

EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS EMPLOYEES FROM LOGISTICS DEPARTMENTS IN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES OF ENTERPRISES IN THE ASPECT OF OPINION POLLS

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Abstract: This paper presents tasks and expectations towards employees working for logistics departments performing logistics activities, placed within organizational structure of enterprises formulated by entrepreneurs. Opinion poll was conducted among a variety of companies while it aimed to indicate the most desirable traits of employees of logistics departments.

Keywords: logistics departments, employees, entrepreneurs' expectations.

1. Introduction

The nature of logistics systems is closely related with all the processes that occur in the companies, both physical, such as production processes and with widely understood regulation area (i.e. processes of management, both in strategic and operational aspect). Such a wide nature determines the necessity of proper coordination and continuous monitoring of relationships between different elements of the system. A necessary element required in this situation for realization of logistics tasks is employees who are subject to formalization within organizational structure of the company.

2. Organizational structure of enterprises

Organization structure in enterprises should ensure execution of all logistics tasks. These tasks are performed in each company while logistics employees form units or the whole departments in enterprises. Nowadays there are independent positions for realization of logistics tasks or the scope of duties in the existing departments are extended by logistics tasks. Therefore, organizational structures are varied. Analysis of logistics tasks performed by individual tasks, however, reveals that they are mainly formalized as presented in Fig. 1.

The departments shown in this figure execute not only logistical tasks. Each of them, except for logistics tasks, performs jobs which might be of priority nature in relation to logistics. For example, employing experts does not only takes into consideration the needs but the remuneration opportunities and conditionings. Legal and fiscal regulations for Human Resources have priority in relation to logistics needs. Similarly, production department manufactures goods while recycling of waste is a postulate rather than actual task.

Procurement Department supplies materials for production of good to the company. Procurement is understood as purchase from the market or concluding of contracts for supplies from other manufacturers. Procurement encompasses transport of materials, which

requires carrier services or it is realized by Transport Department. This division does not only participate in material supplies but also in distribution of goods. It can also provide transportation for employees, packaging and waste to the location of storage etc.

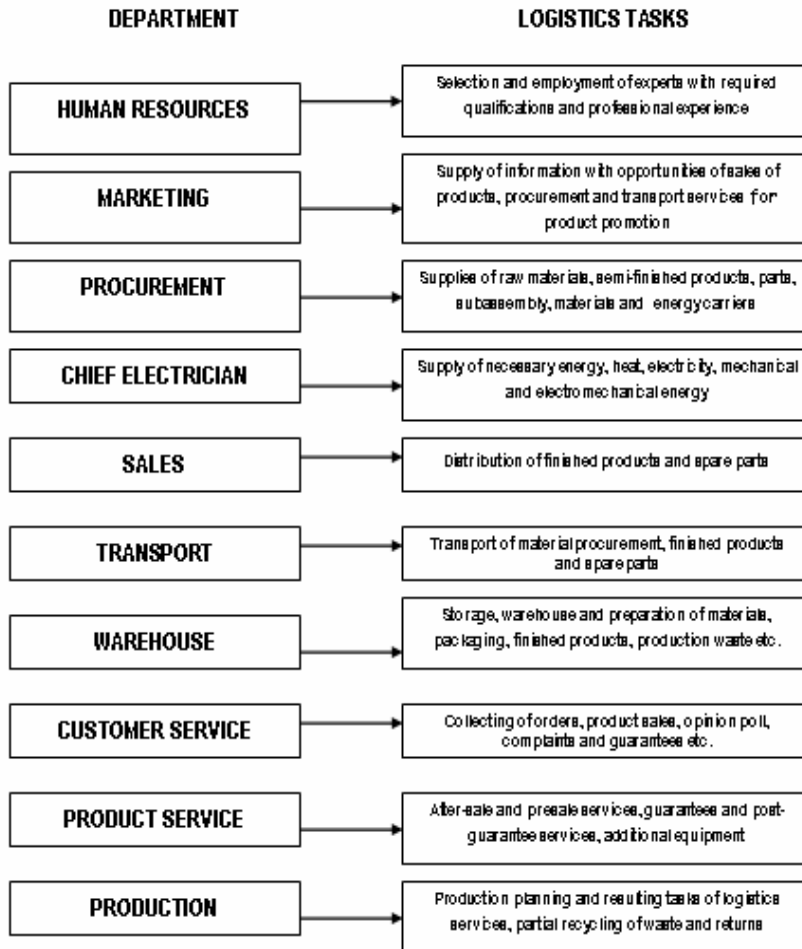


Fig. 1. Typical logistics activities performed by organizational units in the enterprises

Source: own study

Chief Electrician Department ensures supplies of energy to the enterprise. Supplies typically consists in using electrical and heat power networks. Reliability of power supply should always be considered as it might require reserve and emergency supply lines or equipment for production of some types of energy (e.g. electrical power generators, own power plants etc.). If the company cannot purchase some forms of energy from the network, it must generate these forms, which requires supplies of fuels and other energy carriers.

Chief Mechanic Department or Maintenance Department focuses on maintenance of machinery. Service, diagnostics, regulation and maintenance activities aim to maintain machinery in suitable technical state. This department also performs improvement and preventive repairs. Maintenance works are subordinated to production, however, they also condition production. Through diagnostics, enterprises can inspect technical stat of machines

and equipment and make decisions on the scope and dates of technical maintenance, regulation works or preventive repairs during stoppages (holidays, public holidays etc.).

Sales Department is responsible for concluding contracts for supplies of products and for distribution. Distribution typically encompasses packaging while distributional transport activities are realized by either Transport Department or as carrier services, provided by other companies.

Customer Service Department sells goods, services and deals with guarantee-related payments, complaints, opinion polls about the products, collecting wishes and remarks. In 'customer-orientation' it is essential to collect customer orders, conclude contracts for a period of time, locations and methods of goods collection etc. Such orders are a basis for production programs and guidelines for procurement activities.

If an enterprise owns technical support departments, these departments provide technical support for products as well as guarantee and post-guarantee repairs. These activities are highly prized by customers while their scopes can be extended, even with opportunities of installing additional equipment and updating of products.

Marketing Department is responsible for market research and promotion of goods. It provides information on the demand for goods, opportunities of sales, customer preferences etc. These data are a base for production schedules. Product promotion is connected with advertising campaigns, encompassing advertisements, shows, sports events, contests, charity etc. Market research and promotion of goods determine marketing logistics tasks. These tasks include transport and supply activities connected with shows, advertising materials, participation in fairs, exhibitions etc.

In some departments (procurement, transport, warehouses etc.), logistics tasks are priority while for other departments these tasks are of secondary importance. The development of the concept of new structure in the company which encompasses organizational departments in order to realize main goals of operation and logistics tasks.

Such a structure is not developed yet while organizational units realize partial goal, not always oriented towards achievement of the enterprise's goals. Generating of high profits simultaneously with reaching high customer satisfaction is possible through reduction of total costs encompassing cost of distribution, product technical support and customer service. Costs of manufacturing comprise not only costs of production by also utilization of machines, heating energy and lightning of rooms, procurement orders, transport and storage of materials, product-related research and development and manufacturing technologies etc. All the components of total costs are interrelated and condition each other. Therefore, during development of the concept of logistics structure, minimization of total costs should be considered at maintaining possibly highest level of customer service and product-related technical assistance.

Company's goal is achieved by manufacturing, supplies to the customers and sales of products with services provided even after sales. This indicates main processes and organizational units. Logistics requires central management on a company's scale. Logistics works require coordination and synchronization with other enterprise's activities. Therefore it is necessary to provide hierarchical organization of logistics departments and centralized control of their activities. Moreover, logistics departments should employ persons whose qualifications are sufficient to realize tasks imposed on them. In this context, the results of opinion polls carried out in enterprises seem to be very interesting¹.

The questionnaire was aimed at employers of different enterprises located throughout Poland, i.e. at persons who are in contact with the issues of management and selection of employees for logistics departments on daily basis. The opinion poll was anonymous and

¹ Badanie przeprowadzono w ramach realizacji projektu „Logistyka”

was started on 29 May 2008. The completion was planned on 9 July 2008, when last questionnaires were obtained for the present study. The mechanism used for acquisition of the results of the opinion poll (direct distribution of questionnaires among individual groups and personal contact with respondents after previous content of supervisors for the investigations) did not allow for random or quota sampling. Therefore, the sample used in the investigated was created on the basis of self-selection of respondents, who independently decided whether to sacrifice time for filling in the questionnaire or not. The opinion poll was anonymous, questionnaires were given directly and in most of cases personal contact with respondents occurred, after previous content by superiors). Target group comprised 500 persons at the positions responsible for logistics tasks in enterprises. The questionnaire used in the opinion poll contains 18 questions grouped in three categories:

- Part I encompasses characteristics of logistics processes in the investigated enterprise,
- Part II concerns characteristics of employees who start working in the area of realization of logistics activities,
- Part III contains information about the company where the opinion poll is carried out.

The questions are in the form of closed-ended, semi-open and open-ended questions and in third part they are of filtering nature. The conducted opinion poll concerned determination of expectation of employers toward employees in logistics departments in their companies. The investigations formed a project, whose goal was to find out about not only actual state in relation to the analysed subject. Another goal was an attempt to determine the level of commitment and emotional attitude of study participants in relation to the problem of expectations and requirements towards employees of logistics departments. The investigation aimed to determine these areas of activity in companies where use of philosophy based on selection and expectations towards staff could bring measurable results, especially in the aspect of efficiency of operation throughout supply chain. Similarly, analysis of the obtained data showed main barriers which impacted on efficiency of realization of tasks connected with both logistics of distribution and direct customer service.

The questionnaire was aimed at employers in different types of enterprises scattered around Poland i.e. from persons who have, on a daily basis, contact with problems of management and selection of employees for logistics departments. In total, 345 filled-in questionnaires formed the database with the results of investigations. The basic statistics with percentage of answers in relation to individual groups of enterprises were created.

PP- industrial production, H- commerce, U-services, I- other (combined production /commercial/service, production/commercial and commercial/services enterprises).

Making a detailed analysis of the investigation material, the results presented in this study were obtained.

For first question, which concerned the role of tasks performed by logistics employees for development of the enterprise, the results presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Importance of tasks performed by logistics employees for development of the enterprise

PP		H		U		I		TOTAL	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2	44.14	1	69.42	1	70.49	1	44.26	1	55.86
1	49.55	2	29.75	2	22.95	2	47.54	2	38.36
3	6.31	3	0.83	3	6.56	3	8.20	3	5.78

55.86% of all respondents claimed that the tasks performed by logistics employees are of key importance to the enterprise, 38.36% think that the tasks from other areas are equally important while 5.78% marked 'they do not have much importance, there are more important tasks in other areas.

Question 2 points to characteristic features of work at the logistics-related positions, ordered by respondents from 1 (the most characteristic) to 13 (the least characteristic), presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of work at logistics-related position

PP No.	H No.	U No.	I No.	TOTAL No.
10	6	9	6	9
4	2	2	1	2
3	4	3	4	3
5	8	8	10	7
2	3	4	5	4
1	1	1	2	1
6	9	5	9	8
11	11	11	11	11
13	13	13	13	13
8	5	7	7	6
7	7	6	3	5
9	10	10	8	10
12	12	12	12	12

The respondents showed that working at logistics-related positions requires clearly defined goals for employees (1), self-handed coping with problems (2), strong position in organizational structure (3). The least significant were long business trips abroad (13), working overtime (12) and business trips in Poland (11).

Third question concerned indicating of three most important new challenges for logistics graduates in near future. Percentage distribution of answers is presented by pie chart (Fig. 2.).

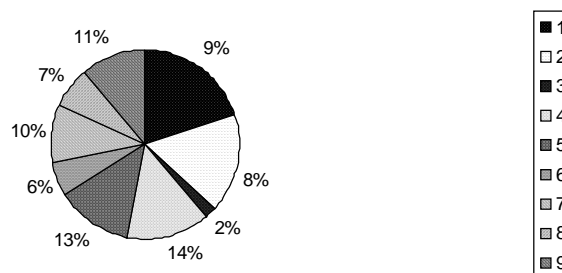


Fig. 2. Challenges for logistics graduates in nearest years

1-Perfect command of computer applications for support of logistics management in all areas of logistics, 2-Ensuring enhanced quality of logistics customer service, 3-Finding the methods of stress reduction at and outside workplaces, 4-Searching for new suppliers and logistics service providers worldwide, 5-Comprehensive negotiation and communication skills in consideration of culture differences, 6- Comprehensive knowledge of supply marketing, 7-Acquisition of knowledge and abilities to interpret legal regulations and community directives, 8-Higher expectations of creativity and motivation among employees, 9-Reduction of logistics costs in individual enterprises and whole supply chains

In fourth question, respondents were asked to order, from 1 (the most significant) to 9 (the least significant) traits and skills in candidates for logistics positions of medium level (Table 3.)

Table 3. Traits and skills in candidates for logistics-related positions of medium level

PP	H	U	I	TOTAL
No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
1	5	2	3	2
7	8	6	6	7
5	1	3	4	4
2	3	5	1	3
4	9	7	7	6
3	2	1	2	1
6	4	4	5	5
9	6	9	9	9
8	7	8	8	8

As the most significant trait, respondents indicated a complex and updated knowledge from the domain of logistics and derivative fields, proved by high average of notes from the university (1), then creative and multi-aspect vision of work at the position (2) and analytical skills combined with decision-making abilities (3). The least significant traits were also indicated: participation of a candidate in different projects during university (9), finished courses and trainings (8) and resistance to stress (7).

In fifth question, three areas of everyday's operations, to which logistics universities' graduates should be appointed: according to 22.6% - internal logistics, 17.4% - dispatch and acceptance, 14.1% - inventory management (Table 4).

Table 4. Operational areas to which logistics graduates should be appointed

PP		H		U		I		TOTAL	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
5		6		3	17.3	3	16.5	4	
6		2	21.9	4		4		3	14.1
1	24.5	5		2	17.9	2	17.9	2	17.4
8		7		6		6		8	
3	18.1	1	26.9	1	25.8	1	20.3	1	22.6
4		4		9		8		7	
9		9		7		9		9	
7		3	12.7	5		5		5	
2	18.7	8		8		7		6	
10		10		10		10		10	

Sixth question concerned analysis of expert skills of logistics graduates (Tab. 5.).

Table 5. Expert skills of logistics graduates

PP	H	U	I	TOTAL
No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
9	15	13	3	13
2	14	14	8	12
10	5	11	6	10
7	4	12	15	11
14	16	10	9	14
16	12	15	16	15
15	13	16	14	16
12	9	2	12	9
6	6	3	2	2
1	10	5	11	5
8	1	9	1	3
3	11	4	13	6
5	22	1	10	1
4	3	7	5	4
11	7	6	7	8
13	8	8	4	7

The most significant abilities include organization of the whole production process (1), cooperation with suppliers (2), cost management (3). The least significant traits were also listed: knowledge of JIT (16), assessment of suppliers (15), control of inventory (14).

Seventh question concerns traits of good graduate. Comparison of the results is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Traits of good graduate of logistics

PP		H		U		I		TOTAL	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	27.7	2	19.2	2	17.8	1	21.6	1	21.4
7		4		5		6		6	
3	15.4	3	15.6	1	25.3	3	14.7	3	17.4
4		6		6		4		4	
6		5		7		7		7	
2	25.3	1	22.2	3	16.9	2	15.8	2	19.5
8		8		8		8		8	
9		9		9		9		9	
5		7		4		5		5	

The respondents pointed to three the most significant traits, such as responsibilities (21.4%), creativity (19, 5%) and ability to work in team (17.4%).

3. Summary

To sum up the presented considerations one can point to the fact that expectations towards employees depend on specific nature of the position held. A fundamental criterion is often good command of English, which is the basis in this branch. Other competences highly prized by entrepreneurs include organizational, analytical and spatial skills, flexible thinking and divided attention. Due to information systems on which logistics departments rest, very desirable ability is ability to use computers and drive for learning. In the case of some positions, flexibility and readiness to work shifts is also expected in consideration of 24h logistics services.

Certain expert competences e.g. ability to monitor orders, purchasing, classification of suppliers are necessary to properly perform tasks at logistics positions. Moreover, whether these tasks are performed at operational or strategic level does not matter much. These competences underlie the basis for efficient solving of logistics problems, independently of their type or place of occurrence.

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