

MANAGEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE WORKERS. SUPPORT FOR CREATIVE THINKING AND ACTION – THE CASE OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

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Abstract. Creativity remains the source of innovation and therefore talented workers, presenting large creative potential are highly desirable. Their activities are characterized by creative, unconventional, original thinking and functioning. Highly gifted people represent the core of Creative Industries (CI), especially in video games studios e.g.: computer specialists, animation programmer, concept artist, combat designers, creative audio director. Their activities are based on creativity. CI was defined as the activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent as well as open the potential for wealth and job creation by generating and taking advantage of intellectual property. It is of crucial importance to establish such working environment which enhances creativity. Creativity is fundamental for innovation processes the effects of which are increasingly complicated and complex. The activities characteristic for enterprises operating in the sector of creative industries are initiated based on the individual creativity of talented, open and competent workers. Simple management systems based on the confirmed forms of control, supervision, and formal procedures are insufficient to create added value in the sector of creative industries. The analysis of the subject literature provides some, but not many ideas on how to manage knowledge workers. It applies, in particular, to the new sector of creative industries. The aim of this paper is to develop a model of knowledge workers' management supporting creative thinking and acting. The research was based on survey studies. The survey questions were addressed to entrepreneurs and managers. The study sample consisted of several SME businesses operating in the sector of creative industries in Poland. The obtained results were used as the starting point in the discussion and in presenting the final conclusions. The paper will be divided into the following parts: the first offer the subject literature review: the essence of such phenomena creativity, knowledge worker in CI sector, the second describes the conducted empirical research including their results to be followed by the discussion presenting the Author's model of work environment for knowledge workers in creative industries includes factors enhancing creative thinking (third parts of chapter) The study was finalized with conclusions and the list of references. One of the conclusions: The elements of the work environment which stimulate creativity are mainly represented by the so-called "soft" management" components referring to various aspects of human capital management in an organization. Their coexistence has to be adequately focused on strengthening workers' skills, willingness and confidence in applying knowledge at an individual, group and organizational level.

Keywords: creativity; Creative Industries; knowledge workers; management of knowledge workers; model of the work environment.

Introduction

A creative person has the ability to invent and develop original ideas. Gifted people with many talents, creative and presenting competencies, which allow creating new ideas included in technologies and products, constitute the essence of creative industries sector, i.e.: computer technology specialists, fashion designers, architects, theatre and film artists, musician. Their activities are based on creativity. The vast majority of staff employed in enterprises operating in creative sectors participate in the processes of knowledge identification, absorption, accumulation, creation, transfer, and commercial application. Their personal knowledge, ingenuity, professional intuition constitutes the background for initiating consecutive business projects (Morawski, 2014, pp.708-715). CI requires a solid base of knowledge, some create capabilities to build greater competitiveness, the natural ability of shaping the climate conducive to encourage the creativity of the organization's human capital.

Highly gifted people represent the core of creative industries, e.g. ICT specialists, engineer, fashion designers, architects, theater artists, and filmmakers or musicians. Their activities are based on creativity and high competences. In the literature of management science, they are often called *knowledge workers*. Well-educated, talented are now responsible for finding new solutions which are to be translated into the development of their company. Human creativity and innovation at both the individual and group level, are the key drivers of these industries and have become the true wealth of nations in the 21st century. The analysis of the subject literature provides some, but not many ideas on how to manage knowledge workers. It applies, in particular, to the relatively new sectors of creative in The aim of this paper is to developing a model of knowledge workers' management supporting creative thinking and acting. The research was based on survey studies. The survey questions were addressed to entrepreneurs and managers. The study sample consisted of several SME businesses operating in the sector of creative industries in Poland. The obtained results were used as the starting point in the discussion and in presenting the final conclusions.

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Creative industries sectors and knowledge workers

Creative industries sectors (CIS) constitute the most important area in the contemporary global, knowledge-based economy. These enterprises which operate in creative sectors represent the most innovative business representatives. Creative sectors can contribute to that increase of innovation in other fields of the economy by providing them with ideas for a new product or service or delivering already finished projects. Such sectors generate both growth and employment as well. It is one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the world economy. Companies covered by CIS represent the perfect area of research focused on various aspects of knowledge management, e.g. strategic advantage coming from knowledge, human capital

management based on the approach to specialists, work in teams and others flexible forms of organizational structure, knowledge sharing processes, organizational learning processes and others. The term “creative industries” has been receiving theoretical and empirical attention within the last two decades (Hartley et al., 2012; Andari et al., 2007; Caves, 2000, 2003).

The following characteristics are decisive in terms of CI specificity (on the basis of the literature review):

- They provide products and services which are linked with cultural, artistic or usually entertaining value; in general, creative industries are deeper involved in the new value creation process than manufacturing industry (Berg & Hassink, 2016);
- Products are subject to continuous improvements, their ongoing development results from the swift verification of their usefulness and attractiveness by means of presentations, demonstrations, and meetings with clients, testing and sharing sample versions of products with their users, collecting valuable opinions through social networks
- Creative processes require the simultaneous involvement of specialized and highly diversified resources;
- Various products are created within the framework of CI: books, journal publications, visual art (painting, sculpture), performance art (theatre, opera, concerts, dancing), recordings, cinema and TV films, fashion, toys and computer games; e.g. NESTA model divides the diversified creative products into creative service providers, creative content producers, creative experience providers and creative originals producers (Flew, 2010);
- The majority of CI products represent goods perceived through visual, aesthetic or spiritual experiences. Their value is not based just on their market value or the one resulting from their functionality, but also and to a great extent, on their expressive value;
- It is necessary to detect, ahead of time, and search for a new formula which could meet the upcoming trends, fashions, changing fascinations and expectations;
- Most final output in the creative industry can reach consumers with the help of other inputs that respond to ordinary economic incentives. For example, a visual artist needs a gallery to display and promote his/her works to potential purchasers (Caves, 2003);
- Internal and external cooperation of an organization remains an imperative. Complex interactions between private and public sector are of major importance (Ratzenbock et al., 2004).

Before developing the concept of creative industries, culture and arts were structurally separated from economics, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Assuming the approach of CI, culture is described as a service category. The creative assets can be developed and then marketed. Since Tony Blair reconfigured the British Department of Heritage into the Department of C.M.&S. in the late 1990s, retrograde separations of culture and economics into different portfolios or policies would block more complex, innovative and entrepreneurial understandings of development and sustainability (Brabazon, 2015). CI definition presented by the UK Government’s Department for Culture, Media and Sport is as follows: “Those industries which have their origin in individual creativity,

skill, and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property”.

Creativity is fundamental for innovation processes the effects of which are increasingly complicated and complex. The activities characteristic for enterprises operating in the sector of creative industries are initiated based on the individual creativity of talented, open and competent workers. Simple management systems based on the confirmed forms of control, supervision, and formal procedures are insufficient to create added value in the sector of creative industries. The creativity of any kind cannot be based on pressure and compulsion. Continuous risks, resulting in negative emotions initiate narrow thinking patterns (Morris, 2001) manifested by the elimination or reduction of problems. Creativity requires knowledge, courage, and uniqueness. Therefore, creativity combined with a commercial approach to ideas requires the involvement of teams, free, informal communication, continuous knowledge sharing and the exchange of experiences.

The term of a knowledge worker is included among the concepts which characterize different categories and groups of employees distinguished among other members of an organization (team, community, enterprise) by the significantly higher level of knowledge, skills, experience, talent, predispositions, etc. In a broader sense, in the conditions of a knowledge-based economy (KBE) these workers create knowledge (or are potentially ready for it) based on the available information. Davenport claims that the primary purpose of a knowledge workers' job involves the creation, distribution, or application of knowledge. Knowledge workers think for a living (Davenport 2005). Mladkova states that knowledge workers represent the special group of highly qualified employees. The specificity of their work and management reflect the intangibility of their major tool and resource, i.e. knowledge. Owing to tacit knowledge, the entire knowledge remains intangible. The intangibility of knowledge makes knowledge workers special and difficult to manage. The most important part of work performed by knowledge workers happens in their heads, even though the final result may be material (Mladkova, 2013, p.446).

The analysis of subject literature (Abbasi et al., 2009; Davenport, 2005; Horwitz et al., 2008; Huang, 2011; Mladkova, 2013) allows concluding that the term 'knowledge workers' covers the category of modern employees distinguished by the following characteristics:

- high expectations regarding the autonomy and independence in implementing tasks and projects,
- high competencies and expertise supported by unique knowledge and experience,
- versatile skills of creative thinking in suggesting new and original solutions,
- interpersonal, leadership-oriented skills resulting from high intellectual potential and intensive professional activity,
- applying knowledge in its various processes, from acquiring and creating through sharing and using in the carried out tasks,
- involvement, at different organizational levels, in creating new knowledge constituting the basis for innovative processes and solutions,
- presenting “tacit” knowledge which offers opportunities for creating added value in an organization.

Emphasizing creativity in the sphere of knowledge workers' activities results in distinguishing a group of employees referred to as the creative ones. R. Florida is the progenitor of such interpretation of some part of knowledge workers. In his opinion, all members of the creative class are characterized by the "joined creativity ethos which values creativity, individualism, differences, and merits. For the creative class members all aspects and manifestations of creativity – technological, cultural, economic – are interrelated and inseparable" (Florida, 2010, p.31). In his definition, Florida divided the discussed class into two elements: the superactive core, represented by scientists, artists, designers, architects and other professions engaged in the creative process. The second component of the creative class consists of creative specialists, e.g. managers, lawyers, doctors and others. A slightly different, but probably more precise definition of creative professions is presented by Krätke (Krätke, 2010, pp.835-853). He distinguishes 5 groups and identifies two as the ones which are of particular significance for the regional innovative capacity. They include artistically creative workers (professional groups involved in culture).

Empirical research

Both in Europe and worldwide these are mainly small and medium size CI companies, usually set up as a result of initiatives and entrepreneurial efforts undertaken by young, educated and competent people attempting to commercialize their passions, invention, and interests. Research several companies in the sector of Creative Industries, conducted in recent years (2013-2014 located in Poland) by the teams of authors, allow to draw the following conclusions (Morawski, 2014, 2015):

- the desire to establish good relations between supervisors and co-workers,
- emotional relations between employees based on positive (sometimes negative) background and behavior,
- the vital rank of personal relations,
- strong identification with an organization in terms of compassion for common fate,
- openness and even enthusiasm towards new concepts,
- a formal approach to procedures, processes, and terminology in the course of performing every day, routine management duties.

It should be noted that the surveyed enterprises were characterized by the following features:

1. The limits between functional areas in the company are dimmed owing to positive feedbacks arising due to continuous information exchange and building, based on this information exchange, thorough knowledge about customers, suppliers, competitors, technologies and products
2. The vast majority of staff employed in CI enterprises operating in creative sectors participate in the processes of knowledge identification, absorption, accumulation, creation, transfer, and commercial application.
3. The major of staff employed in CI enterprises have high competencies and expertise supported by unique knowledge and represent university graduates.
4. Most employees have versatile skills of creative thinking in suggesting new and original solutions.

Summarizing the results of next author's survey (Morawski, 2016), it can be concluded, with adequate care in putting forward unequivocal opinions based on such small

research sample (the 11 small selected private businesses), that the owners of analyzed companies are fully aware of the specificity characteristic for human resources management in their operations. The responses to four questions referring to personnel management processes (recruitment, motivation, appraisal, development) indicated that company owners emphasize the significance of such factors as creative thinking, initiative and workers' ingenuity as well as the opportunities for their realization, but also independence as the motivating factor and the criterion of employee's appraisal, the willingness to share knowledge and the underlying interpersonal skills, including communication and cooperation. Among the factors decisive about company success the owners focused mainly on those related to employees and referring to communication, independence, creativity, involvement, and trust.

Model of the work environment for knowledge workers. discussion and conclusions

The exchange of knowledge between organization members allows developing the resources of shared knowledge with encoded different viewpoints and diverse problem-solving possibilities. It is a perfect background for making discoveries and creating innovations (Dalkir, 2005, pp.132-133). Modern innovations represent processes based on cooperation in integrated teams consisting of high-class specialists in various fields. Such teams guarantee to collect comprehensive, versatile and complementary knowledge from many areas and its appropriate application, resulting from the involvement of professionals.

When the intellect becomes a critical production factor, the successful enterprises differ from the less effective ones predominantly in their approach towards employees. Companies manifest appreciation by granting bonuses for their skills in interacting with others, their commitment, professional expertise, integrity, and other attitudes, but simultaneously create adequate conditions in which employees can develop, acquire new professional skills and increase their work value. In turn, however, the expectations and requirements from knowledge workers keep changing. The success of the growing number of knowledge workers is determined not only by the acquired knowledge but also by their swiftness in learning and sharing what they have learned (Tymon & Stumpf, 2003, p.12).

The increase in knowledge productivity is possible, e.g. through the totally unlimited knowledge transfer. Sharing knowledge generates solutions and benefits which ensure the enterprise competitive advantage (Reid, 2003, pp.43-49). Cultivating knowledge and competences among employees, encouraging creative thinking in teams, educating through organizational learning processes remains realistic only if the mutual trust and, consequently, the willingness to cooperate keeps building up between the organization participants. The more intense network of interpersonal relationships in an enterprise continuously multiplied and extended by the subsequent forms of interpersonal relations, the more developed its social capital. Ch. Evans quotes R. Scase, who said as follows: "whereas once an office used to be the place where work was done, today, in the information age, it is the place where ideas are exchanged and problems are solved. Therefore, office space should be designed in a way that encourages employees to enter into continuous contacts and exchange opinions" (Scase, 2002).

The ability to think creatively does not depend on IT infrastructure only, but more on social and intangible factors present within organizational culture, human and social capital. Creating an appropriate work environment requires integrating various areas of goals, decisions and activities, related to the simultaneous management of information, human capital, interpersonal relations and knowledge.

In the conditions of a turbulent environment, it is necessary to develop such organizational potential which ensures its creative modeling of the future by developing new products, technologies, market segments, etc. The correct anticipation of events remains its basis. However, only the enterprises characterized by a reserve of resources (or even their excess), especially the non-material, knowledge-based ones, whose configuration can be swiftly changed, allowing yet another synergic effect to be obtained, are capable of an anticipation oriented functioning. Accumulated, codified knowledge resources, widely available and continuously updated, constitute a collective organizational memory, which includes good practices, procedures of effective activities, technical descriptions of products representing an invaluable base of knowledge and experience. The collected resources are needed not only to fill in the current information gaps but also constitute a starting point for the new, original interpretation, enrichment, and transformation of what we already know into what we would like to know.

The available resources allow employees' training (internal workshops based on referring to codified experiences, generally available records of good practices, using notes, reports and projects included in enterprise databases), whereas the development of competences encourages establishing contacts and exchanging standpoints. The more intense relationships between employees of different nature (social, substantive, formal, informal contacts, etc.), frequency (regular, intensifying, etc.), content (opinions, recommendations, instructions, etc.), the closer and more direct they become, based on mutual understanding and increasing trust. The gradually densified network of connections between personnel gives rise to the sense of strong bonds and integration in terms of common values. The sense of functioning in a community is developed. The community members are increasingly willing to share their tacit knowledge with other members. It is followed by its absorption, analysis, interpretation, extension, placing in a different context, a different perspective adaptation and also other value judgments. Knowledge sharing processes result in its diffusion, an increase in the average level of competences, the dissemination of similar knowledge causes better understanding of both intentions and proposals offered by the cooperating partners. Discussions, questions, ideas are being developed, innovative processes are initiated.

The model of complex enterprise management in the sector of creative industries presented in Fig. 1 is of tier character. The tier at the model base represents accumulated explicit knowledge, acquired from various sources of an enterprise environment (clients, suppliers, business partners, government agencies, local government institutions, etc.) and from inside of an enterprise (employees, their families, managers, owners/shareholders, other groups: functional departments, project teams, trade unions, etc.).

Rich and diversified collections of knowledge accumulated over the years, is the derivative of applied technologies, manufactured products, provided services, as well as the accompanying events and processes (social, economic, financial, technical and

other), represent the basis for the structured process of knowledge and experience transfer to employees. Effective use of the acquired and codified knowledge is possible not only due to the appropriate technical means: programs, applications, equipment, but also the adequately planned and implemented methods of human capital management. Among the desirable solutions, the following should, for example, be listed: the solutions motivating to exchange knowledge, intensifying interpersonal communication, encouraging for cooperation, creating natural leaders focused on changes and creating openness in mutual contacts.

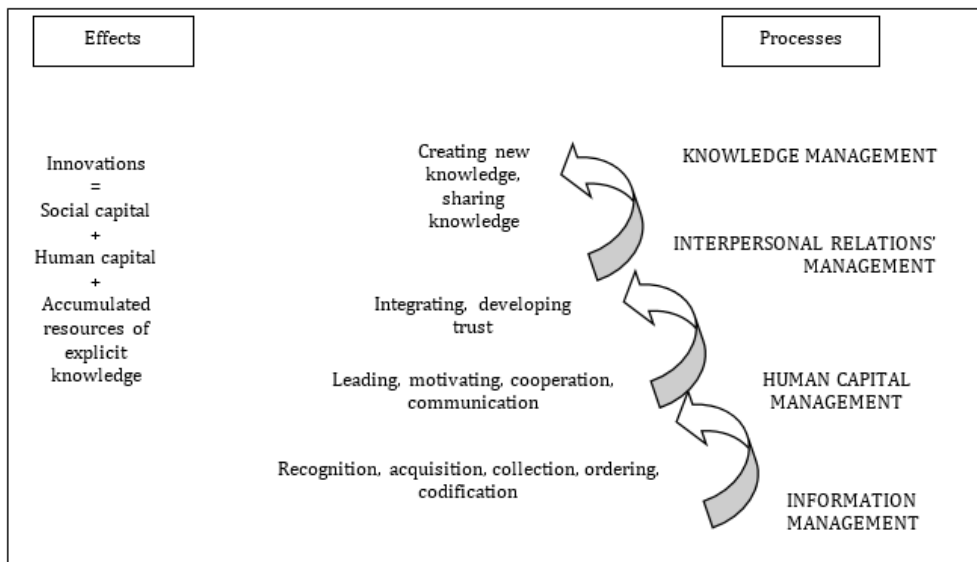


Figure 1. The model of complex enterprise management in the sector of creative industries
Source: own study and research

The two aforementioned tiers represent the organic basis for developing trust as a positive effect of cooperation based on knowledge and competences. Trust – an important element of social capital, built upon interpersonal relationships and the effect of activities strengthening partnership oriented organizational culture – plays a critical role because it strengthens the will to communicate and is of crucial importance for the exchange of knowledge within teams. Trust is related to problems associated with interpersonal contacts. It should be emphasized that trust is listed, in the subject literature, as one of the most often highlighted characteristics in terms of developing consistency in relationships. Therefore, the aspect of trust can be approached as one of the most important cross-sections in analyzing and classifying relationships, primarily when they are of interpersonal and inter-group nature. The developed social capital becomes the basis for less frequently planned, much more spontaneous, informal, interspersed with personal, social and non-substantive motivations of contacts between employees, experiencing close ties with colleagues, having the sense of joint professional interests and values. Creative thinking, sharing knowledge, developing new solutions becomes an unforced and natural component in the professional environment of knowledge workers.

The Author's model of the work environment for knowledge workers in CI includes factors enhancing creative thinking:

Organic leadership

- Searching for optimal – in terms of the effectiveness of knowledge sharing processes – styles of knowledge workers' leadership in such categories as decision making, employees' motivation, and development methods, building partner relationships, training successors and leaders;
- Organizing the course and access to learning processes, acquiring, transferring and applying knowledge;
- Devoting time for assistance and support by managers, stimulating ingenuity and other aspects of colleagues' intellectual efforts, focusing on employees' personal development, activities aimed at co-workers' integration with an organization;
- Teaching employees to take over the role of temporary intellectual and substantive leaders along with the development of appropriate managerial competencies.

Organization of teamwork

- Dissemination of team forms of professional activity organization developed following the initiative, coordinated and managed by key workers;
- Creating organizational and technical conditions for launching and developing independent social media platforms, bringing together the communities of practitioners, enthusiasts, and innovators within the enterprise employees.

Communication processes

- Development of comprehensive communication forms between the particular positions, departments and organizational units, overcoming communication barriers between the positions at various organizational levels, including the popularization of mentoring;
- Dissemination of good practices and principles for solving organizational problems by interdisciplinary teams representing workers of various professions, roles, functions and competences;
- Organizing regular workshops for all employees in an enterprise, providing their participants with the ability to use basic and advanced methods/techniques of verbal and non-verbal communication.

HR processes

- Modeling careers of outstanding employees (high competences, high development potential), including long-term plans for the succession of the most important positions and functions in an organization;
- Analyzing the importance of key workers in terms of an enterprise competitiveness: determining core competences, succession policy of top positions in the organizational hierarchy, paths of employees' transfer and promotion, localizing innovative knowledge, directions of tacit knowledge transfer;
- Analyzing both elements and level of the key workers' satisfaction;
- Continuous improvement of methods and tools for acquiring and retaining employees presenting unique competences, particularly important for maintaining competitive advantage and developing an attractive market offer;
- Preparing individual agreements regarding the share in company profits and other special privileges resulting from high competences;
- Constructing long-term development programs allowing permanent supplementing and extension of knowledge and competences, primarily the ones of both unique and innovative nature;

- Maintaining comprehensive and intense relationships with former key workers by involving individuals in the implementation of consultancy, training, expertise, etc.;
- Developing the brand of an attractive employer ensuring career based on competences and continuous improvement;
- Establishing the desired organizational culture of professionals, highlighting values resulting from the traditional relationship: master-apprentice;
- Efficient use of the resources related to the competencies of key workers (knowledge sharing systems, suggestion systems, competence management methods);
- Purposeful development of organizational memory resources aimed at preserving key knowledge resources by involving key workers in teamwork, a mentoring system, training and corporate university activities.

Additional solutions for improving and supporting creative thinking and performance can take the following form:

- organizing special places for uninterrupted and informal conversations between employees /tables next to coffee machines, rooms used during breaks at work, conference halls, training rooms/,
- special programs for adapting new employees, involving meetings and talks in selected departments and with selected organization members,
- a certain amount of time per work day /week, month/ offered to an employee for his/her free disposition /seeking advice and expert opinions, searching for information from databases, recording own observations and solutions in the generally accessible network, e.g. intranet/,
- formal meetings, meetings on a predetermined subject matter, agenda and final initiatives implemented into practice,
- sessions of ideas arranged spontaneously by co-workers,
- various electronic channels of information /Intranet, e-mail, websites/.

Creativity (author's attitude toward creativity phenomena) like any other mental effort requires intellectual engagement, reflection, concentration, creative passion, and personal interest. At the same time, it is the process of crossing some designated borders, questioning and overthrowing accepted and universally applicable principles or rules, defining problems and the reality in different ways. This means a violation of certain taboos, breaking the stereotypes, repudiation of allegiance to some theses applied in widespread awareness. The outcomes of creative work are both tangible and intangible, to a large extent unique and without past experience. Such understanding of creativity requires a number of conditions to be fulfilled.

Managing knowledge workers in an enterprise within the CI sector should not take the form of a closed project with ultimately outlined goals. The effects to be expected are continuous and essentially timeless, such as the development of good practices or the intensification of learning processes.

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