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## CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR PURCHASING IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED FAMILY ENTERPRISES

### ABSTRACT

**Background.** Business activity involves decision making at various management levels and triggers a number of implications within its functional areas. Scale of their occurrence depends both on the strength of its external environment and the characteristics of the enterprise itself, including risk attitude of its owner. The subject of this article are small and medium-sized family businesses, where the owner often takes direct part in purchase decision-making. The aim of this paper is an identification of constraints and related challenges for purchase departments in family small and medium-sized businesses.

**Methods.** Questionnaire survey and interviews with purchasing managers of family enterprises have been conducted.

**Results.** Propensity of an enterprise owner to take risks and the stage of development of his business give rise to consequences for the functioning and efficiency of the entire organization and its particular departments. Among most frequently constraints finds an authoritarian management style, in which an open-mindedness for new technologies isn't followed by open-mindedness for latest management systems.

**Conclusions.** Purchasing activity of family enterprises is strongly dominated by their owners. The role of purchasing departments then becomes not only the performance of their duties, but also the challenge of making the business owners aware of the existing constraints for the

purchasing area. Future research shall focus on developing a method to overcome the constraints and to emphasize opportunities from purchase activity when it is unaffected by enterprise owner.

**Keywords.** purchasing, procurement, challenges and constraints for purchasing, family enterprise, SME

### **OWNERSHIP OF ENTERPRISE – BUSINESS AND PSYCHOLOGY**

The term "ownership" links the areas of law, psychology and business. From the point of view of the law, "the holder of things is both the one who actually controls it as the owner (the self-proprietor) and the one who actually wields it as a user, pledgee, leaseholder, tenant or having another right with which certain control over someone else's thing is related (dependent owner)" [Polish Civil Code 1964].

The psychological aspect focuses on the mental relationship between the holder and the subject [Ye and Gawronski 2016]. The occurrence of such a relationship is supported by the theorem on the existence of "psychology of mine and property" [Furby 1991], in which the author emphasizes the psychological approach to ownership. It refers to a situation in which a person feels as if the target of ownership (e.g. job or organization) is his' [Dawkins et al. 2017; Baxter et al. 2015]. Up to date research in this field has concerned also child development, consumer behavior, the elderly, within the customs and practices of different societies, perspective of holding land and having a house "with four walls", different socio-economic strata, philosophical discussions of 'being' or the workplace [Pierce et al. 2002].

A smooth transition to "ownership" in business can have at least two dimensions. One of them refers to the owners of (family) companies and the management sphere, and the other to their employees. Conducted in Spain, studies of family businesses prove that psychological ownership is the basic factor determining the companies' willingness to be active, innovate and take risks [Pittino et al. 2018]. Similar studies among German companies have focused on the intergenerational approach to innovation. They showed that the level of innovation is decreasing from generation to generation, and in the third and later generations of owners is noticeably lower than their founders. It was further stated that if, however, in the third and later generations the psychological ownership is high, the tendency to innovate is the same as in the predecessors [Martínez and Requejo 2017; Rau et al. 2018]. Thus, a greater chance for further

success of the company was emphasized if, in the legal sense, a proper psychological approach to ownership is also passed on.

From the point of view of job-based employees, psychological ownership is important for their approach and behaviour at work. In the course of research on the American market, it was shown that an independent position favours an increase in job satisfaction [Bullock 2015]. The same results are reported by the results of middle-level managers in Malaysia [Ramos et al. 2014] and Singapore [Mustafa et al. 2016]. What is more, psychology ownership can strengthen the message to the recipients during the crisis, improve their attitudes towards the company and encourage the purchase of its goods and services in spite of its problems [Hartley et al. 2016]. It is probably psychology ownership that supports employees of family businesses in maintaining the level of work results in times of crisis. The tendency to reduce employment and wages observed at that time lower than in other forms of property was recognized as the result of a contract and mutual trust between the owner and employees [van Essen 2015].

#### **OWNERSHIP – FAMILY AND NON-FAMILY FIRMS**

Finally, the concept of a family business requires explanation. We call a family business if "The majority of decision-making rights in the possession of the person who is the person who has the company companies, or in the possession of their spouses, parents, children, or children's direct heirs. The majority of decision-making rights are indirect or direct. At least one representative of the family". They can be big or small, listed or un-listed. They constitute 60% of all companies in the European Union [The European Commission].

As shown in previous section "ownership is considered one of the key governance mechanisms; however, there have been no systematic attempts at validating the construct and measures used to operationalize ownership. Reflecting this approach, the ownership results from structure of capital, from large shareholders to minority shareholders" [Sur 2018]. Directly associated financial cost of ownership is dividend [Paniagua et al. 2018]. Although agency theory is not discussed in this article, it should be mentioned about the resulting agency cost, which is reduced in family businesses due to the concentration of ownership and management center [Le Breton-Miller and Miller 2009; Gonzalez et al. 2015; Dow and McGuire 2016; Corten et al. 2017; Werner et al. 2018]. Based on the results of research on the ownership structure as a form of management of companies in the USA and the UK, a Table 1 presenting the motivation of various owners to operate was developed [Connelly et al. 2010]. That emphasizes role of family owners and of employees in psychological ownership approach.

Table 1. Motivation of various owners to act in non-family enterprises

Location	Type of owner	Motivation
	Executives	Greater risk taking vs. benefits from agency theory
Insiders	Board members	Avoidance removal of wealth from minority shareholders [Manzanaque et al. 2016]
	Non-executive employees	<b>Social-psychological bond</b>
	Blockholders	Concentrated control and private benefits; <b>if CEO is a family member – creating value for enterprise and minority shareholders</b>
Outsiders	Agent owners	Monitoring firm actions, membership in dedicated coordinating bodies, which gives access to research and inside information not available to other investors
	Private equity	Positive influencing firm’s growth, its ability to procure further financing and its successful harvest [Cox et al. 2017].  Passion for founding and developing new ventures [Murnieks et al. 2016; Warnick et al. 2018].

Source: [Werner, Schröder and Chlosta 2018].

According to Henssen, even a CEO in family businesses achieves better results of his management activity if he has autonomy in it and demonstrates a high level of individual-oriented psychological ownership [Henssen et al. 2014]. This analysis confirms the significant dependence of the degree of involvement in the company's activity on the emotional connection with it, that is, on the business-psychology relationship. So what are the reasons for family business members to run their businesses? Table 2 presents their summary [Maloni et al. 2017].

Table 2. Motivation of family enterprise’s members

Motivation	Description
<b>Family control and influence</b>	Family members seek to maintain authority, control, and influence over the firm through key organization and board roles, possibly even in contradiction to financial objectives.
<b>Family member identification with the firm</b>	The firm serves as an important part of the personal identity of the family member, is considered as an extension of the family, and is tied to the family name.
<b>Binding social ties</b>	Family members maintain strong bonds and embeddedness with one another and also with non-family employees, business

Motivation	Description
	partners, and the community. Relationships are grounded in trust.
<b>Emotional attachment</b>	Strong levels of emotions and emotional attachment among family members impact business decision-making.
<b>Renewal of family bonds to the firm through dynastic succession</b>	Family members seek to pass down the firm to future generations, encouraging a long-term sustainable perspective of the firm and the family legacy.

Source: [Maloni et al. 2017].

The summary of this part of the work is Figure No. 1 showing the types of the company owner and his propensity to risk in relation to the company's development stage.

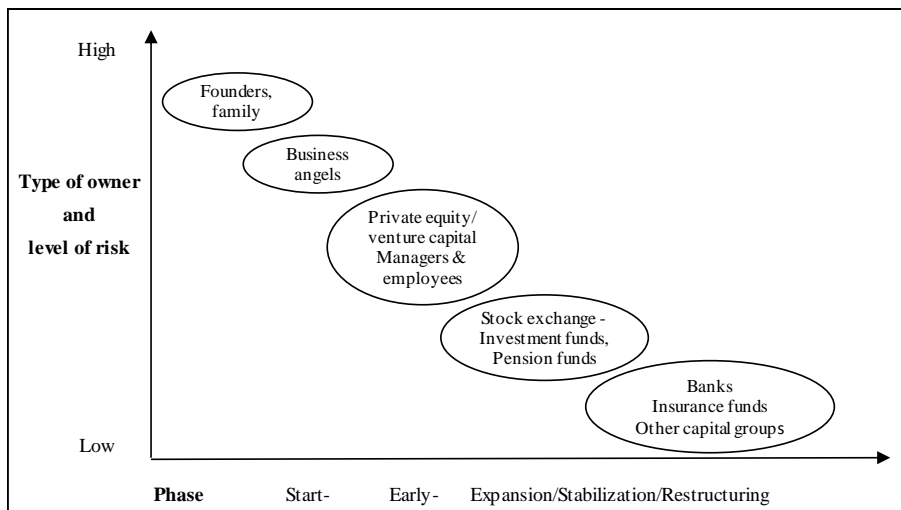


Fig. 1. Type of owner and level of risk versus phase of enterprise's development.

Source: [Ježak 2011].

## ROLE OF PURCHASING IN ENTERPRISE

Purchasing - and more widely understood procurement - perform one of the functions generating value added in the value chain of the company. Porter's concept of the value chain places procurement as an support activity in the model of value chain of the company [Porter 1990]. This model is a base to discuss the role of purchasing in the enterprise. The auxiliary function emphasizes the operational nature of purchases, i.e. a series of activities leading to the acquisition of goods and services. As a globalization result, price pressure and competition, a

strategic role has been also distinguished, understood as, for example, "the mode of modelling the relationship between the organization and its surroundings, and creating coherent patterns in the stream of organizational decisions regarding the environment" [Mintzberg 1979]. The practical expression of this thesis is observed when the purchase costs have a significant share in total costs, the market and prices are unstable, the company is focused on innovation and when there is a strong competition on the final goods' market [Lysons 2004].

The leverage brings then a calculable profit as a (procurement) cost reduction by one dollar, which in turn results in an increase in gross profit by one dollar, while an increase in sales by one dollar gives an increase in gross profit only by a margin from this dollar. The second effect of reducing the cost of procurement is a decrease in the value of goods inventory, or the value of assets, by one dollar. Thus, the ROA ratio (profit / total assets \* 100%) is higher, assuming to maintain the level of sales revenues [Bozarth and Handfield 2004].

Polish Supply Management Leaders, a producer and provider of the Marketplanet Purchasing Platform, made a report on "Role and importance of purchasing in Polish enterprises" in 2012. Role of purchasing in an enterprise has been divided into levels due to the tasks assigned to them. Table 3 presents this classification.

Table 3. Perception of role of purchasing

<b>Role of purchasing</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Orientation</b>
Strategic	"managing the company's external resources in order to increase its value"	value increase
Tactical	"purchasing is a function used to achieve cost synergies"	cost savings
Operational	"purchasing is an implementation of complex requirements at the lowest cost while maintaining the required quantity, quality and necessary deadlines"	transactions

Source: [Marketplanet 2012].

## **TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS IN THE ENTERPRISE**

The continuation of the discussion on the role of purchasing in the company is an identification of critical points, affecting the dynamics and efficiency of the decision-making process and its implementation. In the course of business activity there are situations and phenomena which determine the company's policy at all levels of its operation. They involve its resources and are fundamental for setting strategic, tactical and operational goals. They can significantly affect the market position of the company already in the short term, while in the

long-term they may even lead to bankruptcy. Their scope and scale depend on the market segment in which the enterprise participates and for which it has a limited influence (external conditions, micro and macro environment) and the level of development of the organization itself (internal conditions).

The framework for the functioning of the procurement results from the same scheme. Purchasing problems may affect the overall health of the company. In turn, problems in other areas may affect the efficiency of the procurement process or noticeably determine its effectiveness and methods of operation. The key to success in overcoming such problems is proper identification of their sources and their implications.

Identification of problems and their sources can take place in two ways. The first method is reactive (ex post) activity - direct statement of disruption in the course of one or more processes in the enterprise (qualitative analysis), as well as the result of the key efficiency indicator at the level below the established standard (quantitative analysis). Preventive analysis (ex ante) involves estimating the risk of problems in the organization.

## **METHODOLOGY OF SURVEY**

Identification of challenges and reasons for constraints for purchasing departments in family businesses has been conducted through survey among managers of those departments. 117 small and medium family businesses declaring a manufacturing of electronic devices had been selected for participation in the survey. The criterion of inviting the company was also the complexity of its organizational structure. The expected structure should include the production department, purchasing department, quality control department, sales department, warehouse and in the optimal variant - own R&D department. Such an organization fully reflects the complexity of internal dependencies and creates opportunities for a comprehensive look at their purchasing areas.

The first round of invitations received a positive response from 43 companies (ie 36.7% of the organizations). The second wave of invitations resulted in another 8 consents, which in total gave 43.6% of enterprises that have finally been included in the study. Among them were 1 micro, 47 small companies and 3 medium-sized companies. Table 4 presents a summary of these numbers.

Table 4. Statistics of participants

Size	Quantity	Percentage %
Micro	1	2
Small	47	92
Medium	3	6
Total	51	100

Source: own work.

The questions have been divided into three groups. The first one concerned the enterprise itself and its organizational structure. The second group included selected issues related to the functioning of purchases in the company. The third group are questions regarding attitudes towards changes and conflicts within the enterprise. Moreover, the surveyed managers have been also asked to provide additional information about themselves to get a broader picture of their position in the company.

## FINDINGS

Detailed outcome of the survey has been presented as follows. 82% of the surveyed enterprises have been managed directly by their founders/owners. This is mainly due to the short history of the freedom of private business in Poland after the economic system changes in 1989. 12% of companies are run by an owner's family member. Only 6% of companies are led by non-family managers. In micro and small companies, only their owners and their family members have access to the bank account and only they make bank payments. Medium-sized companies assign these allowances to managers in finance departments. Due to the sources of financing of the activity, the majority of the enterprises bases on the owner's equity and on current revenues (57%). Purchasing managers indicated the MBO as a implemented management system in most cases (61%), and to a lesser extent by quality (23%), although a lack of any defined management system has also been pointed out. Division of competences of particular departments of the company is strictly defined and respected (63%), but also the owner delegates tasks in other way, omitting the established structure and hierarchy (35%). In individual cases, the owner himself takes over the implementation of key tasks (2%). Regarding the level of familiarity with long-term goals and with the efficiency of their implementation small companies do not share such data with their employees or communicate only their non-performance (88% of small companies). Almost all medium-sized enterprises share this



knowledge with their employees (94% of averages). The last question in this group concerned access to the company's current financial results. Owners don't share the company's current financial results (86%) with the employees. And it is despite of - depending on the legal form of the entity - legal duty to publish annual financial statements official registers which are available via the Internet. Moreover, the owners of the surveyed companies run - alone or with partners - from 1 (51%) to 3 additional businesses (26%) in various industries.

The second group of questions yielded answers on the mode the procurement area works. In most cases, the purchasing managers report directly to the owner (CEO) or to the managing director (63%). The remaining cases concern their subordination to the production department (37%). Such results may suggest the relevant role of purchasing in the organization, however, managers defined the position of their department mainly as operational (71%), partly tactical (25%) and only 4% as strategic. The sizes of the departments don't exceed 4 people (100%). Occasionally, a specialization by purchasing category (8%) have been observed and none case of division into a buyer and a disposer (0%). Purchasing managers complain about the lack of sales planning and challenge with the items order system (61%). They are supposed to negotiate the purchase price of each item, regardless of its value and suitability (86%). Furthermore, majority of purchases requires the owner's acceptance (65%). Every three companies introduced a value limit for 1 transaction (33%), while value limits per category were introduced in single cases (2%). Rewarding the purchasing department has two main forms - a discretionary bonus and subsequent savings on purchases (45% each and mixed). Companies in this sector do not invest in buyers development - only 8% sent them to paid purchase trainings. An ERP system in the company has been considered to be an important work tool - every company uses a software containing a supply module, but most of them work on its basic or inadequately adjusted version (76%). Owners are the decision-makers on selecting the supplier (65%) and on hiring new employees for the purchasing department (84%). Neutral criteria like education, professional experience and familiarity with the industry have been also indicated as minor factors in recruitment process (only 18% each). Purchasing procedures are prepared by the owners themselves, sometimes defined as too detailed and unmatched to daily activity (41%). Purchasing strategies are a seldom feature (25%). Surveyed managers listed a trust of the owner (55%), partnership approach to suppliers instead of transactional (24%) and structured internal processes (17%) among most important premises for efficient purchase process. However three most commonly used strategies are pull (88%), insourcing (88%) and

a transactional approach (84%). Purchasing managers indicated that they can see opportunities to improve the overall situation of the company (cash flow, level of complaints, company image, etc.) due to the ability to conduct a wider assessment to select the supplier (72%), implement partnerships with suppliers (66%) and implementing new purchasing concepts (66%).

The third group of questions concerned changes and conflicts in enterprises and participation in the purchasing department. The main causes of conflicts are the lack of materials for production (96%), too short lead time for customers (90%) and quality of materials (51%). The relatively high percentage of responses also applies to the causes of the owner but applies only to small enterprises (20%). Almost all respondents emphasized that their companies follow modern electronics technologies and adapt to some extent their chosen solutions (94%). In opposition to such a result, the companies remain open to changes in the way purchasing department works - the neutral attitude and reluctance prevail here (45% each). In the direct question about the biggest difficulties in everyday procurement, the lack of S&OP (47%), the requirement to negotiate each price of each product (45%) and the competences limited by the owner to make purchase decisions (43%) have been selected. Rapidity of the decision-making process has been indicated as both a disadvantage and an advantage for SMEs.

Furthermore, all purchasing managers have university degree. Their average seniority in current companies is 4 years. Only 45% of them would consider re-employment in a small family business from that sector; for a medium-sized company, this percentage was already 88%.

## CONCLUSIONS

Small and medium-sized enterprises constitute the largest group of business entities. Family enterprise is a category among them that has been distinguished by specific features, due to its character. Ownership in family hands has a special value for it and may be subject to slightly different management rules. Small and medium business is often an achievement of life and can be run in an unconventional way, unlimited by the corporate rules, which are in force in companies with a dispersed ownership structure. The family businesses' goal is not only to achieve the current goals and aspirations of their owners, but - most of all - to ensure the survival of the organization for the next family generations.

The management style set by the family enterprise owner covers all spheres of his business functioning. It stems from e.g. the accepted risk level acceptance in operations. The risk is

related to the adaptation level for the changing environment. In internal terms, the risk concerns the development of efficient and effective management methods, the recruitment of employees and training them with the developed methods and - most of all - giving competences to them. Such a framework causes constraints as well as it generates challenges for purchase departments in small and medium family businesses.

The constraints for the purchase department intersect the challenges, as they relate to the form of business ownership. That form is a main source of limitation for the research. At first, the data availability from family small enterprises is limited due to its family character. Secondly, if it is already available, it can be highly affected by impacts from centralized management style. Finally, it can be charged with personal claims within the small enterprise.

A future research should examine several questions. A first step is processing tools for arranging successful changes in purchase area in family small and medium-sized businesses. Moreover, a person running own business and having a total impact on it, is a complex object to conduct analyzes in terms of proposing the effective implementation of improvements. Second step for future research is a verification if those improvements affect only the purchase area or also other spheres of the enterprise. Final stage should contain developing a comprehensive method for purchase managers to overcome the constraints and to emphasize opportunities from purchase activity if it were unaffected by enterprise owner. Additionally, the future research can also weigh whether constraint and challenge mean the same to purchase departments in family small and medium-sized enterprises.

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