

SPECIFICATIONS OF THE SUSTAINABLE HUMAN RESOURCES GROWTH ON THE EXAMPLE OF COMPANIES IN THE TSL SECTOR

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Purpose: The purpose of this article is to present the specifications of the sustainable human resources growth on the example of companies in the TSL sector.

Design/methodology/approach: The paper presents the issues of the sustainable human resources growth as a significant element of sustainable human resources management. The paper is based on the literature review in this area and presents the results of secondary research referring to the sustainable human resources growth in the TSL sector (reports of examined companies).

Findings: The analysis presented in the article shows that the sustainable human resource growth affects the employee's work productivity in a positive way. The implemented ideas of sustainable human resources management and growth is the key factor for the correct human resources policy in the company.

Originality/value: The paper has a theoretical value. The issues of sustainable human resources management were discussed from the theoretical point of view as well as from the empirical one (the presentation of the sustainable human resources growth in the examined companies). The work is original due to the multi-aspect approach to the scientific issues and the obtained results may be useful both for management practitioners as well as be the inspiration for further research.

Keywords: sustainable human resources management, sustainable growth, organisation, company.

Category of the paper: general overview, point of view.

1. Introduction

Putting emphasis on taking actions and just taking actions concerning sustainable human resources growth comprise directions of strategic actions performed by various kinds of companies (also from the TSL sector). Thanks to the performance of the sustainable human

resources growth (the assumption is that human resources are the main factor guaranteeing the company its development), the organisations are able to develop effectively and obtain competitive advantage in the market. The result of initiating such a concept is shaping the sustainable human resources in a form of highly competent staff that also understands and is aware of the necessity to apply the sustainable growth rules in the work place. The purpose of this paper is to present what various actions concerning sustainable human resources growth are applied by selected companies from the TSL sector. It is based on the subject literature in this area and information obtained from the reports referring to the tasks from the area of the sustainable human resource growth in those companies.

2. Sustainable human resources management – scope of the issue

The basis of the sustainable human resources management is the idea of sustainable growth (sustainable company) which causes the change how the purpose and success of each organisation is perceived and at the same time changes the responsibility towards the interested parties of the organisation (Jamka, 2010, pp. 17-32). Whereas according to Marin (Marin et al., 2012), the sustainable growth enables the interaction between the society, ecosystem and other live systems (without the impoverishment of key resources).

The sustainable human resources management, in accordance with one of the first definitions of this concept (according to R. Zaugg, A. Blum and N. Thorn) refers to three basic factors – abilities and willingness to be an attractive employee on the labour market, maintaining the work – life balance and increasing the employees' autonomy and using their competences (Zaugg, Blum, Thorn, 2001, pp. 3-4). Whereas Müller-Christ and Remer specify the sustainable human resources management as the thing which the organisations themselves should do in their surroundings in order to achieve access to highly-qualified staff in the future (Müller-Christ, Remer, 1999, p. 76). On the other hand, Gollan defines the sustainable human resources growth as the organisation ability to create value and at the same time the ability to regenerate the value and renewing the wealth by using policies and practices concerning human resources (Gollan, 2005, p. 26). Moreover, the social approach referring to the social corporate responsibility and to the relations of a given organisation with its interested parties is a key issue in designing sustainable human resources potential (Macke, Genari, 2019).

On the other hand, according to J. Pfeffer, sustainable human resources management should focus on the influence of human resources management on employee's health and life expectancy. Consequently, it is recommended to focus on such issues as (Pfeffer, 2012, pp. 34-45):

- Working hours and their influence on employee's health or reducing the barriers in joining professional and family obligations;
- Wage inequalities and their influence on the differentiation of health condition;
- Use of holidays by employees;
- Presenting the offers on the health insurance or healthcare programmes to the employees;
- Derecruitment and its consequences for the dismissed employees;
- Requirements at the workplace (contributing to the employee's health condition);
- Atmosphere in the workplace or the event of violence.

The ecological aspect, i.e. the use of the personal policy to support ecology, is a significant aspect of sustainable human resources management.

The ecological aspect, i.e. using the staff policy to support ecology by promoting the idea of 'green' organisations focusing on its results and individual, communal and environmentally friendly development, is a significant element of sustainable human resources management (Chams, Garcia-Blandon, 2019).

According to D. Renwick, T. Redman and S. Maguire, the performance of the ecological aspect in the human resources management should be applied as (Renwick, Redman, Maguire, 2013, pp. 3-4):

- Actions motivating employees in order to encourage them to act for the environment;
- Development of employees' 'green skills' (by recruitment, selection, training or development of managers and green leadership);
- Creating attitudes engaging employees in the scope concerning the issues referring to the environmental protection (by using their knowledge or shaping appropriate organisational culture).

Also a social aspect referring to keeping ethical rules in the employer – employee relations or respecting human rights and dignities is a component of the sustainable human resources management. It can be performed in the following areas of staff policy (Bombiak, 2019, p. 76):

- Employees motivation (fair remuneration, objective criteria of granting gratifications or employees' participation in the management of organisation);
- Selection (fair job offers, ethical interviews or friendly social and professional adaptation);
- Shaping working conditions (care for abiding the OHS provisions and the ergonomics of workplaces, keeping the work-life balance, mobbing counter-acting, various social benefits);
- Derecruitment (dismissing employees keeping the rule of respecting their rights and dignities, ethical and understandable disciplinary procedures, using the programme of monitored redundancies);

- Periodic assessment (transparency of the periodic assessment system, objectivity of the employees' assessment criteria, elimination of typical mistakes of periodic assessment or talking with assessed employees according to the rule of partnership);
- Professional development (investing in employees' professional development or providing them equal access to trainings).

The managing staff, which has a wide range of tools to affect employees, is also an important element of initiating the sustainable human resources management. It refers to three areas (Pabian, 2013, p. 8) and they are:

- Employee – company relations (giving bonuses and rewards for economical use of materials, economical exploitation of machines or initiation of sustainable growth innovations in the organisation);
- Employee – superior relations (positive reactions of managers to subordinates' suggestions concerning the sustainable growth, appreciating the achievements in this area or supporting ecofriendly or social initiatives);
- Employee and work place relations and its direct surroundings (equipping the workplaces in healthy, safe, economical and permanent products, proper adaptation of tasks from the sustainable growth to the qualifications and possibilities of employee).

3. Sustainable human resources growth in the TSL sector – case study

The case study covered the companies characteristics for the TSL sector. The information about the actions referring to the sustainable human resources growth taken by these companies was collected on the basis of the information from the reports published by these companies.

The first one of the tested companies occurring under two firms – Rohlig Suus Logistics and Suus Logistics – is a Polish global logistics operator¹. It provides services of the complex logistics service within the road, sea, air, railway transport, warehouse services, Project Cargo and custom service. It also offers services connected with the supply chain management (VMI, Control Tower, 4PL, Logistics Solution Design) as well as counselling in the scope of supply chain strategies within the team Suus Advisory. This company has three basic values in the logistics activity. They are one step ahead, partnership, and permanent development (Rohlig Suus Logistics, 2023). One of the five strategic objectives of the company is creating the conditions of employees' engagement and satisfaction by creating stable working environment providing work comfort and letting the employees focus on their professional development. In particular, it is performed by (Rohlig Suus Logistics, 2023):

¹ It possesses branches in seven countries – Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Russia, Slovenia and Romania. Its mission is *increasing the productivity of our customers' activity by delivering intelligent logistic solutions*.

- (hard) training programmes (CRM, Power BI, SQL classes, customers' service or issues referring to particular products offered by the company);
- (soft) training programmes (communication, dealing with stress, leading and organisation of efficient meetings, conflict management, assertiveness, emotion control ability, awareness building, prioritizing and work organisation, or ability to keep New Year's resolutions);
- Training programmes concerning managers' development the purpose of which is to shape appropriate organisational culture and creating pleasant atmosphere at the workplace²;
- Programme Work&Care Academy – programme supporting employees both in the area of emotions as well as care for health and mental balance³;
- Suus Active programme – the programme encouraging employees to take care of their health in various sport competitions (running, cycling, swimming, whole-body exercises or also marches and walks)⁴;
- “Mum comes back to work” programme. In this programme young mum receives a folder with all necessary documents which she needs to submit in connection with the child's birth and maternity leave (as well as the timetable helping with all formalities)⁵;
- Wide range of employees' benefits⁶.

The next company – The Metropolitan Transport Authority – serves and manages the city communication systems working at the area of Silesia. It is the biggest transport organiser in Poland. It serves over 50 cities, towns and municipalities (connecting the most important centres of the Silesia Province)⁷. The company takes the following actions in the scope of the sustainable human resources growth (The Metropolitan Transport Authority, 2023):

² It means raising competences in the area of management – motivation, task delegating, appreciations and giving feedback as well as raising the awareness of the importance of the manager in an organisation and promoting management on the basis of the leadership model accepted in the company or unified management standards.

³ Within the cooperation of Rohlig Suus Logistics with the online clinic HearMe the employees receive the psychologist's support.

⁴ Each employee who opened an account in the free application WorkSmile can join the programme. Apart from that, company employees (and their families) may take advantage of financing the cards (enabling support within care for health) in three different packages: Zdrowie Plus [Health Plus], Zdrowie Premium [Health Premium] or Pakiet Senior [Senior Package]

⁵ The women-employees have the possibility to take part in the training “Why is it not worth being a perfect mum and how to stop trying?” after the maternity leave (apart from the welcome present). Besides, each employee (who had a baby) receives a gift (women receive Misie Szumisie [Scumbag Teddy Bears] which help new-borns sleep and men receive baby carriers).

⁶ They are among others: group life insurance, support of participation in sport competition, extra charge for 14-day long holidays, sport card Multisport and Medicovert Sport, private Medicovert care, subsidies, English courses, Christmas benefits, extra charges to sport equipment for children or fuel cards Lotos and Circle K).

⁷ Within this company about 1,700 buses, trams and trolleybuses run at the area of Silesia every day (The Metropolitan Transport Authority, 2023).

- Introduction of solutions supporting professional development and creating the atmosphere contributing to the achievement of work satisfaction by an employee. Moreover, creating professional environment free from discrimination and prejudices as well as opening on the diversity (employment of the disabled);
- Each employee's access to key documents of the employees' field (Regulations of employees' remuneration, Work Regulations or Regulations of raising professional qualifications)⁸;
- Functioning of Ethical Code of the Metropolitan Transport Authority since 2019. Each employee may count on ethics commissioner whose role is to create the ethical culture of the Metropolitan Transport Authority (he provides the employees with the ability to consult cases when they have doubts what to do in a given professional matter in order to be in agreement with the organisation values). The commissioner guarantees the confidentiality which makes it possible to communicate the doubts openly or reporting abuses and offers mediations in disputes. There is also an online and physical box where it is possible to report issues to the Ethics Commissioner;
- Functioning of the periodical assessment system one of the objectives of which is the specification of employees' educational needs⁹ and raising the quality of work performed by them;
- Emphasising keeping the occupation health safety of the working conditions (both for administration employees as well as controllers working in the field).

The next examined company – VGL Solid Group – is one of the forwarding companies offering the full range of transport services – sea, air, railway and road forwarding (VGL Solid Group, 2023). Three basic values¹⁰ - growth, responsibility, openness, work hard, team, honesty comprise its mission (VGL Solid Group, 2023). VGL Group leads its actions and projects towards the employees on the basis of dialogue and the set of basic company values connected with the selected tasks of sustainable growth objectives. They comprise (VGL Solid Group, 11.04.2023):

- 'Engagement Team' – it is the team consisting of the representatives of various company departments and branches and its objective is to make decisions in the matters important for the employees (organisation of trainings, integration meetings, initiation of company improvements or solving significant problems)¹¹;

⁸ These documents specify among others the conditions of work remuneration, rules of granting additional benefits, qualifications required to work at particular positions, company policy concerning racism and mobbing counteracting at the workplace or rules of financing access to trainings.

⁹ The company in its strategy includes the performance of sustainable growth objectives determined by the UN – towards the employees, local communities or customers (VGL, Solid Group, 2023).

¹⁰ Whereas the area of directions of work are recognised on the basis of survey performed every year "What is important for you?"

¹¹ For example, giving employees fresh fruit every Tuesday or honey and fresh ginger in the autumn, "Healthy Breakfast" organised by the company once a year.

- Wide range of employees' benefits (health care, sport package co-financed by the company, Mybenefit café – the employee has the ability to choose any benefits within the café, extra charges to meals during the worktime)¹²;
- Differentiated range of benefits within celebrating various events and recreation¹³;
- 'VGL Adventure' – it is a set of trainings which let the employees get involved in the new company and new work place (its objective is to obtain useful information which enable to understand the organisation, its function and responsibility of particular departments in the first weeks of work);
- 'VGL Adventure – Leader's Academy' (trainings for the company leaders which enables to get knowledge in the areas: communication, personal awareness, building relations, task delegating, leadership, motivating, employees' development, change management and legal aspects of manager's work);
- 'Induction Day' – training programme for new employees (getting to know the organisation and its structure, familiarising with basic IT tools);
- Financing English classes by the company;
- 'VGL Leader Academy' – half-year long training programme the purpose of which is to develop personal and managerial competences (preceded by 360 degree assessment)¹⁴;
- Coaching (help to achieve previously specified goals);
- Branch trainings in order to raise professional qualifications;
- Trainings concerning soft competences (time management, active interpersonal communication, assertiveness or dealing with stress);
- Development and integration meetings (the purpose of such trainings is to develop cooperation and trust in a team, raise awareness of controlling emotions or to get to know tools supporting physical and mental regeneration);
- Cyclical development talks between the employee and his superior.

The next company – Kuehne+Nagel – is a global logistics partner (sea, air, road and contract and integrated logistics offering highly-specialised solutions for the needs of main branches all over the world (Kuehne+Nagel, 2023)¹⁵. The company claims that the coherence of three key factors – economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection – is necessary to

¹² E.g. Women's Day, Boy's Day, Forwarder's Day, Shove Tuesday, Christmas competitions of employees and their children, layettes for the child's birth or gifts for the wedding.

¹³ It is the help in searching new solutions and possibilities, work on motivation, development of abilities and development of managerial competences for beginning managers.

¹⁴ Its development strategy covers global programme of sustainable growth – among others initiation of global standards and frameworks, maintaining the highest level of ethical and consistency practices, care for health and employees' safety, minimalization of service influence of the environment, defining objectives of sustainable growth for corporate and regional management or contribution to the development of local societies (Kuehne+Nagel, 2023).

¹⁵ A week of zero emission (the employees are encouraged to resign from using cars) or Vege Wednesdays (employees who declare are obliged to resign from eating meat every Wednesday).

perform the concept of sustainable growth. The company performs the following actions regarding sustainable human resources growth (Kuehne+Nagel, 2023):

- Performance of high ethical and legal standards (Kuehne+Nagel Ethics and Consistency Programme) as well as the ones towards the employees;
- Organising meetings for employees all over the world every quarter, during which the managerial staff informs the employees about important information concerning the company and the employees have the possibility to ask questions as well as presenting their opinions. Its element is the introduction of the initiative Future of Work (checking the employees' satisfaction and opinions);
- Trainings programmes for employees concerning the counteraction against bribes, corruption and monopoly practices;
- Putting emphasis on providing the employees with the highest level of health and safety;
- Trainings "NO HARM" for the managing staff concerning: behavioural safety, introduction of Safety Anchors KN (specifying the situations and behaviours which may lead to accidents and control and preventive measures which are to prevent them effectively);
- Promoting the development of organisational culture which will fully support and respect human rights;
- Promoting of ecological actions and behaviours among employees¹⁶.

Whereas Raben Group is one of the biggest logistic companies and provides various services on the basis of the excellent fleet, developed chain of branches and modern warehousing area. Raben Group¹⁷ performs actions connected with the sustainable human resources growth within the strategy Employer Branding which integral element is "People with Drive" (the purpose of this strategy is to become a first-choice employer and to attract, keep and guarantee the development possibilities to the employees). The actions performed in this area comprise (Raben Group, 2023):

- Complex research of employees' satisfaction and involvement¹⁸;
- Introducing the programme "Manager of Choice" in a form of competition (during the programme almost 1,000 key managers from 13 countries of Raben Group performed 40 various tasks connected with human resources management). Its purpose was to change the managers' attitudes and education to teach them how to become an engaged leader and how to be more sensitive to the issues connected with team management;

¹⁶ A week of zero emission (the employees are encouraged to resign from using cars) or Vege Wednesdays (employees who declare are obliged to resign from eating meat every Wednesday).

¹⁷ At present it works in 15 European countries providing warehousing, national and international transport, sea and air shipping and intermodal transport services (Raben Group, 2023). One of significant elements of its mission covers running the activity based on sustainable growth which is reflected in the acceptance of the Sustainable Growth Strategy for years 2021-2025 in 2021 (Raben Group, 2023).

¹⁸ Also the research COVID Plus Check was an important element. Its objective was to get to know the employees' opinion about the company activity during the pandemic.

- Trainings and workshops for company employees (connected with onboarding, managerial skills, OHS, project management and compliance with law);
- Regular reviews of employees' results and professional development;
- Efficient and transparent internal communication meaning the information for employees about any changes in the activity which may affect their functioning in the Raben Group;
- OHS training for all employees (performed by the internal and external specialists)¹⁹;
- The performance of research in which the employees are asked about their feelings and perception of safety in the Raben Group (the research results are used to plan changes and improvements in the safety systems and culture in order to minimise the risk of accidents and improve ergonomics);
- Identification of threats connected with work and risk assessment (according to the SHE standards with the consideration of local labour law requirements) and reporting by the employees work accidents in accordance with the incident management procedure (in accordance with the SHE standard, if the situation seems dangerous, each employee has the right to inform the superior about this fact and leave the workplace immediately).

The last of the tested companies, DB Schenker is a leading provider of services in the scope of global logistics and serves industry and trade in the global goods exchange with the use of road, air transport and ocean freight, contract logistics and supply chain management²⁰. Its strategy covers all aspects of sustainable growth and aims to achieve economic, social and environmental harmony in logistics and supply chain management (DB Schenker, 2023). DB Schenker takes the following actions regarding the sustainable human resources growth – on the basis of the DB Schenker Proceeding Code, DB Schenker's vision and values (DB Schenker, 2023):

- Regular analysis of professional career of all company employees;
- Respecting the diversity and equal treatment – regardless of the gender, skin colour, views or religion (workshops for managers in this scope);
- Various employees' benefits²¹;
- Strengthening (by trainings) employees' well-being in the areas of mental and physical health, education about the healthy lifestyle (care for spine or keeping life – work balance);

¹⁹ The company provides subsequent additional trainings to some employees. The programme depends on the type of employment and specific threats connected with work and reacts to the needs specified during the discussion identifying the areas of potential threats and problems.

²⁰ DB Schenker is the leader of logistics for the car and technological industry, consumption goods, market logistics, special transport and logistics of special events (DB Schenker, 2023).

²¹ Such as e.g. financing medical package, financing sport and entertainment activities, group life insurance, participation in sport tournaments, flu vaccinations every year, workshops of health prevention, financing family holidays from the Social Benefits Fund, material and financing help for employees in difficult life situations, loans to decorate a flat, vouchers for Christmas or extra remuneration for work at night.

- Employees' training in the first aid (among others teaching to use defibrillator);
- Periodic assessment with the use of the method 360 degrees²²;
- Care for the safety of employees on the basis of the Integrated Management System included in the Plans to Improve Working Conditions and Environmental Protection²³;
- Monitoring of serious work-related injuries by the company;
- Functioning of the Worksmile Platform (it is used to promote physical activity or healthy lifestyle (it offers the motivating challenges and activity rankings as well as the possibility of individual result tracking));
- Active company participation in the programme safe transport²⁴;
- The performance of the Safe Drive Plan (specifies the way of recruitment and education of couriers employed by the shipping company cooperating with DB Schenker or includes monitoring accidents and possible actions after accidents);
- The performance of the Healthy Challenge programme thanks to which the company recognised the employees' needs concerning the healthy lifestyle.

4. Conclusion

At present, the actions concerning sustainable growth and in the same time concerning sustainable human resources growth are included in the development strategies of companies from the TSL sector more and more often. It is particularly important that the companies wanting to perform the assumptions of sustainable growth need so called sustainable employees. Such employees should feature with the attempt to perform the company development objectives by maintaining and performance of tasks entrusted to them in a way ecologically and socially responsible. In particular, they feature with: (Cohen, 2011, pp. 1-19, 132-156):

- Emphasising the balance in production, consumption, sale;
- Control the company influence on the person and the environment;
- Responsibility for the planet health;
- Actions for the benefit of future generations (so that they were able not only to survive but also to develop);

²² This method allows to compare the employees' self-assessment with the assessments performed by others people, e.g. the superior, subordinates or co-workers). The results of such an assessment enable to identify the strengths and areas to develop as well as indicate the importance of particular competences for the taken position.

²³ Each employee has access to the system about reporting work accidents by using an applications "ACCIDENTS".

²⁴ The programme covers: the analysis of the situation on the roads, description of the road transport safety system, drive safety factors, costs of road accidents, education, description of connections between railway network, water routes and road network, transport of dangerous goods and spreading standards and actions supporting safety.

- Minimising the negative influence of the company in the environment;
- Emphasising the development of products, services or technology in accordance with the rules of sustainable growth;
- Concentration on future and the performance of economic, ecological or social objectives.

The basis to perform such a process comprise appropriate actions of the company concerning sustainable human resource growth (management) with the participation of managerial staff as a stimulator of such actions. These actions should cover among others employees' professional growth, providing work – life balance, health protection or liquidation of remuneration differences and initiating the practice of environmental protection by employees.

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