

BENCHMARKING AS AN ELEMENT OF MARKETING ACTIVITIES OF UKRAINIAN ENTERPRISES

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In today's economic development, every company makes every effort to extend its life cycle in a particular segment of the commodity market. In an effort to stay in the market and outperform their competitors, firms develop and implement strategies whose primary objective is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the company, identify its real capabilities, resources, prospects, etc. However, today's businesses simply need to learn effectively, use benchmarking to strengthen their positions, and therefore maximize profits.

In Ukraine, many Ukrainian companies are very cautious about applying benchmarking, considering it to be industrial espionage, without realizing that there is a very fundamental difference between these methods [1]. The American Productivity and Quality Center recommends benchmarking to understand a consistent and continuous measurement process; the process of constantly measuring and comparing an organization's business processes with world leaders to obtain information that will help an organization take steps to improve its performance [2]. This definition shows that benchmarking cannot be reduced to a simple comparison of indicators. It very clearly directs managers to compare processes, looking for ways to improve them. That is, the focus is not just on what another enterprise has achieved, but how it has achieved it. In addition, the scope of benchmarking is unlimited: public and private sector; commercial and non-commercial sphere; production and non-production activity; different levels of economy.

This method was first developed in 1972 to evaluate the business performance of the Cambridge Strategic Planning Institute. Purposeful benchmarking began to be used by Rank Xerox in 1979 to compare the quality and cost analysis of its own and Japanese products (the first generation of the benchmarking concept) [3]. In the future, the use of benchmarking became more intense, which was provoked by:

- increasing the number of competitors in different segments of commodity markets;
- the need to use world achievements in production and business technologies of organizations;
- growing demands of buyers for the quality of the offered products.

Thus, according to the consulting company Bain & Co, the last two years benchmarking is one of the three most common business management practices of large international corporations. The reason for this is that benchmarking helps to

improve business processes relatively quickly and with less cost, as well as understand how world leaders work and subsequently achieve the same, and possibly better, business results. Large companies, in search of competitive advantages, focus their efforts on the development of new management methods [4]. These studies, as a rule, are global in nature, and the most successful decisions become even separate areas in management, under which they are given a theoretical, methodological base, they occupy their own place in making effective business decisions. Today, small and medium-sized enterprises play an important role in the economy of any country. Ukraine is no exception in this sense, and supporting small business is now down to the rank of public policy. Despite this, most management theories are still rooted in large corporations [5]. Benchmarking, in particular, with some caveats, can be seen as a product of small and medium-sized enterprises, arising from the need to learn from large companies. The tradition of translating the experience of large companies into their own much smaller management systems was established in small Japanese enterprises long before the recognition of benchmarking as an official management tool.

Benchmarking is not just about monitoring potential competitors or partners to identify their methods and approaches to staff training and development. Benchmarking is based on the philosophy of constantly assessing the state of the system of training, training and development and regular monitoring of best practices in the market. Benchmarking can serve to establish whether there is a "weak link", ineffective business process, or there is a systematic loss of effectiveness of the learning and development function in the company. Another situation is possible, the company knows in advance that it needs improvement. In this case, benchmarking helps to answer the question: "How to improve and what to take for best practice?". After the problem area has been identified, the answer to the question is: "Can it be eliminated or minimized?" In this case, industry benchmarking is not always capable of answering these questions, and then, as a rule, additional efforts are required from the corporate training system. Ideally, an external benchmarking can be performed: to compare yourself "in real time" with an external company. In order to find a truly effective partner, research is needed to make a list of potential partners and to understand which partner to choose. That is when industry benchmarking allows you to identify such a partner [6].

With competitive benchmarking, more and more sophisticated products are constantly emerging on the market. However, despite all the benefits of benchmarking in Ukraine, there are pressing issues that prevent companies from effectively applying it. In our opinion, they should include:

- unavailability of open information for comparison and exchange of experience within the country between enterprises;
- opacity of the enterprise functioning environment;
- underdevelopment of benchmarking infrastructure in Ukraine;
- the absence of any national benchmarking programs in the country.

In our view, it is imperative for Ukraine now to begin to implement benchmarking in order to subsequently take a steady position in the global market. After all, the country has a very large potential and the necessary resources. At the

same time, the leadership of each company should remember that in order for benchmarking to bear fruit and serve as an instrument for improving the effectiveness of the corporate training system, it must become part of the overall leadership of the corporate training system. And ideally, part of the corporate training strategy. In the latter case, benchmarking will be perceived and will be a continuous, continuous process of improving the corporate training system.

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