organization's goals (Szopiński, 2013, p. 91-102).

Aims of paper. Methods.

This article addresses the issues of creativity management in companies that provide municipal services.

It describes the concept of creativity and its determinants. It attempts to refer these issues to the activities of companies providing municipal services. The considerations in this respect are illustrated by examples of case studies of companies operating in the industry, depicting the creativity management in practice.

The theoretical aim of the article is to attempt to solve the opportunities of the application of the selected methods for stimulating creativity in practice with particular emphasis on the Design Thinking method.

The cognitive goal of this article is to show the areas of operation in which the companies providing municipal services can benefit from the creativity management.

This article also has a utilitarian objective associated with the so-called best practices, which have proven themselves in the Polish reality and which are worth propagating on a broader scale.

The article uses the case study method to refer to creative activities carried out in the selected Polish companies providing municipal services, literature studies and analysed the essence of the Design Thinking method.

Design Thinking is an intuitive method of work, thanks to which innovations are formed in multidisciplinary teams.

It combines elements of engineering, business, design and social sciences. Thanks to it, it is possible to create an innovative product or service, improve the customer service process or develop new ways of communicating with consumers.

This method is defined in many ways (Serafiński, 2009, p. 40). Its creator, Tim Brown, describes it as transferring design tools into the hands of people who have never considered themselves as in any way related to designing, and applying these tools to a much broader spectrum of problems (Brown, 2009, p. 4). Another definitions states that Design Thinking is a "discipline that uses the common sense and methods of designers to meet the needs of people using what is technologically possible and what can be changes into value for the customer and market opportunity by the business strategy" (Brown, 2008, p. 86). T. Lockwood draws attention to the fact that Design Thinking is a process focused on a person and his needs. It can be used for creating new products, services, as well as for solving business problems and challenges (Lockwood, 2009, p. 54-56).

Design Thinking is based on four basic principles, which include:

- human rule – according to it, design is a social activity, thus solving problems should aim at satisfying human needs,
- ambiguity rule – abandoning the setting of limitations and strict defining, as well as allowing experimentation and different perception of certain things has a positive effect on stimulating creativity and innovation,
- re-designing rule – it should be understood that the problem, which solution is being developed, has usually been analysed before, so it is worth learning about the historical solutions and methods of dealing with this need,
- tangibility rule – i.e. making the idea real through its visualization and

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prototype promotes better communication between those involved in the design (Meinel, 2011, p. 45-48).

As it has already been mentioned before, Design Thinking is based on the functioning of multidisciplinary teams, which is beneficial for stimulating the creativity of their members (Starostka, 2015, p. 1071). The design team dealing with problem solving and development of new products should include people from the production department, research and development, marketing, sales, as well as designers. Due to the fact that their competences are diverse, they have the chance to develop innovative solutions (Bruce, 2002. p. 49).

Not all tools used by designers to improve the process of solving problems and communication with business partner come from the field of engineering and design. Design Thinking, as a multidisciplinary approach, uses methods and tools from various fields of knowledge, such as art, engineering, anthropology, psychology, etc. (Tschimmel, 2012, p. 49). The Design Thinking method consists of five phases that allow the project to develop from the moment the problem is identified to the phase of searching and developing solutions. These are empathizing, defining the problem, generating ideas, building prototypes and testing (Design thinking bootcamp bootleg).


Empathizing enables a deeper understanding of the recipients for whom a given product is designed through observations and interviews with them. Thus, results to the following questions are obtained: Who is my user? and What matters for this person? According to the creators of the Design Thinking method, innovation begins from empathy, which allows a comprehensive understanding of

the needs of its users. It is the most crucial to diagnose and determine the “hidden motivations” that have an impact on people’s behaviour and to understand the market or technological conditions of the project. At the emphasizing stage, such tools and methods as interviews and recognition surveys, user observations, are used, and the environment analysis is conducted in which there is a problem or a need to develop a new product. It is also worth conducting observations of user behaviour, because they can use their own amateur improvements that can contribute to the design of new products.

During the problem definition stage, a viewpoint is created that is based on the insights and needs of the users. Because of this, it is possible to answer the issues regarding the determination of customer needs. At this state, the interdisciplinary team synthesizes the information collected during the previous phase, i.e. empathizing, which is aimed at determining the right problem that ought to be solved. This stage requires the rejection of standard thought frames and habits that limit the field of view, thus not allowing us to look at problems from a broader perspective. The proper definition of the problem makes it much easier to determine the direction of the solutions sought. Most often, this stage can be the most difficult task for a design team, because most people prefer to work on a specific solution from the very beginning, instead of moving in uncertainty of many possible directions. However, it should be remembered that defining the problem too hastily narrows the view of the whole picture, which may mean that despite devoting a lot of time, energy and financial outlays, the developed solution will not fully meet the client’s needs. The techniques, such as re-framing, 5 Why, etc. should be used to define the problem.

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During the next stage of the Design Thinking method, i.e. generating ideas, one should strive to obtain as many innovative solutions as possible in relation to the problem that is being worked on. It should be kept in mind that “crazy” ideas are also worth paying attention to. The interdisciplinary team should focus on generating as many potential solutions as possible for the problem defined in the previous step. This requires not only substantive knowledge, but above all ingenuity, courage in creating new and out-of-box solutions and abandoning the assessment and criticism of ideas created by other team members. This stage should end with the evaluation and democratic selection of the best idea on the basis of which the prototype will be created. The popular brainstorming method is the basic tool used at this stage, as well as the method of 6 hats. It should be kept in mind that these methods are not a goal in themselves, but only a starting point to define further directions of action.

During the stage of building prototypes, a representation of one or more ideas is created to show them to others. Thanks to this, it is possible to answer the question: How can I sell an idea? It is worth underlining that the prototype is only a preliminary design of the product. During this phase of design, a physical representation of the solution of the problem is created, however, it should be kept in mind that its aim should not be to develop complicated models with features similar to the final product. The most important function of the prototype is the ability to visually present solutions to users and quickly gather opinions about it. Thanks to this, it is possible to determine whether the project meets the client’s requirements or change its concept. Working prototypes help eliminate errors

at an early stage of the project (with minimum costs). One can never be sure that the final product will be a success, but frequent improvement of the prototypes and subjecting them to customer evaluation reduces the risk of a final failure. All kinds of materials – paper, cardboard, foam, plastic can be used for constructing prototypes, they can be cut out of Styrofoam or wood, or use the existing products. Prototyping with a 3D print is becoming more and more popular. The prototype does not always have to be an object – in the case of services, one can use a comic book, a storyboard or a drawing of a user path. It is important to take a step further than a verbal description and to visualize the ideas in any way.

The last stage of the Design Thinking method consists in presenting a prototype of the solution to its original user in order to get an opinion about the generated product. Thanks to this, it is possible to answer the question: What worked, and what didn’t? At this stage, the designed solution is tested in a real environment in which the product will be used.

It is necessary to specify the necessary parameters and their values, thanks to which it will be possible to clearly determine the results of the conducted test. This stage requires the involvement of many people and support from the technical, formal, administrative and even legal side. Only after the successful tests, one can talk about the readiness of the product or service for its implementation. Unfortunately, this stage is often overlooked in the implementation of many projects, which only after the fact turns out that the best solution to the problem, as it would seem, does not entirely meet the required assumptions and expectations of its recipients (designthinking.pl, 2015).

Exposition of main material of research with complete substantiation of obtained scientific results. Discussion.

According to the Act of December 20, 1996 on Municipal Management (Journal of Laws of 1997, no. 9, item 43), this activity consists of the performance of own tasks by the self-government units in order to meet the needs of the local self-government community. In accordance with the above-mentioned Act, the municipal management includes, in particular, public tasks of a public utility nature, which aim is to provide current and uninterrupted satisfaction of the collective needs of the population through the provision of publicly available services.

The municipality, when performing the statutory tasks in the area of municipal services, can implement them through budgetary establishments, capital companies, with its participation, use public-private partnership and contract municipal services with private entities (Bałdyga, 2004 p. 57-76; Sońta 2010, p.72 – 83).

In analysing municipal services, their payer is an important element. They are the municipality and the residents. The first group includes services related to the maintenance of greenery (including parks, tourist routes), removal of waste and cleaning public spaces or municipal cemeteries. In the case of the above-mentioned services, the municipality, subject to the regulations, selects the entity that provides them, what is beneficial for it, provided that it negotiates satisfactory parameters of services provided by external entities.

The second group of municipal services, the performance of which is paid for by the residents, there is a great diversification of legal regulations, natural monopolies, fairly developed transmission infrastructure and significant investment


needs. Nevertheless, depending on the industry, the manner of implementing these services is diverse. The sectors of municipal services that belong to the second group include, among others: public transport, waste management and water and sewage services (Szymanowicz, 2000, p.27-28).

Despite the legal and social constraints of communal services, an increasingly visible phenomenon in this sector involves the increasing activity of private entities. This favours competitiveness on this market and enables the implementation of modernization investments for which the municipalities do not have funds or these processes would have to be spread over a longer period of time (Wojciechowski, 2003, p.143-161).

The initiative to redesign the experiences of tourists on the trail to Morskie Oko was an example of using the Design Thinking method in the municipal services industry related to the service of tourist routes. The idea behind this activity was that tourists choosing this place would use its charms not only for the purpose of their trip, but also during the tour. The information and drawings placed on the trail regarding the behaviour in the Tatra National Park and showing the tourists where they currently are on the route to Morskie Oko was the solution of this problem. There were 16 information messages placed on the area of the route to Morskie Oko. Their main purpose is to educate the tourists. When moving along the route, a tourist notices the inscription on the asphalt and reads the information prepared for him. These announcements encouraged exploration of the area (e.g. a sketch of the panorama, on which the names and heights of the peaks were presented) and also featured various

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interesting facts about the place: “Trout lives in Morskie Oko”. In addition, they informed about the location on the route: “Hurray! 1/3 is behind you!”. Some of these announcements presented and explained the rules in force in the Park. Inscriptions at the end of the tour cheered and offered encouragement: “You can do it! You are not far”. In order to achieve such a creative solutions, the Design Thinking methodology was used. It consisted of activities related to interviews conducted among tourists, meetings with employees of the TPN (Tatra National Park), observations of those participating in the trail, collecting information and determining the data needed for the implemented project, a project concept designed to motivate tourists to achieve the purpose of their trip, and at the same time to familiarize them with the rules of conduct in TPN, testing the concepts, selection of the best motivational announcements and testing the resistance of the information placed at the asphalt fragments of the route to Morskie Oko. As a result of the Design Thinking methodology, a positive effect was achieved because the motivation of tourists increased to complete the route to Morskie Oko without the need to switch into horse-drawn cabs. The tourists themselves also felt appreciated that despite the fatigue and problems with footwear they reached the destination of their trip on their own. (It is effective, 2015)

Another example confirming the usefulness of the Design Thinking method to develop creative solutions related to the municipal service industry was connected with the activities undertaken in Gdynia aimed at increasing the accessibility of the public space to the elderly. The main problem to be solved here concerned the fact that the services provided by the city in the public space were to be adapted to the

needs of the elderly and the disabled. How to involve the citizens of Gdynia – seniors and the disabled – in the formation of a friendly public space available to them? In order to answer the key questions for the project, it was necessary to identify the obstacles encountered by seniors when using the services provided by the city in the public space. Research walks were considered the best tool for discovering these inconveniences. Research walks are a field method of interviews with residents – users of the public space. In the interviews, residents were asked about opinions on adapting elements of space infrastructure to their needs. Thanks to this, areas requiring improvement were diagnosed – in particular related to the designation of the area. Illegible information posed at stops were reported as one of the more important shortcomings. The next step was to conduct workshops on the design of the information system at bus stops. Both seniors and designers participated in them. These works, conducted during workshop meetings, resulted in the guidelines for designers allowing the creation of a project of the information system at bus stops readable for various age groups. In this way, the process of designing and testing the proposed solutions under the actual conditions of the new project was commenced (It is effective, 2015).

An interesting example of a creative approach to solving business problems and at the same time an example of open innovation is the project of the Eneris group implemented since December 2016: “I segregate – I do not see any obstacles”, which is directed to the blind and the visually impaired. Until now, this almost 2-million people group, was excluded from sorting waste, and thus from the active and the simplest contribution to environmental protection, because it was unable to identify the colour of the container for

waste subject to sorting. The Eneris company collects waste from 1.1 million inhabitants from nearly 100 municipalities. Nearly 5% of them are people with a disability of vision. A special sticker was prepared for them in contrasting colours, with Braille inscriptions with 6 different waste names. It is a pilot program in the industry under the patronage of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Disabled and the Polish Association of the Blind (website of the Dziennik Zachodni newspaper, 2016).

At the request of the blind and the visually impaired, who care about the issue of environmental protection and in cooperation with them, within the “I segregate – I do not see any obstacles”

program, the Eneris group has developed special stickers that allow the identification of containers for individual waste fractions. From December 3, 2016 they are handed over free of charge to the people in need of such assistance. What is more, not stopping at this activity, the ENERIS group has prepared an accessible website with facilities for visually impaired people in the form of adjustable font size. Until the end of 2017, the company undertook to train employees of the Customer Service Offices and all drivers and loaders of vehicles transporting waste in the scope of service for visually impaired customers (a total of over 600 people serving 1.1 million residents of Polish cities)(website of the Eneris group, 2016).

Conclusions.

This article presents issues related to the management of the organization’s creativity. It attempted to define this concept, taking into account its multidimensionality. In order to refer the issues discussed above into practice, the Design Thinking methodology was presented in detail. Its essence is brought down to the search for creative solutions to business and social problems. It includes various entities into finding the answers to these issues, including consumers of companies, which contributes to better meeting their needs. The last part of this study presents three case studies showing the possibilities of creative solving of problems related to the operation of activities


related to municipal services. The first two case studies refer to the previously mentioned Design Thinking method. In contrast, the third case study is an example of the creative approach of a company dealing with a selective waste collection for the needs of the disabled. The solution presented in this example fits in the so-called open innovation and the concept of social invention. It is also a pioneering solution on the European scale. Therefore, it fits the so-called best practices that are exemplary for the development of the municipal service industry in Poland and abroad.

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