

VALUE CHAIN IN A NETWORKING ORGANIZATION

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Abstract

In turbulent environments, the process of creating a value chain in a networking organization is becoming more complex. It requires a rapid response to both the opportunities and threats which shape strategic advantage and competitiveness. Although it is interpreted in various ways in the literature, today value is the subject of significant analysis. What is important, its importance is clearly emphasized in achieving business goals by companies and networking organizations. The aim of this article is to draw attention to the essence of the development of the value chain in the networking organization. A comprehensive integration of primary and secondary processes and their relationships with other participating entities allow for an increase in the value of a networking organization.

The completed research aimed at recognizing, understanding and interpretation of the conditions affecting the integration of the processes which determine the value chains of suppliers and buyers in a networking organization. The research in this study consist of a literature research and qualitative research. The aim of the literature review was to verify the existing knowledge and the conditions which shape the value chain in a networking organization. The literature research and the analysis of existing data were based on industry reports, academic articles, monographs, as well as commercial knowledge bases. As regards the qualitative research – 540 expert interviews in 36 public hospitals in three analyzed provinces (Warmia-Mazury, Pomerania and Wielkopolska) – the aim was to identify barriers and challenges in the process of developing a comprehensive value chain of a networking organization.

Keywords: value chain, value, competitive advantage, networking organization, hospital, processes, trust, cooperation.

Classification JEL: M12 – Personnel Management; M14 – Corporate Culture, Diversity, Social Responsibility; M15 – IT Management.

1. Introduction

The value chain is a string of various types of functions (actions) that generate value of products and services, which is determined by market relations between the organization and the buyer. These are phases of managing and implementing processes, referring to a specific sector of activity. These phases are related to each other in series or in parallel (*Stabryła, 2007: 165*). In the literature creating value is called added value chain or supply chain, and it is a connection of string values of all its participants, namely: suppliers, manufacturers, dealers, distributors and final customers (*Manganese, Lalwani & Butcher, 2008: 8–12*). Managing a value chain is of strategic nature – it focuses on its basic functions that determine the successes and failures of a networking organization. It is an expression of system process approach which requires the involvement of all the levels of management. In their pursuit of goals enterprises try to achieve a competitive advantage. One way to do this is to create formal and informal links between businesses in the chain – business networking.

This article attempts to answer the following questions or disclose considered areas by showing the results of empirical research as follows:

- To define what are the directions and the scope of changes which are made in the structure of value chain of a networking organization in a competitive market.
- To search what is the function the prosumer plays in shaping the structure of the value chain of a networking organization.
- To identify what factors usually cause changes in the configuration of the value chain of entities in a networking organization, which must be taken into account.

The success of a networking organization depends largely on its ability to create a comprehensive value chain. In the modern, variable, complex and unpredictable environment it is increasingly difficult to do so. The entities within the networking organization which want to achieve satisfactory results should take into account the preferences of prosumers. The created value chains include key processes and have a unique character (*Szablewski & Tuzimek, 2008: 23–39*). They are also based, among other things:

- Innovation processes focused on market research to identify customer needs, designing product offerings and their successful marketing;
- Operational processes associated with the manufacture, delivery of products to customers and the provision of services (repeatability of these processes determines the existence of more opportunities to achieve good results in this area);
- After-sales processes.

This allows to produce and provide value, taking into account the capabilities of the organization, which result from their existing resources and core competencies. These are prosumers who are the beneficiaries of the process of the value creation which involves: “making strategic and operational decisions of investment, organization and finances which help to increase the value of (...), provided that the value creation must be done in an ethical manner and in accordance with law” (*Grudzewski et al., 2010: 157*). On the other hand, the creation and development of value chain of a networking organization as a source of competitive advantage also requires a redesign of the existing organizational and functional structures. The analysis of resources and competences in a networking organization should also be complemented by an analysis of the resources and competences of competitors, partners in the value chain, because in this way relevant information will be obtained to evaluate the possibility of producing and providing added value to customers (*Szymura-Tyc, 2006: 115*)

2. Identification and classification of processes within a networking organization

For the purposes of this discussion it is assumed that the networking organization can be seen as a set of interrelated processes that permeate the organizational and functional structure. These processes can be assessed and coordinated within the framework of a comprehensive development of the value chain of the networking organization.

Literature research (*Bernhardt & Milberg, 2012: 11–14*) shows that the process of improving the position of the complex value chain may be a combination of different forms and may require complex changes in the strategy, structure and technology applied by businesses, as well as the organization of the market and the economic policy of the networking organization as a whole. This kind of thinking – in terms of processes – allows to look for sources of value for customers, while process management aims to ensure greater efficiency of all activities which will result in an increase in value for the customer.

In the opinion of *Grajewski (2007: 15)* a process is a set of sequential steps connected with each other by cause-and-effect relationships in the sense that the results of prior actions are inputs of actions following the prior actions. Any action or set of actions can be described as a process which starts from a certain initial value (or effort) and produces a result – the effort, which has been transformed and enriched with added value. An interesting interpretation of the process from the point of view of the networking organization was presented by *Auksztol and Chomuszko (2012: 18)* stating that the processes implemented within the organization contain economic operations, i.e. those processes that have an impact on the property and are subject to accounting records. In their view, by linking processes with

business operations one can efficiently collect data not only to assess the financial situation of the individual but also to assess the process itself.

One of the important stages of development of the value chain in the networking organization is to identify processes which, according to Grajewski (2012: 33), is already a process itself, understood as the recognition of subsequent actions implemented in the various entities and their qualification. The basic element of identification is to establish the rules which define the criteria – types of processes and to assign them into the corresponding groups.

For the purpose of this discussion it has been assumed that the process is a set of activities connected with each other in the time and space relationship, focused on the customer, defined by the material and information flows, penetrating the boundaries of individual areas of activity of the organization, including primary and secondary activities creating value (Krawczyk, 2011: 97). Research literature allows us to distinguish the following processes in the value:

- Primary processes;
- Secondary processes;
- Management processes.

Regardless of the classification, in the networking organization, due to the nature of management, it is important to classify processes (actions) into the following types:

- Increasing customer value (VA), resulting in a product/service with the desired characteristics and the required customer service levels;
- Not increasing customer value (NVA) – performing action which does not contribute to the creation of products and services which are value for the customer.

Analyzing the presented proposal for identification and classification of processes carried out in the networking organization it should be stated that management based on processes would not be possible without a proper IT tool, which will define a system for effective measurement of single processes.

The implementation of the system of values (results) measurement should apply to all identified processes, regardless of their impact on the creation of value. In addition, we should also make sure that the collection of meters assigned to the processes will result from the adopted strategic directions and have a multidimensional nature (describing reality from several perspectives). This is connected with the need to exchange information between entities in the networking organization. These processes should be properly controlled and monitored, and their implementation should contribute to the creation of added value for the stakeholders.

3. The added value as a result of a relationship between the networking organization and stakeholders

In the uncertain and turbulent environment the entities in the networking organization need to react and this reaction can be making an effort to increase the offered value, which, as Stabryła (2012: 165–166) says, refers to the particular value chain expressing the final result (profit) or indirect effects, but can also relate to the costs generated at all levels of the process.

Thus, the comprehensive value is the offered sum of the utility, resulting from its assessment of the overall ability of the product/service to meet the needs (Beliczyński, 2011: 56–63). It is the difference between the sum of the benefits that are expected from the product/service, and the costs associated with its acquisition (Kotler, 2005: 7–33). The principal determinant of creating cooperative relations for a networking organization is to gain access to knowledge, internationalization, cost reduction, and strengthening the market position (Grant & Baden-Fuller, 2004: 61–84). In a turbulent external environment, inter-

organizational relationships are extremely important, as they allow entities within the networking organization to access information, resources, markets and modern, often expensive technology. Moreover, cooperative relations network are important because they can help to create new opportunities creating to acquire new abilities and skills (*Macias, 2009*).

These links occur when there is a certain degree of interdependence between the parties within the networking organization. It is therefore necessary to look for such improvements in these relationships (links) that allow to improve the cost situation for both the organization and its contractors (*Nowak, 2006: 119–120*).

In the literature we observe a view emphasizing the dominant role of prosumers who have moved from isolation to cooperating with others, from being unaware to being informed, from being passive to being active. The essence of this process, as was rightly pointed out by Prahalad and Ramaswamy, involves interactions between them and the building of mutual experience.

The value creation covers all value-creating processes of transformation in the organization and in relation to other entities (achieving the benefits and value for customers). As stated by Blaik (*2011: 184–185*), a sign of success is the added value for the organization; the difference between the total value of sales of manufactured goods and purchased materials and services used to produce them. In turn, gaining a competitive advantage is, according to Porter (*2006: 65*), a consequence of proper organization and implementation of relevant activities within the value chain, supported by information technology, which “must be aimed at providing information to assess the value for the customer, must motivate and persuade the customer about the validity of purchase decisions, and must be based on the values that build trust” (*Rutkowski, 2010: 114*).

4. Confidence as a strategic resource in the networking organization

In a market economy based on knowledge trust has gained importance, as it is rare and extremely valuable in shaping the value chain of the networking organization. In such conditions it becomes a necessary resource, as well as an intangible asset of entities that generate added value. It plays an important role both in the management of the organization of the network, developing the value chain, as well as affects the quality of teamwork and leadership.

The growing importance of confidence also stems from the fact that it is a way of reducing the risks and preventing entities in the networking organization from being uncertain (*Lewis & Weigert, 1985: 967–984; Shapiro, 1987: 623–658; Sako, 1998: 88–117*). It plays an important role in the functioning of any organization including the networking one in both the exterior and inside the organization. Every stakeholder relation is based on trust, which, according to Hardin (*2006: 17*), shall be understood as the belief in the good intentions and the ability to meet its obligations.

The confidence prosumers put in entities is reflected in their purchasing decisions, which in turn translates into a comprehensive value chain (financial results) of the networking organization. The concept of trust is defined in various ways. Regardless of the approach of individual authors, one can say that it is the readiness to accept the behavior of the other, without having to control them (*Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995: 712*).

Today, confidence is often perceived as capital, like knowledge capital or financial capital. This approach stems from the fact that trust occurs both inside and outside the organization. The amount of confidence stakeholders have for the organization carries a number of benefits: it reduces transaction costs, has a positive effect on the coordination of organizational activities, runs creative thinking, and thus stimulates innovation, promotes the exchange of information, increases the organization's ability to survive the crisis, and is

an essential factor establishing and developing co-operation of the market (*Grudzewski et al., 2007: 31*).

Confidence capital enables collaboration, decision-making, and contributes to value creation. As was stated by Grudzewski, Hejduk and others (*2007: 3*), the capital of confidence is unique, it is not the subject of trade, and it takes time to come into being. Therefore, confidence is seen as one of the strategic resources of the networking organization, i.e. one which ensure to create the value chain. Such resources are characterized by the fact that they are valuable, specific to the organization, and thus difficult to transfer, rare, durable and difficult to substitute, and also that they are complementary, and the development of some of them favors the development of others (*Amit & Schoemaker, 1997: 372–376*).

One quality of confidence is particularly worth emphasizing: it is longevity. Confidence naturally tends to evolve, and generally increases over time. Aiming to strengthen its market position, the networking organization should focus its attention on the values oriented at gaining the confidence of various stakeholders. What is expected in relations with contractors is honesty, unambiguous provisions in the trade agreements, flexibility and participation in the costs of joint actions (*Majchrzak, 2011: 56–58*). Confidence which stakeholders put into a networking organization is closely linked to its reputation. It is obvious that the reputation of the organization reflects the emotional and affective reactions of stakeholders to the organization name (*Bromley 2000: 240–252*). Thus, in order to acquire and preserve the confidence on their part, one should actively contribute to building the reputation of the networking organization. It should be remembered that the achieved reputation is an important strategic resource that allows to develop the value chain (to obtain a competitive advantage).

In the future, organizations will not be able to rely solely on interpersonal confidence, because they will need a complementary mechanism (institutional trust) supporting the creation and transfer of knowledge (*Ellonen, Blomqvist & Puumalainen, 2008: 160–181*). Therefore, every activity in favor of the acquisition and strengthening confidence in the networking organization and its offer seems to be a priority in an era of increasing market uncertainty.

5. The scope of research and the characteristics of the analyzed subjects

The research in this paper consists of literature research component and a component of qualitative research. The aim of the study in the literature component was to verify the current knowledge and conditions of developing the value chain of the networking organization. The research literature and analysis of existing data were based on industry reports, research articles, monographs, as well as commercial knowledge bases. In turn, the qualitative research – expert interviews (540) of 36 public hospitals in the analyzed provinces – was to identify barriers and challenges in the process of developing a comprehensive value chain of the networking organization.

An overview of research reports and foreign literature helped identify key variables that may be relevant for explaining the evolution of the value chain in the networking organization. Among them, the most important are:

- Cooperation of players in the supply chain;
- Competence of personnel;
- Sufficient number of staff employed;
- Degree of computerization of processes;
- Confidence between the partners;
- Risk sharing.

The study aimed at recognizing, understanding and interpretation of the conditions affecting the integration of primary and secondary processes and determining the value chains of suppliers and buyers in a networking organization. Given the fragmented state of knowledge in this area and the qualitative nature of its goals of research, the studies were performed using in-depth interviews – Individual In-Depth Interviews (IDI). The subjects of the study are public hospitals. Two stages were used – first the health sector was selected, then after looking at the entities operating in it public hospitals were selected. The health sector (especially public hospitals) is one of the key areas of social interest.

The determining factor in the choice of the subject was the desire for sectoral conclusions. The number of public hospitals taking part in the study (104 public hospitals, 20.43% of all the public hospitals) justifies the intentional choice from the point of view of the formulation of generalizations for the entire sector of public hospitals. The individuals in the study were purposely selected experts representing the health sector: 540 experts from 36 public hospitals of the three analyzed regions; directors of public hospitals, chief doctors, professors providing work for public hospitals and medical directors, medical provincial health departments and provincial medical consultants. The study was prepared and carried out in the qualitative way, was based on the IDI, which were recorded and then transcribed and analyzed (with the consent and knowledge of the individuals).

Of the 540 respondents 57.8% agreed with the statement that a comprehensive integration of primary and secondary processes determine the increase in added value and 41.8% agreed with an expression that mutual ties of suppliers and buyers shape the growth of the value-added in the networking organization. They also said the increase in confidence (51.3%) and the use of IT tools (34.5%) contributes to the comprehensive growth of the value chain in the networking organization. In addition, 85% believe the use of appropriate procedures and standards are key factors in reducing the risk of decision-making. 77.9% of interviews confirms the high competence of the medical staff, but as much as 89.2% observed lack of a sufficient number of specialists in the field of anesthesiology, nephrology, endocrinology, rheumatology, neurology. For 52.3% participating in the survey the number of staff is insufficient (e.g. there are 7.4 nurses per one thousand patient – it is the lowest rate in European countries). Also, what was an interesting finding were the results obtained from the experts, which are presented in the next section.

Developing value in the opinion of the experts

The most universal, the overall objective of building a competitive advantage is the separation those actions of the total number of tasks performed by the networking organization which are the source of value for the customer and which are paid for. The tool for achieving this is the value chain (*Borowski, 2010: 20*). For the purpose of the work it is assumed that the value chains can be seen in the context of the networking organization, which allows to take into account the following (*Nita, 2008: 78*):

- The path of the economic sector;
- Value chains entities (included in the networking organization) in the cross-section of processes;
- Level of action.

Each entity cooperating (as a recipient, supplier and distributor) within the network (economical path) has influence on the values of individual links – a complex value chain. According to *Penc-Pietrzak (2010: 213–223)* it allows to achieve a certain effect by ensuring the coordination of primary and secondary processes. This allows, in turn, to generate additional value for stakeholders. The secondary activities are mainly about processing information, which accompanies the primary activity. It can therefore be considered as *Obłój (2007: 363)* points out, that the implementation of secondary activities as a widely understood

management process, is supposed to provide efficiency and effectiveness of primary actions and effectiveness of the organization as a whole. The last level is formed as a result of disaggregation of processes into coordinated and interrelated cause-and-effect relationships, providing end customers with maximum value.

According to Obłój and Trybuchowski (2009: 157) the idea of the value chain is based on the principle that all projects are sequences of market related actions. On the other hand, Matwiejczuk (2010: 25) claims that the various activities that make up the processes carried out by the organization, should lead to the creation of added value for customers and thus contribute to the added value to the networking organization.

These circumstances determined the overall goal of empirical research, which was to identify the state of the structure of the value chain in the networking organization. Depending on the direction of improvement of the value chain one should select a specific set of methods for supporting the implementation of the objective pursued (Walas-Trębacz, 2012: 215). The strategies for creating value chains in the networking organization (individual entities) should be seen as a gradual climbing up the stairs with a possibility of resigning from further climbing at any time (Domanski, 2010: 62).

The analysis of the findings and the literature review show that methods which can turn helpful in the evaluation of these processes are controlling processes (Hofman 2007: 225–267). The research conducted by Gaya and Essinger (2002: 12–15) is similar to the data obtained from 33.5% of the experts. According to this group outsourcing can be the direction of improving the development processes of the value chain in the networking organization.

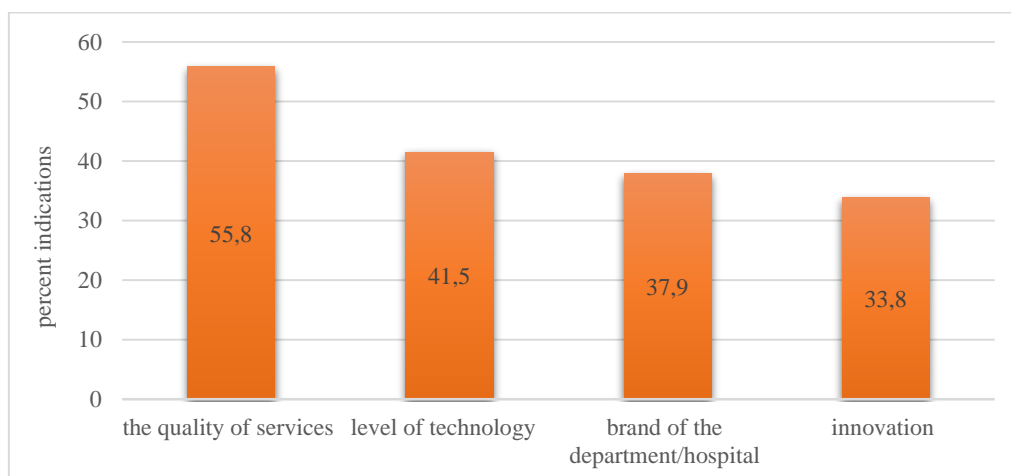


Figure 1. Prosumer role in shaping the value chain (own study)

In contrast, 29.8% of the respondents are in favor of a mixed approach presented by Skrzypek and Hofman (2010: 136). In addition, according to Golin (2003: 38) to build confidence in the organization one needs both knowledge of confidence and motivation. This view was confirmed among more than 51% of the surveyed experts. Detailed research tasks (panel of experts) also focused on the identification of the prosumer's role in shaping the value chain (Figure 1).

The findings are consistent with the position of Kleiner (2010: 28–32), who considers getting intellectual superiority (innovation), used in a team (33.8% positive responses); as a response to consumers' expectations and responding to their changing needs, behaviors (Prahalad & Krishnan, 2010: 12), (55.8% expressed a positive opinion).

According to the experts among the factors affecting the scope of changes in the structure of shaping the value chain in the networking organization (Figure 2).

The cooperation in developing a comprehensive value chain in the networking organization was also assessed in terms of the flow of relevant information. The choice was dictated by the fact that the information about individual links shaping values within the networking organization is crucial to the fulfillment of the postulate of effective cooperation between the parties through reciprocal access to databases, information accuracy and confidence.

The results obtained from experts suggest that the information exchange area was evaluated positively in 34.5%. The area which was particularly highly assessed was confidence between the partners (51.3% of responses), which, as rightly pointed out by Bugdol (2010: 65–69) plays a role of mediation in relations between operators and customers. It also constitutes an important element of the decision making process.

In summary, stakeholder satisfaction is a determinant in creating a basis for the complexity of the value chain. Stakeholders and entities (included in the organizational network) are its co-authors (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2005: 25–27). What complements this is: quality, innovation, competence, standards, IT technologies, and outsourcing, all of them being mutually conditioned and able to bring results only in combination with each other. It also requires the involvement of rare and difficult-to-copy resources, education, and the ability to use them to produce and deliver satisfactory value for customers. Networking organizations should pursue systematic approach in creating value for the stakeholders. According to Porter (2009: 25), competitive advantage stems from combining all activities carried out for the success of an organization into a single system, and therefore, their mutual adaptation, allowing to reduce costs and stand out of the others. Adapting is a manifestation of proper harmonization of the various links of the value chain, which can be considered as the architecture (of the networking organization). This allows to achieve synergistic benefits arising from the coordination and integration of the flows of information, material and financial resources within the framework of a comprehensive value chain.

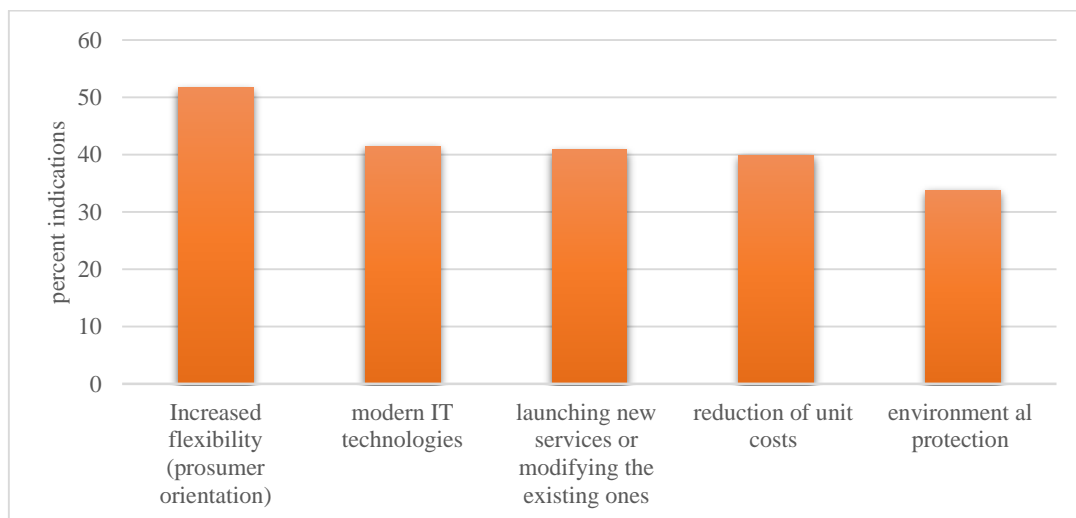


Figure 2. Structure shaping the value chain in the organization of the network (own study)

This analysis included selected variables, the inclusion of other important variables would increase the explanatory power and would give a more complete picture of the phenomenon. Developing the value chain in the networking organization is a complex undertaking, and the factors taken into account in performed studies help to explain the analyzed phenomenon. The sample was narrowed to a network of public hospitals (20.43% of

the total) in three provinces, which may allow interpretation for the entire population of public hospitals.

6. Conclusions

Developing processes of the value chain of a networking organization allowed to display (subjectively) the potential repair and preventive actions (research areas) in this regard. Undoubtedly, the development of information technology contributes to the improvement of operations (*Romaniuk & Kosmalski, 2009: 23; Krain, 2007: 28*) of any networking organization. The advantage is to create connections between different processes, as well as providing access to real-time data processed in the context of a comprehensive value chain. Owing to information technology entities can create the specified value based on the structure of the networking organization, using the core competencies of participants of the network (*Duliniec, 2007: 286*). Therefore, the implementation of the controlling rules in the networking organization supports the development of the value chain and affect its comprehensive efficiency. Since the concept of controlling is not clearly defined in the literature, it promotes diversity perception of the details of its solutions.

In turn, the effective functioning of the controlling rules is affected by the correct formation of organizational and functional entities in the networking organization. Thanks to this, the process of developing the value chain can be more efficient, and the different entities in the networking organization can cope more easily with emerging challenges.

In view of the presented reflections and analyses of the results of the study, we can conclude that:

- Confidence and involvement can be an important link in the process of developing the networking organization;
- Increasing the efficiency of mutual relations requires educational activities conducted among employees of the organization network;
- A way to search for a source of efficiency/inefficiency of various entities in the networking organization, and, above all, the areas of activities in which they have special powers may become a source of value creation;
- Determining the extent of the changes, by pointing to these processes which do not meet the pro-quality expectations of prosumers and identify external trends forcing adaptation of the value chain to market requirements.

The procedural certainty as a dimension of institutional confidence is primarily determined by the degree to which the personnel identifies with the development vision of in the networking organization and the belief that the implemented standards will be conducive to building commitment. On the other hand, a sense of security is primarily driven by the belief that it offers staff conditions for development which are tailored to their needs. Communication efficiency, in turn, is a dimension which is largely determined by the effectiveness of communication processes.

The source of competitive advantage is the value that an organization can create for their clients. Using a tool that Porter (*2006: 18–22*) called value chain (...), it allows any action relevant to the business to be considered from a strategic point of view, enabling to assess the cost and importance of this action taking into account the diversity possibility, (...) and to understand why one product or service may be out of the market over the other. These activities are important in the process of creating a comprehensive value chain, because they allow improve the quality of services and products gradually.

Therefore, it is a mistake that some entities make when they do not accept the included discrepancies between objectives and the result obtained (the level of achievement) in the networking organization. To prevent this, one should identify the error and assign it to

a specific action. An important issue in the development of the value chain is the quality of feedback, informing about the results of the implemented actions, preceded by a proper analysis before the wrong sequence of actions is well fixed. Also, this information may be necessary in the situation when the networking organization operates in conditions of limited resources.

The results of empirical studies have confirmed the validity of the formulated assumptions that the integration of primary and secondary processes and their relationships within the chain of suppliers and buyers develop the growth of value in the networking organization.

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