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*Human Resources Management in a Teal Organization Based on the  
Example of Brewa c.c. in Kalisz*

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Zarządzanie kadrami w organizacji turkusowej na przykładzie firmy Brewa s.c. w Kaliszu

**Keywords:** human resources management; teal organization; self-management

**Słowa kluczowe:** zarządzanie kadrami; organizacja turkusowa; samozarządzanie

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## Introduction

For almost all of their lives, the people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been part of organizations which have been creating the tissue of contemporary life. The world of these organizations keeps changing, and these changes are motivated by both external and internal factors. In the new reality, many previous norms, methods and models of acting lose their meaning. Here, the question arises as to how to manage contemporary organizations, both *for profit* and *non profit*, how to manage contemporary employees, and in what direction a contemporary organization should go

to efficiently, in the surrounding reality, provide work satisfaction to its members. Among the prospective answers, according to the authors of this paper, special attention should be paid to the model of *teal organization* described by F. Laloux in his book *Reinventing Organizations* [Laloux, 2014, 2015]. This idea is an interesting one that encourages researchers to further their explorations, both theoretical and practical. Many consider this conception to be utopian and dream-like, but organizations based upon this idea function both in Poland and globally [Laloux, 2014; Blikle, 2016; Skrzypek, 2017]. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to present and analyze particular functions which together lead to human resources management in a selected teal company, namely Brewa c.c. (civil company) from Kalisz. Human resources management is understood here to mean a number of activities connected with people, which are aimed at reaching the goals of the organization and fulfilling the needs of the employees [Listwan, 1995, pp. 25–26]. The main research methods employed in preparing the article were a survey and an analysis of the literature as well as a categorized interview method.

## 1. Characteristics of the investigated organization and research methodology

Brewa from Kalisz offers its clients solutions based on clean and renewable sources of energy, as it specializes in photovoltaic power stations. Among other things, it offers the installations of systems of energy management, using LED lights and a choice of appropriate heat power and energy, as well as help in selecting the cheapest energy operators [Można Inaczej, 2017]. Brewa is a micro-company, as it employs eight employees; it cooperates with many subcontractors and has been present on the market since February 2015. The goal of the company is to minimize the cost of energy bills in the most convenient way for its clients. This goal has been reached by implementing the System of Quality Management according to norm PN-EN ISO 9001: 2009.<sup>1</sup>

The Brewa company wishes to build a society based upon mutual trust and respect. It wants to allow the employees to freely care about their nearest and dearest. At the same time, it wishes to secure a safe and free development for the company itself. Despite many problems and tribulations, the company has proven that it is possible to build a firm which is profitable, dynamic, has a common goal, self-management, trust and self-realization, and which is free from control, punishment or the absolute execution of sale targets [Można Inaczej, 2017]. All the activities in the company are based upon the following principles [Borowiak 2018b]:

1. Partnership – all are equal, which does not mean that everybody is treated in the same way.

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<sup>1</sup> Also, in ISO 9000 norms, the role of human resource management has been noticed [Rogala, 2013, p. 102].

2. Assertiveness – which means that “I” does not always mean “I am the most important”.

3. Sharing power – which means that the one who has knowledge decides and the rest have to comply.

Every employee has the right to make a decision, for which he or she takes the responsibility. At the same time, he or she knows that the success of the company depends on the engagement and determination of all the members of the team. Therefore, everyone demands things from himself or herself and all the employees have the right to demand things from all the others. The profit of the company is made commonly and the gain is also common, with solidarity in times of trouble also maintained [Można Inaczej, 2017]. At work, not everyone is guided by his or her competence and experience. Emotions and self-fulfillment are also crucial values for the organization. It is important for everyone to feel a person functionally fulfilled and to be proud of it.

Since the inception of the company, a few rules have been commonly worked out [Można Inaczej, 2017] which are a guidance for all the employees assuming that, in time, the firm will belong to those who once took the risk and joined it. The organizational culture of the firm hinges on four foundations: justice, freedom, engagement and taking reasonable risks. The company has been run according to the decalogue of teal companies [Można Inaczej, 2017]. Analyzing these rules and the decalogue, one may notice that they are connected with the realization of a personal function<sup>2</sup> in the company, which has been specified in the course of the current research.

In order to gather information concerning human resources management in Brewa the method of categorized interview was used to question the co-founder of the company Maciej Borowiak. The technique of gathering information was the original inquiry questionnaire [Pilch, 1995, p. 58]. The interview was conducted in August 2018. The interview was registered on an electronic device. On the basis of the interview, the elements of the personal function have been described and analyzed. In particular, those elements which result from the implementation of the teal organization methods to the company under analysis have been highlighted.

## **2. Realization of personal function in the organization under analysis**

Human resources management in traditional organizations involves the following elements: human resource planning, gaining people for the company (recruiting, selection, onboarding), the development of human resources (motivation, payment, training and development, employee appraisal) and discharge (dismissal) [Listwan, 2010, p. 76]. Similar elements can also be found in teal organizations, a representative of which is the company under scrutiny – the Brewa company from Kalisz.

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<sup>2</sup> Human resource management is equated with personal function [Listwan, 1995, pp. 25–26].

Brewa, as a micro-company, utilizes fairly uncomplicated procedures regarding **the choice of employees** [Stredwick, 2005, p. 29]. The majority of the company's team are persons acquired by recommendation<sup>3</sup> (only one employee was given a job on the basis of a job posting). To search for employees, the firm uses its own website and social media. It does not use portals such as pracuj.pl.<sup>4</sup> The firm wants to employ people who are ambitious and whose working careers are interesting (not necessarily only successful).

For the owners of the firm, the knowledge and skills of the candidate are not the most important issues. They believe that if a person is motivated and enthusiastic, he or she can learn everything.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, they try to discover if the candidates care for the job and if they are properly engaged. What is very important is the values<sup>6</sup> which the candidate follows in his or her professional and personal life. In the process of recruitment, the candidates are informed that the company is a teal organization and what this means practically. Visions and plans are also presented in order for the candidates to realize what organization they are applying to. Subsequently, the candidates are asked to fill in a form found on the company's website. It includes the following questions: Describe three values which are most important for you and which you follow in your professional life. Why choose these? If you have any, present a vision and a mission of your life. Why have you decided to apply for a post in the Brewa team? [Brewa 2018]. Later on, an interview with the owner takes place. During this talk:

- the knowledge of the candidate concerning the company, its trade and products is checked;
- a discussion on the values followed by the candidate and the organization is conducted;
- mutual expectations of the candidate and the company are presented;
- information about the candidate included in the application form is discussed.

The company's owners pay special attention to the values declared by the candidates for jobs in the recruitment form. If these values dramatically differ from the values of the organization, the candidate's application is rejected. Next, the candidate is introduced to the other employees so that they can find out if he or she can be compatible with their team. The team members provide the owner with feedback concerning the candidate. The team's opinion and the knowledge gathered during the interview with the candidate form a basis for making a final decision about his or her employment or rejection. In the case of less strategic posts, a selection is made by the company's workers.

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<sup>3</sup> This is confirmed by the results of research conducted in Greater Poland, which indicate that micro and small organizations usually employ recommended candidates [Sławecki, 2010].

<sup>4</sup> According to the owner, considering the work market, such portals are expensive and mostly inefficient.

<sup>5</sup> Only when recruiting candidates for the post of a salesman are technical knowledge tests used.

<sup>6</sup> These include, among other things, honesty, reliability and professionalism [Kosewski, 2008, p. 14].

In the company, significant importance is attached to **socio-professional adaptation**, which lasts for a few months. The owners realize that it is difficult to accept a new employee who has already had experience in traditionally managed organizations. This mainly concerns individual decision making, the habit that the manager is always right, etc.

**Motivating the human resources** in Brewa is closely aligned to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The following needs are fulfilled in the organization:

- physiological needs, among other things, by earnings which can fulfill the needs of the employees and their families and, at the same time, allow the organization to survive and develop, by ergonomic and modern workplaces, and by leisure time and social background;
- safety needs, among other things, by the sense of stabilization and continuity of employment, and by relations in the company which are based on respect and trust;
- the need of belonging, among other things, by being part of the team, and by good relations with co-workers, suppliers and clients;
- the esteem need, among other things, by respect for the employees and for the tasks they do, by appreciating their efforts and trials, by noticing their ambitions and by trust and partnership;
- the self-realization need, which is considered by the owners as the most important since it provides meaning for the work which is done.

The owners look at the organization not only through the prism of profit, but also through the vision of further development. They believe that "the firm builds the future not only for itself but also for its children and the local community" [Borowiak 2018a].

In Brewa, the owners offer the candidate earnings at a particular level. The candidate may accept, reject or negotiate the offer. The earnings of the employees represent the average level in this trade. The owners know that the employees would like to earn more but the firm is young and it strives to survive. The company's further development is aimed at ensuring pay rises. Moreover, in the future the owners would like the employees to determine the level of their earnings;<sup>7</sup> they would also like the earnings to be disclosed<sup>8</sup> (according to the rule: "if you want to earn a certain amount of money, provide your arguments for that").

In the company there are no sale goals, since – according to the owners – these are often difficult to reach without losing the trust of the clients. Every salesman knows how much has to be sold for the company to survive. In the case of providing

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<sup>7</sup> Examples of such companies are Expansio Ltd. from Poznań [Jarus, 2017] and Semco SA from Sao Paulo [Semler, 1998, p. 14].

<sup>8</sup> The transparency of earnings is one of the most crucial factors that influences the assessment of the fairness of earnings and allows them to be compared [Bugdol, 2014, p. 89].

the profit, it has been stated what part of the money is to be shared by the employees (e.g. for a pay rise, training or integration parties).

In Brewa, there are no formal **employee assessments**. A space for conversation and experience-exchange is created on a rational basis. In 2017, the firm organized a meeting for all the employees and leaders outside its headquarters. Before the meeting, the employees were asked to prepare feedback information regarding the co-workers (among other things, what they like, what they dislike in the behaviour of the other employees, their methods of working, etc.). It should be emphasized that the employees focused on the strong sides, the values and achievements. This experience was extremely useful, since the employees met with words of approval and admiration. In addition, at the beginning of 2018, each employee prepared a SWOT analysis of themselves plus the aims which they would like to achieve. The leaders of the company became acquainted with the analyses, which were subsequently placed on the company's information board. The leaders are now trying to concentrate on the strong sides of the employees, on strengthening them and on the careful elimination of their weak sides. They are also aware that this process may take a long time.

The owners attach much importance to **the training of the human resources** and they encourage the employees to engage in continuous development. The employees themselves know when they can and when they should not spend money on training and they autonomously make decisions concerning their participation in a particular training course. The employers take full responsibility for choosing a training course, a training company, the process of learning and the implementation of the effects of the training. The firm offers its employees training courses in English and coaching. It also pays for postgraduate studies. The members of the technical department participate in the greatest number of courses. What is important is that the company does not require any loyalty contracts. The employees willingly broaden their knowledge and skills. Brewa offers its employees support during all the stages of the training process, although the training courses are not formally evaluated. The employees participating in training courses subsequently share their knowledge and skills with the others and recommend courses to them. The owners adhere to the rule that the employees can develop along with the company.

During the whole period of the company's activity, only one person has **left** it. In Brewa, the work atmosphere is friendly,<sup>9</sup> and is created by the whole team. The employees enjoy great freedom. They are aware that if they left the organization, they might find it difficult to find themselves in traditionally managed organizations. A few employees have received job offers from other organizations (some of these offers included more lucrative earnings in relation to those received in Brewa) but none of them have accepted the offers. The employees appreciate working in a teal company and the foundations on which it is based.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, all the employees receive PLN 100 on the their birthday. Similarly, during holidays the employees receive small bonuses on top of their earnings.

## Conclusions

Over recent years, a number of changes in human resources management in different types of organizations have been observed. In particular, these changes concern the attitude towards employees. On the one hand, this should allow them to use their potential at work, while on the other, it should make them feel a deeper meaning towards the work which is done in accordance with their system of values. Thanks to such an attitude towards employees, an organization can develop and serve not only its owners and employees but also the whole society. Organizations can reach this goal, among other things, due to an implementation of the teal organization model, including human resources management. Every teal organization differs from each other, since different people are employed in it. In addition, the realization of personal functions is different, despite there being many common issues. A presentation and analysis of particular functions which constitute human resources management in a teal organization has been conducted using the example of the Brewa company from Kalisz. One of the most important actions in this field has been the choice of employees and, in particular, the introduction of a new employee to work. At that moment, a decision is made by both the company and the person who applies for a job in it. That decision refers to whether a teal company is appropriate for that person and whether that person would be able to work in it without traditional structures and duties. In Poland, an increasing number of firms are choosing the methods of teal organizations [Matysiak, 2018]. They wish to exchange experience, knowledge and good practices in order for other organizations to follow this path [Turkusowy Poznań, 2018].

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### **Zarządzanie kadrami w organizacji turkusowej na przykładzie firmy Brewa s.c. w Kaliszu**

W artykule dokonano identyfikacji działań w zakresie zarządzania kadrami, realizowanych w organizacjach turkusowych opisanych przez F. Laloux, na przykładzie polskiej firmy Brewa s.c. z Kalisza, która od kilku lat wdraża w swojej działalności zasady organizacji turkusowych. Wykorzystując metodę wywiadu skategoryzowanego z jednym z właścicieli firmy, zaprezentowano i przeanalizowano szczegółowe funkcje, które składają się na zarządzanie kadrami w wyżej wymienionej organizacji. Za jedno z najważniejszych działań w tym obszarze uznano rekrutację i selekcję, w tym wprowadzenie nowego pracownika do pracy.

### **Human Resources Management in a Teal Organization Based on the Example of Brewa c.c. in Kalisz**

The article identified activities in the field of human resources management carried out in teal organizations, a concept developed by F. Laloux. The Polish company Brewa, from Kalisz, which for several years has been implementing the teal organization rules, was used as an example. Using the categorized interview method with one of the company's owners, detailed functions which make up the human resources management in this organization were presented and analyzed. The findings indicated that recruitment and selection were considered as belonging to the most important activities in this area, including the introduction of a new employee to work.