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SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT IN A CHANGING WORLD



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BUSINESS PLANNING: SELECTING APPROPRIATE PLANNING TOOLS

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Introduction. In the context of intense market competition and continuous changes in the external business environment, further exacerbated by martial law imposed as a consequence of the Russian Federation's full-scale military aggression against Ukraine, business planning has become a key instrument for ensuring the sustainable and innovation-driven development of small business enterprises. Effective planning not only enables the efficient allocation and coordination of resources but also facilitates risk forecasting, the development of competitive advantages, and the achievement of long-term strategic growth. For Ukrainian enterprises operating under conditions of economic instability and geopolitical uncertainty, high-quality planning is of particular importance, as it provides a solid foundation for informed managerial decision-making.

Business planning can be regarded as one of the fundamental elements of the enterprise management system, ensuring the rational allocation of resources and the achievement of strategic objectives. In the classical sense, the planning process involves environmental analysis, goal setting, strategy formulation, the identification of implementation mechanisms, the establishment of performance indicators, and monitoring of their achievement. Planning enables the application of analytical methods to obtain sufficiently accurate quantitative indicators that support managerial decision-making. Without systematic, timely, and well-structured planning, an enterprise loses its managerial coherence and its ability to adapt effectively to changes in the market environment.

Adherence to the marketing concept represents one of the key determinants of successful small business performance in a modern market economy. Unlike large corporations, small business enterprises operate under significant financial, human,

and material resource constraints, which considerably limit their ability to recover from strategic mistakes. Consequently, a strong customer orientation, continuous market monitoring, and flexible adaptation to environmental changes become essential prerequisites for sustainable business development.

The marketing concept assumes that all managerial decisions should be based on a thorough understanding of target customers' needs and on the objective of satisfying those needs more effectively than competitors. For small businesses, this approach enables the development of sustainable competitive advantages not through economies of scale or substantial capital investment but through customer-centric management, personalized service, rapid decision-making, and organizational flexibility in responding to changing market conditions.

The marketing concept gained particular significance during the second half of the twentieth century, coinciding with the emergence of the digital economy. Contemporary digital marketing instruments, social media platforms, electronic commerce, and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems have enabled small business enterprises to compete effectively even with large corporations. The application of digital marketing technologies provides rapid access to information about customer needs, facilitates the timely adjustment of marketing strategies, and contributes to the development of long-term customer loyalty. Furthermore, the marketing concept strengthens corporate reputation and enhances the positive image of small enterprises. High levels of customer satisfaction stimulate business growth, generate positive word-of-mouth recommendations, and expand the customer base, which is particularly important for small businesses whose success largely depends on customer loyalty and long-term relationships with consumers.

Therefore, the marketing concept constitutes a strategic foundation for the sustainable innovation-driven development of small business enterprises. Customer orientation, systematic market research, the effective application of marketing tools, and organizational flexibility in responding to environmental changes contribute to enhanced competitiveness, stronger market positioning, and the creation of favourable conditions for long-term economic growth.

Aim. The objective of this study is to develop a methodological toolkit for prioritizing the issues of project planning aimed at the development of small business enterprises based on the marketing concept. Priority issues are defined as those requiring immediate managerial attention, as the decisions adopted at this stage establish the foundation for addressing subsequent tasks related to the innovation-driven development of business activities.

Materials and methods. The prioritization of issues associated with the innovative development of small business enterprises is proposed to be based on expert judgment. The methodological framework incorporates expert evaluation techniques, comparison and grouping methods, and the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to systematize expert opinions. In addition, systems analysis methods are employed to examine the principles underlying the formation and composition of expert groups.

Results and discussion. The planning process for innovation-driven business development requires a well-defined logical framework based on recognizing the priority of organizational, technological, and managerial transformations in business operations. The challenges of enhancing business performance and identifying the most effective managerial measures can be addressed through the application of mathematical logic and analytical methods. The contemporary global economic environment is characterized by intense competition, rapid technological advancement, and the necessity for the efficient utilization of resources. In Ukraine, these challenges have been further intensified by the consequences of the Russian Federation's full-scale military aggression. Under such circumstances, small business enterprises are compelled to identify effective approaches to increasing productivity, reducing operating costs, and maintaining stable business performance. An innovation-oriented approach to organizing business processes constitutes one of the key instruments for achieving these objectives.

Strategic vision plays a pivotal role in planning enterprise development, as it facilitates the identification of opportunities for strengthening competitiveness and implementing measures aimed at stabilizing business operations. Successful market

participants continuously revise their strategic objectives and priorities, a process made possible through the adoption of project-based planning. This approach enables organizations to accomplish long-term strategic goals through the implementation of individual projects, while the outcomes of these projects gradually transform the enterprise's business profile and enhance its capacity to adapt to changing operating conditions.

Selecting the most appropriate project planning strategy for a small business enterprise requires combining the practical experience of business owners with the expertise of qualified specialists possessing both practical experience and theoretical knowledge in the relevant field. Such an approach enables the comprehensive evaluation of alternative solutions and supports sound managerial decision-making. During project planning, it is essential to anticipate both the positive and negative consequences of managerial decisions, objectively assess current market conditions, and identify the key factors likely to influence future business development. Consequently, project planning for innovation-driven development should integrate expert evaluation techniques with systems analysis methods.

The first stage of the proposed methodology involves defining the objectives and scope of the expert assessment. In accordance with the research objective, the purpose of the assessment is to identify the set of factors influencing enterprise development from the perspective of innovation-driven business growth. The second stage consists of establishing the survey procedure. For this purpose, a structured questionnaire is developed, including the most influential components of enterprise development across different functional areas. The questionnaire is designed on the basis of a comprehensive review of the relevant literature and information sources.

The third stage involves the formation of the expert panel. To determine the priorities of project planning for the innovation-driven development of small business enterprises, the expert panel included master's and doctoral students enrolled in Management and Marketing programmes, as well as students pursuing a second higher education degree at the master's level.

To ensure the reliability and quality of the expert assessment, the following

eligibility criteria were established for participation:

- mandatory practical experience in entrepreneurial activity;
- successful completion of academic training and acquisition of theoretical

knowledge within accredited higher education programmes.

One of the fundamental conditions of involving higher education students as experts was guaranteeing the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. Anonymity encouraged experts to express their opinions openly and objectively without external pressure or personal bias. Since the participants represented different fields of entrepreneurial activity, the likelihood of competitive antagonism was minimized. In addition, the experts demonstrated a high level of motivation to contribute to solving the practical research problem. Because the responses remained anonymous, expert judgments were independent of external influence. Provided that all participants satisfied the established eligibility criteria, their evaluations could be considered sufficiently consistent and reliable. Based on these principles, three independent expert groups were formed for the subsequent stages of the study.

The fourth stage involves developing the procedures for processing expert judgments. Based on the completed questionnaires, the frequency of expert opinions is calculated for each evaluation criterion. The fifth stage focuses on establishing the final set of indicators for subsequent temporal and comparative analysis.

The objective of the empirical analysis was to identify the most significant components of business planning for small enterprises operating in Ukraine.

As a result of expert discussions moderated by an independent facilitator, a set of essential components of small business development planning that should not be overlooked was identified. The preparatory stage of the group expert assessment may be conducted using one of the following approaches:

- the committee (open discussion) method;
- the Delphi method based on anonymous individual expert assessment.

Given that the survey was conducted in an online environment, the Delphi method was selected as the most appropriate approach under the existing conditions. It should be noted that the Delphi method does not inherently produce a unified

consensus among experts. Rather, consensus is achieved through the statistical processing, aggregation, and interpretation of individual expert judgments.

The expert assessments reflecting the relative importance of the selected components of small business development were ranked using a ten-point rating scale. The most significant components were assigned a score of 10, whereas the least important received a score of 1.

Based on the results of a survey involving three target expert groups comprising a total of 35 respondents, the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was applied to determine the most significant components of planning the development of small business enterprises under the marketing concept. The highest-ranked priorities were risk mitigation strategies, availability of business financing, and innovation-oriented decision-making. In contrast, the experts assigned the lowest priority to human capital development, the development of cooperative relationships, and the enhancement of internal communication capabilities.

It is noteworthy that a substantial gap was observed between the group of components identified by the experts as the most critical and those considered to be of relatively minor importance. The difference in their relative significance amounted to several-fold, indicating a pronounced differentiation in expert evaluations.

The findings suggest that development planning for small business enterprises should primarily focus on the identified priority components, as they exert the greatest influence on business performance and therefore should constitute the core priorities of strategic and operational development planning.

Conclusions. The current security and economic situation in Ukraine has had a substantial influence on the opinions expressed by the experts. According to their assessments, the prospects for the operation and development of small business enterprises are highly dependent on the level of security and stability of the economic environment. At the same time, the results of the conducted analysis make it possible to define more precisely a methodological toolkit comprising key planning components aimed at maximizing the likelihood of entrepreneurial success while minimizing the resources required to achieve it. The implementation of these

planning measures may enable small business enterprises to strengthen their competitive advantages with relatively limited resource expenditures.

The experts identified human capital development, the expansion of cooperative relationships, and the development of internal communication capabilities as planning components that are particularly difficult for small enterprises to implement. At the same time, these factors were assigned relatively low priority, suggesting that business practitioners may underestimate a considerable proportion of the risks associated with entrepreneurial activity.

The proposed methodological toolkit for conducting the above analytical procedures enables small business enterprises to select the most effective managerial alternatives from a wide range of available options during the business development planning process and to establish priorities for their implementation. Furthermore, the proposed approach provides objective decision support when applied to a sufficiently broad panel of experts and may serve as a practical instrument for enhancing an enterprise's ability to respond effectively to the challenges of a dynamic competitive environment.

Business planning remains a particularly vulnerable process for small enterprises because of their limited managerial, organizational, financial, and technological resources. Under the current conditions faced by Ukrainian small businesses, characterized by heightened security risks and an increasingly complex business environment, the ability to respond promptly to changes in the competitive environment constitutes a critical determinant of sustainable business performance and long-term success.