

*Beata Grabowska**

IMPLEMENTATION ANALYSIS OF CONTROLLING ACTIVITIES ON THE CASE OF THE NEUROACTIVE COMPANY

A b s t r a c t: The article presents an implementation analysis of activities in the field of controlling on the example of Neuroactive. The first part of the work covered the diagnosis of information needs in the field of operational controlling in a consulting and training company. The following research methods were used in the described study: case study, documentation analysis and free interview. The diagnosed needs of Neuroactive include multidimensional analyzes of the structure of revenues and profitability, cash flow planning and the possibility to assess the profitability of the project. The second part of the thesis outlined the concept of an operating controlling system dedicated to a consulting and training company.

K e y w o r d s: controlling, operational controlling, consulting and training company.

J E L C o d e: L 21

INTRODUCTION

Controlling is a system that allows you to improve the use of resources in a changing environment. It is a platform within which management functions and its instruments are combined [Kosiń, 2006]. It can be said that this multidimensional system is responsible for supporting the decisions of the managerial staff [Nesterak, Kowalski, Czerniachowicz, 2016]. The purpose of controlling is to make corrections and supervise various areas of the company's activity. It is a comprehensive process in which coordination, control, information and planning activities are integrated. This strategic goal of controlling is realized in the enterprise by creating appropriate structures and internal procedures [Hoensch, 2013]. Internal analyzes are designed individually, depending on the specificity

* Contact information: Beata Grabowska, Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Katowicach, Wydział Zarządzania, Katedra Zarządzania Relacjami Organizacji ul.1 Maja 50, 40-287 Katowice, email: beata.grabowska.w@gmail.com

of the enterprise and the information needs of its managers [Nita, 2014, Zastempowski, et al., 2018]. Many scientists believe that the solutions used in practice should be used to improve the theory, consisting in generalizing and proposing model solutions intended for facilities representing specific industries [Januszewski, 2016]. Eisenhardt is of the same opinion about the advantages of building a theory from case study analysis [Eisenhardt, 1989]. This also applies to controlling systems [Major, 2007; Bienkowska, 2011; Januszewski, 2016].

When analyzing the cases of controlling applications in enterprises, one can get the impression that despite the differences between entities, the introduced controlling is to a large extent a universal solution. Despite this, the effectiveness and efficiency of its operation is obviously different for each company [Nowosielski, 2002]. Therefore, a question arises about the legitimacy and profitability of implementing controlling in a specific company.

The purpose of this work is an implementation analysis of activities in the field of controlling on the example of the Neuroactive company. The paper presents the results of diagnosis of the consulting and training company's information needs and an outline of the concept of the operating controlling system was presented. The following methods were used in the study: case study, documentation analysis and free-form interview. It is worth emphasizing that in the Polish literature, there have been few works on the use of controlling in consulting and training companies [Januszewski, 2016, pp. 217], therefore, the task undertaken by the author to make an implementation analysis of activities in the field of controlling on the example of the Neuroactive company seems fully justified.

1. DIAGNOSIS OF INFORMATION FROM THE COMPANY NEUROACTIVE IN THE FIELD OF CONTROLLING

Neuroactive is a dynamically developing consulting and training company. It has been operating on the market continuously since 2009 in the development industry. The strategy is based on building the quality of services, treating the price as a complementary factor in achieving a competitive advantage. The company operates in a market where demand is shaped, inter alia, by the presence of new trends, the need for continuous improvement of qualifications, the general economic situation, the financial condition of enterprises, the specificity of the activities of competing companies and the availability of funding sources from the European Social Fund.

Neuroactive operates in accordance with the registration data. The information available about the company allows the identification of the area of specialization, the substantive scope of the services provided and target groups. There is a low division of labor in the company. The owner plays the primary role in

making decisions. There is a strong focus on operational activities. Much emphasis is placed on maintaining fluency. Funding opportunities are narrowed.

The company's predominant economic activity includes:

- Educational and vocational counseling.
- Advice on EU projects, preparation of training and investment projects.
- Activities in the field of psychological and pedagogical assistance.

The implemented activities are divided into closed training, open training, individual consultations, implementation, coaching and others. Most of the activities carried out by Neuroactive are training projects including projects co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), which bring about 70% of annual revenues. The company's clients include large corporations, entities from the small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) sector, non-governmental organizations, public administration units and individual recipients.

Neuroactive uses solutions that ensure high quality of the services provided, i.e. presents documents confirming the quality standards it meets (certificates, diplomas), shows a list of projects, references and recommendations from clients, and improves its services. On the other hand, Neuroactive employs 3 people under an employment contract and cooperates with several dozen trainers, depending on the needs, employing them under civil law contracts, but the client does not have access to information (e.g. in promotional and informational materials of the company) about individual persons implementing training.

The company offers services in accordance with applicable legal and ethical standards, in particular the provisions on copyright (the authors of intellectual content can be identified in the training materials) and the protection of personal data. Neuroactive uses practices that allow the implementation of conclusions from the evaluation results in subsequent consulting and training projects, but the company does not have a model of reacting to unforeseen situations and customer reservations (e.g. it does not provide information to the customer about the complaint procedure).

Depending on the goals and scope of services, Neuroactive bases its activities on results research of the client's training and development needs or independently examines his needs based on diagnostic methods, i.e. :

- Analysis of the development paths of competences of service participants.
- Survey questionnaire.
- Interview questionnaire.
- Observations.
- Tests.
- Assessment center.

Based on the results of the study, Neuroactive sets specific goals with the client, which are defined in a measurable manner. Then the company develops

an individual training and development program adequate to the needs and goals agreed with the client. It is worth emphasizing that Neuroactive each time evaluates a training and development project using such methods as:

- Competency tests carried out in the form of pre and post.
- Survey questionnaire
- Interview questionnaire

However, the company does not practice activities supporting the so-called consolidation of the adopted results. We are talking about additional consultations (by phone or e-mail), follow-up activities or complementary e-learning training. Moving on to settlements for the service, it should be noted that the company summarizes training and development activities each time and communicates to the client the degree of achievement of the set goals according to the previously agreed rules (documents are translated in writing in paper or electronic form).

After getting acquainted with the company's activities, its projects and clients, an analysis of internal documentation was carried out. As a result, it was found that:

- The Neuroactive company keeps a tax ledger of revenues and expenses (KPiR). Accounting services are outsourced to an external company.

- The company maintains a contract register that is not linked to the list of invoices issued for their execution. Invoices are issued in the "Fakturownia.pl" program.

- The company does not maintain a common customer file for contract and invoice registration.

- The company does not run one common catalog of services that would be used to register contracts and invoices.

- The company has no tools to plan cash flows for a given month.

- The company settles VAT on a monthly basis.

- The company keeps records of the trainers' work.

- In order to calculate the costs of the training offer, the company uses simplified spreadsheets.

- The company does not analyze profitability according to any criteria, such as the type of projects.

The presented conclusions were discussed with the owner of the company, who was shown the possibilities of using operational controlling tools. Then, the most important areas of the company's management information needs were identified. The content of these areas is presented in Table 1. The process of designing controlling is presented below:

- The scope and time horizon were defined.

- Objectives and operational plans were prepared.

- System control parameters have been selected.

- Organizational and information safeguards were implemented (appropriate data set, possibilities for selection, processing and rapid flow of information).
- Procedures for determining deviations of control parameters were built.
- Rules supporting the decision-making process have been established.
- The functioning of the designed system was verified.
- A decision was made to implement the system.
- A schedule for the implementation of the design stages was defined [Marciniak, 2004, pp.89-90].

It is worth emphasizing that operational controlling is focused on achieving current goals in the area of generating profits, using in this respect the success factors specified by strategic controlling and revenue control tools, costs, expenses and outlays on investments [Walica, 2007, pp. 151].

The tasks of operational controlling include coordination and assistance in determining the main and partial goals of the company’s operations, developing action plans and translating them into budgets for individual organizational units, ongoing coordination and supporting entities implementing the plans, comparing budgets with their actual implementation, and information service for the management staff, determining the causes of deviations and personal responsibility of the deviations, preparing reports and assessing the degree of performance of current tasks and indicating on their basis the possibilities of actions facilitating the implementation of the company’s strategy, ensuring short-term financial liquidity, creating reserves for the future and increasing the value of the company’s equity [Sierpińska, 2004, pp. 20].

Table 1. Diagnosis of the information needs of the Neuroactive company in the field of operational controlling

Area I	Area II	Area III	Area IV
Multidimensional analysis of revenues obtained from clients, taking into account such elements as the type of project, the subject of the project, the business field and the industry. In order to identify missed opportunities and better target the offer [Januszewski, 2016].	A multi-level profitability analysis, taking into account the business areas, type, area of project activities, size and thematic scope of the project, customers, people acquiring projects. To determine the profitability of activities carried out by the enterprise [Nita, 2014; Kujawski, 2007; Kujawski, 2005].	Analysis of trainers according to: client list, project list, references. Certificates and qualifications. The results of the analysis will confirm the trainers’ experience and will constitute an evaluation of their work [Januszewski, 2016].	Analysis and planning (monthly assessment of the company’s value) as well as forecasting flows on a monthly basis, which is to enable better planning of purchases [Hoensch, 2013].

Source: Own study

2. THE NEUROACTIVE AS AN EXAMPLE OF APPLYING CONTROLLING IN A CONSULTING AND TRAINING COMPANY

Neuroactive company recognizes controlling as a process in which the responsible person performs a comparative analysis of the plan-execution type on an ongoing basis and controls the processes in the company in such a way as to prevent errors in the present and future. The decision to implement controlling in the company was made due to the need to have more complete information and to ensure profitability, smoothness and efficiency of operations. Moreover, the company cared about:

- Identification and elimination of weak links in the enterprise.
- Planning, controlling and forecasting flows.
- Building an individual information system that will allow the collection, processing and reporting of information on costs, results and investments.

The diagnosis of the information needs of Neuroactive was the starting point for the development of the concept of the operating controlling system including:

- Contract registration module.
- Project profitability assessment module taking into account variable costs.
- Fixed expenses module.
- Cash flow forecasting module.
- Reporting module.

Taking into account the specificity of the activity of the consulting and training company, the following were additionally introduced:

- Cost calculation sheet for the training offer.
- Project Calculation Sheet.

The toolkit was made in an Ms Excel spreadsheet. In a small enterprise, this software is still the analytical tool most often used by controllers [Kaszuba-Perz, 2011].

The implementation of controlling in Neuroactive was carried out in three stages. These stages correspond to the actions proposed by S. Nowosielski and R. Marczak [1996]:

Stage I - preliminary activities:

- obtaining the initial approval of the management board for the idea of a new management system,
- defining the main goals of controlling,
- appointment of an implementation team,

- employee training in the controlling system,
- assessment of the solutions used so far and possible changes will cause controlling.

Stage II - designing organizational changes in the field of:

- defining strategic and operational goals,
- general concept of the controlling system, according to the sequence:
 - objectives → tasks → methods → procedures → instruments → documents
- assessment and verification of the adopted solutions,
- decision making process.

Stage III - introducing controlling focused on:

- developing detailed guidelines, procedures, planning and accounting documents and implementation schedules based on approved solutions,
- correcting the solutions of the operating system.

SUMMARY

After the implementation of activities was completed, the functioning of controlling in the enterprise was assessed. The evaluation of controlling included an analysis of the weaknesses of individual services and the adopted criteria (efficiency, effectiveness, quality). The constructed controlling system and the developed set of tools made it possible to conduct multi-dimensional analyzes of revenues and coverage margins. In addition, unused areas of the company's operations were identified and areas with the highest and the lowest profitability were discovered. In addition, the prepared tools gave Neuroactive the ability to forecast cash flows. The developed tools meet the expectations formulated by the company's management. Controlling is not a universal solution that will help solve all the company's problems by means of mysterious calculations. However, it is to support rational decision-making at the operational and strategic level, so that each part of the enterprise is oriented towards one common, long-distance goal.

LITERATURE

- Eisenhardt K.M. (1989), *Building Theories from Case Study Research*, Academy of Management Review, Vol. 14, No. 4, s. 532-550.
- Hoensch W. (2013), *Zastosowanie controllingu w małych i średnich przedsiębiorstwach na przykładzie firmy niemieckiej „Danilo Wiehler”*, Przestrzeń, Ekonomia, Społeczeństwo, Sopot - Szkoła Wyższa, nr 3/1, s. 119-131.

- Januszewski A. (2016), *Diagnoza potrzeb informacyjnych w zakresie controllingu operacyjnego w firmie doradczo-szkoleniowej*, Rachunkowość a controlling, Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu, nr 440, s. 217–220.
- Kaszuba-Perz A. (2011), *Wzrost małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw w kontekście stosowanych narzędzi rachunkowości zarządczej i controllingu*, Nierówności Społeczne a Wzrost Gospodarczy, nr 20, Uniwersytet Rzeszowski, s. 364–373.
- Kosiń P. (2006), *Uwarunkowania wyboru instrumentów controllingu na tle rozwoju struktur sieciowych*, Studia Ekonomiczne/Akademia Ekonomiczna w Katowicach, (37 Zarządzanie strategiczne w przedsiębiorstwie), s. 201–214.
- Kujawski J. (2005), *Model oceny rentowności centrów zysku z wykorzystaniem standardowej marży pokrycia*, Prace i Materiały Wydziału Zarządzania Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, s. 107–118.
- Kujawski J., Ossowski M. (2007), *Wykorzystanie wieloblokowego i wielostopniowego rachunku wyników w działalności usługowo-handlowej*, Prace i Materiały Wydziału Zarządzania UG, nr 4, s. 49–58.
- Major A. (2007), *System controllingu w przedsiębiorstwie*, Studia przypadków zastosowań w warunkach polskich, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, Warszawa.
- Marciniak S. (2004), *Controlling. Filozofia. Projektowanie*, Difin, Warszawa, s. 89–90.
- Nesterak J., Kowalski M., Czerniachowicz B. (2016), *Controlling strategiczny w praktyce przedsiębiorstw działających w Polsce*, wyd. Krakowska Szkoła Controllingu, Kraków.
- Nita B. (2014), *Zakres wewnętrznych analiz dotyczących rentowności w controllingu operacyjnym*, Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Finanse, Rynki Finansowe, Ubezpieczenia, nr 66, s. 75–86.
- Nowosielski K. (2002), *Ocena controllingu w przedsiębiorstwie [w:] Systemy controllingowe przedsiębiorstw i instytucji*, Prace naukowe Akademii Ekonomicznej im. Oskara Langego we Wrocławiu nr 948, Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej im. Oskara Langego we Wrocławiu, s. 163–167.
- Nowosielski S., Marczak R. (1996), *Metodyczne aspekty wdrażania controllingu w przedsiębiorstwie*, Akademia Ekonomiczna, Wrocław, nr 725, s. 109 [w:] Sierpińska M. (2004), *Controlling funkcyjny w przedsiębiorstwie*, Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Kraków, s. 25, [za:] Florczak M. (2012), *Projektowanie i wdrażanie controllingu w przedsiębiorstwie*, Проблеми теорії та методології бухгалтерського обліку, контролю і аналізу, 2,23.
- Sierpińska M. (2004), *Controlling funkcyjny w przedsiębiorstwie*, Wyd. Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Kraków, s. 20.
- Walica H. (2007), *Inwestycje i controlling w przedsiębiorstwie*, Wyd. Wyższa Szkoła Biznesu w Dąbrowie Górniczej.
- Zastempowski M., Głabiszewski W., Liczmańska-Kopcewicz K. (2018), *Mikrootoczenie MŚP a ich aktywność innowacyjna*, Zeszyty Naukowe, Organizacja i Zarządzanie, Polityka Śląska, z. 127, s. 325–339.