

STRATEGIES FOR INNOVATIVE BUSINESS IN BUSINESS GROUPS

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Introduction

Corporate groups are an interesting subject of study in the field of management sciences, due to their diverse management, organisational and structural solutions. Corporate groups' opportunities to shape their development and competitive strategies, as well as to use resources necessary to utilise them, are far greater than those of other businesses. These extraordinary opportunities are a consequence not so much of the volume of business, but rather of connections among business group entities. The connections based on ownership relations, often supported by personal and political relations, create a strong dependence between a parent company and its subsidiaries. Corporate groups have greater opportunities to diversify their business, internationalise it and to create economies of scale than other entities, due to, among others, easy inclusion and exclusion of individual businesses into and from their structure, as well as due to the possibility to manage a business more complex than one enterprise. Such possibilities are ensured by replacing hierarchical relations with capital and contractual ones.

In this article, authors focus on the issue an innovative business strategy in business groups and information needs related to formulating and applying such a strategy. The authors have assumed that the way of carrying out innovative business activities in business groups is different from other entities, and it is also diversified depending on the type of the business group. This is accordant with the view of M. Trocki (2004, p. 46) who reckons that business groups are in practice very diversified and require various ways of developing and applying rules and methods of their management. This diversity and the resulting need for an individualised approach to studying business groups (Mierzejewska, Sopińska, 2017, p. 360) and proposals of streamlining their business activities concern largely the way of running innovative activities (Ghoshal, Bartlett, 1988, p. 381).

The goal of this article is to present strategies of carrying out innovative business activities and diversified information needs of decision-makers in different business groups. The article presents model strategies of innovative business activities management in business groups. The strategies differ in respect of the rate of activities concentration in the group and the rate of using the synergy effect. It has been assumed that the innovative business strategies in different types of business groups

require different information bases for management decisions concerning the group's innovative activities and adjusting diagnosis methods to those needs. The authors' experience proves that methods of measuring and examining innovativeness known from the literature and applied in the research practice turn out to be of little use in managing innovativeness of a business group. Apparently „tailor-made” analyses and measurement of innovativeness are necessary that are adjusted to the information needs of decision-makers in different types of business groups.

The article presents information needed for innovative activities of a management team of a financial related business group, which applies an innovation strategy. This strategy the authors call a dispersed non-synergistic strategy. To analyse information needs, an original innovation excellence model of an enterprise was used, and also the needs for support of subsidiary companies were examined through interviews and surveys. The selection of a financial business group for the research was related to the expert study made in 2019 at the request of one such group in Poland. The case described in the article concerning the creation of information base for a decision to support innovation of entities of a business group has been developed for the specific group, but the methods of preparing decisions for the needs of group innovativeness management may be applied not only for various business groups, but also for multi-entity enterprises carrying out dispersed innovation activities.

Innovative business activities in business groups – model solutions

Discussing various types of groups, the authors mean three group types: operational, managerial and financial ones (Trocki, 2004, p. 71). Each type of the business group provides different opportunities in the scope of strategy dimensions such as business diversification, shaping the scope of vertical integration, rate and nature of internationalisation, building competitive advantages, as well as effecting an innovative business strategy.

Types of groups differ among each other as to the level of coordination of subsidiaries' activities by the parent company, both in respect of decisions centralisation and allocation of tasks among the group's companies. The need

for coordination is related to the dependencies occurring among the group's companies. There are four forms of the companies relations: concentric, sequential, mutual and aggregate ones (Trocki, 2004, p. 70).

The concentric relation occurs when subsidiary companies are strongly related operationally with and totally dominated by the parent company, but are not mutually connected by cooperation relations. The concentric type of relation occurs only in operational groups called also concerns or conglomerates. In operational groups the share of parent company in achieving income of the entire group is prevalent and the subsidiaries are subordinate to the parent company's operational activities. The task of subsidiaries is to support the parent company in performing its tasks.

The sequential relation is more complex and more decentralised, where subsidiary companies are set in a specific order to perform tasks in such a way that the performance of a next company in a sequence depends on the activities of the company in the previous stage of tasks. The mutual relation occurs when companies are connected by their mutual cooperation on similar operational activities and when they coordinate their activities themselves, which reduces coordination functions of the parent company.

The sequential or mutual relation is a basis for managerial business groups, also called strategic groups, the scope of whose own operational activities is limited or non-existent. The role of the parent company consists in developing the business strategy for the whole group and coordinating the implementation of strategy of each subsidiary in order to reach synergy. Managerial business groups may have different rates of centralisation, depending on whether their subsidiaries are connected by the mutual or sequential interdependence. However, there exist also concern-type business groups, where the parent company carries out operational activities poorly related to the activities of subsidiaries, for example only exporting products manufactured by the subsidiaries. In this case strong concentric-type or sequential-type relations connect subsidiary companies and the scope of coordination of their activities by one parent company is insignificant.

The weakest relations among companies of a business group occur in the case of the aggregate interdependence, when the scope of coordination of their activities is very limited. Such a type of interdependence is present only in financial business groups. Financial business groups consist of companies where each of them pursues its own strategy without the need to cooperate with other group entities. The aim of a financial business group is not to reach the synergy effect, but to maximise investment profits and to reduce investment risk. As a rule a parent company does not interfere with the business of subsidiaries, it rather focuses on their analysis and evaluation, as well as decision making concerning a purchase or sale of companies or their shares, and also changes in the management team. Apart from the three model types of business groups, the literature distinguishes also related forms, like keiretsu or cheabol.

Another form of a group of enterprises considered to be a related form of financial business group are also *venture capital* funds. The difference as compared to financial business groups consists not only in higher risk of investing in companies which are often in crisis or applying innovative solutions, but also in a greater activity of a parent company in affecting subsidiaries in order to restructure them. In this sense venture capital funds are something between a managerial and financial group. Several years ago an example of such an unusual business group were Polish National Investment Funds. Since Polish financial groups in their pure, model form are practically non-existent, we understand the term „financial groups” as both classic financial groups and their related forms.

The type of a business group and the nature of relations between the companies define the possibility and need of implementing innovative business strategy by the parent company group-wide. From the point of view of innovative business location in the group and choice of companies where innovative projects would be carried out, as well as their cooperation, the following model strategies of innovative business activities in a business group may be distinguished: concentrated, dispersed synergistic and dispersed non-synergistic ones.

The concentrated strategy consists in carrying out innovative activities exclusively in the parent company. Subsidiary companies receive from it ready technologies or template products and use them in their operational activities. This type of strategy occurs only in an operational group, where subsidiaries are connected with the parent company by concentric relations. In a managerial group innovative activities may also be focused in one of the subsidiaries carrying out activities of key importance for the entire group or in a separated subsidiary running exclusively, for example, research and development. An example of the concentrated strategy implementation is Rafako Business Group – a market leader in power generation devices in Poland and one of the European leaders. It is a group comprising a parent company and ten subsidiaries located in Poland and other countries. Projects carried out by Rafako focus on several sectors and cover, among others, development of boiler technologies and environment protection plants, including methods of flue gas desulphurisation and nitrogen oxides removal, as well as modernisation of dust removal equipment or manufacturing electric buses. The strategy of innovation management at Rafako is based on its own strategic resources, most of all on its own technological solutions and licenses, its own staff and production facilities located at the parent company Rafako S.A., where operate a design and construction studio as well as a manufacturing plant testing new solutions. Almost all innovative potential is located at the parent company and that is where large resources for innovation development are directed.

The dispersed synergistic strategy consists in locating innovative activities in several entities of a business group. In case of an operational group it may be the parent company and some subsidiaries. Innovative activities in individual companies are specialised and coordinated by the parent company. The dispersed synergistic strategy is also applied

in managerial groups, where the parent company itself does not carry out innovative activities, but makes decisions on their location, financial support, and coordination for the entire group. The parent company may also coordinate collaboration with external entities cooperating on the implementation of innovative projects. In managerial groups coordination of innovative activities and related strategies does not mean that subsidiaries cannot independently run business unconnected with other entities for the needs of their own activities. An example of such a strategy may be Asseco S.A. – an operational-type business group from the IT sector, where all the group entities carry out partly related business activities, and partly activities independent from the business of Asseco S.A. parent company. The firm Asseco is a „born innovator”, which from the very beginning has created its own innovative programmes addressed at first to Polish, and then to foreign enterprises and institutions. The parent company comprises a developed innovation centre, while large R&D departments also function in foreign companies of the Group. Innovations include primarily new IT products: completely original IT software protected by Asseco licences, software adapted for specific clients, and also marketing innovations, or packages of IT solutions along with their implementation, monitoring and supplying hardware. Asseco also obtains innovations from the outside by acquiring innovative companies or cooperation with start-ups, small technology companies in order to take over their products or talented IT staff, which is also an innovative managerial move. This way dispersing the sources of obtaining innovations and simultaneously partly dependent and partly independent functioning of innovation centres in many companies of the business group ensures it constant stimulation of innovativeness and supports the head innovation centre located in the parent company.

The dispersed non-synergistic strategy is typical for financial and related groups where there is neither operational nor strategic cooperation among the companies, and also innovative activities do not require coordination. Entities of a financial group independently make decisions on innovative activities, choose the best type of strategy, and incur costs of innovativeness. Financial groups may also, to some extent, play a supporting and restructuring role for their subsidiaries. They can initiate innovative projects, support efforts to obtain projects and external financial resources, to some extent they may also financially support innovative activities of individual entities. An example of such a strategy is the strategy of a large business group consisting of several dozen companies, presented further. The literature defines this type of a business group as a related group, since apart from managing the companies’ portfolio and ownership management it also carries out certain kinds of restructuring measures towards its subsidiary companies. In respect of innovations these are measures supporting undertaking and developing innovative activities by subsidiary companies. These measures may take the form of financial, organisational, and training support.

Table 1 summarises diversified innovative business strategies in various types of business groups.

Table 1. Strategies of innovative activities in various types of business groups

Strategy of innovative activities	Type of business group		
	Operational	Managerial	Financial and related financial
Concentrated	Yes	Yes	No
Dispersed synergistic	Yes	Yes	No
Dispersed non-synergistic	No	No	Yes

Source: own study

Each of the innovative business strategies for business groups described above requires a different information base. The concentrated strategy does not require collecting information about the business and innovative potential of all the group’s companies, since the entire innovative business activities are effected in one entity. The dispersed synergistic strategy needs very specific information about the potential and innovative activities of individual companies and synergistic relations among them. With such an information base innovative activities can be designed, as well as flow of resources and output of innovative activities in various companies of the group in order to reach the synergy effect. In classic financial groups decisions on undertaking and the way of carrying out innovative activities are taken independently and do not require support nor approval of the parent company. So-called related groups, considered by the authors to be financial-type groups, may implement the dispersed non-synergistic strategy, the goal of which is to intensify investments of individual subsidiary companies and thereby improve their value. This strategy type has particular information needs. The way of building a information base for the management board of the parent company of a related business group is presented further in this article.

Research method

The subject of the research was a related business group called Alfa Group – its management board planned to support innovative activities of its subsidiary companies by allocating among them funds for innovation development. Specifically, two decisions were to be made: to select companies that want to and can use the support for raising its effectiveness and to adjust the form and volume of the support to the needs and nature of the selected companies. The task of collecting necessary information was ordered to experts.

The research was conducted in two stages. The first stage of studies was to select companies able to absorb support effectively. The second stage covered examining the needs of companies with respect to forms of support for their innovative activities. During the initial research on the list



of subsidiaries of Alfa Group, on the basis of financial statements analysis, the companies with uncertain economic status, i.e. under the threat of or in the process of bankruptcy or liquidation were rejected. The remaining 38 companies were examined using methods such as a questionnaire, interviews with board members and documents analysis. The goal was to determine which companies deserve to receive support for innovative activities and what support tools should be used for each of them.

Absorption ability is defined in the literature as the ability to acquire, adopt and use in practice certain resources and skills. With respect to innovativeness, absorption is defined as a firm's ability to recognise the value of new, external information, to assimilate it and use for commercial purposes. Researchers distinguish two elements of absorption ability: potential ability resulting from openness to knowledge, and effected ability resulting from already acquired innovation experience (Zastempowski, 2019, p. 79). There is also desorption ability, as distinguished from absorption ability, which is the ability to transfer innovations to other entities (Glabiszewski, 2017, p. 397).

In order to measure and describe absorption ability of Alfa Group companies, two specific parameters were used: current innovation rate and innovative potential. It was assumed that the ability to absorb enterprise innovation activity grows with both the rise of innovation rate and innovation potential. This required adopting the method of operationalisation and measurement of two variables: innovation rate and innovation potential.

Enterprises' **innovation rate** may be measured by two individual indicators or by several indicators. Individual indicators used as innovation measures include, for example, the share of income from sales of new or significantly improved products in total sales, the number of started or completed innovative projects, share of innovative business costs in total business costs or only R&D costs. Since each indicator measures a different element of innovation, a more appropriate method of measurement of innovation rate is using a measure consisting of a few individual indicators measuring innovativeness. Presented studies measured innovativeness with four simple and easily identifiable indicators:

1. Share of net income from sales of new or significantly improved products in total sales in 2015–2018.
2. Dynamics of the share of net income from sales of new or significantly improved products in total sales in 2015–2018.
3. Launching to the market new or significantly improved products and services in 2015–2018, introducing on the market new or significantly improved products or services in 2015–2018.
4. Expenses for innovative business activities in respect of product and process innovations in 2015–2018.

Each of the above fragmentary indicators was rated for 1 (where „0” means lack and „1” means occurrence).

The second important measure of enterprise innovativeness is the **innovative enterprise potential**. Measuring the potential, or an enterprise's ability to carry out innovative business activities in the future, is much more

difficult than measuring current innovation rate. The literature does not recommend any indicators or methods of measuring this parameter; different approaches are recommended, such as analysis and evaluation of resources, especially intangible ones, measurement of dynamic capabilities, measurement of enterprise capabilities. All these methods however are complex, require in-depth and costly studies. That is why a simplified method of multi-factor measurement of enterprise innovation potential has been created. It has been assumed that the measure of innovation potential are four indicators including internal and external factors affecting innovation potential:

1. Belonging to the medium and high-tech sector or knowledge-intensive services sector, where 0 points means that the firm does not belong to these sectors and 1 point means that it does,
2. Rate of crisis-resilience (Z_7 , INE PAN model – Mączyńska's index (Mączyńska, Zawadzki, 2006) – where a firm with the index below 1 gets 0 points and a firm with Z_7 index above 1 gets 1.
3. R&D position or unit in the organisational structure – where having such a unit means 1 point and not having it means 0 points,
4. Cooperation with the scientific sector or other entities as a part of innovative business – where no cooperation means 0 points and carrying out cooperation means 1 point.

The results of these measurements were used to qualify each company as worth or not worth supporting from the management board of the group. It was assumed that the company is advanced in terms of innovation level and innovation potential if it received 3 or 4 points in each of these dimensions.

In the second stage of the study, it was limited to examining 24 companies that had sufficient capacity to absorb support measures. A questionnaire of 11 questions was sent to the management boards of these companies. The answers received were verified and supplemented with information from company reports and telephone interviews conducted by experts.

Results of the research – assessment of the absorption capacity of the subsidiaries

For the purposes of the diagnosis, a model of innovative excellence was constructed, in which the types of innovation excellence of an enterprise were defined depending on the measurement results of two of its features: the level of innovation and innovative potential. It was assumed that both the level of innovation and the potential for innovation of enterprises can take two dimensions: low or high. This gives four types of enterprises with differentiated innovation excellence, and thus differentiated capacity to absorb funds for innovative activities: “innovation driver”, “potential innovator”, “occasional innovator” and “permanently non-innovative enterprise”. Figure 1 presents four types of enterprises from their level of innovation and innovative potential view.

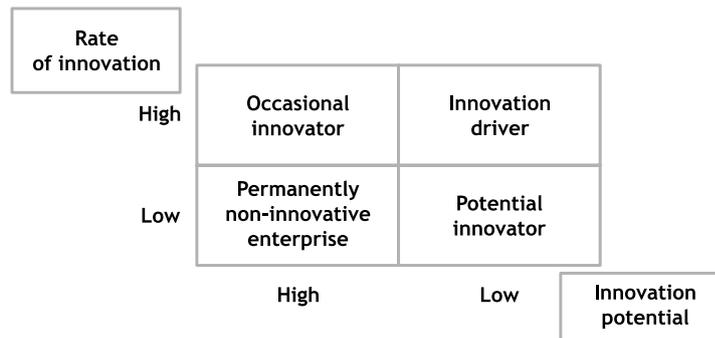


Figure 1. Enterprise innovation excellence models
Source: own study

„**Permanently non-innovative enterprise**” is an enterprise that has not carried out significant innovative activities so far and does not have an internal ability to undertake innovative actions in the future. An enterprise which is not interested in innovations and attempts to stimulate its innovative activities from outside are doomed to failure. This model was specific to 14 companies, which was the biggest number and accounted for almost 40% of the group.

„**Occasional innovator**” is an enterprise which has occasionally carried out innovative activities to conduct its innovative projects with support from outside. It has been a passive recipient of external schemes and resources, but it has not taken advantage of these opportunities to raise its internal innovation potential. Enterprises of this type often consume funds allocated to develop innovativeness, for example as a part of EU projects, and do not initiate their own innovative projects after their completion. There were 8 such companies in Alfa Group.

„**Potential innovator**” is an enterprise with substantial innovative potential, which so far has not shown any significant activities. Finding reasons for innovation passivity of such enterprise and supporting it in overcoming barriers may transform it into an innovative enterprise. This model was typical for 6 companies.

„**Innovation driver**” is an enterprise with large internal innovation potential supported by long-term experience in running innovative projects. This is the most promising type of enterprise, guaranteeing effective use of resources allocated for innovation development, especially if in some periods the company has to deal with financial obstacles. It is highly competent and experienced in running innovative business, which makes it use any support very effectively. Whether such enterprises really need such support is a different question. Having an „innovation driver” in a business group helps to develop innovativeness of the entire group, since it ensures a possibility to carry out training and innovation projects in which also other, less innovative companies may learn from innovation masters. There were 8 companies which were „innovation drivers”.

Among the four presented enterprise types only one of them, „permanently non-innovative enterprise” does not deserve external support for innovative activities. It lacks both competences and motivation to undertake innovative activities.

In case of „occasional innovator”, what should be funded are not innovation projects themselves, but activities raising innovative potential such as training innovation leaders and creating R&D base etc. Cooperation with other entities with greater experience in innovation business should be supported.

A good beneficiary of financial support allocated for innovation is an enterprise of the „potential innovator” type, especially if the only barrier for innovative activities is the lack of funds. The support should be used for enhancing innovation potential and effecting specific projects.

Enterprise innovation excellence models described above have been used in the research as a diagnostic tool. It turned out that the most numerous group of companies – 14 were classified in the category “permanently non-innovative enterprise”. 10 companies were included in the “innovation driver”, 8 companies in the “occasional innovator” model, and 6 companies in the “potential innovator” model. The result was a selection of companies according to the criterion of the ability to effectively use support from the parent company. After rejecting 14 companies included in the “permanently non-innovative enterprise” model, a reference list of 24 companies was created. This list of companies is worthy of support in developing innovative activities.

At the beginning of the research it was assumed that enterprises belonging to one business group do not only have a diversified ability to absorb external support, but also different reasons for carrying out innovative business and various expectations from the environment.

We can assume that supporting innovative business, and especially the form of the support depends on the companies’ nature, their motivation to carry out innovative activities and also their barriers and expectations concerning the way of supporting innovativeness. Results of the research on Alfa Group companies concerning their management boards’ reasons, barriers and expectations are presented below. They provided a basis for recommendations of forms of support for individual companies of the Group¹.

Reasons for introducing innovative activities are broadly discussed in global and Polish literature. There are instrumental (Garst et al., 2017, p. 8), moral and relational reasons (Trias de Bes, 2013, p. 42). In our research the reasons were divided into external and internal ones.

External reasons connected with the influence of the environment included: responding to market pressure and to regulations currently in force or to be introduced in the future. External reasons included the need to improve enterprise's performance and to respond to cost pressure. The results of the research on innovativeness reasons in companies with particular innovation excellence models have been presented in Table 2.

According to the research both categories of reasons for undertaking innovative activities are important for companies – 25 companies indicated external reasons, 23 companies indicated internal reasons, and the most common one was the willingness to improve the company's performance, while the least common was responding to cost pressure. Interestingly, „permanently non-innovative” enterprises do not appreciate the influence of innovation on their performance, but they were more eager than other companies to indicate the issue of „necessitating” innovation by the law.

An enterprise's decision to undertake and continue innovative business is largely a consequence of barriers connected with these activities, and specifically the perception of these barriers by the enterprise boards. Numerous studies have been carried out in Poland on innovation barriers and dozens of factors have been identified which are responsible for the poor innovativeness of Polish enterprises (Rudawska, 2017, p. 73). The factors most commonly perceived as innovation barriers are usually as follows:

- structural barriers often connected with the business sector, lack of strategies of effective allocation of the EU funds,
- systemic barriers resulting from excessive regulations or legal acts not corresponding to contemporary challenges and changing economy,
- cultural barriers resulting from the lack of confidence and social acceptance for innovative approach,
- competence-related barriers resulting from the lack of the management team and employee's knowledge and skills related to managing innovations (Matusiak, Guliński, 2010, p. 76).

In the presented studies the list of barriers is limited to economic and competence-related barriers, which are most common in Polish enterprises. Just as it was in case of reasons, barriers can be divided into internal and external ones. Internal barriers include: lack of possibility to fund innovations from internal sources of an enterprise, excessive costs of innovations and shortage of staff with suitable skills. External barriers include: lack of possibility to fund innovation from external sources of an enterprise, lack of partners for cooperation and uncertain demand for innovation on the market. Results of the research on barriers for innovation have been presented in Table 3.

According to Table 3 the examined companies were more likely to see internal than external barriers, and usually they identified them with economic factors, i.e. excessive costs of innovative projects implementation as compared to modest financial possibilities of the company. The second most common barrier was the personnel barrier – shortage of staff with suitable skills. Also, the economic barrier was prevailing among external barriers – lack of possibility to obtain funds from loans and difficulty in obtaining government grants and subsidies. A relatively small number of companies observed barriers related to uncertain demand for innovation on the market and lack of partners for cooperation under innovative projects. The „permanently non-innovative” model companies observed almost exclusively financial barriers, while other companies also observed staff-related barriers, as well as risk connected with uncertain demand for innovations. These differences result probably from lack of innovation experience of „permanently non-innovative” companies. Apart from the barrier categories presented in table 3, some companies indicated also other companies, such as changing legal regulations, conservative character of their industry, the company's focus on dealing with current issues.

The analysis of innovation barriers brings us to the conclusion that the key to improving innovativeness of companies is suitable financial support. Enterprises that

Table 2. Reasons for introducing innovation

Innovation excellence model	Number of companies with a particular model	Reasons for introducing innovation				Number of indications
		Performance improvement	Responding to market pressure	Responding to cost pressure	Responding to regulations	
Innovation driver	10	9	7	1	4	21
Potential innovator	6	5	2	3	3	13
Occasional innovator	8	5	4	3	3	15
Permanently non-innovative enterprise	14	3	4	2	5	14
TOTAL	38	22	17	9	15	63

Source: own study

Table 3. Barriers for innovative activities in the innovation excellence model

Innovation excellence model	number of companies with a particular model	Factors hampering innovative activities							Number of indications
		Internal factors				External factors			
		Lack of possibility to fund innovation from internal sources	Lack of staff with suitable skills	Excessive costs of innovation	Lack of possibility to fund innovation by loans	Lack of partners for cooperation	Difficulties in obtaining government grants or subsidies for innovation	Uncertain demand for innovation on the market	
Innovation driver	10	5	5	4	3	1	6	5	29
Potential innovator	6	4	3	3	4	1	3	1	19
Occasional innovator	8	3	4	3	3	0	5	2	20
Permanently non-innovative enterprise	14	8	3	8	3	1	6	1	30
TOTAL	38	20	15	18	13	3	20	9	98

Source: own study

Table 4. Preferred forms of financial support from the parent company

Innovation excellence model	Number of companies with a particular model	Expectation of support from the parent company in developing innovative activities		Number of companies expecting financial support
		Debt financing	Equity financing	
Innovation driver	10	3	4	6
Potential innovator	6	3	4	6
Occasional innovator	8	4	4	7
TOTAL	24	10	12	19

Source: own study

the researchers recommended as the ones deserving support from their parent company are ready to receive funds and to use them correctly. The only problem is adjusting the forms of support to the companies' expectations and character.

To address this problem the companies were asked about their expectations concerning support for innovative business activities. The respondents were asked about their expectations for support from their parent

company and the government. They were asked to indicate in the questionnaire whether their company expects financial or non-financial support. Two forms of financial support were distinguished within the financial support category: debt financing (loans from banking institutions and from other business entities and natural persons) and equity financing (companies recapitalisation). Results of the research on preferred forms of support are presented in Table 4.



According to the research some of the „innovation driver” model companies do not expect any financial support, and almost all other companies expect both debt and equity financing, with the latter being more common. 67% of companies reported a need for non-financial support. They expected from their parent company measures such as: assistance in obtaining international contacts and external funds, assistance in recruiting and training specialists in innovation management and establishing contacts and cooperation with technological partners, ensuring access to industry analyses, assistance in analysing market trends, promotion and product placement.

The next question the enterprises were asked was about expected forms of support from the state government. Here also the types of support were divided into financial (debt and equity financing) and non-financial one. Most companies answered that their preferred form of support from the state government was financial support in the form of subsidies, tax relief and grants. The need for non-financial support was expressed by 15 enterprises who listed such forms of support as: legislative changes adjusting waste management law to the EU regulations, development of vocational education, protection of the market against the inflow of products from Eastern markets, introduction of innovation requirement in tender procedures, organisation of innovative meetings with universities, participation in government delegations on selected markets, facilitating cooperation with scientific entities.

Results of the research on the reasons, barriers, and forms of expected support for innovation processes made it possible for the authors to answer the question about the form of providing support to each of the 24 subsidiary companies distinguished at the first stage as potential beneficiaries. While formulating recommendation, what was taken into account were not only the expectations reported by individual companies, but also the results of the previous study on innovation excellence. The type of support recommended for the „potential innovator” and „innovation driver” model companies was financial support, while for „occasional innovators” the most essential was support in building innovation potential, i.e. trainings and assistance in establishing contacts with potential partners for innovative projects and building the companies’ own R&D base.

Irrespective of individual support for selected companies the parent company was recommended to undertake measures to build innovativeness of the entire business group by developing such initiatives as:

- creating a cooperation platform with scientific and education institutions for interested companies, facilitating contact, supporting common innovation projects;
- undertaking collaboration with universities and their entrepreneurship centres and engaging the companies’ representatives in order to teach them how to establish start-ups within their own firm and recruit graduates;
- providing assistance in obtaining external resources to fund innovation projects, for example with the

National Research and Development Centre [*Narodowe Centrum Badań i Rozwoju*] – assistance in writing applications, obtaining partners, information about competitions etc.;

- organising cyclical trainings for innovation leaders (also in the form of postgraduate studies) forms of collaboration with external partners and running innovation projects;
- funding projects carried out by „innovation drivers” provided that participants from other companies are involved and trained as a part of the project;
- organising visits to foreign enterprises that are more advanced in respect of innovation for representatives of various sectors.

Conclusions

Literature studies and the authors’ research experience related to business group management made it possible to draw up a classification of model strategies of innovative business activities in business groups. Models of these strategies differ in respect of concentration and innovative activities synergy. It was assumed that the factors determining the innovation strategy model for a given group are the types of business group and the form of the companies’ interdependence. Three model strategies of running innovative business activities in business groups have been distinguished: concentrated, dispersed synergistic and dispersed non-synergistic, and each model strategy has been assigned to a specific business group type. The concentrated strategy and dispersed synergistic strategy were briefly described, an in-depth analysis of the dispersed non-synergistic strategy was made using research carried out in a large related financial business group. The description of the three model innovative business strategies in a business group shows that each of them needs a different information base.

Based on the results of the research conducted to provide an expert study for the owner of Alfa Group, the authors presented the methodology of preparing an information base for the decision to support financially innovative business activities of subsidiary companies in a business group. According to the presented research the proposed method of collecting information is an effective tool supporting decision-making concerning the selection of companies to be supported in raising their innovativeness and choice of the form of such support. The method of examining the absorption ability of companies using innovation excellence models turned out to be a simple and suitable tool to select companies for the support scheme. The proposed simplified method of selection of enterprises for support schemes meets the needs of managers for whom very complex and costly methods used in analyses of enterprise innovativeness are barely acceptable. The proposed method of assessing the ability to absorb innovation support does have also its flaws. It only allows to distinguish enterprises deserving support, but does not specify the form of the support. Separate studies must be carried out to do this.

The general conclusion stemming from the research presented herein is as follows: optimisation of decision-making process concerning granting support for innovative business activities in business group requires building a solid information base. The information base for decision-making has to be diversified depending on the type of business group, type of relations among its companies and their ability to absorb support measures. In each case, using even a simplified methodology requires competences and financial expenses.

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Endnote

- 1) For the sake of comparison the research also covered “permanently non-innovative companies”.

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Strategie działalności innowacyjnej w grupach kapitałowych

Streszczenie

Przedmiotem publikacji są strategie prowadzenia działalności innowacyjnej w grupach kapitałowych i potrzeby informacyjne związane z formułowaniem i realizacją tych strategii. Wyróżniono trzy modelowe strategie prowadzenia działalności innowacyjnej w grupach: skoncentrowaną, rozproszoną synergiczną i rozproszoną niesynergiczną, przypisując każdą z modelowych strategii do określonego typu grup kapitałowych. Przyjęto założenie, że strategie prowadzenia działalności innowacyjnej w różnego typu grupach kapitałowych wymagają różnych podstaw informacyjnych decyzji o zarządzaniu działalnością innowacyjną grupy i dostosowania do tych potrzeb metod diagnostycznych.

Do analizy potrzeb informacyjnych zastosowano autorski model doskonałości innowacyjnej przedsiębiorstwa oraz badanie potrzeb wsparcia spółek podrzędnych w grupie kapitałowej za pomocą wywiadów i ankiet. Autorzy, wykorzystując wyniki badań związane z realizacją ekspertyzy dla właściciela Grupy Alfa, przedstawili metodykę przygotowania podstawy informacyjnej dla decyzji o wsparciu finansowym działalności innowacyjnej spółek podrzędnych w grupie finansowej pokrewnej. Ze zbioru kilkudziesięciu spółek Grupy Alfa wyselekcjonowali 24 spółki mające dostateczny potencjał absorpcji środków wsparcia, równocześnie wskazując na zróżnicowanie tego potencjału i konieczność różnicowania polityki wsparcia w zależności od tego, czy spółka należała do typu „lokomotywa innowacyjności”, „potencjalny innowator” czy „okazjonalny innowator”. Dla każdego rodzaju spółki wskazano na preferowane przez nich sposoby wsparcia.

Zastosowana w zaprezentowanych tu badaniach metoda badania zdolności absorpcyjnej spółek za i ich potrzeb w zakresie wsparcia okazała się prostym i trafnym narzędziem zbudowania podstawy informacyjnej do podjęcia decyzji zarządu Grupy w zakresie wsparcia spółek Grupy w ich działalności innowacyjnej. Wydaje się, że procedura badawcza zaprezentowana w artykule może być wykorzystana w szerszym zakresie w budowaniu strategii wspierania innowacyjności spółek w grupie kapitałowej.

Słowa kluczowe

grupy kapitałowe, strategie innowacyjności, modele doskonałości innowacyjnej