

SIGNIFICANCE OF SUCCESSION COMPETENCIES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SILESIAN FAMILY BUSINESS IN THE SECTOR OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

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ABSTRACT. This article presents the issues concerning the competence of successors of modern family businesses. Particular attention was paid to the importance of leadership competences in managing a modern enterprise. The role of emotional intelligence is emphasized as an important part of the successor competencies and competences related to education and socialization. This research focused on the importance of competence of successors in the area of emotional intelligence in Silesian family enterprises in the sector of small and medium enterprises. The completion of reflections is the author's model of competence of successors, which deals with the competencies governing the efficient management of modern family enterprises.

Keywords: family business, successor, competences, emotional intelligence

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Introduction

As the market economy relies, to a considerable extent, on family firms, the succession problem has become common and pressing (Bracci and Vagnoni, 2006, p. 8). The experience shows that 50% of family firms

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will be able to deal with succession-related problems, whereas as few as 15% of companies will manage to hand the company over to the third generation (Sułkowski and Mariański, 2009, p. 39). The unique character of family companies may transpire from their prevalence, the latter resulting from a long-term vision, an ability to take prompt decisions and ability to behave in accordance with trust, loyalty and personal relationships.

The fact that numerous Polish companies are now facing key decisions related to the transfer of power, knowledge and property is getting more and more obvious. The first wave of succession is coming. Therefore, the company founders – the ones who took risks, sacrificed their work, energy and money to establish their business – are about to hand their companies over to their successors. The first intergenerational change is connected with the necessity to define by a senior member and the family, a new vision of the company, as well as to establish new systems of values and formal regulations as to the property and power in the family firm.

However, under the highly undetermined conditions, the managers of contemporary companies have to adopt the roles of change leaders, knowledge managers, managers-entrepreneurs, team managing managers, decision-makers willing to take risks, analysts, coaches and masters looking after the development of their own competencies. It is one of the signs proving that the business environment is undergoing significant changes, and that the executives are about to face more and more daunting tasks.

The concept of management in family businesses requires a different approach to functions executed by contemporary managers and their successors. Moreover, it requires to elaborate new models of education, “tailored” to the needs of family businesses, which, in the larger extent, will take into consideration the following aspects: development of leadership skills, development and improvement of employees’ competencies, practical motivation skills. In the family businesses, one can combine business and their family by shaping entrepreneurial values during the upbringing of the generation of successors, the latter regarded as future managers (Więcek-Janka, 2014, pp. 139-155).

Owners of family businesses require from their successors to have numerous multi-discipline skills, the acquisition of which is a highly time- and work-consuming process. The acquisition and use of the skills are to ensure that the family-run enterprise will continue to develop in compliance with a determined strategy.

Competencies of successors are subject to studies by numerous members of the scientific community. Elaborating a set of competencies for successors, necessary to run a family business, is a complex and ambiguous process. Family enterprises which, under the long-term strategy, anticipate succession processes, should take into account the successors' competence profiles. Taking into account the complexity of the business environment, it seems to be rightly justified to determine the essential competencies, allowing to cope with challenges imposed on successors in the contemporary family businesses.

The aim of the paper is to draw the readers' attention to the significance of competencies of successors in contemporary family firms, with a particular emphasis on the leadership competencies, emotional intelligence and competencies related to the upbringing and socialisation.

1. Importance of Leadership Competencies in the Modern Company

Having a strong leadership background is a basic condition for the development of each company. This truth was confirmed by a research on "Leadership competencies" conducted by Deloitte. In the research 172 managers from the largest Polish companies were asked about roles of leaders. Then, in April 2014, the same question was posed on a nation-wide scale to a representative sample of 1,110 Poles. As a result, a new model of leadership competencies could have been established in Poland (Thor and Georgijew, 2014).

At some point, a group of business experts, scientists, advisors and HR practitioners selected and defined a Model of Leadership Competencies that are necessary to manage a modern company. Ten most important competencies were defined, these being necessary for effective management in new times; the competencies that would match present and future challenges imposed on companies in the post-crisis period. A recent decalogue of a new leader is supposed to encompass the following competencies (Thor and Georgijew, 2014, p. 12):

- adopting a wider perspective. Interpreting the company's stance in the broad business context, assessing properly its development opportunities, recognising potential threats and limitations; being familiar with market trends and being able to make use of the said phenomena to the benefit of the company.

- focus on the increase in goodwill. A strong pro-success attitude, building a strong market position of the company; setting challenging targets and making efforts to fulfil them; recognising new opportunities to achieve a competitive edge and growth, promoting innovations.

- developing visions and fulfilling them. Being able to present a development strategy in a clear way, being able to fulfil the strategy with passion.

- flexibility in the operation of the company. Being able to act effectively and constructively under pressure and in stressful situations. Being able to adjust to changeable external conditions.

- promoting changes. Recognising and promoting advantages triggered by changes (change leaders); creating a positive, pro-change attitude, recognising risks connected to changes and taking responsibility for the risks.

- financial perspective. Making use of financial analyses while elaborating strategic targets and taking key decisions.

- building effective relationships. Fostering a net of effective relations within the company and beyond; adhering to ethical rules, declarations, and consequences between declarations and actions.

- talent development. Creating favourable work conditions, being willing to accept suggestions from workers, developing the employer's good reputation. Promoting talents and educating a generation of successors, delegating competencies to skilled managers.

- influencing others. Providing clear and coherent messages and ideas. Informing of the plans as to the company development, accepting a role of a leader and authority; commitment to the elaboration of new ideas and innovative solutions. Energy, passion and involvement.

- building a value-based company. Building a stability in the long-term. Showing respect for diversity, business ethics, responsibility and understanding of the CSR² rules, all are distinctive features of a leader.

There is no doubt that managers are responsible for developing behavioural patterns, organisational changes, and learning new ways of how to act. They are also responsible for initiating and propagating knowledge-based solutions in the companies.

² Corporate Social Responsibility – (CSR) A concept according to which companies, when elaborating their strategies, deliberately take into consideration social issues and environment protection, as well as relationships with various groups of stakeholders (Wołkowicka, Dąbrowski, 2012, pp. 79-89)

Regardless of the economic situation, the executives still value people management most. Over 65% of the surveyed managers, within the scope of Talent Club³, believe that staff flexibility when facing a problem is the most important quality of a good employee. The respondents claimed that managers, although acting in critical situations, should not act ruthlessly, manipulate, solve problems in an authoritarian way or relentlessly pursue their aims. The manager should be surrounded by people whom they like working with, people who create a positive atmosphere at work and form an effective and powerful team. Those managers who make use of their employees' talents, knowledge and skills in order to pursue one common aim achieve the best results. The manager should become a leader for his/her employees, highlight the aims and allow the staff to choose the best way. The employers are looking for creative and independent workers for whom the workplace is not necessarily a synonym for a rat race, since successes are achieved by those who can act along with the managed team. Thus the managers reject as useless and unneeded, the ruthlessness and lack of sensitivity, so much promoted some years ago by the best executives. However, the managers stated that the most valuable assets are the professionalism and expertise of employees, being a well-educated and talented expert in one's area⁴.

One of the key types of strong leadership was defined by M. Smoliński and L. Zakrzewska (Smoliński and Zakrzewska, 2017, pp. 14-19). The authors stated that a leader is a highly efficient person; the efficiency helps them to be a strategist, originator, talent hunter and leader. They can boast knowledge, charisma, honesty, emotional intelligence, stress resistance and ability to learn. The position of the leader should be forged out of one's attitude, passion, commitment, courteousness and empathy. Such a combination determines the leadership effectiveness and its quality.

³ Findings of the report entitled „Polish managers in the time of crisis” are a continuation of a study conducted under the programme Talent Club – Polski Menedżer 2009. The study was carried out by means of online questionnaires to be found at www.talentclub.pl, from March to September 2009. 285 respondents took part in the survey. The study „Polski Menedżer 2009” covered 1,461 managers, participants in the Talent Club programme. The study was held from 19.09.2008 to 30.09.2009.

⁴ „Wyścig szczurów to przeżytek”, www.rp.pl/artukul/551452.html.

2. Role of the Successors' Competencies Related to Emotional Intelligence

There is not a single area in life in which emotional intelligence would not play an important role. The emotional intelligence acts as a drive for people to develop their own potential, it allows them to take hold of negative attitudes, helps to set interpersonal boundaries and also, facilitates the development of satisfactory relationships, both in private and in the professional life.

Emotional intelligence is a competence that is personal to every human, individually developed, understood as their ability to recognize their own and other people's emotional states, as well as the ability to make use of their own emotions and tackle other people's emotional states (Mikołajewska and Mikołajewski, 2013, p. 3). It involves one's ability to control and regulate one's mood, which, in turn, is helpful in coping with various situations. The ability to understand emotions and make right use of them plays a key role in the human life.

The studies on emotional intelligence were initiated by H. Gardner. He distinguished (Mikołajewska and Mikołajewski, 2013, p. 3):

- intrapersonal intelligence involving the capacities of understanding and controlling one's own emotions (relationship with the self),
- interpersonal intelligence involving the capacities of understanding and coping with interpersonal relations (relations with others).

Interpersonal intelligence, also known as social intelligence, means one's capacity to get on well with people and be willing to cooperate with them. It also means the empathy, the capacity to enter into deep relationship with the others, understand their needs, and promote desired attitudes and reactions. Moreover, the social intelligence consists of empathising with other people's emotions and building of trust.

The importance of social intelligence in family enterprises has been confirmed by the findings of the report entitled „Competencies of the future in the family businesses 2017” (Report: Kluczowe składniki sukcesu, 2017, p. 15). The analysis of responses submitted by all companies proves that social intelligence is the most desired competence of the future. Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of surveyed businesspeople declare both the willingness and need to develop the said competence.

The studies on the specific character of diagnoses and assessments of the use of successors' competencies confirm that the competencies related to emotional intelligence are essential for succession processes.

A list of successors' competencies, needed in the succession process, elaborated on the grounds of a study carried out by E. Więcek-Janka i A. Hadryś-Nowak (Więcek-Janka and Hadryś-Nowak, 2016, pp. 61-72) in 2014, enumerates 20 competencies, out of which eleven competencies refer to emotional intelligence. One can find here: diligence, communication skills, organisational skills, accuracy, resourcefulness, commitment, resistance to stress, firmness, ambition, motivation, courage. It was emphasised that the most frequently chosen competencies are, among others, diligence and commitment, whereas the competence of diligence was granted the highest average mark. Furthermore, Polish successors of family businesses stated that the abilities to introduce changes and adapt to the closest and more remote environment of the enterprise are the most useful skills in the succession process. Adaptive skills, i.e. the ability to change and the ability to act and make decisions are also regarded as competencies related to emotional intelligence. The classification of successor competencies used in the succession process implies their various origins. Providing the family enterprise with multi-generation resources and development, and ensuring that the enterprise is highly efficient are, to a large extent, dependent on relevant competence potential of successors.

Those family enterprises that anticipate succession process should focus on developing the competence profiles of their successors, while taking into consideration the role played by the competencies related to emotional intelligence. The findings were confirmed by the author's own research⁵. 19 competencies were selected from 33 competences grouped in 11 emotional intelligence-related competence subgroups⁶. According to the successors, these emotional competencies are of key importance in the process of succession in companies owned by families. In order to select an enterprises owned by a family⁷ for the purpose of the

⁵ Badania zrealizowano na terenie województwa śląskiego w okresie od września 2016r. do lutego 2017r.

⁶ Doboru oraz podziału kompetencji dokonano na podstawie: Goleman, D. (1996), *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, Bantam Books, New York.

⁷ The Chief Statistical Office in Poland is not in possession of data relating to the number of family-owned businesses registered in Poland, including on the territory of the Silesian Province.

current study, a company that should meet specific criteria of sample selection, a pilot study was conducted by telephone, e-mail or face to face. Finally, from a group of 296 enterprises, 46 enterprises were selected that met the study criteria.

These enterprises were divided into two groups. 27 family-owned enterprises⁸ participated in a series of studies aiming at selecting the significant competences of the successors in the area of emotional intelligence, meeting the following criteria:

- a family-owned enterprise is a business activity where at least two family members work; at least one member has an important impact on management of the enterprise; family members have majority of shares in the enterprise,
- such an enterprise is considered a family-owned business,
- such an enterprise intends to hand over the business onto the next generation,
- it is a capital company – a limited liability company (spółka z ograniczoną odpowiedzialnością) or a joint stock company (spółka akcyjna) according to the Commercial Companies Code,
- the enterprise has been operating on the market for at least 10 years,
- the company belongs to the group of SMEs,
- the family-owned enterprise is owned by at least the second generation (it has undergone the process of succession at least once),
- the company is situated in Poland, on the territory of the Silesian Province⁹.

⁸ Survey studies completed with 27 successors who manage family-owned enterprises at least as the second generation (89% of the studied enterprises are owned by the second generation, while 11% are owned by the third generation). All studied enterprises are limited liability companies (sp. z o.o.) operating in the SME sector (48% - small enterprises, 52% - medium enterprises). The dominant enterprises are service providing companies (52%), trade companies compose 22%, while production and mixed enterprises compose 15% and 11%, respectively. The studied successors represent enterprises that vary in terms of the time of operations of a family-owned business on the market. Enterprises operating on the market for more than 15 years and less than 20 years compose 33%; similarly, enterprises that have existed on the market for over 20 years and less than 25 years – 30%. Participation of enterprises functioning on the market for more than 5 years and less than 15 years as well as more than 25 years composes 26% and 11%, respectively.

⁹ The selection of a province in which enterprises were chosen to take part in the study was intentional. It was assumed that the Silesian Province is characterized by strong family traditions in business as well as the developed business behavior standards.

On the basis of calculations, it transpired that the successors shared the same views as to all competencies. With regard to the above, it was concluded that as essential successors' competencies one shall view the competencies which:

- got 5 points from at least 50% successors,
- the average amount of points granted to a given competence by successors equalled, at least, 4.5.
- table 1 below presents competencies that fulfilled the above-mentioned conditions.

Table 1. Key competencies of successors, related to emotional intelligence

No.	SUCCESSORS' KEY COMPETENCIES RELATED TO EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
1	Self-esteem
2	Self-efficacy
3	Awareness of one's own abilities and opportunities
4	Awareness of one's own limitations
5	Ability to consciously control one's own emotional states
6	Ability to cope with stress
7	Ability to say "no" firmly and in a way which does not harm other people
8	Argumentation skills
9	Effective communication
10	Ability to settle conflicts
11	Ability to create visions and encourage other to fulfil them
12	Ability to win supporters
13	Charisma
14	Ability to work in a group to achieve common aims
15	Optimism
16	Willingness to change
17	Willingness to take decisions and act
18	Willingness to act and take decisions when under pressure
19	Willingness to take responsibility for tasks and their execution

Source: Author's work.

The importance of competencies in the area of emotional intelligence was also underlined by L. Weroniczak, who defined the following qualities, i.e. (Weroniczak, 2012), p. 81):

- communication skills,
- empathic perception,
- ability to solve conflicts through cooperation,
- understanding of change processes,
- seeing diversity as a resource,
- regarding the company and the family as intertwined systems,

as psychological and social skills, necessary to create space that promotes an intergenerational dialogue, existing in the succession process.

The managing of the family enterprise is undoubtedly a test of successors' competencies. It is of great importance for managers to have competencies related to emotional intelligence as the managers shape the culture of the entire organisations, set development trends and motivate the staff to work more effectively. Creating the empathy-based atmosphere, being, more often than not, a factor that builds team stability, are some of the core competencies contemporary managers and businesspeople should have. Those managers who can act wisely and keep their teams together are also able to carry on and expand their family businesses.

3. Model of the Successor's Competencies in Contemporary Family Businesses

Successors of contemporary companies have to face numerous challenges, often regarded by the senior members of the family firm as a chance to maintain the company, further develop it or even restore it, if the case may be. The most essential personality traits, from the perspective of the entrepreneurial process include readiness to take risks, motivation for achievement and inner control, thanks to which a businessman is aware of their ability to affect the environment and control the actions to be taken. Moreover, the personality traits of effective businesspeople include determination and persistence to reach one's aim, passion and ability to inspire other people, diligence and ability to make decisions. Many of the said traits are shaped, not entirely consciously, by parents in the environment of the family business (Gutkova, 2014, pp. 4-5).

More and more family businesses have been facing a decision to launch a procedure of succession, which is mainly connected with the handing over of responsibility and management. And to this end the

future managers of such companies are required to possess determined competencies. One should bear in mind that the specific character of the family business management entails the need to take into consideration not only economic aspects, but also interpersonal relations in their broad sense. Thus, it is necessary for the successors to possess not only textbook competencies; one should also have intuition, imagination, courage and determination.

Selecting a successor requires from the senior members of the family companies the ability to assess candidates objectively, not only through the prism of family bonds, but mainly with regard to their acquired competencies. The study on the specific character of diagnosis and assessment of competencies of the appointed successors under the first succession stage in the family businesses in Poland was conducted by E. Więcek-Janka in 2014. The study, which involved 106 successors and potential successors of family firms, brought about results on the significance of successors' competencies and features. 20 features and competencies were assessed.

The acquired data may be divided into two groups: traits connected with the character (related to inborn features) and other traits connected with the upbringing and socialisation. On analysing the findings of the author's research, one should conclude that diligence, courage, precision, commitment and expertise were regarded by the successors as the most useful personality traits. With regard to other traits viewed as very useful, the surveyed underlined, in most cases, those traits that can be acquired through upbringing and socialisation.

The surveyed highlighted that the expertise they acquired while working for a family company, opportunities to make independent decisions affect their commitment to work. They claim that the said commitment is a proof of diligence, whereas the latter proves one's precision. The respondents linked the courage with the upbringing in a family. Parents shape, during the upbringing process, their children's courage to take decisions and their attitude to self-determination. And that is inextricably connected with courage (13-17% of the surveyed selected these features as the most useful ones).

Three traits were selected as the least used in the succession process: ambition, intelligence and innovativeness. They are connected with inborn personality-related qualities of people (merely 4% of the surveyed regarded them as the most useful in the succession process).

Presented percentage data related to the most useful traits mean that in the successors' opinion the traits and competencies acquired during the upbringing in the family business are more useful in the development of entrepreneurial competencies, involving the improving, at the same time, of their succession potential as to personal traits.

When analysing the studies of authors quoted in the work, as well as the results of our own studies relating to the competence of successors of family companies, the following three competence groups are specifically emphasized:

- 1) competences relating to upbringing and socialization,
- 2) leadership competences,
- 3) emotional intelligence competences.

The model of competences of successors of the today's family-owned enterprises presented in Figure 1 contains 34 competences from the three competence groups listed above, preconditioning efficient management of contemporary family-owned businesses.

It should be underlined that the management of a family firm requires, apart from having traditional competencies to manage such companies, to focus on the role of these competencies, resulting from the company's specificity in the field of business, special emphasis being placed on emotional intelligence. Differences between family firms and non-family firms evolve mainly around values, organisational culture and aim hierarchy. This type of enterprises features a specific identity, as well as values and problems related to the conducted activity.

Managing a family business is more difficult than a non-family business and then "managing" a family which is not connected to the business. It transpired that the level of difficulty in managing a family business is not a simple aggregate of levels of difficulty in managing a company and a family; it is something considerably greater, as any failure in the company immediately affects the family, while any family crisis has an effect on the company (Blikle, 2012, p. 39). Apart from market rights, aspects of a typically economic and financial character, apart from strategic aspects of the management, there appear streams of non-tangible resources of a specific character. Within the entities, a specific role is played by family bonds, attachment to family values and determination to prolong the entrepreneurial "dynasty" (Tomski, 2011, p. 147). This, among others, brings about that the challenges the family business successors have to face are constantly growing, which, in turn requires from the successors to possess specific competencies.

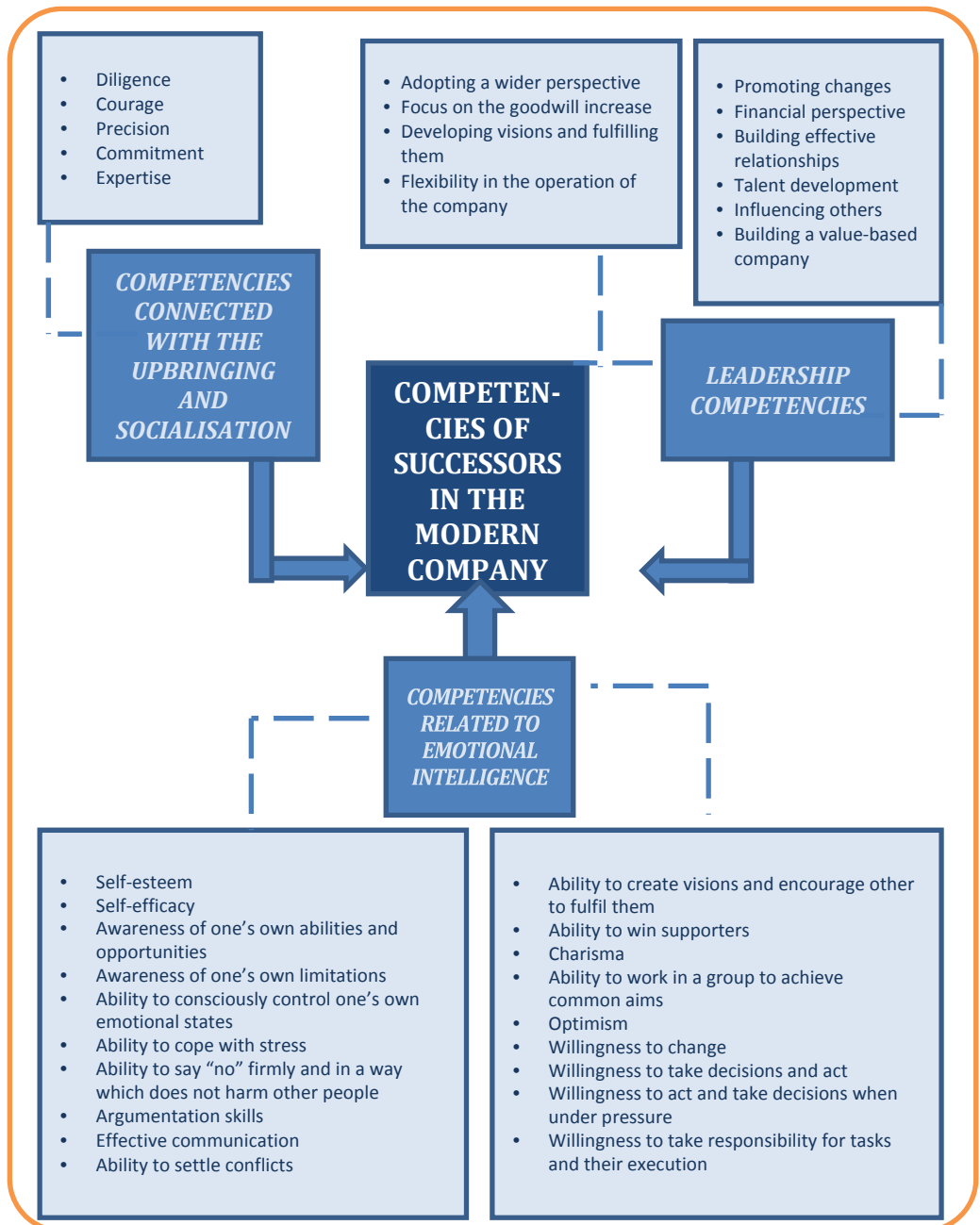


Figure 1. Model of competencies of successors in modern family companies.
Source: Author's work.

Conclusions

Family firms have been the oldest way of doing business, and as such they constitute one of the pillars of the world-wide economy. Their creation, operation and collapse considerably affect the development of both national and global economies. A long-term perspective of running a business by a future generation, as well as combining family-related and managerial functions result in distinct identities of the said entities (Sułkowski and Marjański, 2009, p. 9).

Addressing effectively the challenges faced by contemporary companies requires significantly more than just proficient management of tasks. It requires greater interpersonal skills, committed people and a transparent system of values. In such a context, one may experience a growing necessity to find more appropriate predictors of professional successes and life achievements than mere traditional skills.

The more family business successors achieve a wide range of leadership competencies, the more these skills determine their ability to effectively recognise and focus on various market opportunities and achieve business targets. The upbringing in the atmosphere of a family business, the knowledge of its specific character, a new view on it, the willingness to change old status quos, the courage and determination of young successors, all that may be a source of opportunities for a family firm to develop.

More and more family businesses have been facing a decision to initiate such a succession process, which is mainly connected with the handing over of responsibility and management. And to this end, the future managers of such companies are required to possess determined competencies. One should bear in mind that the specific character of the family business management entails the need to take into consideration not only economic aspects, but also interpersonal relations in their broad sense. Thus, it is necessary for the successors to possess not only textbook competencies; one should also have intuition, imagination, courage and determination.

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