European Research Studies Journal
Volume XXIV, Issue 3B, 2021

pp. 704-721

The Management of a Company's Relational Capital as Part of Business Process

Submitted 11/07/21, 1st revision 04/08/21, 2nd revision 22/08/21, accepted 30/09/21

Anna Walecka[1]

Abstract:

Purpose: *The paper deals with the issue of a company's relational capital, especially customer relations. The aim of the paper is an attempt to answer the question concerning the role of developing the right type of relational capital with customers in organisations applying the Business Process Management (BPM) philosophy.*
Design/Methodology/Approach: *The paper characterises business processes and the BPM concept, as well as describes models of process maturity. The section regarding a company's relational capital focuses on different types of relations with stakeholders and also asks about the essence of customer relations in organisations using BPM. The paper includes the results of quantitative research carried out among 600 companies of all sizes operating throughout Poland. The diagnostic survey method, which used the Paper and Pencil Interviewing (PAPI) technique, was chosen as the research method. The respondents were representatives of top management, including business owners. The research was complemented by a case study conducted in one of the organisations operating in the metal industry. It is a company that fully applies the BPM concept.*
Findings: *The results of the quantitative research carried out indicate the existence of a relationship between the type of relations that a company has with its customers and the level of process maturity of the company. The types of customer relations are so important that the attention of companies using the BPM concept is focused on this kind of relationships. The results of the case study strongly confirm that the company analysed sees an important role of its relational capital (especially customer relations) in business process management. Every process implemented in the organisation is undertaken with the final customer in mind as well as his/her satisfaction with the product or service offered.*
Originality/value: *The article discusses an innovative approach to the relational capital of enterprises from the point of view of the process maturity of companies.*

Keywords: *Relational capital, customer relations, BPM.*

JEL classification: *M10, L14.*

Paper Type: *Research study.*

Acknowledgments: *This research was funded by the National Science Centre, Poland, as research project No. 2014/15/D/HS4/01170.*

[1]*Faculty of Management and Production Engineering, Lodz University of Technology,* *anna.walecka@p.lodz.pl*

1. Introduction

Every enterprise operates in an environment that affects its performance. This environment is dynamic and discontinuous (Romanowska, 2007). It consists of particular entities with which the enterprise establishes various types of relations. The issue of relations has been discussed in the literature for many years (Gray and Wood, 1991; Reitan, 1998, Mattessich and Monsey, 1992; Piwoni-Krzeszowska, 2014). Their scope, manner of manifestation, as well as conditions of formation and functioning have varied. The awareness of their existence, along with the extent to which these relations have been taken into account in science or legislation, has also varied.

Nevertheless, relations have always existed, regardless of knowledge about them. Nowadays — due to the increasing pace of change and unpredictability of the conditions of functioning, increasing competition and the related growing interdependence of market participants — relations take on special importance. They become the basis for strategic activities of an enterprise (Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2019). These relations may be of diverse nature, durability and degree of formalisation (Wilkinson, 2008; Osarenkhoe, 2010; Smith-Doerr and Powel, 2005; Walecka, 2019).

A special role is assigned in particular to a company's relations with its customers, which are an important group of stakeholders for organisations implementing BPM. Therefore, this group of stakeholders is the focus of the presented paper. Considering the above, the aim of the paper is to attempt to answer the question concerning the role of building the right type of relational capital with customers in organisations applying the Business Process Management philosophy.

2. Explanation of Key Concepts

2.1 Characteristics of Business Processes and the BPM Concept

The literature presents many definitions of the business process. Hammer and Champy (1993) define the business process as a structured set of activities designed to produce a specific output for a particular customer or market. Thus, the business process determines the sequence of events required to generate a product or service. The business process is defined in a similar manner by Dumnicki *et al.* (1998), who perceived it as a structured set of combined production or service activities performed at a specific time, resulting in benefits for an external or internal customer. During the implementation of the business process, certain resources (material and/or information resources) are transformed, and through these transformations, value is added for which customers are ready to pay. Smith and Fingar (2003) define the business process as a complete and dynamically coordinated set of transactional and collaborative activities that delivers value to customers.

Rummler and Brache (2000) define the business process as a sequence of activities designed to generate a product or service, whereas Brilman (2002) defines the business process as a stream of activities that transform supplies (raw materials or information) acquired from suppliers into production with added value for customers. Blikle (2012) has provided a definition of the business process designed specifically for the purpose of a process organisation, the business process is a set of activities that process products of a similar nature and refer to a common area of knowledge. A process in this sense is therefore not a sequence of activities performed one after the other, but a set of activities from which such sequences (production processes or service processes) can be built. The type of process is determined by the type of product processed by its activities and the type of knowledge needed to perform these activities (Blikle, 2012). All the above-mentioned definitions indicate the ordering of activities and their purposefulness expressed in benefits for the final recipient—the customer, so important from the point of view of this paper.

It should be noted that business processes are an inseparable element of every organisation, regardless of how it is managed (Grajewski, 2007). Sometimes these processes are not observed because they run horizontally, crossing the boundaries of individual functional departments (e.g. marketing, sales, or human resources), and everyone sees only their fragments, without trying to combine their own actions with the actions of others.

The literature shows a large variety of business processes, which allows them to be classified according to various criteria—their scope, degree of automation, value added, the scope of applied knowledge, the degree of formalisation, the method of construction, and many others (Gabryelczyk, 2006).

Taking into account an organisation's strategy, the processes which result in delivering a specific value to the organisation's customers (external processes) are of fundamental importance. In turn, internal processes (within a given company) should be entirely subordinate to the implementation of external processes and optimised accordingly, as only the value brought in by external customers affects a company's development. Therefore, all processes taking place within an organisation should be subordinate to processes based on customer relations and should be managed.

Considering the management of processes in an organisation, it is worth mentioning that the literature indicates the evolution of this concept, and the very concept of Business Process Management (BPM) has changed its meaning over the years. The first stage of its development was related to the concept of Business Process Reengineering (BPR) proposed by Hammer and Champy (1993) and radical change of processes (Davenport, 1993). When it turned out that the vast majority of BPR initiatives were unsuccessful (Hall *et al.*, 1993), that approach was transformed into the concept of Business Process Improvement (BPI). The focus was placed on the evolutionary change and improvement of processes by their enhancement in each phase of the business process life cycle.

Business process management is perceived by researchers in a variety of ways. Some treat it very narrowly (as providing support for business processes with the use of IT methods, techniques and tools for the design, implementation, control and analysis of processes, including people, organisations, applications, documents and other sources of information (Van der Aalst *et al.,* 2003), while others consider it more broadly (Brilman, 2002; Speer *et al.,* 2005). In a broader sense, business process management is a continuous and structured impact on the processes taking place in an organisation through the use of appropriate concepts, methods and tools for improving and designing new processes or reducing existing processes so as to fully achieve the goals of the organisation and best meet the needs of its customers. It follows that BPM covers not only processes at the operational level but also processes at the tactical and strategic level. According to business practitioners, BPM is (Reiter *et al.,* 2010):

- a holistic perception of an organisation whose main idea is to cover all activities with one management system,
- a company's orientation towards the value added chain and emphasis on creating customer value,
- orientation towards customers and meeting their needs,
- opposition to a functional approach and focus on the organisation of activities,
- making efforts to streamline and optimise subsequent activities,
- management with an emphasis on defining goals and involving contractors in their achievement,
- management with emphasis on the implementation of the entire process life cycle.

Maturity models help to improve the concept of business process management. These are structured sets of elements that describe the characteristics of effective processes at different stages of development. They also indicate the points delimiting the various stages as well as methods of transition from one level to another (Pullen, 2007). There are many models of process maturity that are developed independently by different organisations. Various authors of process maturity models propose different criteria for assessing particular degrees of maturity and their varying number, for example, Hammer (2007), Harmon (2009), Roseman and vom Brocke (2010), Rohloff (2009), Willaert *et al.* (2007), McCormack *et al.* (2009), Magdaleno *et al.* (2008), and Zwicker *et al.* (2010). Some models of process maturity are considered intellectual property of consulting companies and research institutes (Willaert *et al.,* 2007; Melenovsky and Sinur 2006). There are those which merely assess the conditions for the implementation of the process or relate to specific process types, such as the Process Condition Model (de Toro and McCabe 1997;

Röglinger *et al.*, 2012). De Bruin and Rosemann (2010) divide maturity models into two types:

- models that evaluate individual, specific processes or their sets,
- models that assess an organisation's ability to manage interrelated business processes often referred to as BPM models (De Bruin and Rosemann, 2010).

The paper refers precisely to such models of process maturity.

The first model assessing organisational maturity—the Capability Maturity Model (CMM)—was created in 1991 at the Software Engineering Institute (SEI). It was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Defence, which—dissatisfied with the quality of delivered products—ordered the preparation of a reference list that would help assess the ability of software companies to fulfil government orders (PCCW, 1993). The proposed approach turned out to be very simple and effective, therefore the CMM was adopted to evaluate companies operating also in other areas.

Since then, the entire family of CMM models was created to finally be made into, the second model, one Capability Maturity Model Integrated (CMMI) in 2001. This model enables the process maturity of an organisation to be assessed (CMMI Product Team, 2002). Process maturity is understood as the awareness that an organisation is made up of horizontally occurring processes that must be properly managed (Brajer-Marczak, 2012), it is the degree to which processes are formally defined, managed, flexible, measured, and effective (Grajewski, 2007). These features are naturally gradual on a continuum from an immature organisation to a mature one in terms of implementation of solutions oriented towards processes (Grajewski, 2009). A process-mature organisation is an organisation in which (Grela, 2013):

- the ability to build and improve a product and/or a service is a hallmark of an organisation, not of individual employees,
- processes are fully identified and knowledge about them is effectively communicated to employees,
- work related to the design of processes is planned,
- processes are also observed and improved by means of controlled experiments and cost-effect analysis,
- the division of roles and responsibilities is clearly defined within the framework of the organisation of individual projects,
- the quality of products and/or services as well as the degree of customer satisfaction are monitored,
- there is an objective, quantitative basis for assessing the quality of products, services and activities.

The CMMI model defines the following maturity levels of an organisation:

- Level 1 – characteristic of organisations where processes are random and disorganised,
- Level 2 – processes in an organisation are repeatable and partially organised,
- Level 3 – processes are organised and identified but not measured,
- Level 4 – processes are managed based on measures,
- Level 5 – processes are constantly improved.

This model was used in the empirical part of the paper to verify the process maturity of the organisations analysed.

2.2 Company Relations with the Environment

Knowledge concerning relations in business activity has evolved along with the development of subsequent theoretical research trends. Depending on the area of interest, studies have focused on transactional analysis or relational analysis (Donaldson and O'Tool, 2000).

Transactional analysis is closely related to explaining dependencies in the value chain. According to this concept, relations are treated as a market failure and may only occur if they reduce the costs related to handling transactions (Małys, 2014). Relational analysis emphasises the social aspect of the exchange between entities. Researchers note, among others, the large influence of a company's internal stakeholders (e.g. employees) on the exchange process. They point to such aspects of cooperation as the long-term duration of cooperation between entities along with the resulting experience and developed standards of cooperation, as well as commitment and trust between organisations. In the framework of this trend, it is emphasised that the motive that prompts companies to cooperate may be the simple willingness to do so and good experiences derived from mutual cooperation. This kind of view broadens the traditional views according to which cooperation between enterprises is a function of the necessity to exchange resources (Donaldson and O'Tool, 2000).

It is currently emphasised that both research trends — transactional analysis and relational analysis — complement each other. The combination of both concepts provides a full picture of the nature of bilateral ties linking independent entities. As a result of these connections, information, material or energy exchange takes place. Such exchanges show a specific commitment of the parties, and this attitude is mutual (Czakon, 2007).

Regardless of the adopted perspective – transactional or relational, it is problematic to distinguish business relations from other relationships that a company has with its environment. One of the most frequently cited in the literature is the distinction between interactions and relationships (Easton, 1992). Interactions are defined as specific actions taken over a particular period of time which may be one-off or occasional in nature. If interactions between entities are repetitive, then a relationship is established. Some researchers assume, however, that all connections between an enterprise and its environment are relationships (Blois, 1998). These relationships influence the course of interactions and determine the expectations as well as behaviour of the parties.

Considering the nature of relationships, the literature points to three basic types of inter-organisational relations that acquire strategic importance for organisations nowadays (Stańczyk-Hugiet, 2013; Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2014), cooperation, competition, and coopetition. Cooperation means mutually compatible, complementary activities of individual organisations that have a positive impact from the point of view of their influence on the achievement of a specific goal (Kaczmarek, 2000). Competition is characterised by the incompatibility of the objectives of the entities participating in it (Pszczołowski, 1978). As part of the continuum between cooperation and conflict, competition (rivalry) may be characterised by a certain mobilising dimension, but it is conducive to the achievement of individual goals. Coopetition is a system of simultaneous and interdependent relations of competition and cooperation used to achieve specific strategic goals over an extended time horizon (Cygler, 2009).

In the framework of each of the discussed types of relations, horizontal and vertical relations should be distinguished (Osarenkhoe, 2010). Inter-organisational relations can also be formal and informal (Smith-Doerr and Powel, 2005). Formal ties are those in which the parties are bound by a legal contract. These ties constitute a set of relations in which the parties, subject and content are regulated by legal provisions (Chrisidu-Budnik, 2012). In the case of informal relations, the trust of the parties involved is the most important element (Adler, 2001; Blomqvist, 2002; Walecka, 2018).

From the point of view of the duration of the relationship, this cooperation can be long-term, medium-term as well as short-term, and can also comprise single, incidental relationships. As it can be seen, inter-organisational relations can be of varied nature and durability. Some weaken to finally diminish, others evolve, changing their character, which means that every organisation must constantly seek new relationships in order to ensure the continuity of its functioning. It must constantly build its relational capital.

2.3 Customer Relations as an Element of a Company's Relational Capital

Relational capital is one of the elements of an organisation's intellectual capital (Roos and Roos, 1997; Stewart, 1997; Stewart, 2001; Sveiby, www. sveiby.com.au). It is a form of social capital in which relations are resources conducive to achieving goals, both individual and collective (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Wagner, 2011). Relational capital is often perceived through the prism of a company's relations with customers (Stewart, 1997; Saint-Onge, 1996), sometimes this catalogue is extended to include partners and investors (Warschat *et al.*, 1999).

It is also the ability to shape relations with all stakeholder groups (Czuba *et al.*, 2011). This approach is also represented by the author of the paper. For the purposes of the paper, it has been assumed that relational capital is understood to mean all relations of a company with its environment (Walecka, 2018), especially with customers, competitors, suppliers and strategic allies, financial institutions, local government, labour market institutions, and other stakeholders (Walecka and Zelek, 2017). It is the entirety of relations and ties between a company and its stakeholders (Walecka, 2020; 2021).

From the point of view of the source of income, both the survival and development of an enterprise depend on attracting and retaining customers purchasing its products and services. The relations between customers and an enterprise are of a special nature. An enterprise without a customer is able to generate only costs, so the profit centres are located outside an enterprise (Drucker, 2011) and the profit itself appears when a customer purchases a product and pays for it (Drucker, 1994). Thus, a customer is the meaning of an enterprise's existence. If it is not possible to generate profit without a customer, hence establishing and building relationships with customers should be a priority for modern enterprises.

These relations should be long-term and based on a mutual value exchange. The effect of this exchange is the development of relationships leading in consequence to customers' loyalty enabling companies to generate profits. And not only the number of these relations is important, but above all their quality. At this point, one should consider whether having long-term relations with customers is specific to organisations using BPM. The next part of the paper is devoted to an attempt to answer this particular question.

3. Material and Methods

3.1 Research Methodology and Characteristics of the Companies Surveyed

In order to answer the above-mentioned question, empirical research was carried out among 600 enterprises operating throughout Poland (the standard error of the estimate reaches 4%). The research method was the diagnostic survey method which used the technique of Paper-and-Pencil Personal Interview (PAPI). The research tool was an original questionnaire. The respondents who took part in the research were representatives of top management, including business owners. The characteristics of the companies surveyed are presented in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, mainly enterprises from the SME sector (including micro-enterprises — 29% and small enterprises — 46%) participated in the study. From the point of view of the legal form of the enterprises surveyed, those were mainly entities conducting independent business activity — the form characteristic mainly of micro (80.8%) and small (57%) enterprises — as well as limited liability companies. Taking into account the type of ownership of the companies surveyed, those were mainly family businesses (95.3%).

***Table 1.** Characteristics of the companies surveyed*

Company size	No. of companies	% of companies
Micro	175	29%
Small	277	46%
Medium	87	15%
Large	59	10%
No reply	2	0%
Type of business activity	**No. of companies**	**% of companies**
Commerce	150	25%
Manufacturing	156	26%
Services	143	24%
Other	146	24%
No reply	5	1%
Legal form of activity	**No. of companies**	**% of companies**
Sole proprietorship	331	55%
Limited liability company	178	29%
State-owned enterprise	42	7%
Joint-stock company	22	4%
Other	21	4%
No reply	6	1%
Micro	175	29%
Small	277	46%
Medium	87	15%
Large	59	10%
No reply	2	0%

***Source:** Own study.*

In terms of the understanding of BPM methodology in the organisations studied, it seems to be perceived in a very diverse manner. The vast majority of respondents consider Business Process Management to be a holistic philosophy of organisation management seeking its excellence (42.8% of companies surveyed). Significantly less (24.2%) considers it to be a set of actions aimed at improving an organisation's processes and reducing costs, or actions consisting in the use of various types of methodologies, such as Lean or Six Sigma (20% of companies surveyed). 13% of companies surveyed equate BPM with the application of a process approach in an organisation.

To synthetically account for the progress of the process approach implementation in the organisations studied, the five-step CMMI process maturity model described above was used. In this model, the first level includes organisations that do not implement a process approach at all, and the fifth level comprises organisations where processes are constantly improved (Table 2). Although 45% of the organisations that took part in the study admitted to applying the business process management concept, their degree of process maturity was highly differentiated (Table 2).

Table 2. *Degree of process maturity of the companies surveyed*

Degree of process maturity	No. of companies	% of companies
1	114	19.0
2	221	36.8
3	140	23.3
4	62	10.3
5	63	10.5

Source: *Own study.*

As shown in Table 2, as much as 19% of organisations surveyed are at the first level of process maturity (no process approach at all), and 20.8% of companies surveyed manage processes based on different types of measures and continuously improve processes taking place within the organisation.

4. Results

4.1 Inter-Organisational Relations between the Companies and Customers

When analysing the relations of the companies surveyed with the environment, it is worth asking a question about the essence of cooperation with various groups of stakeholders. It turns out that such cooperation is diverse. Managers perceive their customers as the most important group from the development point of view — mean, M = 5.92 (Table 3). Half of the respondents rate this group of company stakeholders very highly — at the level of at least 6 (on a scale from 1 to 7). This is confirmed by the view presented in the theoretical part of the paper that a company's customers are its meaning of existence.

Table 3. *Importance of various external stakeholder groups for the companies surveyed*

External stakeholder groups	M	Me	STD	High Score Response Rate (5-7)	Including: 6	Including: 7
Customers	5.92	6.00	1.09	**90.4**	33.2	36.2
Suppliers	5.35	5.00	1.24	81.2	32.1	16.7
Cooperating entities	4.37	4.00	1.39	45.7	20.1	2.4
Competitors	4.71	5.00	1.23	67.3	23.7	2.4
Social and government institutions	4.10	4.00	1.61	37.6	13.1	5.8
Labour market institutions	3.99	4.00	1.53	38.1	10.8	3.5
Financial institutions (banks and others)	4.26	5.00	1.59	51.7	19.3	3.7
R&D sector	3.76	4.00	1.51	30.5	9.1	1.7
Organisations associating entities in a given industry/city	3.71	4.00	1.61	31.4	9.8	2.3
Local communities	3.92	4.00	1.64	35.2	12.5	4.6
Media	3.69	4.00	1.62	31.1	9.2	2.2

Note: *M– mean, Me – median, STD – standard deviation.*
Source: *Own study.*

Taking into account the types of relations established with customers, it turns out that most often these relationships take the form of long-term relations (47.9%), although there are also short-term (39%) and incidental (32.4%) relations – Table 4.

Table 4. *Types of relations between the companies surveyed and their customers*

Relations	**Relation Duration**			
	Long-term (n=192)	Medium-term (n=157)	Short-term (n=100)	Incidental (n=105)
Formal	47.9	24.8	39.0	32.4
Informal	43.8	63.1	49.0	54.7
No reply	8.3	12.1	12	12.9

Note: *The respondents referred to each answer separately. The figures in the headers of each column indicating the count add up to 100%.*
Source: *Own study.*

Taking into account the formalisation of the nature of relationships, the companies surveyed establish both formal and informal relations with their customers. Formal relations are characteristic of both long-term (47.9%), short-term (39%), and incidental (32.4%) cooperation. Relations with customers based on trust (informal) are most often characteristic of the medium-term duration of cooperation (63.1%) and incidental transactions (54.7%). It follows that the companies surveyed establish very different forms of cooperation with their customers, both short-term and long-term, formal and informal (Table 4). The degree of process maturity, verified by the CMMI model, and the type of relations between the companies examined and their customers are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. *Degree of process maturity of the companies surveyed and their relations with customers*

Relations	**Degree of process maturity (percentage of companies)**				
	1	2	3	4	5
Long-term (n=192)	1.6	28.1	34.9	17.2	18.2
Medium-term (n=157)	21.7	38.9	24.8	8.9	5.7
Short-term (n=100)	26.0	50	8.0	8.0	8.0
Incidental (n=105)	48.6	44.8	4.8	1.0	1.0

Note: *100 % is the n number of enterprises maintaining a given type of relationship*
Source: *Own study.*

According to Table 5, there is a weak relationship between the degree of process maturity of the enterprises surveyed and the duration of their customer relations (T coefficient = 0.296722644). Long-term relations are most often characteristic of companies at Level 3 process maturity, medium-term and short-term relations are typical of Level 2 companies, and incidental relations are characteristic of companies that do not use a process approach at all. This may be due to the fact that the sample was dominated by companies where processes are random, disorganised

(Level 1), repeatable, partially organised (Level 2), as well as organised and identified but unmeasured (Level 3 of process maturity).

In order to explore the topic of developing a company's relational capital as part of the broadly understood BPM, a case study was conducted in 2020. Among other things, a company with 100% Polish capital, established in 1926, was examined. The enterprise consistently implements a programme of transforming itself into an innovation and implementation centre, offering customers comprehensive development, implementation, and launching of projects based on pressure die casting and machining technologies. This direction has been adopted as a response to the demand that the company has observed over many years of operation in the metal industry.

The need for comprehensive service—from design to delivery of finished components to the recipient's warehouse—has been articulated in relation to the company by large domestic and foreign companies from the automotive, electrical-tool, construction, pneumatics and power hydraulics, electronics, household appliances, machinery and aviation industries, as well as the defence industry.

The activities of the company based on the approach to customers described above have resulted in an increase in production in the field of high-pressure die casting. Therefore, the company's management, seeking to maintain high dynamics and meet the ever-increasing requirements—also in the field of 3D design—has invested in state-of-the-art machinery and equipment guaranteeing manufacturing at the highest, world-class technical and technological levels. These investments are very promising and allow continuous improvement and transformation of the company into an innovation and implementation centre that meets the expectations of the most demanding customers. Already, at the very beginning of the implementation of the strategic plan, the company was able to undertake the production of parts and components for the automotive and aviation industries (i.e., for a group of customers with the highest requirements in the high-tech field).

The company analysed is in good financial condition (in 2013-2016—in good condition, in 2017-2019—in very good condition), generating a positive financial result in the last eight years. It is optimistic about the growth prospects of the sector and does not see any serious risks to its own functioning. The enterprise manages its own business processes and is at the 5th level of process maturity.

In order to learn about the nature of formation of the enterprise's relational capital as part of BPM, a free-form interview was conducted with a representative of the company management. It appears that the company examined assesses the importance of its various groups of external stakeholders in a very diverse manner (Table 6).

Table 6. *Importance of various external stakeholder groups for the company analysed*

External stakeholder groups	**Impact (1-very insignificant, 7-very significant)**						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Customers							X
Suppliers					X		
Cooperating entities					X		
Competitors						X	
Social and government institutions			X				
Labour market institutions			X				
Financial institutions (banks and others)					X		
R&D sector						X	
Organisations associating entities in a given industry/city		X					
local Communities							
Media	X						

Source: *Own study.*

Customers (the enterprise has approx. 5,5 000 individual customers and 78 institutional ones) are by far the most important for the company analysed, as this group has the greatest impact on the processes that take place in the enterprise. The company establishes long-term relations with this group of stakeholders (89.7% of institutional customers and 69.7% of individual customers of the company analysed are long-term customers) and formal relations (contract-based). The assessment of the quality of relations with customers was made through the prism of six factors (cf. Czuba, Szczepaniec) which are shown in Table 7.

Table 7*. Quality of the company's relations with customers*

Quality dimension	**Assessment (1-very low, 7-very high)**						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Acquiring important market information from a given group							X
Significant impact of a given group on our product range							X
Significant impact of a given group on the quality of processes in the company						X	
Long-term nature of cooperation							X
Trust in a given group							X
Benefits of cooperation							X

Source: *Own study.*

According to Table 7, the quality of relational capital with customers is rated very highly. This group has an impact on the offer of products provided by the company, the quality of the processes taking place in it, as well as the acquisition of market information. The enterprise analysed sees as vital the long-term nature of cooperation with customers, as well as the mutual benefits derived from it.

Importantly, the manager of the company studied believes that the management of its relational capital is an important element of BPM, which is why the company constantly manages this capital. The enterprise focuses on the identification of stakeholders of the organisation, their diagnosis and classification—determining the importance of stakeholders for the organisation (the division into key and secondary stakeholders), and develops relations with key stakeholders. Similarly, the company measures its relational capital. In terms of customers, this measurement is most often based on:

- measuring the number of regular customers,
- measuring the number of new customers,
- measuring the number of customers re-purchasing products or services (customer retention rate),
- measuring the frequency of transactions,
- measuring the duration of cooperation (the length of the relationship),
- analysis of company reviews provided by its customers,
- analysis of experiences related to this stakeholder group,
- examination of the level of customer trust in the company,
- measuring the customer satisfaction level,
- examination of the level of sales revenue,
- examination of the level of costs of obtaining sales revenue,
- analysis of the generated sales profit.

The results of the case study strongly confirm that the company analysed sees an important role of its relational capital (especially customer relations) in business process management. Every process implemented in the organisation is undertaken with the final customer in mind and this customer's satisfaction with the product or service offered.

5. Conclusions

The research carried out has enabled different conclusions to be drawn. It turns out that the enterprises surveyed develop relations with various groups of external stakeholders. The managers perceive their customers as the most important group from the point of view of enterprise development. This confirms the view that a company's customers provide the meaning of its existence. They play a particularly important role for enterprises using a process approach. The companies examined establish all sorts of relations, long-term, short-term or incidental, with their customers. Those are both trust-based relations and contractually formalised relations.

In response to the question posed in the introduction of the paper concerning the role of developing the right type of relational capital with customers in organisations applying the Business Process Management philosophy, it appears that there is a weak dependency between the types of relations with this group of stakeholders and the level of process maturity of the companies studied. Long-term relations are most often characteristic of companies at Level 3 process maturity, medium-term and short-term relations are typical of Level 2 companies, and incidental relations are characteristic of companies that do not use a process approach at all. This may be due to the fact that the sample was dominated by companies where processes are random, disorganised (Level 1), repeatable, partially organised (Level 2), as well as organised and identified but unmeasured (Level 3 of process maturity).

The importance of developing the right type of relational capital with customers can be seen much better as a result of the case study. A company at level 5 of process maturity, fully applying a process approach, was selected for the study. For the company examined, customers are the most essential group of stakeholders, as this group has the greatest impact on processes taking place in the organisation. The enterprise usually establishes long-term, formal relationships with its customers. As the manager points out, having regular, loyal customers who participate in business process management is very important for the company. The enterprise also constantly measures and evaluates its relational capital with this particular group of stakeholders. As the respondent emphasises, it is much easier to manage relational capital this way, which is so vital from the point of view of BPM.

At this point, the limitations of the presented study should be mentioned. The quantitative research was carried out solely in Poland and involved only a group of 600 companies. An in-depth study was conducted in only one company. The author is aware that this is an insufficient research attempt to be able to generalise the conclusions to the entire population. It therefore seems necessary to conduct this type of study internationally. Importantly, research should also be carried out in more process-mature companies. The domination of the research sample by companies of 1-3 level of process maturity has not allowed the author to fully answer the question concerning the role of formation of relational capital with customers in companies implementing BPM. However, it seems that such a large representation of process immature companies is a reflection of the preparation of Polish enterprises for business process management.

References:

Adler, P.S. 2001. Market, hierarchy, and trust: The knowledge economy and the future of capitalism. Organization Science, 12, 2, 215-234.

Blikle, A. 2012. Doktryna jakości, www.firmyrodzinne.pl.

Blois, K. 1998. Don't All Firms Have Relationships? Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing, 13(3), 256-270.

Blomqvist, K. 2002. Partnering in the dynamic environment – the role of trust in asymmetric partnership formation, doctor of science thesis. Lappeenranta, Lappeenranta University of Technology.
Brajer-Marczak, R. 2012. Efektywność organizacji z perspektywy modelu dojrzałości procesowej. Zarządzanie i Finanse, 10, 1(3).
Brilman, J. 2002. Nowoczesne koncepcje i metody zarządzania. Warszawa, PWE.
Chrisidu-Budnik, A. 2012. Elementy sieci – aspekty prawne. In: J. Niemczyk, E. Stańczyk-Hugiet, B.Jasiński (eds.), Sieci międzyorganizacyjne: współczesne wyzwania dla teorii i praktyki zarządzania. Warszawa, C.H. Beck, 43-65.
CMMI Product Team: Capability Maturity Model® Integration (CMMI), Version 1.1. Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute, Pittsburgh, 2002.
Cygler, J. 2009. Kooperencja przedsiębiorstw. Czynniki sektorowe i korporacyjne. Warszawa, Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH.
Czakon, W. 2007. Dynamika więzi międzyorganizacyjnych przedsiębiorstwa. Katowice, Wydawnictwo AE im. K. Adamieckiego.
Czuba, T., Szczepaniec, M., Jurkiewicz, T. 2011. Kapitał relacyjny w małych i średnich firmach. Raport z badań ilościowych. http: //www.koniunktura.com/publikacje/open/id/53.
Davenport, T. 1993. Process Innovation. Reengineering Work Through Information Technology. Boston, Harvard Business School Press, MA.
De Bruin, T., Rosemann, M. 2010. Using the Delphi technique to identify BPM capability areas. Australasian Conference on Information Systems. www.bptrends.com.
Donaldson, B., O'Toole, T. 2000. Classifying Relationship Structures: Relationship Strength in Industrial Markets. Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 15(7), 491-506.
Drucker, P.F. 2011. Managing for Results: Economic Tasks and Risk-taking Decisions. London and New York, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
Drucker, P.F**.** 1994. Post-capitalist Society. London and New York, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
Dumnicki, R., Kasprzyk, A., Kozłowski, M. 1998. Analiza i projektowanie obiektowe. Gliwice, Helion.
Easton, G. 1992. Industrial Networks: A Review. In: Alexsson, B., Easton, G. (eds.). Industrial Networks: A New View of Reality. London, Routledge, 1-27.
Gabryelczyk, R. 2006. ARIS w modelowaniu procesów biznesu. Warszawa, Difin.
Grajewski, P. 2007. Organizacja procesowa. Warszawa, Polskie Wydawnictwa Ekonomiczne.
Grajewski, P. 2009. Uwarunkowania implementacji procesów do organizacji. In: Podejście procesowe w organizacjach, S. Nowosielski (ed.). Wrocław, Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu, nr 52, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu.
Gray, B., Wood, D.J. 1991. Collaborative alliances: Moving from practice to theory. The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 27(1), 3-22.
Grela, G. 2013. Ocena poziomu dojrzałości procesowej organizacji. Nierówności społeczne a wzrost gospodarczy, 35, 169-182.
Hall, G., Rosenthal, J., Wade, J. 1993. How to Make Reengineering Really Work. Harvard Business Review, 71(6).
Hammer, M., Champy, J. 1993. Reengineering the Corporation: A Manifesto for Business Revolution. Harper-Collins Publishers.
Kaczmarek, B. 2000. Współdziałanie przedsiębiorstw w gospodarce rynkowej. Łódź, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.

Małys, Ł. 2014. Kształtowanie relacji z nabywcami instytucjonalnymi na rynkach zagranicznych a wyniki przedsiębiorstwa. Studia Oeconomica Posnaniensia, 2, 11 (272), 103-121.

Mattessich, P.W., Monsey, B.R. 1992. Collaboration: What makes it work: A review of research literature on factors influencing successful collaboration. St. Paul: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Nahapiet, J., Ghoshal, S. 1998. Social capital, intellectual capital and the organizational advantage. Academy of Management Review, 23(2), 242-266.

Osarenkhoe, A. 2010. A study of Inter-Firm Dynamics Between Competition and Cooperation – A Coopetition Strategy. Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management, 17, 3-4, 201-221.

Osarenkhoe, A. 2010. A study of Inter-Firm Dynamics Between Competition and Cooperation – A Coopetition Strategy. Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management, 17(3-4), 201-221.

Piwoni-Krzeszowska, E. 2014. Zarządzanie wartością relacji przedsiębiorstwa z rynkowymi interesariuszami, Wrocław. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu.

Pszczołowski, T. 1978. Mała encyklopedia prakseologii i teorii organizacji. Wrocław, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.

Pullen, W. 2007. A public sector HPT maturity model, Perform Improvement, 46(4).

Reitan, T.C. 1998. Theories of interorganizational relations in the human services. Social Service Review, 72(3), 285-309.

Reiter, S., Stewart, G., Bruce, C., Bandara, W., Rosemann, M. 2010. The Phenomenon of Business Process Management: Practitioners' Emphasis. 18th European Conference on Information Systems, ECIS.

Röglinger, M., Pöppelbuß, J., Becker, J. 2012. Maturity models in business process management. Business Process Management Journal, 18(2).

Romanowska, M. 2007. Trwałe wartości zarządzania strategicznego. In: Krupski, R. (ed.). Planowanie strategiczne w warunkach niepewności. Prace Naukowe Wałbrzyskiej Wyższej Szkoły Zarządzania i Przedsiębiorczości, Seria Zarządzanie i Marketing, 57-62.

Roos, G., Roos, J. 1997. Measuring your Company's Intellectual Performance. Long Range Planning, 413-426.

Rummler, G., Brache, A. 2000. Podnoszenie efektywności organizacji. Warszawa, PWE.

Saint-Onge, H. 1996. Tacit knowledge: the key to the strategic alignment of intellectual capital. Strategy & Leadership, 10-14.

Smith, H., Fingar, P. 2003. Business Process Management – The Third Wave. Meghan-Kiffer Press.

Smith-Doerr, L., Powel, W.W. 2005. Networks and Economic Life. New York, Russel Sage Foundation - Princeton University Press.

Speer, A.W., Jost, W., Wagner, K. 2005. Von Prozessmodellen zu lauffähigen Anwendungen. ARIS in der Praxis, Heidelberg, Springer-Verlag.

Stańczyk-Hugiet, E. 2013. Dynamika strategiczna w ujęciu ewolucyjnym. Wrocław, Wydawnictwo UE we Wrocławiu.

Stewart, T.A. 1997. Intellectual Capital: The New Wealth of Organisations. London, Nicholas Brealey.

Stewart, T.A. 2001. The Wealth of Knowledge, Intellectual Capital and the Twenty-First Century Organization. London, Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Sveiby, K. 2004. Intellectual Capital and Knowledge Management. www. sveiby.com.au.

Van der Aalst, W., Hofstede, A., Weske, M. 2003. Business Process Management: A Survey. Proceedings of the International Conference on Business Process Management. In: W.M.P. van der Aalst *et al.* (eds.): BPM 2003, Lecture Notes in Computer Science, Vol. 2678. Berlin, Springer- Verlag.

Wagner, S.M. 2011. Supplier development and the relationship life-cycle. International Journal of Production Economics, 129(2), 277-283.

Walecka, A. 2018. Relational Capital of Enterprises: Identification of the Phenomenon. In: Mehmet, B., Hakan, D., Ender, D., Ugur, C. (eds.). Eurasian Business Perspectives. Eurasian Studies in Business and Economics, Springer International Publishing, 8/1, 157-168.

Walecka, A. 2018. Zaufanie w relacjach międzyorganizacyjnych w świetle badań własnych. Przegląd Nauk Ekonomicznych, 29, 25-38.

Walecka, A. 2019. Kapitał relacyjny a odporność przedsiębiorstwa na zjawiska kryzysowe. Łódź, Monografie Politechniki Łódzkiej.

Walecka, A. 2021. The Role of Relational Capital in Anti-Crisis Measures Undertaken by Companies - Conclusions from a Case Study. Sustainability, 13, 780. https://doi.org/10.3390/ su13020780.

Walecka, A., Zelek, A. 2017. Kapitał relacyjny firm w prewencji i interwencji antykryzysowej. Organizacja i Kierowanie, 2(176), 167-183.

Walecka, A. 2020. Relational capital and an enterprise crisis in the light of expert opinion survey. Eurasian Bus. Perspect, 12, 39-58.

Warschat, J., Wagner, K., Hauss, I. 1999. Measurement System of the Evaluation of R&D Knowledge in the Engineering Sector. Report on Workshop Intellectual Capital / Intangible Investments 22nd November. European Commission.

Wilkinson, I.F. 2008. Business Relating Business: Managing Organisational Relations and Networks. Edward Elgar Publichers (January 1, 1725).

Zakrzewska-Bielawska, A. 2014. Ewolucja szkół strategii: przegląd głównych podejść i koncepcji. Prace Naukowe Wałbrzyskiej Wyższej Szkoły Zarządzania i Przedsiębiorczości, 27, 9-29.

Zakrzewska-Bielawska, A. 2019. A Recognition of relational strategy content: insight from the managers' view. Eurasian Bus. Rev., 9, 193-211. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40821-018-0109-9.