Benchmarking can be defined as the process of identifying best steps or practices and using them in other organizations. It is a powerful tool in search of continuous improvement and significantly better results.

In the evaluation of organizations and companies, there are many theoretical and practical methods to enable the company to determine the current position in the market, its strengths and weaknesses of the competition, its growth opportunities and potential decline in fulfilling their goals and mission. It should be noted that even the retrospective evaluation in the constantly changing environment, which could be of socio-economic, political-legislative, technological, technical and other nature, complicates the position of companies and organizations in general and to determine the exact position of the organization is practically impossible.

We will briefly mention here the most used methods, which are sufficiently known from the theory of management, marketing, etc. It is for example the Boston matrix, suitable for analysis and strategy making, General Electric (GE) portfolio matrix, which should reveal the strengths and attractiveness of the organization where the organization operates, and other methods. In realization of these methods and others it is clear that the theory and practice, are correct and meaningful. Their drawback is a precise — exact determining of a position of rated organizations and companies. To avoid subjective position of evaluators within a company (which evaluator and employee of a given organization would officially state that the company management is bad and leads the company incorrectly?), there are professional external companies to evaluate the status of specific rated businesses in the surrounding environment, environmental advantages, weaknesses, opportunities and potential threats, without the influence of a management of the rated company. In determining the status of the company it is certainly sufficient, however in many specific situations unsatisfactory. In such situations the method called benchmarking can be employed. This method can certainly be applied to most organizations and companies, in this paper we will focus on its contribution, application and its benefits on forwarding companies. It would be very helpful for these companies to recognize their position and to pick up the positives from competing companies. The situation in the CR is such that there are many transportation companies without a stable position.
and it is certain that not all of them can maintain the market position in the future. The benchmarking would be helpful in this specific field.

Let us summarize a definition of benchmarking that would probably best suited to the possibility of and justification for this method for transport: Benchmarking is a process (method) that would allow a better implementation of work activities with a view to the best effect of the work in the transport company to improve its market position. Other definitions reported in the literature, as stated by C.J.McNair, Kathleen H.J.Leibfried, D. Elmutih, Bob Camp, and others are not inconsistent with the definition provided.

It can be argued that the benchmarking activity means improving the processes and products in process and activities of the transport company that uses and applies its benchmarking activities. To apply benchmarking means to improve processes and products according to the customers' needs, thus meeting the needs of our customers and meet their needs in the requirements for a particular transport. In the practical situation, however, for the forwarder the most important is the economic benefit, which is preferred over the general principles. One can state that benchmarking is also advantageous for the top forwarding companies, which achieve (or they think so) the "greatest achievement". These companies are indeed the "best", but certainly have a lot of areas and activities that can be improved when compared with competing transport companies, especially from abroad. The transport can be claimed to be without the boundaries, because the forwarding takes place worldwide. Transport companies have many different competitors, even of different transport sectors. Forwarding can be realized for example by road transport, but also by rail. There are companies that specialize in specific services, such as road and on different commodity, but also on different routes in different countries.

Many transport companies have several different sized branches in different regions or countries. The reason is to attract customers and their potential transmissions with the benefits of residency in a given country. Benchmarking within an organization is then divided into internal and external. Transport companies, but also other organizations use very often so-called functional benchmarking. In short, the carrier's main task lies in ensuring a transport and this, according to the management decision can provide only a few companies. Therefore, a transport company should divide a transport according to commodities or by regions or countries where the transport will take place. This part of the work has its advantages and disadvantages and the transport management should decide based on their experiences. For example, it is decided that one unit will focus on transportation in Romania (somebody from this department knows Romanian - which is a big plus), or
according to functional benchmarking the department focuses on specific commodities (management decides that the given department will deal with transportation of iron, and so on). Using functional benchmarking, the company can get to the top level of the market. The principles of benchmarking show that it is better to learn from mistakes and take advantage of external experiences, mistakes or to “copy” some behaviour than to create difficulty and expensively its own bad solutions.

For benefits and goals of transport companies also the diagnostic (index) benchmarking can be used. Diagnostic benchmarking is a continuous process of identifying and analyzing strengths and weaknesses of the company against similar companies and efforts to improve critical points that could be dangerous for them, and vice versa strengthen parts, where the company is better than others, in order to maintain and improve its competitive position. A transport firm may achieve a better position over other transport companies in various areas which could be for example knowledge of a particular mode of transport, knowledge of a region where transportation will be realized, customer knowledge, its market position, solvency, etc. Diagnostic benchmarking will not only analyze the strengths and weaknesses of competing transport companies, but also know the situation on the transport market. The knowledge of transport market will help to maintain the good position or further strengthening. It should be noted that diagnostic benchmarking does not need to be performed by the transport company itself – reason could be also objectivity, but to request and contract an external consultancy firm to do this outsourcing work. The results of this work are mostly objective, although the validity of the results is limited, for constantly changes of the market environment, which is under development and is influenced by the environment, especially due to technical, technological and economic changes.

The main reason and purpose of benchmarking and diagnostic benchmarking is to stimulate transport companies to achieve competitive advantages over other transport companies. We can find the specifics here which in traditional companies are not presented. Transport is viewed by customers as "necessary evil" and the production company, i.e. the customer of a transport company would be very happy to remove the carriage, such as for example a buyer would have arrived for the goods directly to the factory and safe thus transport costs. Other specific of forwarding companies is that they are often focused on one type of transport. Thus, they gain one advantage, stemming from their specialization, however, on the other hand, under certain conditions, a different kind of transport can be more suitable, and in such a case the transport company would lose their economic effect.
Benchmarking, which is its main advantage for the transport company, may help even in the areas mentioned above in assessing the status of companies in different fields and matching potential competitors. Benchmarking can compare companies and determine the position on the market at both regional and transnational level, especially now in time of globalization and in the field of international transport can assess the status of their business and competing transport companies and also the status of their potential domestic and foreign clients. Use of benchmarking is important for the transport company or even inevitable because the main profit is from international forwarding, such as imports and exports of goods and particularly transit through the state. As statistics show, a profit realized from forwarding only in home country is much lower.

The problem of applying methods of benchmarking in transport companies is a certain reluctance of companies to provide with their data. Most companies have even developed systems, data privacy, that include especially transport prices and discounts, and these data are protected as trade secrets. External benchmarking is not appropriate for comparing direct competitors, the condition is that each company is better in some parameter and results should be used to enrich all participants. It is very difficult to justify their needs for benchmarking to imitate successful companies. Use of benchmarking is organizationally difficult and time-consuming because it requires the creation, internal testing and approval system of indicators for comparing.

Individual steps of diagnostic benchmarking can be described as data collections. Data are mostly obtained from customer inquiry sheet for a transport, which is essential for a forwarder from which the transport cost is calculated.

It is thus clear that in our conditions the use of benchmarking for transport companies is entrepreneurial and economically beneficial. We think that the biggest advantages will have that companies which first establish a method of benchmarking in their activities and strategies.

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Literature

Summary

The paper deals with the method of benchmarking and its use in transport companies. It will briefly mention here the most used methods, which are sufficiently known from the theory of management, marketing, etc. The article explains the principle of benchmarking and its application suitability for transport companies. Author expresses the opinion that many transport companies in the Czech Republic are still without the stable market position, and thus the use of the benchmarking, i.e. studies from other companies of similar orientation, is very useful and beneficial.

Keywords

Management, marketing, benchmarking, commodity stuff, social environment, status on the market, forwarding agent, consumer