



Corporate Social Responsibility

Case Study #1 (LIT2019): INTEGRATION OF DISABLED PEOPLE (Lithuania 2019)

Abstract

The case study describes a medium-sized branch of the retail trade company in Klaipėda region. The aim of this work – to analyse a company's strategies in the integration of the disabled and challenges that the company faces. The company, which has recently started to employ the disabled, faces the difficulties of their adaptation. The successful example of described company shows that one of the main aspects for the adaptation of the disabled in a new workplace is having a permanent line manager. However, the line manager also needs help and certain guidelines which would help in being a useful person, who helps the adaptation process. The checklist table which can be used by a line manager as a guideline in the process of supervision is provided in the study. The checklist should ensure that both the new employee and their line manager know what has or has not been covered at any given time. Both, line manager and employee, need a copy which should be kept up to date, so they can follow what is happening. It can also act as a reminder of anything that needs particular attention.

Introduction to the Organisation

Legal form of UAB "RIMI Lietuva" is a joint stock company, which is solely responsible for its (the company's) assets. UAB "Rimi Lietuva" – is a constantly growing private Lithuanian company, and operator of the biggest retail trade network of food products and industrial commodities in the Baltic countries, which expands its trade opportunities. Its products are not only of excellent quality, but they are also attractively presented. The company pays a lot of attention to the introduction of new technologies. The newest and the most reliable storage, accounting and stock management equipment is bought, and all trade lines are constantly modernised. The company is always ready for the development of mutually beneficial business and trade relations.

"Rimi Lietuva" started in 1995 when the company "Ekovalda" was established. In 1999, the Swedish company "ICA AB", a leader of retail trade market in the region of the Northern countries, acquired 50% of the company shares. Already in a year the first "Rimi" ("Supermarket") shopping centre was opened.

Currently "Rimi" has its shopping centers in 18 towns in Lithuania. However, it is not the development of "Rimi Lietuva" is not limited to this. If there is still no "Rimi" shopping centre near your home, it will definitely occur there!

HR Processes in the Company

Selection and recruitment. Personnel specialists are responsible for employee search, selection and recruitment in the company. Usually employees are found by hiring personnel search companies that prepare job ads and carry out the primary selection. The further processes of selection and recruitment take place in the company under the supervision of the Personnel Manager.



Adaptation. Adaptation period in the company is very individual, depending on the experience of every new employee and his/her ability to grasp the internal processes in the company. The minimum adaptation period is one month, but quite often a longer period is given, sometimes even up to one year.

Motivation. The company takes great care of its employees and tries to develop an individual motivation system for everyone. Unfortunately, sometimes it is extremely difficult to do that because of a big number of employees, therefore recently the company has started to practice different methods of motivation for employees in different positions. For example, for managers, a more flexible work schedule is used as a motivation measure, while for cashiers certain gifts and extra payments are more suitable, because their work schedule is quite rigid.

Assessment. The company has a very clear, structured assessment system known by all employees. Assessment usually takes place every month and afterwards general meetings are organised. Every employee is talked to individually, but these talks are not as frequent as general meetings – usually they take place every half year.

HR Challenges

The company, which has recently started to employ disabled people, faces the difficulties of their adaptation. According to the company personnel manager, so far, the company has not encountered any difficulties with the adaptation of new employees since it has not paid a lot of attention to adaptation and everything went quite smoothly and naturally.

It is noticed that adaptation of disabled employees requires preparation before he/she even comes to work, in other words, the company has to prepare in advance for the admission of a disabled person, which has never been done with other employees.

It has also been noticed that adaptation of a disabled employee requires a longer period of time and an appointed person in charge, who would help an adaptation process to run smoothly. New challenge – training of a responsible person before recruiting a disabled person. Another challenge is time consumption of the appointed person, because attention and time dedicated to the new employee costs the time, which could be spent on the current job and this makes the processes in the company slower.

Literature Review



After the restoration of Independence of Lithuania, the attitude of society to a disabled people started to change. Attention started to be paid not only to the physical state of a person, but also to the realisation of his/her professional activity. Disabled people are perceived as fully-fledged members of the society who have professional abilities and competences to be active participants in the labour market (Katiliūtė E., Bumblauskaitė K., Skiecevičius P., Bubnys R., Stepanavičienė R., 2008).

When establishing a company or developing its activity, it is extremely important to form a competent, loyal and perspective team. It is not a simple task for a manager of any company to find a suitable, loyal employee. For that purpose, managers allocate a lot of time and money. However, after finding a competent employee, the new person cannot start using his/her full potential without the necessary preparation (Sakalas A., 2003).

In social companies and social companies of the disabled, new employee selection and adaptation processes are complicated by the fact that the majority of the company employees have to belong to a target group. Based on the Law on Social Enterprises of 1 June 2004, employees of social companies for the disabled, who belong to a target group, have to make at least 40% of the annual average number of employees in the list.

Employment opportunities for the disabled are predetermined by internal and external factors. Internal factors are especially important for the integration of the disabled in the labour market. These factors depend on the disabled person himself/herself. It has been noticed that internal factors are constantly changing and are divided into psychosocial, competence, human capital, career competences and health. Meanwhile external factors, which predetermine adaptation of the disabled in the labour market, are not related to the person himself/herself. They are related to the social, economic, and legal situation in Lithuania (Katiliūtė E., 2008).

Any new member of personnel has to adapt to the organisation, its members and new work conditions. If this process is successful, the employee psyche is affected positively, and this is reflected in the labour efficiency. Often a new workplace is assessed as a stressful situation. Most employees feel stressed because of uncertainty and for fear of not being able to meet the expectations of the company, appropriately perform work tasks, or make friendly relationships with the existing staff. There is a tension when trying to adapt to a differently organised work environment and the internal policies and procedures of a company (Guodytė S., 2008).

However, in order to appropriately prepare a new employee for work, an investment of time is necessary. Time is lacking most in the modern world. Often employers do not pay a lot of attention to the adaptation period, thinking that is a spontaneous process. However, this period is important not only to the new member of the organisation, but also to the company itself. The faster a person adapts in the new environment the faster he/she becomes a fully-fledged employee.

Management of the processes of new employee adaptation is especially important under the current circumstances, when the market is filled with competitive companies. Appropriate employee adaptation is one of the main factors determining efficiency of an organisation's activity and its profit-seeking (Baršauskienė V., 2006). Therefore, attention should also be paid to the needs, goals and expectations of the new employee. An organisation's success is influenced by the relationships among its members and their relationship with the company itself.

Methodology

Object – difficulties that the company faces when recruiting disabled persons.



Sample of research – UAB “RIMI Lietuva” Personnel Manager and 24 employees of the company.

Method of research – in-depth interview method and a quantitative research.

Course of research. The research was carried out in May 2019. Personnel Manager in UAB “RIMI Lietuva” was interviewed. The interview with the Personnel Manager was conducted using a pre-formed questionnaire.

Findings and Analysis

Knowing the importance of the process of new employee adaptation to the psychic and social health of the person, the research aimed to find out how adaptation processes are managed in UAB “RIMI Lietuva”. For that purpose, a questionnaire was formed for the company employees and research was carried out.

It was noticed that the majority of personnel in the company have worked the between 1 and 5 years, fewer employees have worked in the company between 5 and 10 years, and the least number of employees are new employees, who have spent up to 1 year in the company.

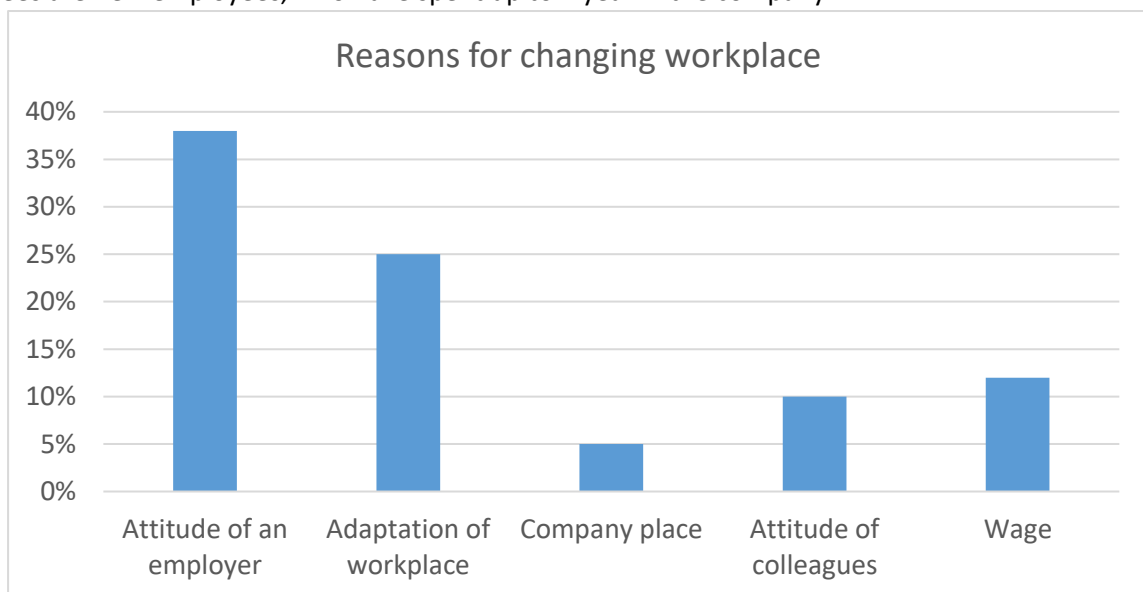


Figure 1 Reasons for changing workplace

In order to find out the reasons why disabled people change their jobs, the respondents were asked to indicate the reasons that encourage them to make such decisions. The research revealed that most employees changed their jobs because of an inappropriate attitude of the manager (to those with disabilities). The adaptation of a workplace by the nature of disability had less influence on such a decision. The attitude of colleagues to a disabled person and wage had a small influence on the change of a workplace. The company’s strategic place encouraged the least number of employees to change their workplace.

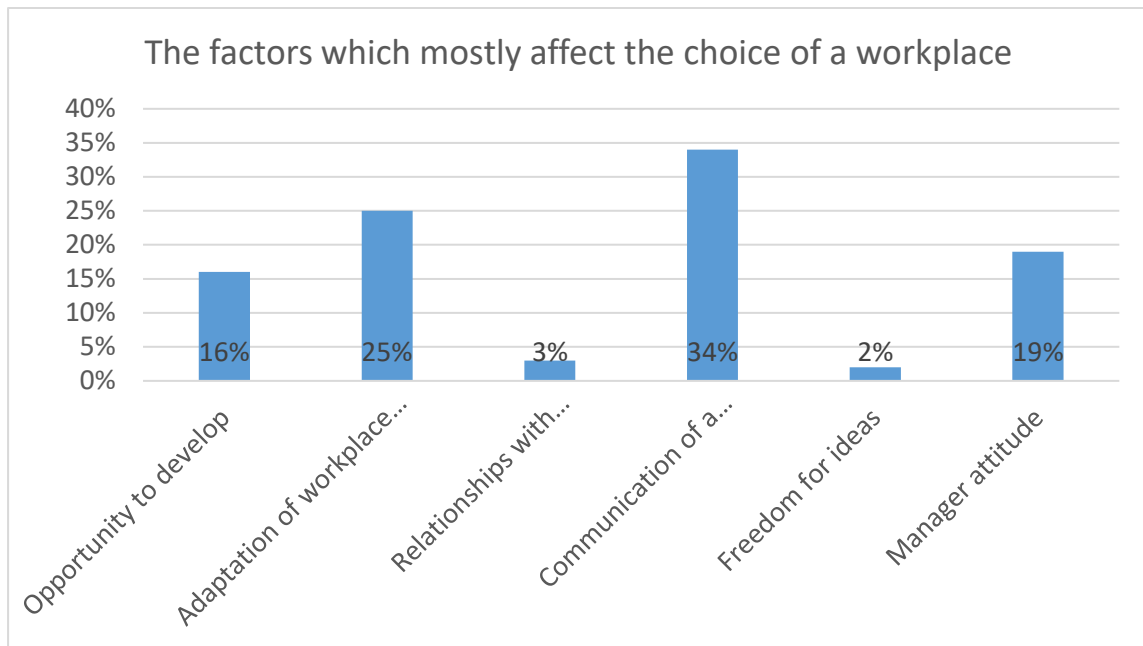


Figure 2 Factors which mostly affect the choice of a workplace

The research was done in order to establish the factors that predetermine what workplace people with a disability choose. The company employees mostly emphasised the communication of a manager, adaptation of a workplace by the nature of disability, the attitude of a manager to the disabled and an opportunity to develop as the most important factors as determinants of workplace choice.

The aim of the questionnaire was to find out which stages in the process of new employee adaptation, in the opinion of the respondents, are very important, important, less important and not important at all.

Most employees (40%) indicated that the stage of introduction to the direct work as the most important in the process of new employee adaptation. A smaller proportion of respondents thought that the most important stages are introduction to the personnel; introduction to the workplace; introduction to the person, which can be addressed in case of difficulties; determining the need for additional measures in adapting workplace.

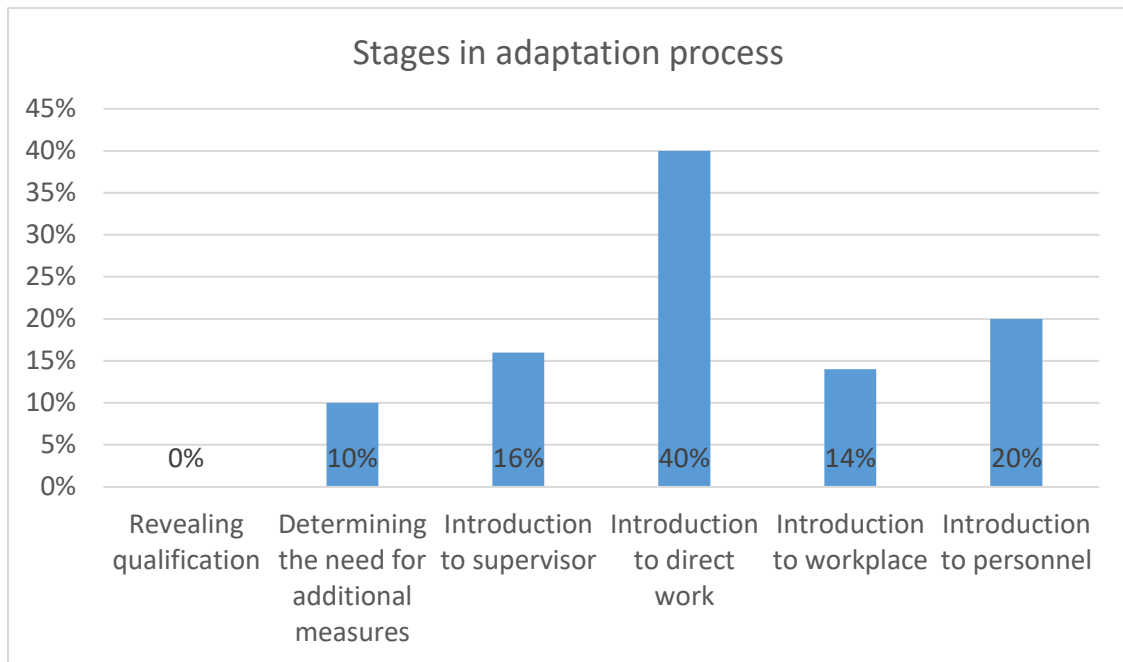


Figure 3 The most important stages in the process of new employee adaptation

Analysis of interview data

In order to better understand the RIMI case, when disabled people are recruited, an in-depth interview was conducted with the personnel manager of the company.

The main reason that the company took steps to integrate disabled people into their workforce was through a sense of corporate social responsibility. The company's view is that integration of disabled people is very important, and a socially responsible company should provide everyone with opportunity of a job. Besides this, there were other reasons to widen their recruitment to target people with disabilities, such as shortages in the labour market. In other words, it is getting more and more difficult for the company to find suitable employees, therefore it was necessary to expand the field. Another reason is that of an ageing population and labour force emigration. The future perspective is even worse, the process of an ageing population will continue, and emigration has so far taken away a huge number of Lithuanians of working age. Of course, it has contributed to the decision to employ under-represented groups such as disabled and retired people.

The survey revealed that throughout the recruitment process, the biggest challenge that the company faces with regards to the integration of disabled employees into its workforce is the attitude of the surrounding people. The company used to get a lot of negative comments and only a little support. Only after starting this initiative did the company realise how negative and stigmatised is society's attitude towards disabled people. A very big challenge was managing the expectations of customers and changing their attitude, since in the beginning it was noticed that customers avoided going to the cashier with a disability. Only after some time did the situation started to change and now the company feels the support of its customers for this initiative. Different forms of advertising, which



were quite widely shown in their publicity material, helped the company to change the attitude of its customer-base.

One more challenge was the additional equipment needed for the disabled employees. Workplaces had to be adapted to remove any obstacles, especially for those employees with mobility difficulties.

When asked to assess the company's decision to recruit disabled people, the personnel manager of the company said that so far, she thinks of it as one of the best decisions the company has made. Though there were difficulties and quite a number of challenges to overcome, the result is excellent as the company has a full team that functions perfectly together.

It was important to find out how the whole recruitment process of disabled people took place, and what their adaptation was. In the opinion of the personnel manager, it is never possible to be 100% ready. The company had done everything it could before starting to employ people with disabilities, but when the process started, it turned out that certain things had not been considered. The most important part was not the adaptation of the physical environment, but the preparation of the current employees, admission of a new employee, his/her training and involvement in the team. It is very useful to appoint a line manager for a new employee – a person, to whom a new employee can go to about any issue whenever he/she needs. It is important that the programme of the line manager lasts at least one year, after which the company can be sure that the employee has fully adapted to the team and he/she no longer faces any difficulties.

Practical Human Resource Management Tool

The successful example of "Rimi" shows that one of the main aspects of the adaptation of disabled employees in a new workplace is having a permanent line manager. However, the line manager also needs support and guidance to enable them to be effective in this role. Below is an induction checklist (table 9), which can be used by a line manager to guide the process of supervision.

The checklist should ensure that both the new employee and their line manager know what has or has not been covered at any given time.

They both need a copy, which should be kept up to date so that they can follow what is happening. It can also act as a reminder of anything that needs particular attention.

While a checklist is helpful, it should not turn the induction into a tick-box exercise. It is the responsibility of both management and the new starter to ensure all items are properly covered.



Table 1 Outline of a job induction checklist

First day	Carried out by	Date	Notes
Welcomed by			
Show new employee where they will be working			
Introduce them to their line manager, colleagues, including their 'buddy' and senior managers			
Show new employee the rest of organisation including facilities			
Outline health & safety			
First week	Carried out by	Date	Notes
Who's who, how it works and what it produces			
Future plans and developments			
Brief history			
Explain new employee's job fully, how it fits in the organisation and work practices			
Outline new employee's expected job performance and how it will be assessed			
Possible opportunities for future development			
Run through new employee's terms and conditions of employment (this includes details of any probationary period, hours of work, breaks, holidays and when they will get paid)			



<p>The organisation's important rules on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • job performance • discipline • absence, including because of illness and sick pay • complaints against staff, such as bullying and harassment <p>Also say where more details can be found</p>			
Other important rules such as use of the company internet, email and phones			
Details such as dress code, parking, smoking and the canteen			
Complete documentation on new employee's appointment for their personal file to be kept securely			
Detailed training on health & safety in the organisation			
First month	Carried out by	Date	Notes
The organisation's commitment to be an equal opportunities employer			
Details of any employee representation, including any trade union membership			
Towards the end of four weeks, an informal meeting with the line manager to assess how the new starter is adjusting to their role, and whether			



they have any particular coaching or training needs, or other concerns			
At three months	Carried out by	Date	Notes
Review with the line manager how the new starter is settling in and performing This is also an opportunity to pinpoint any development needs, set timescales for achieving them and adjust work targets if required			
At six months	Carried out by	Date	Notes
If the new employee is on probation, will they be confirmed in post? If yes, it is time for the line manager to look to the next six months - any new work objectives? Any experience, coaching or training needs?			
At 12 months	Carried out by	Date	Notes
Ask the employee for feedback on their induction – what worked well? What could be improved?			

Conclusion

It has been determined that the majority of disabled employees change their work because of the negative attitudes of company managers. All the other factors can contribute to employees' leaving their jobs, but they are not the main factors explaining why employees change workplaces. Also, when talking about a disabled person choosing a new workplace, the most important thing is the communication of a manager. In other words, for a long time a prevalent opinion was that recruiting a disabled person is going to present a big challenge because of the need to adapt the physical environment to him/her. However, what is more important is a normal, humane fair communication and admission.



The analysis of “Rimi” case determined that the biggest difficulties in the integration process of disabled employees is the fight with the attitude of the public. The company used to get a lot of negative comments and a very little support. After starting the integration of disabled people into their workforce, they realised how negative and stigmatised society’s attitude is towards disabled people. A very big challenge was managing the expectations of customers and change in their attitude, since in the beginning it was noticed that customers avoided buying at the cashier with a disability. Only after some time did the situation start to change and now the company feels support of its customers with this initiative. It can be said that the company had to earn respect when introducing the innovation (integration of the disabled) into the market. Different forms of social advertising, which were quite widely shown in its publicity, helped the company to change the attitude of society.

Reflections on HRM in EU SMEs

Since SMEs in the EU face similar problems as those of Lithuania – ageing society, lack of people of working age, migration of residents – it is important to search for other resources to supplement teams. Integration of people with disabilities is an excellent way not only to satisfy workforce requirements, but also to contribute to improving the quality of life for disabled people and changing society’s attitudes to become a socially responsible company.

What can be learned from the “Rimi” example is that the challenges that companies think of before starting the employment of disabled people are not necessarily the most important in this process – the greatest attention should be paid to employee training, change in attitudes and stereotypes, as well as changing the attitude of society. Finally, the most important is to invest in a qualitative, non-judgmental and supportive communication with both employees with disabilities and the rest of the team.



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