

# FOCUS ON Business

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# FOCUS ON

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## Business



### Dear Readers,

The modern services sector is making its presence felt in an ever-widening global environment. Not only the United States, Western and Eastern European countries and Asian nations, but also African states are showing their strength and development potential in sectors such as BPO and IT. In this issue of *FOCUS ON Business* magazine, we bring to you a closer understanding of how the BSS sector looks not only in the familiar environment and economic context, but also in other parts of the world.

The main interview of this issue which we are pleased to recommend, is a conversation with the Permanent Secretary of the Rwanda's Ministry of ICT and Innovation, Mr. Yves Iradukunda, who talks about the outsourcing environment in Rwanda.

Staying in the business services area, we also invite you to read the interview with Miłosz Aleksander, who introduces the Shared Services Centre of Tate & Lyle in the SSC Lions section.

In our international section we recommend reading the article that discusses the results of the *Do IT like Ukraine* report, which proves that the IT sector in Ukraine not only remained fully operational as the only one in the country during the ongoing war but also increased its export volume compared to previous year.

The topic of remote work, which appears in the Polish Labour Code, could not be omitted. This important issue for the BSS sector will certainly be subject to a wide analysis in companies belonging to this sector. This topic is covered by the Chudzik and Partners law firm.

In the current issue, we have dedicated a significant amount of space to the subject of the workplace environment. Despite remote and hybrid work, offices are and will remain places conducive to work, however the requirements associated with this are constantly changing, as experts from Skanska, Kinnarps and Nowy Styl write.

These are just some of the content that I cordially invite you to read, as well as all the others.

Editor in Chief

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# BUSINESS NEWS

## ALORICA LAUNCHES OPERATIONS IN EGYPT AND POLAND

Alorica Inc., a trusted leader in next-generation customer experience (CX) solutions, announced its expansion plans into Africa and Europe through the launch of its operations in Cairo, Egypt and Łódź, Poland.

As one of the largest business process outsourcers (BPO) globally with 100,000 employees across 17 countries and 24 years of CX experience – Alorica continues to scale and diversify its best-in-class workforce, now with a presence in these new markets. Setting up operations in Egypt and Poland further enables the digital CX company to meet the growing expectations of multinational companies to deliver industry-leading business outcomes including multilingual customer care, revenue generation, content management & content moderation, tech support and CX consulting. Alorica plans to open for

business in both countries during second quarter of this year.

*– Growth through Africa and Europe is key to our strategy of offering culturally and linguistically relevant support to well-established and emerging businesses worldwide – said Greg Haller, Chief Executive Officer at Alorica. – Egypt and Poland have been on our radar as robust commercial markets with a strong talent pipeline. Our new operations will unlock career opportunities for local residents and create a distinct path to extend our solutions to clients in the region.*

With the expansion into Egypt and Poland, Alorica continues its investment into high-growth markets with scalable talent. Its experienced workforce offers CX support in over 30 languages to service brands in high-demand industries ranging from financial services, technology, travel & hospitality to e-commerce

and retail among others. With existing operations of 1,000+ employees in Sofia, Bulgaria, the company will continue to leverage its innovative technologies to engage employees and customers through a combination of its work-at-home and on-site programs.

In Cairo, Alorica's new contact center is strategically located in Sheikh Zayed City near top private universities, while its site in Łódź, Poland is in the heart of the city near Warsaw – accessible to high-caliber candidates. Both locations are equipped with numerous onsite amenities – accessible transportation, public services, retail stores, and more – while providing maximum efficiency for both brick-and-mortar and work-at-home operations that appeals to a multicultural and multilingual workforce.

*– Leveraging Alorica's global scale and deep experience, we will provide localized service delivery to companies here in the region, while also enhancing EMEA's reputation as the top outsourcing destination for customers everywhere – said Alorica's EMEA President Matt Sims. – I'm excited to bring Alorica's mission-driven culture to Egypt and Poland as we hire and develop talented individuals from diverse backgrounds who are passionate about making lives better. As part of our corporate social responsibility, we are committed to not only doing business in the region, but also making an impact through our philanthropic work, people-focused programs and sustainability initiatives, benefiting the communities where our employees live and work. We're looking forward to creating many jobs in these countries.*

Source: Alorica



## ZOOM IS THE MOST DOWNLOADED BUSINESS APP IN THE U.S.

Zoom's (NASDAQ: ZM) emergence among the most preferred video conferencing platforms amid the pandemic saw the entity record significant growth in adoption and revenue, placing the company to topple other established competitors. With the effects of the pandemic waning off, it seems Zoom is managing to sustain the growth experienced during the health crisis.

In this line, data acquired by Finbold in February indicates that Zoom was the most downloaded business app in the United States across 2022 at 37 million, followed by Microsoft Teams at 25 million, while Indeed ranks third after recording 19.4 million downloads. Microsoft Authenticator emerged fourth with 17.2 million downloads, while Google Chat fifth at 15.1 million.

In terms of revenue, the 2022 fiscal year marked Zoom's highest returns at \$4.09 billion, representing a growth of 54% from 2021's value of \$2.6 billion. In 2020, Zoom's full-year revenue amounted to \$622.6 million, while in 2019, the value was \$330.52 million.

Zoom's ability to rank as the most downloaded business app in the U.S. highlights the platform's resilience to maintain its popularity after bursting on the scene



triggered by the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. The growth has been sustained despite the world emerging from extended lockdowns. In this case, initial drivers that inspired the platform's adoption, such as work-from-home policies, have helped the app retain usage for personal and business purposes while adopting specific growth strategies.

The number of downloads also corresponds with the company's revenue which has surged steadily in recent years, despite the firm issuing several warnings of negative growth. The revenue growth

has been tied to Zoom's enterprise sector offering.

At the same time, Zoom is still competing for a market share, considering the video conferencing scene has grown exponentially with new and established entities moving to improve services. Despite fierce competition from established brands such as Microsoft, Zoom appears to strive to secure its position as a significant video communications company in the U.S.

Source: Finbold

## COMPUTER VISION, GENERATIVE AI, ROBOTICS TO DRIVE GLOBAL AI REVENUE TO \$383 BILLION IN 2030

The global artificial intelligence (AI) market is forecast to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 21.4% from \$81.3 billion in 2022 to reach \$383.3 billion in 2030, according to GlobalData.

GlobalData's latest thematic report, "Artificial Intelligence", reveals that the explosion in the volume of sensor data, coupled with the increased sophistication of advanced deep learning models, the emergence of generative AI, and the availability of chips created specifically for AI processes, will all drive growth in AI over the coming years.

Josep Bori, Research Director at GlobalData Thematic Intelligence, comments: – *Despite the hype, artificial general intelligence (AGI), or the ability of machines to do anything that a human can and possess consciousness, is still*

*decades away. However, 'good enough' AI is already here, capable of interacting with humans, motion, and making decisions. For example, OpenAI's GPT-3 and ChatGPT models can write original prose and chat with human fluency, DeepMind's algorithms can beat the best human chess players, and Boston Dynamics' Atlas robots can somersault. If this evolution continues, it could upend the labor-based capitalist economic model.*

Driven by ethical and political concerns, using AI for facial recognition will lead to conflict in standards and regulatory approaches. This will lead to the break-up of the global supply chain in the AI segment, as is already underway in semiconductors. Ultimately stricter ethical regulation will break the global AI market into geopolitical silos, in isolation from one another.

– *The most advanced AI technologies, such as computer vision and generative language models, rely on powerful AI chips. As such, the ongoing US China trade dispute, which has led to the US prohibiting exports to China of either AI chips or the tools to manufacture them, will disrupt the competitive landscape. China will lose its AI market dominance unless it can secure access to advanced chip manufacturing technology* – Bori continues.

The ongoing trade dispute between China and the US has negative implications for the global progress of AI technologies. However, China will play a leading role in AI due to its leadership in AI software and IoT technology and its progress in low-end chip manufacturing.

Source: GlobalData

# Direction: Słupsk. BSS projects are entering smaller cities

*In early February 2023, the "Direction Słupsk" conference was held in Słupsk. The event, organized by the Pomerania Development Agency, Invest in Pomerania and the City of Słupsk, gathered over a hundred participants at the Słupsk Technology Incubator.*

The conference aimed to discuss the factors influencing Słupsk's attractiveness as a location for BSS projects, but the event's format also drew attention to smaller cities that have not yet appeared on the map of locations for modern business services. This was already the second edition of the event in Słupsk, with the first taking place in 2020 and a lot has changed since then.

This year's conference focused on three topics in its substantive stream:

- HR in post-pandemic time
- Business in a modern urban fabric
- International business in a smaller city.

Each of the topics was discussed during panel discussions, with participation of Leszek Bonn – Deputy Marshal of the Pomeranian Voivodeship, Mirosław Kamiński – President of the Pomeranian Regional Development Agency, Marta

Makuch – Deputy Mayor of Słupsk, Marcin Grzegory from Invest in Pomerania, Ewa Krzaczkowska from Słupsk Technology Incubator, Dominika Horbacz from Randstad, Radosław Krasowski and Krystian Liberacki from Santander, Marcin Faleńczyk from JLL, Rafał Kierecki from DZP INVEST, and Jacek Kuliński from KPMG Poland. The panels were moderated by Wiktor Doktor, CEO of Pro Progressio.



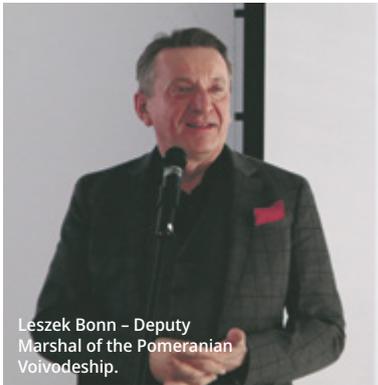
During the panel discussions, participants underlined that the BSS sector emphasizes maintaining a hybrid work model and there are no indications of turning back from this form of employment. As one of the conclusions, it was stated that this is a factor that increases the attractiveness of smaller cities and may contribute to the development of BSS companies' operational activities in their area.

During the conference, Santander representatives announced that they had begun the recruitment process for Słupsk and surrounding municipalities citizens for their international project. As they emphasized, the most important factor is English language knowledge,

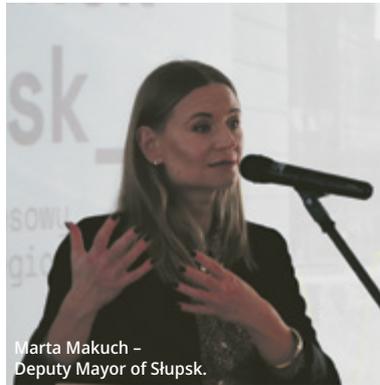
a competence that is widely available among candidates from the region. The Santander project means, among other things, that the doors to smaller cities for BSS projects are beginning to open wider. ♦



Marcin Faleńczyk (JLL), Ewa Krzaczowska (Słupsk Technology Incubator), Rafał Kierecki (DZP INVEST)



Leszek Bonn – Deputy Marshal of the Pomeranian Voivodeship.



Marta Makuch – Deputy Mayor of Słupsk.



Mirosław Kamiński – President of the Pomeranian Regional Development Agency (PARR).



Wiktor Dołtór (Pro Progressio), Radosław Krasowski (Santander), Dominika Horbacz (Randstad), Krystian Liberacki (Santander).

# Compliance with sanctions in Polish service centres

Text | **Piotr Jaśkiewicz, Ewa Marcisz**

*Business service centres located in Poland, although usually serving only their own capital group, are not free from exposure to the risk of sanctions violations. One of the reasons for this is the so-called Polish sanctions list, which can lead to restrictions on the handling of processes, as well as limitations on the ability to serve entities based in Russia.*

## WHAT SANCTIONS APPLY IN POLAND?

In Poland, there are two basic groups of sanctions regulations EU and national. The EU legislation implements sanctions enacted by the UN and additional restrictions imposed by decisions of the Council of the European Union.

Sanctions imposed by the European Union are mainly bans on importing or exporting certain goods, providing certain services, financing and investments, and maintaining economic relations with certain entities.

As for the EU sanctions introduced in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the following regulations (but not exclusively) are in particular worth bearing in mind:

- Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 of 31 July 2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine;
- Council Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 of 17 March 2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine;
- Council Regulation (EC) No 765/2006 of 18 May 2006 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Belarus and the involvement of Belarus in the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The purpose of national legislation is to implement EU regulations e.g. for the authorisation of various types of

sanction proceedings, the prosecution of infringements, the determination of penalties for infringements.

In addition, by virtue of the Act of 13 April 2022 on special solutions to prevent support for aggression against Ukraine and to protect national security, Poland also adopted its own sanctions on the import and transit of coal and introduced a local sanctions list which can complicate the operation of service centres.

## WHEN DO SHARED SERVICE CENTRES FACE SANCTIONS?

Service centres are most likely to be confronted with sanctions pertaining to:

- restrictions on providing services to entities based in Russia, and
- restrictions on maintaining business relationships with individuals and entities on sanctions lists.

The handling of processes by service centres located in Poland may violate sanctions regulations, especially with regard to entities on the Polish sanctions list, which is not always correctly recognised at a group level.

## HANDLING TRANSACTIONS WITH ENTITIES ON THE POLISH SANCTIONS LIST

Service centres typically provide specific support services within the group including accounting, IT, HR, procurement services and many others. As a result of this role, other group companies are the main recipients of the service centres' services.

If the centre's clients are not subject to Polish or EU sanctions regulations, a regulatory gap is created it is then possible that there may be transactions that are fully compliant with the client's regulations, but which would be in breach of the sanctions regulations applicable in Poland.

” **If the centre's clients are not subject to Polish or EU sanctions regulations, a regulatory gap is created.**

This issue is particularly pertinent from the perspective of a shared service centre if the corporate group, as part of its own compliance regime, chooses not to factor in Polish sanctions. In such a case, the activities of the shared service centre may qualify as a breach of the prohibition on making available or the obligation to freeze funds or economic resources with regard to entities or persons on the sanctions list (and subject to the relevant restrictive measures).

### Example:

*A French entity purchases goods from a supplier that is not subject to EU sanctions but is on the Polish sanctions list and is covered by, for example, a freezing of funds and a ban on providing access to*



economic resources in Poland. The transaction by the French entity is legally compliant as Polish sanctions do not apply in France.

*Employees of the shared service centre located in Poland handle payments for goods purchased by the French entity, using access to the French entity's bank account. As the buyer is listed on the Polish sanctions list, the execution of the payment by an employee of a Polish shared service centre would violate Polish sanctions regulations.*

When assessing the activities of a shared service centre, it is important to remember that it is also prohibited to knowingly and intentionally participate in activities that have the purpose or effect of circumventing restrictive measures.

Of course, in the specific cases set out in Regulation 269/2014 and Regulation 765/2006, which are referred to in the Polish sanctions act, the Head of the National Revenue Administration may authorise the release of certain frozen funds or economic resources of persons or entities included in the sanctions list or the provision of certain funds or economic resources to such persons or entities. To the extent the consent

of the Head of the National Revenue Administration is obtained, the shared service centre will therefore be able to take actions against counterparties on the sanctions list.

**” When assessing the activities of a shared service centre, it is important to remember that it is also prohibited to knowingly and intentionally participate in activities that have the purpose or effect of circumventing restrictive measures.**

Therefore, since support services activities may also result in a breach of sanctions, it will be necessary to analyse what specific activities the shared service centre carries out and to implement its own compliance system.

#### **PROHIBITION ON PROVIDING SERVICES TO RUSSIAN ENTITIES**

Regulation 833/2014 also prohibits the provision, directly or indirectly, of certain types of services, including accounting, auditing, bookkeeping, tax consultancy, business and management consultancy, and public relations, architectural and engineering services, legal consultancy services and IT consultancy services to the Russian government or to legal persons, entities or bodies established in Russia. Some of the above types of services are commonly provided precisely by shared service centres.

With one of the exceptions provided for in the aforementioned regulation, the above prohibition does not apply to the provision of services intended for the exclusive use of legal persons, entities or bodies established in Russia which are owned by a legal person, entity or body registered or established under the laws of a Member State, a member state of the European Economic Area, Switzerland or a partner state (currently: United States of America, Japan, United Kingdom, South Korea), or which are independently or jointly controlled by such legal person, such entity or such body.



As explained by the European Commission, for the purposes of applying the above exemption:

- It is sufficient for a Russian entity to be at least partly owned or controlled by a legal person, entity or body registered or incorporated under the laws of one of the designated countries;
- The exemption applies to services intended for the exclusive use of entities established in Russia the ultimate owner or controller of which is an entity from one of the countries indicated. That said, the Commission also stipulates the need to ensure that the above rules are not used as a means of circumventing EU sanctions;
- The exemption does not apply to services provided to Russian companies that are controlled or owned by individuals, including those from the listed countries.

However, it should be borne in mind that even if a group company or a client currently complies with the above

requirements, shared service centres should monitor the provision of services covered by the prohibitions set down in Regulation 833/2014. This is because it is uncertain whether the exceptions as outlined above will remain unchanged by subsequent sanctions packages.

**HOW CAN SHARED SERVICE CENTRES AVOID VIOLATIONS OF SANCTIONS?**

In line with the European Commission's recommendations, each operator should develop, implement and routinely update a sanctions compliance programme that reflects its individual business models, geographic and sectoral areas of operation, as well as the specifics and associated risk assessment of customers and staff.

Sanctions regulations compliance management involves several basic steps, the main ones being:

- Determining which sanctions regimes the company is subject to;
- Carrying out a risk assessment, i.e. identifying which areas of the company's

business carry a risk of breaching sanction regulations;

- Preparing a prevention plan for each of the identified risks of breach of sanctions.

An important element of the compliance management system, both under the EU regulations and the Polish Sanctions Act, will be the verification of counterparties. Are they on the sanctions lists? Are they controlled by or owned by individuals and entities on the sanctions lists? What is the extent of the restrictive measures they have been subjected to? In this respect, neither the Polish Sanctions Act nor the above-mentioned regulations contain a catalogue of actions to be taken.

In practice, when it comes to basic due diligence instruments, the following are worth considering:

- Obtaining information directly from counterparties using standardised questionnaires, etc;
- Obtaining contractual assurances and commitments from counterparties;
- Obtaining information from publicly available sources such as trade registers, the media, the Internet;
- Use of professional suppliers providing information on counterparties.

Of course, it is worth checking how the counterparty verification process works at the group level what information is already being obtained, which sanctions lists are being checked, etc. If possible, it is worth considering adding Polish statutory requirements to the above process.

Notwithstanding the above, however, relying solely on the information that vetting of entities and persons is carried out by other group companies may not be sufficient from the perspective of the responsibility of the managers of the shared service centre.◆

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# Quorum

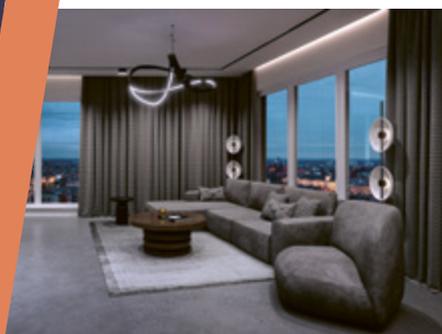
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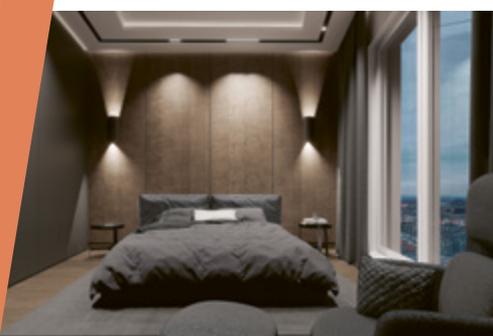
  
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GREEN TERRACES

# Remote working finally in the Labour Code

— Text | **Dr. Iwona Więckiewicz-Szablowska** —

*With the Act of 1 December 2022 amending the Labour Code and certain other acts, the legislator adopted a long-awaited amendment to the Labour Code, which permanently introduces remote working therein. But does the new regulation respond to the labour market demand?*

Remote working appeared in the Polish legal system in the so-called COVID Special Law as a response to the pandemic challenge Polish entrepreneurs faced. Despite the rudimentary regulation of this instrument, which raised multiple questions about the scope of rights and obligations of parties to the employment relationship, it was received enthusiastically. For a long time, employers and employees had demanded the possibility of working from the so-called home office. The then-existing telework regulated in the Labour Code was not attractive for the parties to the employment relationship. The new act replaces the previous telework and repeals the remote work contained in

the special law, introducing a comprehensive regulation of this institution to the Labour Code.

According to the definition present in the Act now, remote work is that performed wholly or partly at a place named by the employee and each time agreed with the employer, including the employee's residence, in particular using direct remote communication. The location of remote work must, therefore, always be agreed upon by the employer and the employee. However, remote working does not have to be carried out regularly, nor is it defined by the type of work. Only specific work cannot be assigned to be performed remotely for safety reasons. That applies,

for example, to particularly hazardous work or one that exceeds the acceptable standards of physical factors set for living quarters.

The amendment provides for three options to introduce remote working:

1. by parties' agreement – when executing the employment contract or during the employment;
2. at the employer's request – in cases specified in the Act (e.g. during an epidemic or in a period when due to force majeure, the employer cannot ensure safe and healthy working conditions at the current workplace). Additionally, the employee must submit a declaration that they have the premises and technical means to perform remote work;



The employer's obligations related to the introduction of remote working include providing work materials and tools for the employee and covering the costs of, for example, electricity and necessary access to telecommunication lines.



3. at the employee's request (so-called occasional, incidental remote work) – up to 24 days per calendar year.

The employer's obligations related to the introduction of remote working include providing work materials and tools for the employee and covering the costs of, for example, electricity and necessary access to telecommunication lines. The new regulation explicitly stipulates that rules can be established for the employee's use of their own materials and tools as long as these meet the health and safety requirements. The employer will pay the employee a cash equivalent for that. Alternatively, the employer may pay the employee a lump sum amounting to the expected costs they incur in connection with the remote work. The amendment lists the circumstances to be considered when calculating the allowance or lump sum amount. Notably, the law explicitly states that the provision of materials, tools or reimbursement of costs by the employer and the payment of an allowance or a lump sum do not constitute income within the meaning of the PIT Act.

The new regulation also introduces significant modifications to the employer's health and safety obligations in the case of remote working. Due to the specific nature of remote work, some commitments have been repealed (e.g. the obligation to provide an appropriate workstation or hygienic and sanitary facilities and personal hygiene products), while others have been modified. For example, when drawing up an occupational

” **Before introducing remote work, its rules should be defined, including the groups of employees involved.**

risk assessment for remote work, the employer should consider its impact on vision, the muscular and skeletal system and psychosocial conditions of work. Based on such risk assessment, the employer ought to prepare information for the employee with the principles and ways of proper organisation of the remote workplace, the principles of safe and hygienic performance of remote work, the activities to be performed after the completion of remote work, and the rules of emergency procedures. Only an employee who confirms that they have read the risk assessment and the above information and have declared that their remote workstation provides safe and healthy working conditions may be allowed to work remotely.

Before introducing remote work, its rules should be defined, including the groups of employees involved. That should be done in an agreement with trade unions or regulations introduced by the employer after consultations with employee representatives. If remote working only applies to individual employees, the rules for its implementation can be set out in an agreement concluded with them. If remote work is introduced by the employer by means of an order, such regulations should be included in that order. The law defines the minimum scope of such arrangements. These include, for example, the rules for the employer to cover the remote working costs (including the determination of the cash allowance/lump sum), the rules for the communication between the employer and the remotely working employee or the confirmation of attendance at the workplace. It is also vital to stipulate how the employer will control the remote worker's work, also regarding health and safety or compliance with security and information protection requirements. It must be emphasised that the employer may control the employee at the remote workplace and during the employee's working hours. The inspecting activities must not only infringe on the employee's right to privacy or impede the use of the home premises per their intended purpose.

In the case of occasional remote working, the general regulations will be of limited application to make it more flexible. However, the employer will still be obliged to provide the employee with safe and healthy working conditions, just like in other cases of remote working.

The new rules shall take effect from April 7<sup>th</sup> 2023. It is therefore advisable to prepare internal regulations to take advantage of this form of work.♦

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# Shared service centres rely on professionals.

## What can be done to nurture talent that may soon be in short supply?

*In recent years, we have been hearing more and more about Global Business Services, the term being mentioned on a par with Shared Service Centre and Business Process Outsourcing. This raises questions – what really is the GBS model and why is there such a rapid increase in the number of companies seeking to implement it? How do you recruit professionals who will be comfortable with the new collaboration model?*

Answers to these and many more can be found in a new ACCA report entitled “Financial shared services to global business services models: a journey worth taking?”. It focuses on the topic of talent development in both business outsourcing models. Based on gathered information, we can already say that the trend in the coming years will be a gradual transition from the FSS (Financial Shared Services) model to GBS (Global Business Services). Therefore, examining the interdependencies in the functioning of these structures is of great importance for further analysis of the direction of talent development and employee recruitment.

– *We showcase changing trends in the operating model of companies that can help improve processes. It is worth remembering that the success of any company depends first and foremost on the teams that work for it. Irrespective of the business model, nurturing talent should be a key pillar of the organisation and these issues, among others, are addressed in our publication* – says Agnieszka Jarosz, Head of ACCA Poland, Ukraine and Baltic Countries.

### EVOLUTION OF THE MODEL

The shared services model was born less than 30 years ago, out of the need

to support corporations in consolidating, standardising and optimising financial transactions, as well as related activities such as accounting and debt collection, among others. Today, virtually all leading companies have adopted this model, often extending it to include additional functions – such as human resources (HR), purchasing, property and facilities management, and even customer service,

sales and marketing. The original service outsourcing model has evolved into a cross-functional business services platform and is now commonly referred to as global business services (GBS).

The report also shows that while large companies have implemented and streamlined the shared services model, small and medium-sized enterprises are in the early stages of implementation.



” Irrespective of the business model, nurturing talent should be a key pillar of the organisation.



” More than 50% respondents agreed that this career path was more attractive than other employment options. Even more respondents admitted that working for GBS helps them develop their professional skills.

With the increasing popularity of shared services, staff management in these models has become the subject of business myths. For example, there is talk of a 30% attrition rate or crowded departures of senior managers. However, if we analyse the opinion of our respondents, shared services centres are a good place to develop professional competences, in particular the so-called ‘competences of the future’.

#### **WORKING AT GBS DEVELOPS THE COMPETENCES OF THE FUTURE**

In a time of global recession and great resignation, working in GBS can be an opportunity for better earnings and an excellent career prospect. In the survey described above, more than 50% respondents agreed that this career path was more attractive than other employment options. Even more respondents admitted that working for GBS helps them develop their professional skills.

Working in outsourcing, regardless of the model, builds a whole range of employee competencies, including financial management skills. 70% of the participants in our survey rate their competences as desirable for the future. Working in such a model, we can develop as a team leader, and this in a later stage

of our career can help us open further doors, in even higher positions – such as HR Director or CFO. By working with other professionals, we can observe their actions and gain knowledge of how the overall process works. 61% of respondents believe that working in the GBS model brings with it a real opportunity for the employee to be promoted to other, higher structures within the company.

” **61% of respondents believe that working in the GBS model brings with it a real opportunity for the employee to be promoted to other, higher structures within the company.**

So, what can be done to achieve success? What competences will prove useful? Among mid-level staff, respondents point to technical and domain-specific knowledge. This is followed by broad digital skills, beyond basic knowledge of the programmes used during work. But they are not the only ones. What also counts is the ability to operate and

make decisions in diverse teams, where the sharing of experience can be crucial to the smooth implementation of a project. Given the dynamics of the work, it must be added here that positive relationships with the team are key to career development. Therefore, the interviewees also identified the ability to cooperate with others as another important employee competence in the GBS model.

The attractiveness of working in these models is also evidenced by the positive change to the work-life balance system. 82% of those surveyed were positive about the possibility of working remotely, which before the pandemic was not as popular as it is today. Employees also value flexibility in terms of where they work.

If we look at the leaders, we see that their top 3 most important competences differ from those indicated by colleagues in lower positions. Collaborative skills are among the most important in this group, but so is commitment to contacting key stakeholders. Communication skills and personal initiative are therefore a dominant attribute of any leader. Insight and the ability to formulate one's own conclusions, as well as an enthusiastic approach to the activities undertaken, are also important in this position.



The „Financial shared services to global business services models: a journey worth taking?“ report focuses on the topic of talent development in both business outsourcing models.

The full report is available for download here



**THE ORGANISATION'S PERSPECTIVE**

With GBS work offering so many opportunities for development, what problems might organisations face in recruiting employees?

Difficulties may be related to the lack of enough leaders in the labour market to adequately guide teams and individual employee development. This may result in facing a lack of experienced staff to coordinate the implementation of projects in the future. 60% of respondents to the survey said that they experience challenges in getting the necessary skills in their organisations.

**” 60% of respondents to the survey said that they experience challenges in getting the necessary skills in their organisations.**

Research has also shown that time spent in service outsourcing jobs is considered conducive to career development. Companies planning for the long

term should support talent by providing rewarding career paths, mobility and building employee engagement. By investing in the development of their employees, offering competitive and attractive remuneration, these functions can play a key role in building an organisation's future talent pipeline.

Therefore, organisations operating under the aforementioned models should first be mindful of developing long-term plans for the development of specialised teams so that they do not experience staff shortages in the future.

**CLEAR CAREER PATH AS AN INCENTIVE FOR CANDIDATES**

We can conclude that with such a high demand for very specific and specialised skills, we can speak of an employee market. Therefore, every company should realise that only having the right offer and a clear development path can encourage more experienced staff to sign a contract with us. Despite the automation of many processes, no company can survive without a strong team that is not only capable of managing an ongoing process, but more importantly, initiating and supporting the change process. Unfortunately, in

the survey conducted, more than 52% of respondents admitted that getting the right employee is a major challenge.

*– To gain on attractiveness, it is important to present potential candidates with a clear career path that shows them the opportunities that accompany working for our company. Some also complain about the lack of adequate coaching, training and even mentoring. Therefore, when thinking about creating new jobs, it is worth taking care of these aspects as well, in order to foster the development of our team's competences – Agnieszka Jarosz concludes.*

The „Financial shared services to global business services models: a journey worth taking?“ report provides direction on the implementation and transformation of processes within global service centres. It was prepared based on a survey of more than 800 ACCA business services professionals, with the support of Everest Group and PwC.◆

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# The dreams of a Contact Center consultant

— A feuilleton by **Denis Brzeziński** —

*When I think of the Contact Center, the first thing that comes to mind is an agent sitting with headphones and a microphone. You can also add an elegant outfit (we often see a shirt with a tie or even a full suit in the photos) and a smile in American Style.*

It is unlikely that this position is still one of the most desirable on the market. These people eventually acquire new customers, serve the existing ones, maintain and maintain a good relationship regardless of the current situation.

The evolution of this position is also very impressive. It all started with a landline phone (one with a cable) and a notebook, until it finally got a headset and a screen. In the area of customer service, a huge technological leap has been made. Today, we are able to report each indicator, estimate sales results for the coming months, build a flow bot so that it can redirect the conversation to the right place and much more.

And when I look at all this, it seems to me that the greatest savings have been made on the consultant. Please don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that the applications on which agents work has not changed, because it would be a great blasphemy. However, I kinda understand why companies don't invest so heavily in the development of CSS (Customer Service System) applications. Obviously, a newly hired person is expected to: click, save, complete, check, serve or sell. All this in one conversation and sometimes in a very short time. Being hired as a new agent, I could not leave without admiration how such an advanced consultant moves around the applications, clicks on all these windows and at the same time conducts a smooth conversation with the person on the other side of the phone. After a few months, I became this employee who acted like a machine



with a high level of service. However, we must remember that we are dealing with a human and his main task is to build a relationship with another person, something that the machine will not replace for the moment.

Looking at the solutions that are available on the market, I see a certain division: into these simple and these complex systems. These simple systems, available at a low price (which is their great advantage), often have a basic package of functionality: voice calls, e-mail communication, chat. Sometimes we have access to the history of interactions and the possibility of creating a customer profile. The rest of the stuff needs to be integrated with some CRM and other internal systems, and sometimes that's out of reach. When we have to serve the customer as a consultant, it is necessary to access several different applications

” **We must remember that we are dealing with a human and his main task is to build a relationship with another person.**

or programs (Excel, CRM, Knowledge Base, Courier Website, etc.). If you are a rookie consultant, you need also your notes with information about what to say or click. For many new agents, it's stress and nightmare, especially when we accidentally close something or are unable to read it because the system loads the desired page "forever" due to the high load. Training new agents isn't easy either. As a newhired person, we get a big pile of information about handling

several to a dozen applications. You have to learn them dry because on the first call, we want to do everything according to the procedures, which does not help with the stress we are dealing with.

On the other hand, we have advanced solutions that “out of the box” have a wide functionality package. They are made very professionally and many times when I saw them in use, I was very impressed with their capabilities and how efficiently everything can work within one system. This is also the reason why they are not cheap “toys”. Due to its size, the implementation and integration time is slightly longer and often requires a skilled programmer.

*If I had that information in the system here, that would be great.*

*It doesn't make sense because I still have to open this program to check the order status.*

*It's all too complicated. It should be simple and transparent.*

I said such sentences and various others while working as a consultant, as well as I heard as a sales coach sitting next to a consultant.

**So what should this ideal CC consultant system look like?**

First of all – one interface to work with. No jumping from window to window or screen (not everyone has the possibility to work on more than one screen). Any information you need should be implemented into the window you are working on. “Underneath” the system should be able to integrate with everyone else so that the information you need can be displayed here and now. The dream is that such an interface will allow you to go step by step through the entire conversation. At each stage, we can “connect” some other program or document. If you need to find, for example, an available workshop, then the “bam” a list opens on the right side. If you need to present the advantages of the product, we display information from the product library with one click. For novice consultants, you could even implant a conversation script, which will eliminate reading from a paper or text file. An intermediate will work much faster, he will move smoothly on his screen and thus reduce its operating time. And the best? They will continue to be at the lead and may now break through the glass ceiling of their limits.



” **The machine is a perfect solution for repetitive and routine tasks. At the beginning of the conversation, it could gather a complete set of information about the customer, inform about the procedures or answer simple questions.**

I think that taking care of the comfort of the agent is the key to effective implementation of tasks. Yes, there are many alternative methods of “motivating” agents to work, but when the tool on which we work is not very comfortable, even the best commission competitions will not make the consultants work as we would expect.

There is another element that can make the solution I am writing about here more “sexy”. For some time, bots and artificial intelligence have been added to work. Let’s think about what

effect can the agent’s cooperation with the bot bring? The machine is a perfect solution for repetitive and routine tasks. At the beginning of the conversation, it could gather a complete set of information about the customer, inform about the procedures or answer simple questions. Then it transfers the call to an agent (with all the collected data), who with his creativity and empathy conducts this part of the conversation, where soft skills are key. The bot can be our helper, who will provide the new consultant with solutions, scripts or information. Otherwise, it can perform calculations and deliver the final order amount. How much this would help the agent and give him the opportunity to show off in the area he is most effective in.

Is this dream worth pursuing? I think that every Contact Center, large or small, will benefit from the fact that the consultant does his job with pleasure, because what disturbs him is reduced to a minimum. Such an ecosystem is within our reach. The technology is already there. I found myself in a place where such dreams have a chance to come true and who knows, maybe soon we will see consultants smiling not only in the photos.♦

## Author



**Denis Brzeziński**  
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# The office in the hybrid work era: How to shape it?

*The work space is shaped based on the demands related to new processes and work patterns. The office needs to be a value-creating, attractive and sustainable place where people feel good, thrive and have the possibility to perform at their best. What is the key to succeed with a modern office?*

More than ever, the importance and design of office space is being discussed. Striving for innovation, creativity, problem-solving and efficiency while promoting the health, well-being and satisfaction of employees is key for many organisations. Everything from working methods, office layout and workflow, to technology and work life balance is under scrutiny. It is becoming increasingly important not only to retain, but also to attract new

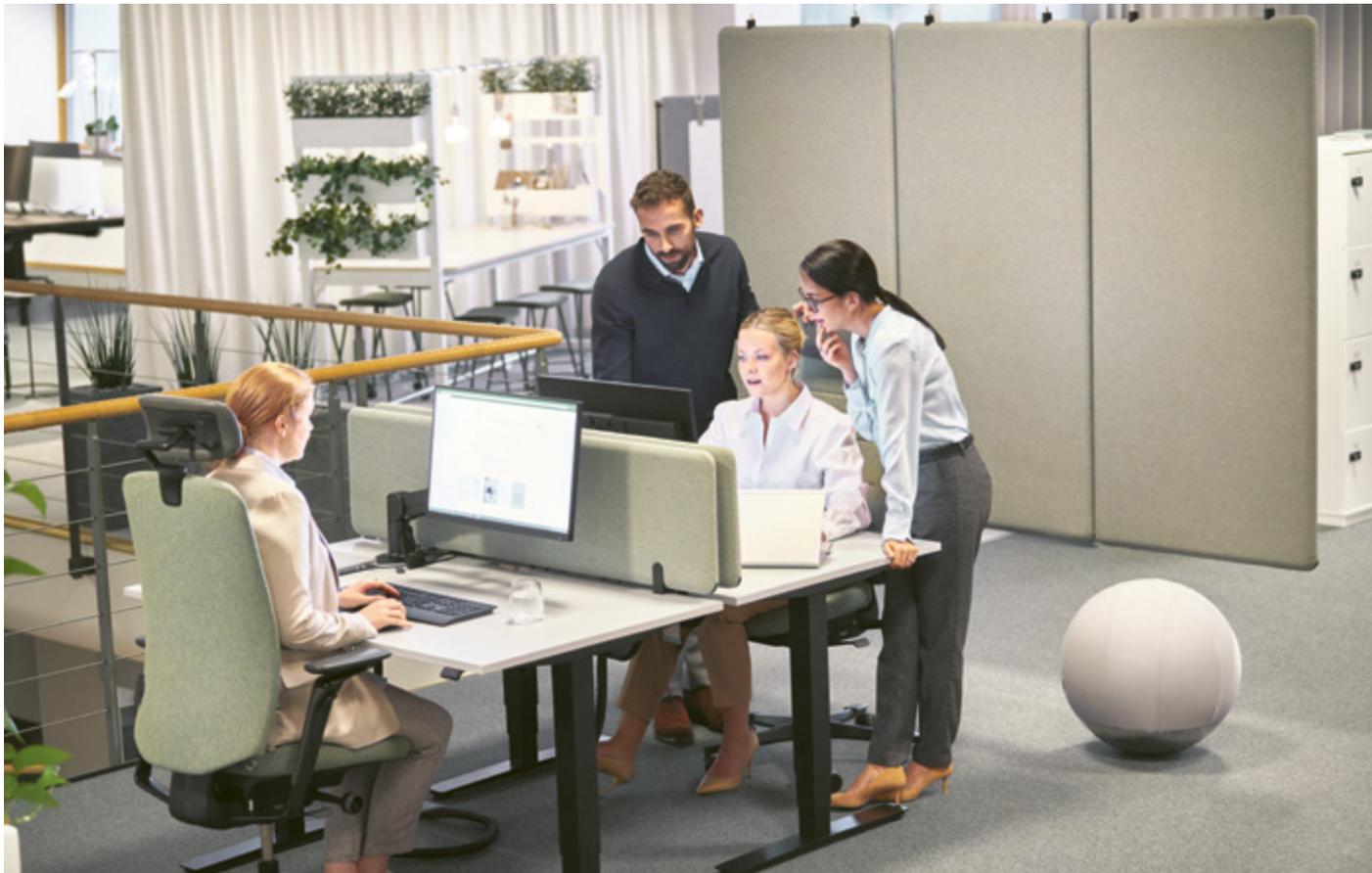
talents. Here, the office plays an important role as a carrier of culture, a hub and a place where the organisation's image and values are reflected.

A well-planned office promotes health and well-being, which in turn leads to better performance. Good health is not only an asset for the individual, but an important resource for organisations and society at large, and a prerequisite for employee creativity and productivity.

## **OFFICE OF THE FUTURE: NO SHORTCUTS**

Each organisation must use its vision, specific needs and ways of working as its starting point. An ideal office should support actual activities – whether it's individual focus work, creative physical collaborations, hybrid project meetings or digital conversations.

The prediction is that offices of the future will be more a place to meet. It is highly likely that many organisations



” **The prediction is that offices of the future will be more a place to meet.**



will need new types of meeting spaces, both for digital, hybrid and physical meetings, but it should also be kept in mind that a large part of many people's working day consists of individual work that requires a high level of concentration.

The design of our offices was already changing before the pandemic, from traditional, personal desks to more flexible ways of working. With new technology, we have greater flexibility in how and where we work, which is why clear ways of working and well-functioning workflows are very important. Spaces for concentration-intensive work, for example, need to be separated from areas where there is a lot of movement and interaction between people. By working with zones that have different degrees of focus in the office, you promote both social interaction and the opportunity to solve tasks that require concentration.

The offices of the future therefore need to be designed to support both individual work and collaboration. But the extent to which the office space should be divided between these two depends on

” **The offices of the future therefore need to be designed to support both individual work and collaboration. But the extent to which the office space should be divided between these two depends on the specific organisation's needs.**

the specific organisation's needs. In other words, there are no shortcuts to successful and healthy working environments.

There are five key principles to follow in order to succeed with a modern office.

#### **1. Map and analyse your needs**

Time and thought in the beginning of your project lays the foundation for a successful office change. A workplace analysis is a useful tool for identifying your needs. It supports you in your change journey, provides an analysis of the current situation and helps you gather valuable knowledge and data before designing your office. The data also makes it easy for you to follow up on your office environments going forward. The results of the analysis show how you should optimise your office space for it to be attractive and value creating.

#### **2. Design health-promoting environments with holistic ergonomics**

People are the most important asset in any organisation. When entering the office,

” **A variety of factors affect how you feel and perform – so it’s important to consider the ergonomic whole.**



what makes employees feel welcome, safe, inspired and motivated to start their working day? A variety of factors affect how you feel and perform – so it’s important to consider the ergonomic whole. Holistic ergonomics is about the total experience of an environment, physical, organisational and social.

**3. Future-proof your office with flexible interior design solutions**

A work environment made to last over time must be able to adapt and develop with changing needs. It must support your needs at all times to remain an up-to-date, attractive and useful workplace. These changes may be minor ones made on a daily basis or major transformations occurring less frequently. The interior needs to be equipped with flexible and multifunctional furniture, that can be used or updated in different ways to support various activities.

**4. Make sustainable choices**

Having a sustainable mindset and making sustainable choices are givens for most people today, but what does it actually

” **Having a sustainable mindset and making sustainable choices are givens for most people today, but what does it actually mean when you are choosing your interior design?**

mean when you are choosing your interior design? It’s about how the interior will physically last, but also how it, in the long run, will support the people who work in it and give them the right conditions to perform their work tasks. An attractive and well thought-out office that has all the functions that you actually need reduces sick leave and promotes well-being, creativity and efficiency. This in itself makes for a sustainable investment for both the organisation and the planet.

**5. Connect the physical and digital office**

The workplace design of the future must support physical, hybrid and digital collaboration – regardless of the task or degree of focus. It is important that the workplace connects the physical and digital office in the best way possible to maintain efficiency and productivity. How different spaces in the office should be designed depends entirely on the specific organisation’s needs and access to technology.

For more information on how a well-arranged office can support a company’s success in a hybrid world, see the Kinnarps report “Five Key Principles that shape a successful and sustainable work environment”.◆



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# Venture Capital Winter: Understanding and surviving a downturn in Venture Capital

— Text | Magdalena Pawłowska —

*VC winter is a downturn in the Venture Capital industry, where investment activity slows down and startups struggle to secure funding. This can have a significant impact on startups, which often rely on Venture Capital to grow and scale their businesses. As one of the risk factors, startup can identify and measure its influence, as well as prepare for it.*

Nowadays, we observe that the next VC winter is coming. First COVID, then war in Ukraine, followed with globally rising inflation and interest rates with a retreat of capital to safer investment instruments, and an economic slowdown are the factors that make VC winter no longer a matter of “if” but rather “when” it strikes.

” **We use “VC winter” to describe a period of time when the investment activity in the Venture Capital industry decreases, causing a slowdown in the flow of funds to startups.**

Venture capitalists use “VC winter” to describe a period of time when the investment activity in the Venture Capital industry decreases, causing a slowdown in the flow of funds to startups. This can be due to a variety of reasons such as a decrease in the number of high-return investments, economic uncertainty, or a shift in the focus of Venture Capital firms. During this period, startups usually face difficulties in securing the necessary funding to continue growing and expanding their businesses, which can negatively impact their chances of success. Despite these challenges, some startups are able to

weather the storm and come out stronger, while others may be forced to close their doors. Regardless of the outcome, VC winter can be a critical period for startups and it is essential that they are prepared to navigate the challenges ahead.

Today’s founders are too young to remember the last time it occurred and how it affected the global startup ecosystem. Following the dot-com bubble in 2000–2003 which led to a bust when the market crashed and caused a slowdown in Venture Capital activity, as investors became more cautious and hesitant to invest in startups. As a result many startups faced bankruptcy as funding became scarce and valuations plummeted. That is why preparing for the difficult times is crucial.

## **FACING A VC WINTER**

Startups must face challenges such as reduced access to funding, decreased valuations, and increased competition for investment opportunities as the VC winter becomes a fact. The slowdown in investment activity makes it more difficult to secure the funding they need to grow and scale their businesses. The lower valuations can also make it harder to attract investment and stand out to investors in a competitive market.

To navigate a VC winter, founders should focus on improving their products

and services, diversifying their funding sources, being cautious with spending, and networking with potential investors. While it can be difficult to predict exactly when a VC winter will occur, there are steps that founders can take to prepare.

**Focus on product market fit.** A product with a strong market fit is essential for any startup, but it becomes even more important during a VC winter. By focusing on product market fit, founders can increase their chances of generating revenue and attracting new customers, which will make them more attractive to investors.

**Build a strong revenue stream.** One of the most important things that founders can do to prepare for a VC winter is to focus on building a strong, diversified revenue stream. This means finding stable sources of income, such as through partnerships, licensing deals, or other revenue-generating activities. By having multiple streams of income, founders will be less reliant on outside funding and will be better able to weather a downturn in the Venture Capital market.

**Cut costs wherever possible.** This could include downsizing the team, renegotiating lease agreements, or finding ways to automate certain processes. By cutting costs, founders will be able to extend their runway and make it through a period of reduced funding.



During a VC winter, fundraising will be more difficult and time-consuming

**Be realistic about fundraising.**

During a VC winter, fundraising will be more difficult and time-consuming. Founders should be realistic about their fundraising prospects and should not rely on a single funding round to keep their company afloat. Instead, they should plan for multiple rounds of fundraising and be prepared to pitch to a wider range of investors, including angel investors, family offices, and corporate Venture Capital funds. The best way is to secure funding for at least 18 months ahead which helps to wait through the VC winter most demanding time.

**Networking.** It is always important for founders, but it becomes even more crucial during a VC winter. By building relationships with other founders, investors, and industry experts, founders can stay informed about the latest trends and opportunities and will be better positioned to take advantage of them when they arise.

**USING VC WINTER ON A STARTUPS' FAVOR**

While a VC winter can be a challenging time for startups, it can also present opportunities for those who are willing to adapt, stay the course and take on a bit more risk.

” **With reduced funding, startups can shift their focus towards improving core business operations and refining their strategies.**

Startups can turn the downturn into a positive by taking advantage of opportunities such as refocusing their efforts, attracting top talent, negotiating better terms with investors, identifying new revenue streams, and building brand awareness. With reduced funding, startups can shift their focus towards improving core business operations and refining their strategies, which can result in more sustainable growth.

Additionally, with fewer investment opportunities, talented individuals

may be more likely to join startups, helping companies build a strong team. The increased competition for funding may also allow startups to negotiate better terms with investors, such as lower equity dilution or more favorable valuations. Lastly, the need to explore new revenue streams and customer segments can lead to new business opportunities, and with reduced noise in the market, startups can use this opportunity to build brand awareness and reach new customers. By focusing on these areas, startup can increase its value and attractiveness to investors when the market recovers.

This downturn in the market also presents opportunities for startups to explore alternative sources of funding. These non-traditional sources of funding can include crowdfunding platforms or grants from government organizations or foundations, which can provide startups with the capital without sacrificing equity.

**TO EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED**

The downward trend in the startups valuation initiated in 2022, especially those at later stages, will continue. Companies in the pre-seed and seed stages less affected by this decline, will face less capital availability. As the VC winter arises, three elements will be extremely important for Founders for the upcoming months: focus on core-business development and securing solid traction on a core-value for the customer, securing a runway for a minimum of 18 months with a possible rapid achievement of Break Even Point, and continuous risk analysis, as the current macroeconomic situation may significantly delay execution of sales and development plans.

VC winter can be a challenging time for startups, but it also provides opportunities for them to build their advantage. Those who will adapt to the changes and focus on core business development will come out stronger when the market rebounds.◆

**Author**



**Magdalena Pawłowska**  
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# Meeting the demands of always on, tech-savvy consumers with smart CX technologies and evolving work models

— Text | Mark Angus —

*In today's digital age, consumers expect instant access to information, products and services. The rise of smart technology and evolving work models have made it possible for contact center organizations to better meet these demands and provide a seamless customer experience (CX).*

This article will explore how contact centers can use smart technology and flexible work models to stay ahead of the curve and meet the needs of digitally connected consumers. From automating processes to remote work and beyond, we will cover the key strategies and technologies that can help businesses thrive in a digital-first world.

## SMART CX

The wave of digitization has drastically influenced consumer demands, who expect to be serviced 24/7/365 and engage through their preferred channel with the freedom to seamlessly switch between devices without losing context or relevance. To meet these new demands with agility and accuracy, contact centers must amplify existing capabilities with emerging smart customer engagement technologies.

” **Leveraging smart technologies in contact centers can empower and augment human agents to deliver more complex, value-add services.**

## Integrating smart technology with smart people to deliver smart CX

Leveraging smart technologies in contact centers can empower and augment human agents to deliver more complex, value-add services, effectively transforming them into ‘super agents’. Combining digital-first engagement tools, including

artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics with existing customer interaction histories can unlock opportunities to gather and analyze customer data in real-time and elevate CX delivery.

Moreover, AI can create dynamic customer profiles through data integration and real-time analysis, allowing agents to accurately identify and cater to a customer's unique preferences. And automation solutions, such as virtual agents and self-service platforms, shifts menial tasks away from human agents, which opens capacity for them to deliver value-adding services that boosts the CX journey. For example, virtual agents help both the customer and contact center agent to achieve more in less time. Virtual agents can extend operating times and reduce response times, saving valuable human agent resources (and thus costs) and improving CX.

## CX tasks best suited to robotic workers/virtual agents

Smart technologies eliminate certain manual and repetitive tasks, as well as respond to routine customer queries and standard requests. Specifically, robotic process automation (RPA) automates process-based tasks between multiple

systems, reducing human error and boosting operational efficiency.

Other automated solutions, such as chatbots and virtual agents, cater to the demands of digital-first consumers, who prefer self-service options over voice and demand expedient query resolution times. By deploying automated chatbots into web and mobile applications provides customers with uninterrupted, 24/7 real-time assistance, even when contact centers are closed or overloaded. Additionally, always-on chatbots can process greater call volumes than human agents, resulting in improved service delivery and customer satisfaction levels.

Other variants of AI-powered solutions can detect behavioral patterns and anomalies to adapt engagements according to unique consumer contexts.

## CX tasks you should keep with human workers

However, smart technologies do not provide empathetic engagement with a warm, friendly and personal touch, which are critical when customers have complex issues. In this regard, human agents can apply emotional intelligence (EQ) to detect when a customer is frustrated, worried or responding aggressively, allowing human agents to respond appropriately. Similarly, higher-order tasks that require strategic and creative thinking are better suited to highly

trained and skilled human agents. However, collaboration with smart technologies and insights serves to complement human agents in these complex scenarios, delivering greater value to the customer and the business.

**Automation keeps jobs**

To extract the optimal value from smart technologies, contact center operators will up-skill or re-skill their staff to perform more advanced job functions augmented by technology. In this way, embracing smart technologies in the contact center will retain rather than displace the human workforce. This is supported by findings in the 2022 Global CX Vertical Demand Report produced by Genesis GBS, where 22% of respondents reported that staff moved into more analytical functions as technology managed their previous tasks.

What’s more, the emergence of smart technology is creating numerous new job titles. For example, Data Detectives correlate and analyze data and Personal Data Brokers negotiate and execute data trades.

**SMART WORKING MODELS**

These technologies are essential for enabling evolving work models, which exhibit the flexibility and agility that is required to meet the demands of always-on consumers. As such, contact centers can respond to future threats and shifting market dynamics. However, are evolving work models, particularly work-from-home (WFH), the answer to keeping tech-savvy consumers satisfied?

**The benefits and concerns of work-from-home (WFH) agents**

One of the major benefits WFH has yielded contact center organizations is retaining workers through greater flexibility, as indicated by 84% of contact center

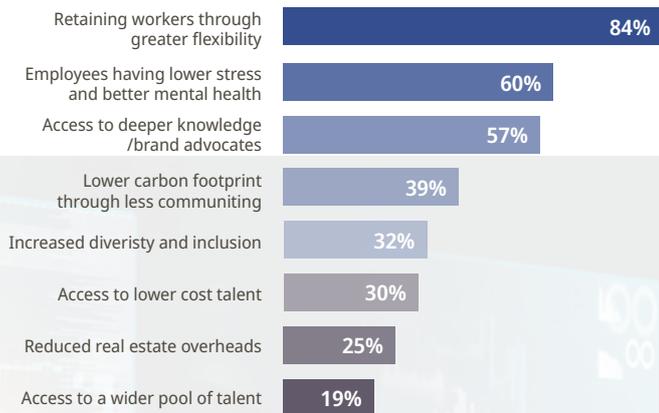
operators. Another contributing factor to employee retention is lower stress and better mental health for contact center employees (60%). Simultaneously, WFH opens access to a deeper pool of knowledge/brand advocates (57%) and a wider pool of talent (19%).

Increased talent accessibility allows for a more inclusive and diverse workforce (32%), which provides a wider array of perception, creativity and innovation.

However, lower productivity levels and inconsistent CX delivery are one of the concerns expressed by contact center organizations. Physical disparity can also result in the erosion of company culture and teamwork, reducing much-needed collaboration for improving CX.

**GREATEST PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF A HYBRID OR FULLY REMOTE WORKFORCE**

Source: MIT Technology Review Insights 2022 Customer Experience and the Future of Work Survey.



” To extract the optimal value from smart technologies, contact center operators will up-skill or re-skill their staff to perform more advanced job functions augmented by technology.



CX can also be impacted by poor home office technology and broadband capabilities, leading to frustrations on both the sides of the agent and customer. Remote, digital set-ups are also highly susceptible to security breaches and cybercrime, due to unsecured networks, lack of security software and lack of IT support.

**The “new normal” outlook for future work models**

Despite these concerns, global organizations have noted the valuable benefits WFH offers and are prepared to reinvent their working models. To succeed in this 'new normal', the establishment of best practices will be crucial for operators to organize and manage distributed workforces. These include the deployment of technology ‘must haves’, performance monitoring solutions, access to knowledge, communication protocols and stringent security measures and frameworks. On-site or work-from-the-office (WFO) structures and practices will also need to change to empower workers with autonomy and expedite decision-making processes to remove operational bottlenecks and increase agility.

**The hybrid/blended model**

A hybrid working model will be key to maintaining operational resilience in the ‘next normal’. A combination of both WFH and WFO working models, a hybrid arrangement entails employees splitting their time between home and office locations. Rotating workforces enable businesses to realize the benefits of both WFH and WFO arrangements. However, a series of best practices and supporting technology will be required in ensuring seamless transitions in and out the office.

**Can smart technology and smart work models meet changing consumer demands?**

Smart technology and smart working models have the potential to meet the demands of digitally connected consumers and help contact centers achieve high quality CX outcomes. Analytics, AI,

automation and RPA can enhance CX deliverables by taking over mundane, process-based tasks and augment contact center agents to conduct value-add tasks that require creativity and EQ.

The agility of smart technologies can complement and boost smart working models. Although WFH can be useful to tap into a wider pool of talent and boost employee satisfaction, it also comes with several challenges. In this case, a hybrid working model may be an effective solution to 'the next normal', but best practices are required to make it work for the contact center employer, the client and the employee.

Ultimately, it's important to find the right balance between leveraging smart technology and fostering a positive work culture to achieve the ultimate goal of providing exceptional CX to always-on consumers.◆

**Author**



**Mark Angus**

CEO of market research consultancy, Genesis Global Business Services and Founding Partner of The World Source Marketplace for Global Business Services (GBS.World)





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# In-house or outsourced accounting?

*The current difficult situation in the labour market, related to the shortage of qualified employees, poses challenges in terms of the functioning of accounting teams in companies. In multiple enterprises, the management is considering whether it is better to keep accounting in-house – thus running the risk of staff turnover – or to outsource accounting to a specialised external firm. We talk about the pros and cons of each of these solutions with **Agnieszka Tyczyńska-Osińska**, Senior Accounting Area Manager at MDDP Outsourcing.*

**FOCUS ON Business: It is very difficult to acquire qualified accounting staff today, so what should a CEO do when part of the accounting team, including people in key positions, decide to leave the company?**

**Agnieszka Tyczyńska-Osińska, MDDP Outsourcing:** Certainly both high staff turnover and staff shortages bring about a very stressful situation for a company, which directly involves a high risk to its smooth operation. There are several solutions to this problem (better and worse).

The first and most obvious one is trying to retain employees in the company by offering higher salaries to them. However, such an attempt will not always succeed, for it is often the case that employees, rather than being motivated by a higher salary, want to change something, develop or get promoted, and the company is not always able to satisfy such expectations. This is especially true for young employees, who, wanting to learn as much as possible in a short time, frequently decide to change jobs.

If the first solution does not bring the expected results, the next step is to think about the current shape of the accounting team and possible modifications. Perhaps one of the employees has the knowledge and experience to take a higher position, and his or her work can be entrusted to less experienced people. One can also consider improving the efficiency of the accounting team by

automating some processes (e.g. eliminating the circulation of paper invoices and introducing an electronic document workflow integrated with the accounting system, automating posting by means of posting schemes and patterns, applying machine learning or robotisation to recurring processes, for instance the posting of bank statements or entry of payments, etc.).

However, if there are no employees suitable for promotion in the company, and the possibilities of enhancing efficiency are limited due to the lack of appropriate resources or knowledge and skills needed to implement the improvements, there is an option of switching partially or fully to an external accounting firm.

” **If there are no employees suitable for promotion in the company, and the possibilities of enhancing efficiency are limited, there is an option of switching partially or fully to an external accounting firm.**

**What does that mean?**

Switching completely to the services of an accounting firm means that the in-house accounting team can be eliminated, and all accounting tasks can be outsourced to the accounting firm. There are a number of advantages to this solution, the most important one being the ability to focus on the core business

of the organisation without the need to allocate resources to accounting, which the company sees as an auxiliary activity. Problems related to staff turnover and absenteeism in the accounting department disappear. All accounting and tax issues as well as payments are dealt with by an accounting firm, which, if necessary, seeks the services of tax advisors or law firms.

Another plus is access to modern solutions, which translates into improved work efficiency and work automation in the area of finance. Larger accounting firms provide their clients with the opportunity to use electronic document workflow integrated with the accounting firm's accounting system as well as solutions for the automation and

robotisation of processes. When a company decides to implement financial and accounting procedures on its own, costly mistakes are likely to occur. Ready-made solutions offered by external accounting firms often need to be parameterised only once, which, for example, makes it possible to account for business travel almost immediately. Specialists at accounting





firms have experience of cooperation with organisations from multiple industries, which enables them to choose the optimal solutions. In this way, the client's company gains professional support, and the management can focus on business growth.

The services can be based on the accounting system provided by the accounting firm as well as on the client's accounting system – in case the client prefers the latter cooperation model, or it is required by their group's procedures.

Given that accounting firms provide services to a number of clients and have specialised departments in charge of particular processes, e.g. document processing departments, tax departments or reporting departments, they have gathered considerable experience, which they can utilise while supporting their clients, thus significantly improving their financial and accounting processes. What is more, clients of external accounting firms do not have to worry about updating their systems when the law changes or about scalability as their business grows.

On the other hand, switching only partially to accounting services provided by an accounting firm means that some of the accounting tasks are assigned to the firm on a temporary basis (until appropriate employees are found) or on a permanent basis.

#### **What kind of tasks could these be?**

Depending on the needs, these can be simple accounting activities such as registering documents in the document workflow system or posting them. The support offered by an accounting firm may also be more complex and involve, for example, work related to year-end closing and preparation of the financial statements, accounting for VAT on a monthly basis, preparation of the JPK\_VAT standard audit files and even fulfilling the role of the company's chief accountant.

however, it turns out that finding a new person for the position of chief accountant is very difficult because a properly educated and experienced candidate cannot be acquired, or soon after hiring it turns out that the person cannot find their place in the organisation and resigns, or the employer decides to terminate the cooperation. It may also happen that the salary requirements of candidates for the chief accountant position greatly exceed the company's budget. Then the accounting firm continues to act as the chief accountant for a longer period

” **Switching only partially to accounting services provided by an accounting firm means that some of the accounting tasks are assigned to the firm on a temporary basis (until appropriate employees are found) or on a permanent basis.**

#### **Is an accounting firm really able to perform the function of a chief accountant?**

##### **What does that look like in practice?**

From the point of view of working at MDDP Outsourcing, where we have extensive experience in this type of projects, I can confirm that it is possible. We usually perform this role on a short-term basis – until the client's company hires a chief accountant. In addition, based on our experience, we frequently offer advice to the client during the recruitment process for this post. Sometimes,

or on a permanent basis.

The key to success in this type of assignments is to precisely define the tasks to be taken over by the accounting firm and the methods of their performance before the contract is signed, as well as to precisely determine the rules of cooperation between the accounting firm and the in-house accounting team.

#### **Are there any disadvantages of outsourcing accounting services to an external accounting firm?**



” A decision to outsource some tasks to a third party is always based on a cost-benefit analysis.

Like any solution, outsourcing of accounting-related processes also has its weaknesses, but an appropriate contract with an accounting firm can minimise them.

The first characteristic of this solution that some organisations may consider a disadvantage is the loss of direct control over bookkeeping and limited direct access to financial data concerning their business activities. If a particular company finds it to be an obstacle, this issue can be eliminated by a precise specification of detailed deadlines and reporting methods in the contract for accounting services so that the accounting firm's work can be verified. It is also advisable to arrange for remote access to accounting data to the extent expected by the client. A way of verifying the accounting firm's work can also be an audit of the financial statements (if the company is under a statutory obligation to have an audit or decides to do so on a voluntary basis).

Another issue is that of the accounting firm's liability. One needs to be aware that it is the client that is ultimately liable for the work of the accounting firm before the tax authorities, and the client may subsequently have a claim against the accounting firm on this basis. The scope of liability of the accounting firm is determined by the contract for accounting services or – if it lacks relevant provisions – by the laws governing the general principles of civil law liability.

Another issue is, of course, the fact that a third party gains access to confidential information associated with the client's business activities and the details of the client's customers. Yet, issues related to data confidentiality are typically specified in the contract concluded with the accounting firm.

” **Before a decision is made, one should take into consideration their employees' competences, the capability of arranging replacements for team members as well as the efficiency of the accounting team's work.**

#### **So how can one decide: in-house or outsourced accounting?**

A decision to outsource some tasks to a third party is always based on a cost-benefit analysis. Before a decision is made, one should take into consideration their employees' competences, the capability of arranging replacements for team members as well as the efficiency of the accounting team's work. It will also be important to calculate the costs associated with both of these solutions. One should bear in mind, however, that the costs of in-house accounting do not only include employees' salaries, monthly bills and the time spent on matters not directly related to the company's core business. These are also the costs of implementing, adapting and maintaining financial and accounting systems,

the money spent on securing and protecting confidential data, the costs of training related to tax law changes and other training, as well as the costs of recruitment and integration of employees.

All in all, some aspects that clients consider to be outside their main area of interest become a central focus in terms

of development and improvement for an external accounting firm's specialists. Entrepreneurs who decide to outsource accounting processes get safe procedures – carefully tailored to the scale of their business and the industry. At our company we also have a dedicated team responsible for the development of digital solutions and security systems, which further minimises the risk of software failures or update problems. Thanks to scalability, flexibility and a process-oriented approach to its activities, the team makes sure that the dynamically changing legal requirements do not pose a challenge to the client's business, and the client thus gets resources and means necessary for business development.

**Thank you for the interview.♦**

# We are expanding the scope of cooperation with global business

An interview with *Miłosz Aleksander*, Vice President, Head of Global Shared Services at Tate & Lyle.

**FOCUS ON Business:** With a history spanning over 160 years, Tate & Lyle is a London Stock Exchange listed global supplier of ingredients and solutions to the food industry. What is the global structure of the company and what is the position of its branch in Łódź?

**Miłosz Aleksander, Tate & Lyle:** At Tate & Lyle, we have more than 3,000 employees working in 60 locations across 30 countries. The main pillars of our global structure are Global Operations – ensuring safe, efficient and sustainable running of global production facilities; Innovation and Commercial Development, which identifies and develops new business opportunities and creates and commercializes innovative specialty food ingredients and technologies; Corporate Affairs – responsible for global communications, government and community relations, Legal team, Human Resources and Business Performance.

We as Global Shared Services play a significant role in the Business Performance team, supporting the organization with financial activities to deliver our long-term growth strategy.

**What processes are supported and operated by the Global Shared Services center in Łódź?**

These are primarily finance processes: General Ledger, financial reporting, payment processes, receivables management, cash management, taxes. Moreover, for the last three years we have

been developing our Center of Excellence department, created by high-class specialists, which provides advanced financial analyses, budgeting, financial forecasts, as well as detailed reports that support key business decisions.

Our structure also includes the procurement department, the HR department and HR Shared Services, the customer service department and some processes that form part of the global IT. Together, this makes over 30 teams.

We want to be perceived not only as a service provider, but mostly as a business partner, which is why we focus on continuous improvement and development of our processes and expanding the scope of cooperation with global business.

**Nearly 15 years ago, when the company was searching for the best place to locate its GSS center in Europe, the competition was between 37 cities. The opening of a branch in Łódź in 2011, as well as the move to a new headquarters in the same city, proves that you've found an ideal climate here, conducive to the operation of the center. So what are the strengths of Łódź that you consider crucial?**

Everything starts with people. It's the people that create the atmosphere, build a strong team and are responsible for the success of everything we are doing. We have been lucky that since the very beginning of our operations in

Łódź, we have been meeting extraordinary people, who drive our growth, bring countless ideas and a great enthusiasm to take action. This is appreciated by our business partners, often setting our team as a model for other units at Tate & Lyle group. This makes us extremely proud.

Apart of that, Łódź is a city that has taken a huge step towards its development and the creation of a world-class business hub in recent years. We can see how dynamically the city works for better cooperation with business and we want to be part of this journey. We are sure that the best is yet to come.

**Tate & Lyle is commonly associated not only with the latest technologies and modern infrastructure, which company uses in its daily activities, but it is also known in Łódź for supporting pro-ecological and pro-social activities. How do employees find such initiatives?**

Supporting local communities and caring for the environment that surrounds us are 2 out of 3 pillars of Tate & Lyle's Purpose. Since the beginning of our presence in Łódź, we have been engaging our team in CSR activities. Worth to highlight that we don't need to ask them twice when it comes to this type of activities. We have several theme groups fully created by our employees. These are the Charity, Eco and Active teams that drive local initiatives, proactively define CSR tasks and engage other team members to join them.

” Everything starts with people. It's the people that create the atmosphere, build a strong team and are responsible for the success of everything we are doing. We have been lucky that since the very beginning of our operations in Łódź, we have been meeting extraordinary people.



Every year we organize a dozen charity and ecological campaigns, supporting local orphanages, foundations, hospices, and animal shelters. On top of that, members of our Active Team represent the company in several sports competitions a year, at the same time, promoting healthy lifestyle among their colleagues.

Definitely one of the most important initiatives in 2022 was the revitalization of Anstadt Square in Łódź and the financial support we provided, which turned out to be the highest donation in the history of the City for the development of green areas. This spring, on the refreshed square, together with the city's Department of Environmental Development, we will organize ecological workshops for our team, which we hope will be just a first step of this promising cooperation with the Department.

consisting of representatives of various departments was involved in the selection, which gave us confidence that the new office would be attractive from various angles: location, security, IT solutions, Environmental Health and Safety, as well as the infrastructure of the building and its surroundings. We were unanimous in this choice and we are sure that we made the right decision.

The new office will be modern in terms of design and applied solutions. Since our working model is very flexible and we work from home most of the time, the project is focused on fostering collaboration and integration between teams, with many places for meetings, brainstorming and joint work on projects. Working from the office like that is supposed to be a valuable pleasure, not an obligation to fulfill. This is a very important step for our development and

**” Working from the office is supposed to be a valuable pleasure, not an obligation to fulfill. This is a very important step for our development and further building of a strong brand on the local market.**

Last, but not least, in the tragic event, which is the war in Ukraine, thanks to the huge support from the company and the Corporate Affairs department, we were able to donate a significant amount to local organizations supporting refugees and those who remained in the war zone. Also in this case, the support from employees was invaluable. Our team actively engaged in charity actions, bringing countless gifts, which we later donated to the City. We are extremely grateful to them and proud of their commitment.

**How does the company's commitment to modern technology solutions and care for the environment, as well as the desire to meet the expectations of employees, fit into the choice of a new headquarters?**

The choice of the new location was preceded by very thorough analyzes of both the company's needs and the needs of the team. A diverse working group

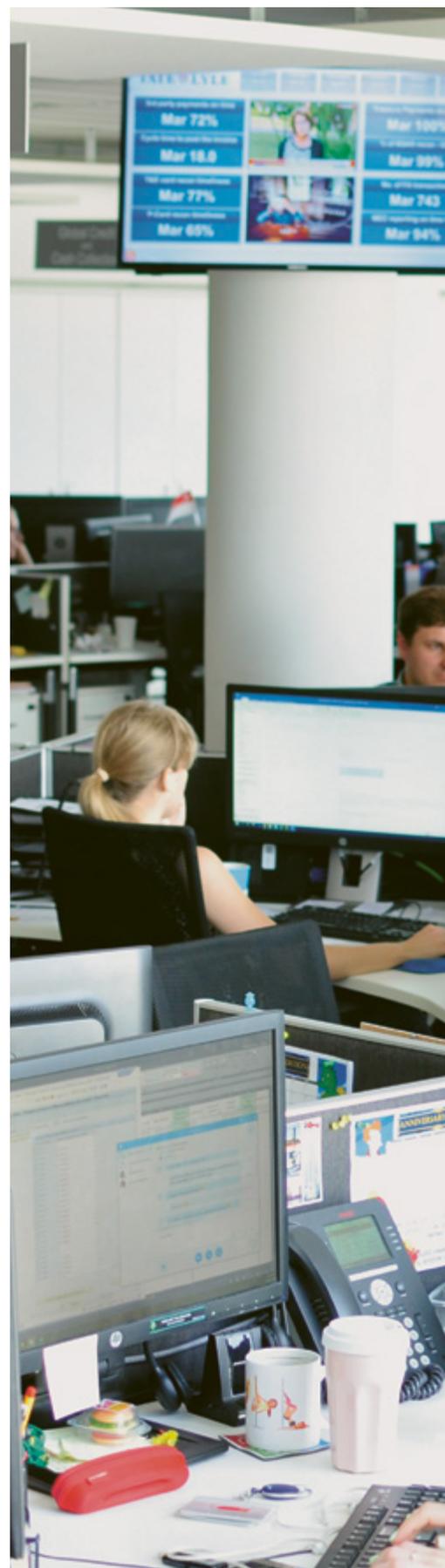
further building of a strong brand on the local market.

**What are the development plans for your center in the coming years?**

Investing in what our most valuable asset, which is our people – their knowledge, skills and engagement, we will confidently step to the future. Our main goal is to transform Shared Services to Global Business Services, and as a result – full control over the end-to-end processes. To achieve this, we focus on optimization and improvement of processes, continuously monitor the needs of our business partners and propose customized solutions. We invest in automation and new technologies that will help us deliver that.

We are determined and we have all the means to become a world-class Global Business Services. We are well on our way to get there.

**Thank you for the interview.♦**





# THE RWANDAN OUTSOURCING OPPORTUNITY

*Interview with Mr. Yves Iradukunda,  
Permanent Secretary of Rwanda's  
Ministry of ICT & Innovation.*



**Wiktor Doktor, Pro Progressio: Can you please shed more light on the development of the BPO and IT sector in Rwanda?**

**Yves Iradukunda, Rwanda's Ministry of ICT & Innovation:** The IT sector has been core to Rwanda's transformation strategy for a long time. As the government, we have made significant investments in that direction over

the last two decades, mainly focusing on infrastructure and skills. To build the supporting infrastructure we equipped the entire country with a reliable fiber backbone totaling 7,000 km, secured 3 independent connections to the East African Seacom submarine cable system and built an LTE network that covers 95% of the country. Even more important have been our investments in

” **The IT sector has been core to Rwanda's transformation strategy for a long time.**



skills: these range from our broad “one laptop a child” initiative that focuses on teaching digital literacy to all our youth to partnerships with world leading Carnegie Mellon University, which opened its Africa campus in Kigali to train the future pan-African leaders in IT.

The outsourcing sector has always been part of the broader vision and 5 years ago the government decided to really focus on it: we worked with BPO operators and analysts to better understand

Rwanda’s value proposition, benchmarked costs against global peers and reviewed the regulatory system and processes. Our focus on making the first deal happen really helped in showing the potential of the industry. In the end, the strong commitment of all stakeholders was critical to secure Tek Experts and CCI to open operations in Rwanda.

Looking back, I am impressed at what we were able to build together over the last years, despite challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **What is the current size and maturity of the Rwandan BPO and IT industry?**

The sector is certainly nascent but growing fast. According to different international analysts there are between 4,000 and 7,000 GBS workers in Rwanda serving international and domestic clients.

As the government, we are closely working with a dozen companies that deliver BPO and IT solutions for global clients, many of which just recently set up in Rwanda. To date, they employ around 1,000 people and project to grow to at least 4,000 employees over the next two years. If you look at the services areas by FTE breakdown, you find around 50% providing voice support, 25% technical support and 25% software development.

There are also several other companies in the pipeline that we expect to set up in Rwanda relatively soon and which should double the numbers I just mentioned.

**” According to different international analysts there are between 4,000 and 7,000 GBS workers in Rwanda serving international and domestic clients.**



**What are the education programs available in Rwanda, which help people to work in BPO/IT industries?**

First of all, there is the traditional education system in Rwanda, which produces around 50,000 higher education graduates each year, of which around 2,000 graduate in ICT.

We also have a range of specialized training schemes, especially targeting IT skills. One of those – Carnegie Mellon University – I already mentioned. Two other important IT education institutions in Rwanda are the college of Science and Technology and the Rwanda Coding Academy, which focuses on Software Development, Embedded Systems Programming, and Cyber-Security.

For the less tech focused BPO jobs, we work very closely with Harambee Youth Accelerator, an NGO that helped thousands of young South Africans to get BPO jobs. Harambee helps us to identify generally qualified youth and to upskills them according to employer needs. Their training mostly focuses on language capabilities and general soft skills. For the BPO operators we are working with, this is tremendously valuable support. Another partner of ours is Education First, a Swedish education company. They are providing English training to over 20,000 professionals in the tourism industry and are now training 1,000 potential BPO candidates.

**Are there any governmental programs, grants, benefits that support growth of BPO and IT in Rwanda?**

Much of the support is provided in close collaboration with our partners, who are often better suited to carry out those tasks. For the BPO sector, we formed a tripartite partnership with Harambee, who I already mentioned, and GIZ, the German Agency for International Cooperation. Under their Special Initiative for Jobs, GIZ is able to provide job training grants to BPO companies, thereby making it easier and more attractive for operators to set up in Rwanda.

The government complements these efforts through targeted incentives. For example, most ICT equipment

is exempt from import duty and VAT and corporate income tax – normally 30% – is reduced to 15% for companies exporting the majority of their services. The government also has the flexibility to negotiate tailored support schemes if they are needed. In the case of BPO, we are often requested to grant additional work permits so that companies can initially bring in the managerial and training talent they require. We are also open to companies who want to set up their pan-African hubs in Rwanda to serve other languages available in Africa through pan-African talent based in Rwanda.

**What are the languages most commonly spoken at the Rwandan BPO and IT centers and what countries do the clients come from?**

English is clearly the most common language but there are also some operators offering French and bilingual capabilities. As I mentioned before, there are even some who are considering to provide Portuguese and other languages from here, although that would clearly require to bring pan-African talent to Rwanda.

We find that many clients come from the US and Germany, with Germany being particularly interested in technical support and software development.

**In terms of salary levels – can you give us a sample for a typical BPO / IT role available in Rwanda?**

Salaries obviously depend on the services offered and the respective skills of the employees. In a call center setting, your typical salaries would start with around \$150 to \$200 take home per month. When it gets to higher value services such as tech support, you are looking at \$300 to \$500 per month.

**What is the growth potential for the BPO and IT industry in the coming years?**

I am confident that BPO and IT industry is one of our main growth drivers. Yes, it is still very nascent and yes, it is still small but that's how everything starts. I see a lot of excitement when I speak with



” For the BPO operators we are working with, this is tremendously valuable support.



” **The Rwandan growth model which is based on equal opportunity, dignity and green growth receives a lot of support from industry captains all over the world.**

the companies here and a lot of potential for growth. One interesting point that I keep hearing is that Rwandans are eager to learn and improve and that that eagerness really drives client satisfaction, even if they sometimes start with a lower skills level than what you may find in more established BPO destinations.

Beyond the existing opportunity, I think there is a lot of room for the government to further strengthen Rwanda’s value proposition. For example, we are now starting to get a critical mass of demand for talent from employers. This makes it easier for us to sync our education system with their needs. Before that, it was always a bit of a theoretical undertaking to teach the skills our youth needs to succeed in these jobs. Now we can partner up with the companies, align our education programs and training initiatives and get direct feedback from

the companies on what worked and what did not.

Equally, I see a massive opportunity for impact sourcing, which we are not yet fully exploiting. The Rwandan growth model which is based on equal opportunity, dignity and green growth receives a lot of support from industry captains all over the world. Many companies are willing to engage in Rwanda. I believe that for a lot of those the BPO / ITO sector offers a compelling opportunity: source some of your already outsourced services from Rwanda and create thousands of direct jobs that truly transform the lives of those employees and their communities.

**Thank you so much for the inspiring talk.♦**

# INVESTMENT NEWS

## NEW PROJECTS BY THE DESIGN GROUP

Following last year's interior design realizations for companies such as Allegro, Bacardi-Martini, and Provident, this year brings new unconventional projects by architects from the Warsaw-based studio, The Design Group. With the start of 2023, the interior design project for the main headquarters of the OLX Group in Poznań has come to light.

– *In the OLX Group office, we combined a multipurpose space with a homey flair. We wanted this workplace to support the individual needs of employees, and at the same time, to allow for building and strengthening relationships. That's why there are a lot of rooms and lounges where one can work in silence, conduct a brainstorming session or at least organize a call with some of the team working from home. What's more, we've made sure that individual zones or rooms are flexible and give the possibility to make changes in the arrangement of furniture and even walls, depending on the current needs or situation* – says Konrad Krusiewicz, CEO of The Design Group.

Less than a month later, The Design Group presented another project, which is the implementation of the interiors of the headquarters of PricewaterhouseCoopers Service Delivery Center, occupying nine floors of the .KTW II office building in Katowice.

– *Due to the unusual location of the office, culture, art, and regional traditions became one of the main guidelines for the design of the PricewaterhouseCoopers Service Delivery Center headquarters. At the same time, each space was designed individually, based on arrangements with the client and its employees. As a result, we created an office that fuses the core values for PricewaterhouseCoopers, the Silesian*

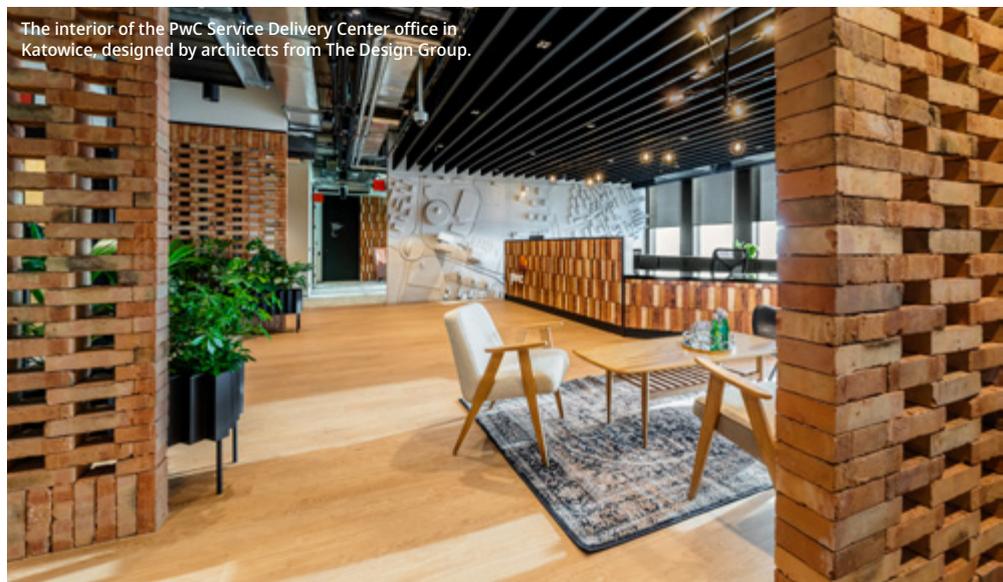
*identity and the business character of the region. Industrialism is combined here with modernity and it's complemented by cosy, homey accents* – explains arch.

Marta Konarska from The Design Group is responsible for the design of the office.

Source: The Design Group



The interior of the OLX Group office in Poznań, designed by architects from The Design Group.



The interior of the PwC Service Delivery Center office in Katowice, designed by architects from The Design Group.

## PANATTONI WITH THE FIRST BREEAM OUTSTANDING CERTIFICATE IN POLAND

Panattoni has received an "Outstanding" rating under the BREEAM International New Construction system for Panattoni Park Szczecin III (halls A and B). This is the first such high level of certification in the industrial real estate market in Poland for a newly built investment. Its implementation was preceded by detailed life-cycle cost (LCC) and life-cycle analysis (LCA) of the facility for a period of 60 years. During construction, energy and water consumption were carefully monitored, harmful CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were minimized, and thermal imaging was performed upon completion. The halls have been adapted to climate change and a possible change of use in the future. The project is located just 500 meters from public transportation and is accessible to people with disabilities.

Panattoni Park Szczecin III is located in the capital of the West Pomeranian region on Kniewska Street. The two certified halls occupy a total of more than 30,000 sqm. The facility used some water-saving measures. State-of-the-art technologies – including leak prevention devices, water-efficient fixtures and motion detectors – reduced water



consumption by 57.6 per cent. As a result of all these measures, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were reduced by 50.8 per cent.

Green areas around the development have also been cared for, increasing the biodiversity of the local ecosystem. The plantings do not require watering and rely solely on rainfall, at any time of the year, as confirmed by a report from

a qualified ecologist. The eco-friendly meadows and pocket parks maintain moisture, prevent soil erosion, reduce air temperature, and are among the most effective oxygen producers and carbon sinks. The right choice of plants also helps provide food and shelter for local fauna.

Source: Panattoni

## EUROPEAN OFFICES RECAPTURE THEIR MOMENTUM WITH LEASING ACTIVITY UP 15%

Market analysis from real estate services firm Cushman & Wakefield shows that Europe's office leasing markets are in rude health as they reap the benefits of markets fully reopening from Covid-related restrictions. A total of 12.6 million sqm of office space was leased in 2022, a 15% jump on the 10.9 million sqm leased in 2021, and sits well above the fifteen-year average of 10.3 million sqm.

The growth in activity was evident across the majority of markets with 23 out of 30 markets tracked reporting year-on-year growth in leasing activity. Major markets including Milan (+37%), Warsaw (+34%), Madrid (+32%), Paris (+26%) and London (+22%) all showed robust levels of activity.

Nigel Almond, Head of Data Analytics at Cushman & Wakefield, said: – *As occupancy levels pick-up, occupiers are focussed on taking the best-in-class space in the most desirable locations to*

*attract and retain staff and ensure they have the right space to enable more flexible ways of working as well as ensuring there is the right space for collaboration, staff wellbeing and connectivity. With a growing number of countries now demanding tighter environmental standards, occupiers are focussed on securing space in buildings that meet the highest standards.*

The drive for good quality space has helped drive rental increases on prime offices, which rose by 6.2% year-on-year in Q4 2022 compared with just 1.7% in Q4 2021. This was the strongest annualised reading since mid-2008.

The total amount of space available for occupation across Europe showed a modest 0.7% increase year-on-year to 22.6 million sqm. Equivalent to 8.1% of total stock. This ratio has been stable at this level over the previous four quarters.

Luxembourg has the lowest ratio of available space to stock at 4.2% with

three German markets – Hamburg (4.4%), Berlin (4.7%) and Munich (5.2%) – in the lowest five markets, with Paris fifth at 5.5%. Many cities are benefiting from stronger levels of take-up and limited construction activity, which is helping to keep the amount of available space at relatively low levels.

Whilst the market is not immune to broader economic headwinds, over recent quarters we have seen completion levels start to fall and the level of construction activity fall too. A total of 4.3 million sqm of new space was completed in 2022, down from 4.8 million sqm in 2021. The amount of space under construction totalled 15.2 million sqm at the end of 2022, down from 15.6 million sqm in Q4 2021. This is equivalent to 5.4% of stock.

Source: Cushman & Wakefield

# IT industry in Ukraine remains fully operational during wartime

*The Ukrainian tech industry has made considerable efforts to ensure its resilience and enter new work formats in military realities. With an optimistic view of the future, the IT Ukraine Association conducted a national "Do IT like Ukraine" research to analyze the role of the IT industry in Ukraine, its contribution to the national economy during the War, and the potential of the industry in the future recovery of the country. The goal of the research is also to pay tribute to the selfless work of Ukrainian IT professionals who deliver, volunteer, and protect society in cyberspace and on the front lines.*

## **BEFORE AND AFTER: A NEW STARTING POINT**

Before the War, the national IT industry became one of the largest exporters of IT services in Europe, which grew by 25–30% annually and generated more than 4% of Ukraine's GDP. The IT market was the largest and constantly growing due to formal education and switching, providing the largest number of graduates with IT specialization.

” **Before the War, the national IT industry became one of the largest exporters of IT services in Europe, which grew by 25–30% annually and generated more than 4% of Ukraine's GDP.**

The War started a new chapter in the history of the industry. According to the results of 2022, the industry brought USD 7.3 billion in export revenue to the economy of Ukraine and reached a growth mark of 6% compared to the previous year.

*– In the conditions of war and numerous challenges, the IT industry and the entire country demonstrate phenomenal resilience. The industry remains*

*the only export branch of Ukraine, which fully works in wartime, maintains the country's economic front, actively assists the army and supports a powerful volunteer movement. IT companies continue to work and implement projects even in blackouts, pay taxes on time, increase their presence in the global market and attract new customers. Thanks to such unique features and experience, the Ukrainian IT industry has all the prerequisites to become the main driver of the reconstruction of Ukraine after Our Victory – Konstantin Vasyuk, Executive Director of the Association emphasizes.*

## **THE RESILIENCE OF IT COMPANIES**

Most technological companies were able to ensure the continuity of business processes, to maintain productivity at the level of 85–90% in the first month of the War and starting from April – to restore positive growth dynamics.

Positive indicators in the industry became possible due to the large-scale and rapid reformatting of the industry during the War. Most companies implemented business continuity plans effectively, switched to flexible work models, relocated teams and diversified offices in Ukraine and abroad.

## **RELOCATION**

As a result of the full-scale invasion, 70.8% of IT companies conducted an unplanned

relocation, a quarter of them – a full one. 16.7% of companies conducted a full or partial relocation abroad. The geography of company relocation has changed, and today the list of Top 10 countries includes Poland, Germany, the USA, Portugal, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania, Moldova, Spain, and Canada. 81.5% of IT companies that relocated abroad still plan to return their business to Ukraine under the condition of lifting martial law and a complete cessation of hostilities.

## **IT PROFESSIONALS SUPPORT THE UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT**

From the first days of the War, the IT industry has been actively helping the Armed Forces and the government. In 70% of companies, professionals serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine; in 43% of the companies, the number of professionals in the Armed Forces is up to 5%. In 25% of companies, this figure is from 5% to 15% of professionals. A separate track is the industry's support of the vital volunteer movement, which the 200,000 IT army represents today. 95% of companies have at least one IT professional who has joined the cyber army.

Fundraising and volunteering have also become integral to the companies' day-to-day activities. 95% of IT companies and more than 90% of IT professionals regularly transfer funds to help the government purchase regimentals, enginery,



drones, necessary equipment and weapons to bring the victory over the enemy closer. Almost 18% of companies do not advertise the help they provide.

#### THE ONLY FULLY FUNCTIONING EXPORT INDUSTRY

The industry remains the only export branch of Ukraine that is fully operational during wartime and was able to increase export volumes compared to last year, while others suffered from significant losses. For example, the metallurgy fell by 59%, the export of mineral products by 46.1%, and the chemical industry products by 42.6%. By contrast, the share of IT services exports in GDP increased by 51% and is currently 5.4%. Similarly, the share of IT in the export of services increased by 24% and made up almost half (47.0%) of the total service export.

As of November 1, according to the State Tax Service of Ukraine, the amount of taxes and fees paid by the IT industry amounted to UAH 26.6 billion.

Companies continue to work continuously and implement projects even in blackouts, pay taxes on time, attract new clients, and actively enter the global market. According to the research, 43.1% of IT companies expect business growth for the year. 93.4% of IT companies plan to continue investing in Ukraine.

#### IT MARKET

Despite the War, the IT market is growing. Today, the industry has almost 309,000 IT professionals. Korn Ferry's 2022

” **A separate track is the industry's support of the vital volunteer movement, which the 200,000 IT army represents today. 95% of companies have at least one IT professional who has joined the cyber army.**

IT industry compensation study revealed several key trends:

- the specificity of the work of the industry determines the involvement of sole traders by IT companies. 76% of companies work with this model;
- despite the War, most IT companies planned to increase the compensation budget; in particular, 82% of IT companies planned to increase compensation by the end of 2022;
- there is a significant difference in wages depending on the position of an IT professional or employee.

#### BLACKOUTS AND ONGOING CHALLENGES

On October 10, 2022, Russia began to carry out massive missile strikes on energy infrastructure facilities, which led to the absence of electricity supply throughout Ukraine. This became another challenge for the industry and brought to the fore the risks connected with the lack of Internet and cell connection.

The Ukrainian IT business does everything possible to ensure maximum readiness for any scenario of events. Most companies are constantly adapting their BCP and providing several options for responding to risks:

- the spaces are equipped with generators
- a diversified network of Internet providers and Starlinks are used
- fuel is reserved
- key systems are installed in the "cloud"
- relocation to another region is paid
- offices are equipped for continuous work and accommodation of teams
- co-working is paid
- there are various internal channels for informing/notifying employees
- power banks and other equipment are purchased for employees.

Ukrainian IT business has been coping with one of the hardest challenges ever – the business operation in wartime.

And while the world is facing inescapable changes (such as dynamic market flow and the labour market transformation), the Ukrainian IT sector is ready to suggest possible solutions for dealing with the crisis. Ukrainian businesses have already adapted to some of the requirements posed by the changing market realities and are now ready to share their unique experience with international partners.♦

The article has been created in cooperation with



# Goal: zero emission. Carbon footprint in office buildings

— Text | Marcin Uske —

*More and more companies operating in the real estate and construction industries are guided by the requirements related to the concept of sustainable development. The aim of the ecological approach is to reduce the negative impact of buildings on the environment throughout their life cycle. As it turns out, the emission of greenhouse gases while operating the building, constitutes a significant share in the overall carbon footprint of respective facilities. We are looking at the results of the analysis of the operational carbon footprint in office buildings conducted by Torus.*

Analysing the emission of operational carbon dioxide as for the Torus office buildings erected in the past decade has been conducted side by side with developer's long-standing partner in LEED certification, VvS | Architects & Consultants. A special computational model has been developed for these purposes, accounting for multiple parameters, which will ensure reliable, representative results for respective buildings. The subsequent stage will embrace the emission analysis during a day-to-day use of the building, and the comprehensively-recognized business activity.

## NEED FOR CONTINUOUS SELF-IMPROVEMENT

The analysis of the operational carbon footprint is of paramount importance, as According to the latest data provided by Carbon Leadership Forum, around 30% of all global emissions of carbon dioxide are attributed to the construction sector. No less than 20% originates from operating the buildings (so called 'operational carbon'), whereas at least 8% comes from the production process, transportation, installations, maintenance and disposal of building materials i.e. from processes included in the so-called 'embodied carbon'.

Torus began their path toward zero-emissivity from an analysis of operational carbon dioxide for the buildings

erected in the past decade. The analysis covered four stages of the Alchemia compound, and two buildings of the Officyna investment in Gdańsk. The obtained information will be used to improve the design process, and to implement ever-innovative solutions in future investments, all within the cycle of continuous improvement.

*– I am very happy to have had the opportunity, for many years now, to cooperate with such an innovative company. Torus took up the challenge, and among the very first developers in Poland, upon developing a respective model and completing a detailed analysis*

*of the operational carbon footprint, began to share data, in a transparent manner, on the emission of carbon dioxide resulting from the company-erected buildings – says dr Agnes Vorbrodt, owner of VvS, who has been offering similar services to the consulted facilities located in Boston for many years now.*

## MODEL ANALYSIS

The analysis of the operational carbon dioxide footprint of Torus-erected buildings has been conducted on the basis of the facility energy-related modelling. The point is to directly compare a referenced building of particular parameters,



Patio between Aurum and Platinum office towers, Alchemia, Gdańsk.



prepared in compliance with the ASHRAE 90.1 norms, with the proper blueprint of the building. The 3D solid of the building is made according to the blueprint, with the model itself taking into consideration the applied mechanical equipment, water consumption, façade parameters, ventilation systems, lighting, or the size of windows. The heat transmission coefficient, or the number of persons or appliances in the buildings, are also accordingly taken into account. The modelling accounts for an hourly variability of parameters across an entire theoretical year.

#### **ARGON – A PASSIVE HOUSE**

The final outcome of the analysis included a calculation of the EUI indicator value (showing the energy consumption of a particular building calculated per unit area), separately for each office building.

*– The building's energy use intensity (EUI) indicator serves as a reference point in calculating energy saving properties of a building, and subsequently, the amount of generated carbon dioxide footprint. In simple terms, it defines how*

*far the building is from the energy-saving benchmark, meaning an environmentally neutral edifice. In the USA, it is considered the main parameter of analysis, where the new buildings are designed so as to reach a certain EUI value. Some of the US leading cities, including Boston, have already introduced mandatory regulations on the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint reduction. At present,*

**” In the modelling analysis of Torus-erected office buildings, the best result was achieved by Argon, a building which is part of the Alchemia compound in Gdańsk.**

*the regulations embrace all new buildings subject to the building-permit process, whereas in the future, they will relate to older facilities as well; though, there are already obligations to report the use*

*of energy and water of such buildings on an annual basis for some time now. The European market and respective legislation, although being at a different stage of development, are heading in the same direction, which is reflected by the environmental rules included in the ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) – comments dr Agnes Vorbrodtt.*

In the modelling analysis of Torus-erected office buildings, the best result was achieved by Argon, a building which is part of the Alchemia compound in Gdańsk, i.e. 116 kWh per square metre (per year). However, what does it mean in practice, and how does it impact the environment? The energy modelling provides an illustration of the comparison of the EUI indication, meaning how the growing trees can reduce the environmental pollution caused by cars, or how they can positively influence the environment as a whole. In case of Argon (in comparison to a referenced building according to the ASHRAE norms), the result means, for instance, removing 167 cars of the roads, or a 10-year-long

Officyna, Gdańsk.



growth of 12,817 tree saplings. For comparison, the first stage of Alchemia achieved the result of 124 kWh per square metre (158 cars or 12,146 tree plantings, respectively). What should be highlighted, however, is the somewhat different size of the buildings, which impacts the obtained results. Referring to the Passive House norms, which are less precise in terms of the methodology compared to the model developed for Torus, the Argon building is nearing the fulfilment of the criteria set for a passive building.

**CERTIFICATION A CORNERSTONE**

Growing environmental awareness, both on the level of societies, and countries or institutions alike, sets the directions and framework for various domains of our life, and for further development of multiple industries as well. The construction sector shall be subject to particular regulations, as its contribution remains meaningful, and as a matter of fact, we can already see it. The worldwide systems of certification of buildings, including

the American LEED, laid foundations for an ecological building process. Nowadays, the systems are already being used by all leading commercial market developers in Poland. As it is shown by the analysis of the operational CO<sub>2</sub> footprint of the buildings erected by Torus, based on the properly developed model, the effort made in the certification process pays off, and it significantly helps to reach the goal of zero-emissivity.

*– The UE regulations, alongside ESG rules, are considered challenges for the entire Polish real estate sector. The know-how and experience acquired while certifying buildings are of vital importance in this respect. We have already done a considerable amount of*

*work, which is visible and acknowledged by the respective results. It makes you feel pleased as we know we are headed in the right direction. Our R&D team are already working on future solutions that will make our activity and buildings increasingly more friendly to the environment – says Alicja Napiórkowska, manager of investment planning department in Torus.*

In Poland, the first LEED certificate was awarded by U.S. Green Building Council in 2010. The Platinum Level, the highest recognition in the 4-grade scale, has so far been reached by nearly 70 buildings in Poland. 10 of them are located in the Tricity, with as many as 7 of them erected by Torus in Gdańsk.♦

**Author**



**Marcin Uske**  
PR Manager, TORUS



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# To be or not to be at the office?

— Text | Ewelina Kałużna —

*The coronavirus pandemic is most likely behind us, but the changes it initiated or accelerated will stay with us for longer, and perhaps forever. They affect various areas of our lives, including work.*

The social distancing forced by the spread of the virus and the necessity to work remotely brought a number of challenges to those of us for whom the use of a "home office" was rare or non-existent before the pandemic. Also, those employees who previously had the opportunity to work remotely, did not use this option all the time. Switching from working in the office (whether 5 days a week or less) to working only remotely was a challenge. As social beings, needing contact with other people for our well-being, we missed being with co-workers and complained about the difficulties in communication and collaboration. At the same time, those of us who worked surrounded by active household members or noisy neighbors lamented the lack of conditions that allowed them to focus, which were provided by the office space. Some home office workers suffered from the lack of an ergonomic workstation at home, or rather its effects – discomfort and pain in various areas of the musculoskeletal system, requiring the intervention of a physiotherapist or orthopedist.

Over time, we have learned to live with all this, getting used to remote work to such an extent that today many people cannot imagine returning to the office full-time. We got used to the home office and we want it to be a permanent feature of our work model. At the same time, we appreciated the advantages of working from the office and want to combine going to the office with working remotely, not only from home, but from anywhere.

## ADAPT OR PERISH

Before the pandemic, the hybrid work model was a rarity, a kind of benefit

offered only by some employers, mainly from the private sector and in the largest urban centers. The results of the study on the state of hybrid work in Poland, conducted in September 2022 by the consulting company Deloitte, indicate that many organizations have not yet introduced clear rules regarding this new work model, which often translates into negative employee experience and reduced team productivity. At the same time, the data obtained in this study indicate that the ability to work partially remotely (at least 40% of the time) is of great importance to employees.

” **The share of people who prefer the hybrid work model has increased significantly (from 30% to 57%), making it the most frequently selected model.**

Nearly half of the respondents declared a willingness to resign from their current jobs in the event of an enforced increase in the number of working days in the office. At the same time, one in three surveyed employees would agree to lower earnings in order to obtain or maintain a satisfactory number of days working remotely.

The high popularity of the hybrid model is visible not only in large corporations, but also in the sector of small and medium-sized enterprises. Only

one in three employees from this sector returned to the office permanently. At the same time, the share of people who prefer the hybrid work model has increased significantly (from 30% to 57%), making it the most frequently selected model. The data comes from the study "Flex Offices in Poland" commissioned by flex office operator, Business Link, which is part of the Skanska Group.

Employers who try to go against the grain and expect or even force their employees to return to the office full-time (such as Elon Musk, the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, who ordered employees to return to the office under threat of dismissal), may face challenges related to talent retention and acquisition. *It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one more responsive to change*, to quote Charles Darwin.

## AN OFFICE WHERE EMPLOYEES WANT TO BE

Many employers understand the new expectations and are adapting models and workplaces to them. Those who excel in anticipating trends started implementing changes already during the pandemic. According to the "Hybrid and Beyond" report published by the real estate consulting company Colliers, one in two organizations rearranged its office space during the pandemic in order to adapt it to the new reality or plans to make such a change in the coming months. We need different offices and a differently organized work environment than 2–3 years ago.

Different, but how? Ones that enable effective work by offering spaces aligned with the nature of the tasks

” One in two organizations rearranged its office space during the pandemic in order to adapt it to the new reality or plans to make such a change in the coming months.

” To enable effective work, an office space must combine coziness, ease of focus and separation from other people when needed.



performed and the individual needs of employees. According to the study entitled "Designing the office of the future" conducted among office users by Skanska and the already mentioned Colliers company, offices that meet these requirements are visited more frequently by employees – on average three times a week. This is one day more than in the case of offices that do not guarantee these conditions.

To enable effective work, an office space must combine coziness, ease of focus and separation from other people when needed, with the possibility of interaction, teamwork and building relations with coworkers and the organization. The trend of creating spaces that are primarily friendly (by offering conditions that are good for our physical and mental health and are inclusive) and as such allow for effective work, is gaining even more importance, regardless of whether

we work best at a joint table or in a quiet room away from others.

In addition to open spaces, various types of conference rooms, workshop rooms, zones for informal meetings and places for videoconferencing are desirable, so that each user can find a place that suits their work style and current task to be performed.

Competition from the home office is fierce. The vast majority, nearly 70% of respondents to the Skanska and Colliers survey claim that they have the right conditions to work effectively from home. At the same time, a significant percentage of respondents (41%) admit that they have a problem with separating work and private life when working from home. A partner working from home at the same time, children staying at home, pets seeking our attention, courier deliveries or a long list of household chores that

**TOP 10 MOST DESIRED AMENITIES AMONG OFFICE USERS**

Source: own compilation based on the report entitled "Designing the office of the future" by Skanska and Colliers.

	„Must have”	„Nice to have”
Grocery store	62%	30%
Restaurant	54%	37%
Office canteen	55%	32%
Parcel locker	42%	41%
Facilities for cyclists	53%	29%
Terrace/Patio	37%	44%
Café	40%	36%
Pharmacy	21%	47%
ATM	20%	47%
Gym/Fitness Club	25%	39%



” One of the most important factors determining the attractiveness of an office is a good location.



Business Link Centrum Południe, Wrocław.



tempt to try to do them in the “meantime” – these are the conditions that in a well-designed office we can cut ourselves off from in order to focus on the work-related tasks on our “do to” lists. And if we are not planning to re-design the existing office, it is worth considering the option of using flex offices. They allow to rent a certain number of workstations for a certain period of time, while offering design aligned with the latest market trends, including a variety of workspaces.

#### NOT JUST PEACE AND QUIET

One of the most important factors determining the attractiveness of an office is a good location. Until recently, this was understood as a location in the city center, accessible by various means of transport and in the vicinity of various retail and cultural facilities. A good office location is, above all, a location with easy and convenient access, according to the aforementioned survey by Skanska and Colliers. The time spent commuting to work affects the number of days employees are willing to come into the office. The longer it takes to get to the office, the less often employees want to go there. People whose commute to the office takes up to 30 minutes, work from the office on average three days a week. Employees whose commute to the office takes more than an hour want to spend less than two days a week there.

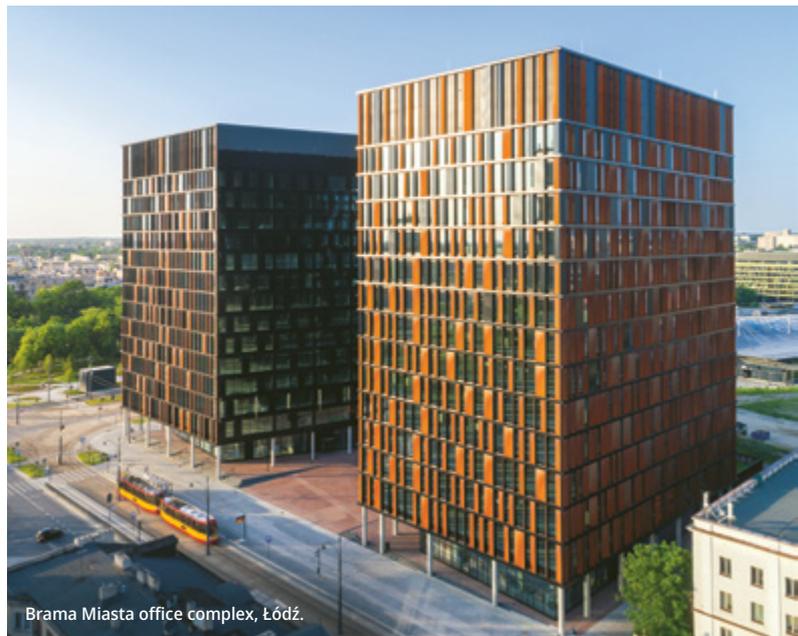
The survey also showed that employees are more likely to return to

the office and spend more time there if certain amenities are available in or around the office building. The availability of restaurants and shops where one can buy food turns out to be one of the key elements to be taken into account when planning your company’s location. Among the 10 most desirable amenities there were also: parcel lockers, facilities for cyclists, a pharmacy, an ATM and a gym or fitness club.

#### THE MAGIC INGREDIENT

Regularly visiting office spaces created by various companies, I see beautiful, modern, sustainable places that meet all the requirements I mention in this article. Despite this, some of them are almost empty. What went wrong? The magic ingredient was missing: purpose. In order to effectively encourage employees to work from the office, we, as employers, must answer the question “why?” and then secure employees’ buyin. If there is no specific reason why we want them to come to the office, then why force them to go there?

The purpose may vary. Observing companies whose offices are teeming with life, I can give some examples for inspiration: effective teamwork thanks to technological solutions supporting creative and innovative processes (e.g. in the increasingly popular Experience Lab or Innovation Lab); easier problem solving thanks to quick and direct communication



P 180 building, Warsaw.

Brama Miasta office complex, Łódź.

(sometimes an informal chat at the desk or coffee machine leads to an "Eureka!" moment); supporting team integration through formal and informal interactions (we work together, learn together, rest together); learning new skills and onboarding of new employees (online training is nice, but some skills are easier to acquire face-to-face); career development and networking (direct interactions support building a personal brand).

If an employer expects employees to come to the office "just because" or because they want to have control over them, I fear that the effect may be quite the opposite.

At the same time, the amended Labor Code comes into force soon. Working on-site will continue to be the basic form of working. Employees will be able to agree on hybrid working with their employers as part of their employment contract or during the course of employment. Some employees – such as parents of children aged below 4 and caregivers of dependent persons or of individuals with disabilities – will be able to work remotely regardless of their employer's permission (with some exceptions). Others will be able to work remotely occasionally, within the limit of 24 days per year. Managers will also be able to issue

a business order for their subordinates to work remotely – in particular cases (such as a fire accident or state of epidemic).

Under the new regulations, employees will not be given full freedom to choose their place of work. The place of remote work will have to be precisely defined, and the employer will be obliged to provide appropriate equipment and devices, as well as to monitor compliance with health and safety regulations. The employer will also be obliged to cover the cost of remote work, in particular of energy and telecom services but also all other costs associated with this type of work. These costs can also be covered though equivalent or allowance. Except for health and safety regulations compliance (employees will be obliged to submit a statement about compliance of their remote workplace with these regulations) employers will also be entitled to control the correctness of the implementation of other regulations – in particular those related to data protection.

The literal introduction of these rules will certainly not be met with enthusiasm – neither from employers nor employees. I am curious to see how the written rules will work in practice and with expectations. Will there be room for a good compromise there?♦

Author

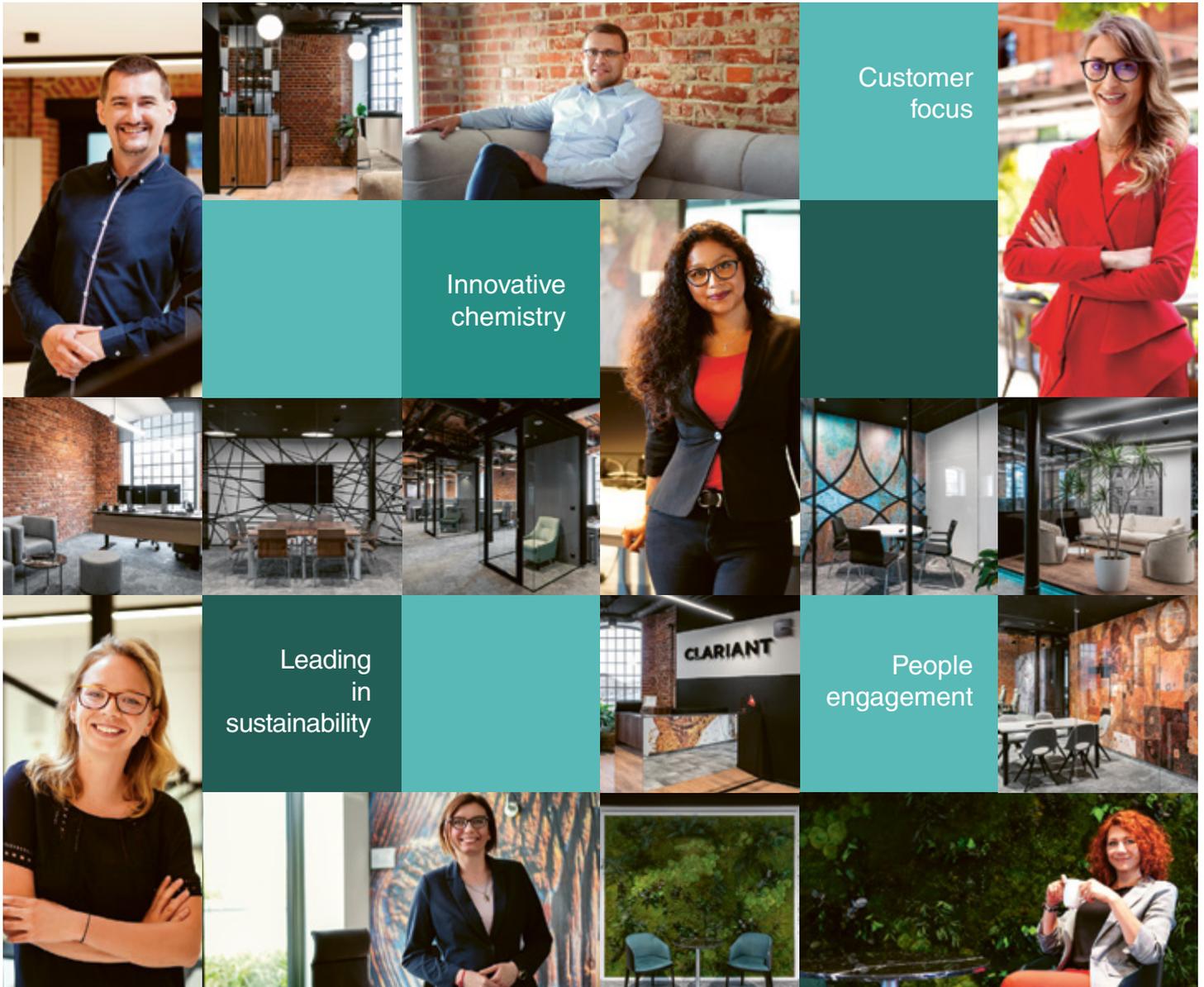


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# Office: where the balance belongs

— Text | Aleksandra Szelağ —

*Dynamic changes require constant adaptation. We already know that it's impossible to go back to the days before the pandemic – this knowledge is backed by our experience, new expectations, and a different cultural situation. On the other hand, we're going back to normal. And we're in for a brand new quality of life. In the new reality, an office needs to compete not only with a range of other physical spaces, but mainly with computers, virtual domain, and remote work. Since we've been able to successfully and effectively shift to online work, why do we still need an office?*

Before the pandemic, it was the main players who set the trends in the office world, while smaller companies adopted the newly defined standards. Is it still the case? The post-pandemic reality forces employers to find a space for their companies somewhere on the broad

spectrum between remote work – which doesn't require any office space – and coming to the office every day. This decision is no longer a matter of trend. More and more companies start to question the need for and the value of office work.

## REMOTE WORK IN A COMPANY

The last two years saw a rapid development of remote work. Work-life balance, so difficult to maintain, was gradually replaced by work-life blending. What is more, apart from the indisputable advantages, we started noticing



numerous limitations of remote work – related mainly to the human need for socialisation. The pandemic effectively deprived us of the opportunities to meet this need. Turning a home space into an office, often without an ergonomic and properly adjusted workstation, working overtime, and extended isolation – all this impacts our health and relationships with family members and with our colleagues. The team spirit and sense of belonging have gradually weakened. Online meetings cannot replace face-to-face interactions, and Zoom or MS Teams sessions failed to deliver the expected results. Lack of personal interactions between team members put a lot of strain on the relationships and affected the quality of teamwork. Some employees, especially those who changed jobs during the pandemic, saw their colleagues for the first time after two years.

Poor relationships within teams combined with hardly any ties to the company resulted in a trend known as the great migration. After all, it takes more than an online meeting or a phone conversation to create a community. Staying in the same physical space involves

operating actual objects and equipment: from a coffee machine to a whiteboard. This is how the employees get the opportunity to experience the same emotions and share a similar experience: starting with a view admired through the window, to using the same furniture and feeling part of a team. All this helps people build associations and form an attachment to the place – to the company.

#### **DO WE STILL NEED OFFICES?**

Interpersonal relations are a basic element of everyday workplace experience – after all, professional activity entails contact and using your competencies, skills, and personality traits to form and maintain relations with other employees. As the relations are formed at the workplace, people form groups that share a common goal and direction. Being a group – a separate unit – is a special kind of bond, which helps you communicate or solve problems. What is more, such relationships can change and transform over time – something that started off as a professional relationship may grow into a lifelong friendship.

” **More and more companies start to question the need for and the value of office work.**





We still need offices, although their function will be different now. In the future, an office will be mainly a place that boosts the people's sense of belonging and identification with the company and with the team. Without these aspects, we are becoming a group of freelancers, who only meet every now and then. It's also good to remember that an office arrangement itself has considerable cultural and relationship-building potential, so it's worth investing in it and adjusting it to the changing reality. Learning about and shaping the elements of organisational culture helps create a unique vibe, an atmosphere the employees are immersed in.

On-site work will be completely different now: organisations need to make sure their physical space is well adjusted to the new challenges and properly arranged to cater to the needs of the people who come to work there. All this makes pre-pandemic arrangements a thing of the past, which means they will have to be replaced with areas that foster collaboration, innovation, and community-building.

#### HOW DO YOU CREATE AN "OFFICE OF TOMORROW"?

Creative effort and collaboration involve more than just groupwork. You also need

some time in solitude, to focus inwards, on your own thoughts. Effective collaboration is a balance between brainstorming, unlimited thought or information exchange, and individual effort and completing assigned tasks. It's good to support each kind of activity by creating easily accessible places, where an employee can go without having to tour the whole office.

An office of the future is a place focused on relationships and interactions, which is why they should rely on flexible, open spaces with mobile boundaries. This is to make sure the users can rearrange the office to address their current needs. Open spaces are usually more flexible because they do not require fixed elements. Such a zone can be rearranged to reflect the latest models or demands.

On the other hand, an office of tomorrow should also be an asylum, a safe haven for all those who find it inconvenient to work from home. Individual work areas will have to be designed to offer the extra peace and quiet, to make the user experience privacy on every level, also visual and acoustic. Creating closed spaces is especially important for those employees who have grown out of being constantly in touch with their team members. What is more, shifting some of the tasks online means we're

” **An office of the future is a place focused on relationships and interactions, which is why they should rely on flexible, open spaces with mobile boundaries.**



stuck with Zoom meetings and extensive phone calls, whether we like them or not. In the office of the future we would therefore expect properly prepared areas with screens and panels, to facilitate our work and mitigate any disturbance or potential difficulties.

#### THE NEW REALITY CALLS FOR A NEW SPACE

We are entering the new reality with new knowledge, experience and lessons learnt during the pandemic and the initial stage of remote work. We still need offices but in a different capacity. For the users – the employees – an office space will be mainly a social asset. On the other hand, an office will be a safe haven, which enables us to retain a work-life balance and makes it easier for us to manage our daily schedule. A properly arranged office fosters focus work in silence – with no unnecessary noise and distractions, which often happen at home.

The office of the future is a place that caters to your needs, especially those that were suppressed during the pandemic. We had to face isolation, distance, and loneliness. The relevant needs were clearly formulated by the respondents of a variety of studies conducted among employees. An office of the future is a place that fosters integration, a sense of belonging, and balance.

Each work necessarily relies on humans – our needs, expectations, and values – while a career, just like any other area of life, follows a certain cycle. Considering a variety of activities, duties, or biographies is aimed at improving the well-being at work and boosting our satisfaction. It's good to recognise the employee's life cycle, their changing needs, and conditions, and to reflect these aspects in the office space, regardless of the global trends, which don't always accommodate the needs of individual companies.◆

” **The office of the future is a place that caters to your needs, especially those that were suppressed during the pandemic.**

#### Author



**Aleksandra Szelağ**  
Workplace Consultant, Nowy Styl  
**NowyStyl**



# Make IT happen in Tricity

*Every year, the Tricity IT sector is growing, and the activity of more and more investors in the area has a very beneficial effect on building the local community. With these joint actions, we are now seeing a hub starting to emerge in the north of the country.*

The development of a technological ecosystem in an area previously oriented more towards industry (shipbuilding and more broadly – maritime) was slightly delayed compared to the rest of the country. The trigger was certainly the development of the BSS market. With more square metres of office space came new investors and future employees began to develop a specialisation in broadly-defined digitisation. Leisure time activities, previously related more to hobbies, such as board games, slowly started to be replaced by events focused on professional interests. Coding sessions evolved into meet-ups packed with lectures and networking opportunities, and then into events with a wide-ranging exchange of

ideas and experiences, with Infoshare and IT Manager of Tomorrow at the forefront.

## AN ARCHIPELAGO OF LONELY ISLANDS

The Tricity's IT industry now comprises 25,000 people, employed by more than 130 companies with diverse specialisations. Among the most recognisable brands are Intel, Nordea, Sii, EPAM, Nike, Boeing, Capgemini and Lyreco. The more investors decide to set up local branches, the more competitive the market becomes. And while high economic growth is important for the Pomeranian economy, there are indications that companies are competing for qualified specialists. With the sector's diverse needs, balanced competition naturally drives

the IT industry forward. Both well-established brands and new companies on the Tricity map engage in initiatives that activate the community with a view to popularising their own values and projects, treating the creation of a coherent social fabric as a secondary issue.

One form of activating the community is through meet-ups. Their primary function is to create space for the powerful IT circle to have an opportunity to develop into a cohesive community, capable of harmonious staff exchanges within an intrinsic structure. And while the vast majority of regular meetings fulfil the above objective, their individual nature makes it difficult to form a coherent body.



” The Tricity's IT industry now comprises 25,000 people, employed by more than 130 companies with diverse specialisations.

## A UNITED COMMUNITY AMID TODAY'S CHALLENGES

One step towards solving this problem was the establishment of the Tricity IT Club, bringing together the leaders of local centres. The quarterly meetings, which have been held for the past two years, provide a platform for experience sharing and networking. The idea of the Club is not so much to bring together local sites as to create an open community, free from corporate rivalry. Younger generations do not identify with brands, but with projects they can be part of. They engage in CSR and ESG activities, they want to change reality, not work for Big Brother. Professional mobility is key for them. Building an IT hub created not only by companies, but also by the community, seems to be the right response to the competition from other Polish agglomerations.

” **In the last year, 7 new small ventures found a home in the Tricity, offering solutions for the biotech, automotive, education and AI industry.**

This is why Invest in Pomerania, founder of the Tricity IT Club, supports initiatives that bring the community together. Among the most egalitarian ones is Tech3Camp, run by Infoshare (in 2022, 12 meetings, 1,388 participants, 38 experts). It is a series of meetings for programmers in the form of lectures combined with networking, which address various industry issues. Another open event, organised by Objectivity, is Pi3 Project Managers in 3City, which is essentially an agora for Project Managers and PMOs, a forum for the free exchange of

ideas and experiences to improve the art of project management.

Whereas the grandest events on the Tricity's IT scene are undoubtedly IT Manager of Tomorrow, dedicated to leaders of the high-tech sector, full of workshops, case studies and discussion panels, which brings together 700 participants every year; and Infoshare, the largest conference in this part of Europe. A place for software developers, start-ups, investors, marketers and anyone interested in the world of future technology. Invest in Pomerania is the initiator of the Pomerania Zone – a space for regional institutions, which combines the promotion of life, work and leisure. The last Infoshare figures are impressive: 6,100 participants, 170 speakers and 544 involved start-ups.

– *Supporting events that promote the local IT industry is one of our priorities. We promote the region because we want as many people as possible to come to Pomerania permanently, combining work with a wide range of leisure activities. To respond to the staffing needs of our investors, we are also actively introducing reskilling initiatives. In this case, our flagship project is the Invest in Pomerania Academy, where we enable hundreds of participants to acquire the skills necessary to work in various specialisations of the digital sector* – says Aleksandra Moszyńska, BSS Promotion Project Manager, Invest in Pomerania.

### BRILLIANT MINDS

Start-ups have a particularly important role to play in the near future. In the last year, 7 new small ventures found a home in the Tricity, offering solutions for the biotech, automotive, education and AI industry.

– *We are constantly investing in a system to promote the region as an attractive place for innovative solutions.*

*We work with business incubators and local universities to provide start-ups not only with space to work, but also with skilled staff ready to work on the most complex projects. We support out-of-the-box thinking and want people with crazy ideas to develop them right here, to become part of the Tricity IT hub* – says Paulina Śmigieliska, BSS Investor's Support Project Manager, Invest in Pomerania.

” **Invest in Pomerania is the initiator of the Pomerania Zone – a space for regional institutions, which combines the promotion of life, work and leisure.**

### LAND OF OPPORTUNITIES

The diverse community ranges from large corporations employing hundreds of people to small businesses made up largely of enthusiasts. By focusing on diversification, the Tricity attracts investors and talent from all over the world. The pandemic showed us that one can work from anywhere, especially in IT. But not everywhere can you do that while sitting on a beach – or have a 10-minute walk from the office to the beach. There is no doubt that environmental factors are one of the advantages of the Tricity IT hub. This is usually one of the less crucial elements of business decisions, but it cannot be underestimated.

With such a high demand for specialists, the conditions offered by Pomerania place it at the forefront of Polish IT hubs, and the rich variety of investors gives hope for further development of the sector.♦

## More information



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# Let's play in Poznań

*With the constant advancement of modern technology and the internet, the gaming industry has become one of the fastest-growing branch of the creative industries. Games used to be seen as an infantile form of wasting time that did not add much substance to people's lives. Such an opinion was often held by the older part of society. Today, the average age rate of gamers is constantly rising, which shows that even older people are willing to use virtual forms of entertainment. The branch of e-sports is also growing, with professional gamers competing against each other in international tournaments, attracting thousands of fans from all over the world.*

Gaming undeniably represents a huge part of today's market, which is valued at USD 184,4 billion. Poland's video game industry has made its contribution to this result. For many years, Poland has been an increasingly important market on the international stage. According to Euromonitor International, in 2020 our country was ranked 19<sup>th</sup> in the world in terms of market value in games production. This success is mainly due to professionals who create games with passion. Many of them come from Poznań.

## POZNAŃ GAMEDEV SECTOR

The capital of Wielkopolska is home to many studios in the gaming industry. One of them, Gamedust, was founded in 2015 as the VR department of Setapp, a Polish software house located in Poznań. Just 2 years later, Gamedust has already become an independent company looking to the future and making a revolution. Today, the studio has the experience to deliver projects on time in a healthy working environment, publishing games on its own and helping other companies with their projects on the Unity VR engine and much more. Gamedust presented titles such as *Best Forklift Operator*, *Yupitergrad* and *Spuds Unearthed*.

Atomic Jelly is also no stranger to success. The company was founded in 2016 by a group of passionate professionals. Teamwork and continuous improvement of competencies are key factors in the company's success.

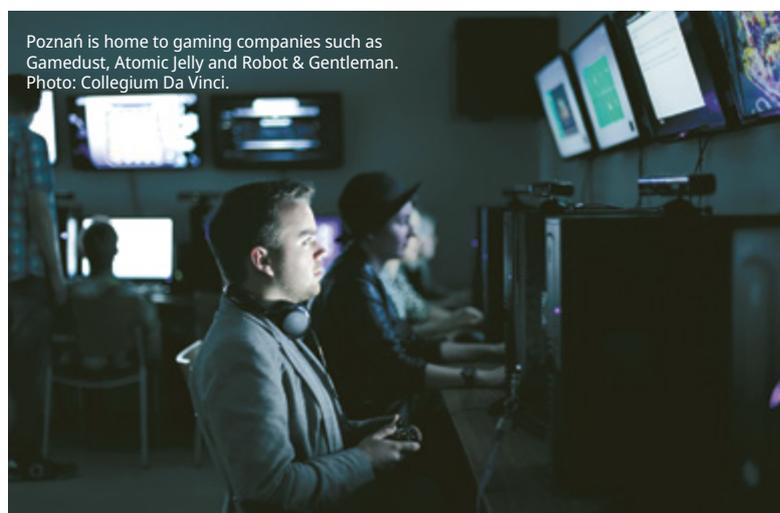
In recent years, the studio has had the opportunity to work on major titles, as well as collaborate with major publishers. Games produced by Atomic Jelly are unique and innovative, and the creators themselves are guided by the motto „we make interesting games based on ambitious and sometimes crazy ideas”.

” **According to Euromonitor International, in 2020 our country was ranked 19<sup>th</sup> in the world in terms of market value in games production.**

The company's portfolio includes titles such as *303 Squadron: Battle of Britain*, *Train Mechanic Simulator* and this year's upcoming *Space Mechanic Simulator*.

Robot & Gentleman, on the other hand, is an independent games studio founded in 2013. What sets the developers apart from others is the dark, comedic atmosphere that accompanies their productions. The company focuses primarily on the story aspects – the story is meant to be both thrilling and unconventional and is also meant to bend design ideas. The most popular game produced by the studio is *60 Seconds*, which has sold more than 2 million copies worldwide.

Poznań is also home to international capital. One of them is SOFTSWISS, a company specialising in software



Poznań is home to gaming companies such as Gamedust, Atomic Jelly and Robot & Gentleman. Photo: Collegium Da Vinci.

development for the iGaming industry. Programmers from the Polish team are involved, among other things, in creating innovative solutions for customers from all over the world. The Poznań branch of SOFTSWISS continues to grow and increase employment.

#### HOLLYWOOD FOR GAMING

Poznań also has potential in terms of the space itself for the creative industry. At this point, we should mention of last year's venture, the creation of eN Studios. This unique project is an investment by the private university Collegium Da Vinci. It is a facility dedicated to representatives of not only the gaming industry but also advertising, audio, photo and video, as well as creative and interactive technologies. Professionally equipped studios are joined with office space, meeting rooms, and conference and workshop rooms. The project has been hailed as the Hollywood for games production, and this is by no means an empty title!

Inside the building is a 300-square-metre studio with the equipment needed for object scanning or VR production, using Motion Capture technology. Game developers can use specialised tools, imported straight from the United States. These include 36 specialised cameras, active gloves or an in-ear microphone.

” **Poznań deserves attention, when it comes to educating a new talent-pool in the area of gamedev. The city can boast such fields of study as game studies, game development and games and internet technologies.**

All this allows even the most daring projects to be brought to life.

#### STUDY AND WORK IN POZNAŃ

Year after year, the industry reports an increasing shortage of staff and demand for employees. The Polish education system has recognised the potential of the industry and, by adapting to market needs, new faculties related to the broader issue of game development are being created. Undoubtedly, Poznań deserves attention, when it comes to educating a new talent-pool in the area of gamedev. The city can boast such fields of study as game studies, game development and games and internet technologies.

At Collegium Da Vinci, students have the opportunity to develop a game development degree with three different specialisation tracks: game design, game programming and game graphics. The three-year education pathway is distinguished by a practical approach to learning and emphasises the acquisition of the knowledge and experience needed in the video games industry. The lecturers are experienced practitioners with a strong passion for video game development. The university also has a partnership with Unreal Engine, a computer games engine produced by Epic Games. It is the world's most advanced real-time 3D creation tool, used to create games, architectural visualisations or VR experiences, providing photorealistic visualisations and immersive experiences. It is worth mentioning that this is the only such collaboration in Poland and Central and Eastern Europe!

Game studies is a new course that has only been available at Adam Mickiewicz University for two years. It is addressed to people passionate about video games and their culture. Game Studies trains humanists in knowledge and skills as well as critical competencies (professional criticism of digital games, including video games), in-game market analysis, animation and education to introduce



Poznań's universities are committed to training a qualified talent pool for the gamedev sector. Photo: Collegium Da Vinci.



The PGA is the heart of Polish gaming beating in Poznań. Photo: Collegium Da Vinci.

different target groups to the complexity and importance of digital games and representatives of the game development industry (e.g. game testers, story designers, script consultants). There is no shortage of applicants for this course, as can be seen from the numerous recruitment applications.

Meanwhile, games and internet technologies is a specialisation offered at the computer science degree programme run at Poznań University of Technology. The university offers studies in the basics of computer game development and infrastructure for e-commerce applications. Graduates acquire the ability to design and implement simple computer games, and applications in the field of e-commerce, banking, logistics and business management. They also acquire the ability to analyse and carry out IT projects in these fields.

#### THE HEART OF POLISH GAMING

Poznań is also the place where the heart of Polish gaming beats. We are talking about Poznań Game Arena – the largest computer games and multimedia entertainment fair in Poland and this part of Europe. It is organised for both the industry and individual visitors. The event can already boast over 15 years of history! Every year in October, tens of thousands of gaming fans from all over Poland (and beyond!) can be found at the PIF.

The PGA hosts game and hardware launches, presented by major brands, publishers and development studios from around the world. E-sports fans can try their hand at a tournament with their companions or with well-known stars of the Polish e-sports scene. There is also no shortage of colourful cosplayers who present their costumes at a spectacular show. Famous youtubers and influencers eagerly come to the fair to meet fans and

take photos with them. Without a doubt, the PGA is a vibrant gaming event that has become part of Poznań's history.

The fair also features a number of conferences and a business zone within the Game Industry Conference. Visitors to the GIC have the opportunity to attend networking meetings, lectures tailored to different levels of expertise and knowledge, discussions, as well as a job fair called GeekCareers. This is a real asset for all those who want to tie their professional future to the games market.

Poznań is boldly moving towards the future, not only following new trends but also setting them. It is not without reason that the city is known nationally as the capital of IT. Perhaps the time has come for it to become the capital of gaming too.

For more details on current investments in Poznań, please visit: [poznan.pl/invest](http://poznan.pl/invest).♦

#### More information

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# Częstochowa in the leading SEZ in Poland

*Częstochowa's areas covered by the status of special economic zones were established relatively late for such a large city, in 2014. Earlier, Guardian Glass, ZF Group and GST Automotive Safety Poland located here, used the human capital available in the city but at that time the direction of the city's development saw potential in pilgrimage tourism rather than in industry.*

When the local government finally fought for the establishment of zoned areas, it also took care of the interests of SMEs and today the minimum investment value in the zone is PLN 1,786,400,000. Those are data collected based on letters of intent submitted to SEZs. Not only is the industry diversity impressive, but also the truly global recognition of many of them. Global giants function perfectly well in Częstochowa – mainly from the glass and automotive industries who still appreciate Częstochowa's staff and high work culture, but also our family businesses and SMSes have found a place for themselves in the "zones". In addition to the automotive industry, which dominates not only in Częstochowa but also in the entire province, the aforementioned glass industry and metal processing, our domestic companies and enterprises in the zone are successful in the food sector – including the production of organic food, footwear production, the medical industry, photovoltaics, outsourcing, and also operate within the Polish Armaments Group.

## THE POWER OF KSSE

Today, the Częstochowa investment areas are within the impact zone of The Katowice Special Economic Zone S.A. (KSSE S.A.) only. This happened after legal changes in 2018 – the act on special economic zones was replaced by the act on supporting new investments. The rules for using state aid for activities in a special economic zone have changed, and the zoning of zones has also been introduced. Under the new legal conditions,

from that moment on, among others, the investment area at Korfantego street, belonging to the Industrial Development Agency, is covered by the status of SEZ Euro-Park Mielec. Today only KSSE S.A. issued the permit in Częstochowa to investors wishing to take advantage of public aid. It is the best SEZ in Poland and Europe, and for years it has been among the world leaders.

” **Today, the Częstochowa investment areas are within the impact zone of KSSE S.A. only. This happened after legal changes in 2018 – the act on special economic zones was replaced by the act on supporting new investments.**

## A ZONE OF INTERNATIONAL GIANTS AND FAMILY BUSINESSES

The first, relatively small area is "Kusięcka" at Strefowa street, near the roundabout on Legionów street. The construction of the BT Sport hall is already underway there, in the vicinity, the LiM company produces the Maccioni footwear brand. Across the street, the French automotive concern CGR has just started expanding its plant, which was the first to start production there, and in the vicinity of Enckel – an Italian manufacturer of machine parts. Etqa and Seltre APC – companies from the food industry – have already been operating in their new headquarters, and ZF Group has also been present here for years. The latest investments are those of Maskpol and Eco-Team, which has just purchased the land. The area of "Kusięcka" is located in the economic

zone at Legionów Street, connected with DK 91, and at the same time, near post-industrial areas. That is where the Częstochowa Industrial and Technological Park is located, Accolade and Panattoni logistics parks and producing components for cars and motorcycles – TS Tech Poland, which in 2020 purchased the plant from GST Automotive Safety Poland and Koksownia Częstochowa Nowa.

At Bojemskiego street, there is an area of the KSSE called "Korfantego" referring to the street crossing the area of the former Huta, when the city introduced plots to the zone. Here, in the vicinity, world-famous manufacturers of lamps, such as TK Lighting or the Nowodvorski family company from Częstochowa, have already located themselves. Already within the former SEZ Euro-Park Mielec, we have a family company operating in the metalworking industry, Stal-tim, which has been operating for several generations, the domestic tycoon x-kom, which was the first to appreciate the advantages of this location and the construction of the NSTEEL Group dealing with metallurgical products processing has begun.

Outside the zone, at Korfantego street is also home to traders, e.g. glass paints and Formatex bookbinding adhesives, Konshurt canned food distributor and bitumen road and bridge work. It is near the Seppler Group's modern Ocykownia Śląsk and the dominant producer of high-quality float glass in the area, the global giant Guardian Glass, which celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Częstochowa. The factory in Częstochowa is the largest green-field capital investment in Guardian's history. This facility is the company's most efficient and effective plant in terms of operations. The production capacity of the new float glass line is 1,000 tons per day. It is worth remembering that Guardian in Częstochowa was the first to use public aid under the KSSE. Behind the Guardian is

the Thick Plate Rolling Mill of the Liberty Częstochowa steelworks.

#### INVESTMENT BOOM

On the opposite side of the city, near the A1 motorway, there is the "Skorki" investment area, where the construction of the Linmot family hall is underway – according to the name of the company specializing in the production of ropes for the automotive industry. In the immediate vicinity, there are already two halls of a family IT company – Promatek, which is the owner of such well-known brands as Adamigo and Kukuryku, as well as facilities of the leading manufacturer of adhesives Wiko Klebetechnik (a pioneer among companies investing in Skorki) and PMS4i – a manufacturer of plastic elements. The construction of the new headquarters of Dobra Kaloria, already

enjoying an international reputation, is also underway (the Kubara company, i.e. the owner of the brand is also a family business from Częstochowa).

In the next location of the Częstochowa Industrial and Technological Park, there is SGP which provides outsourcing solutions, SteriService deals with the sterilization of medical devices, and Zielona Energia represents the photovoltaic industry. They are adjacent to the facilities of the ZF Group – the constantly expanded New Electronics Plant and the Shared Services Centre.

The area of "Skorki" is surrounded by Ekonomiczna street. On its opposite side the city is preparing further areas for investors – 17.5 ha under the name "Skorki II" with the possibility of taking advantage of incentives under the Polish Investment Zone.◆

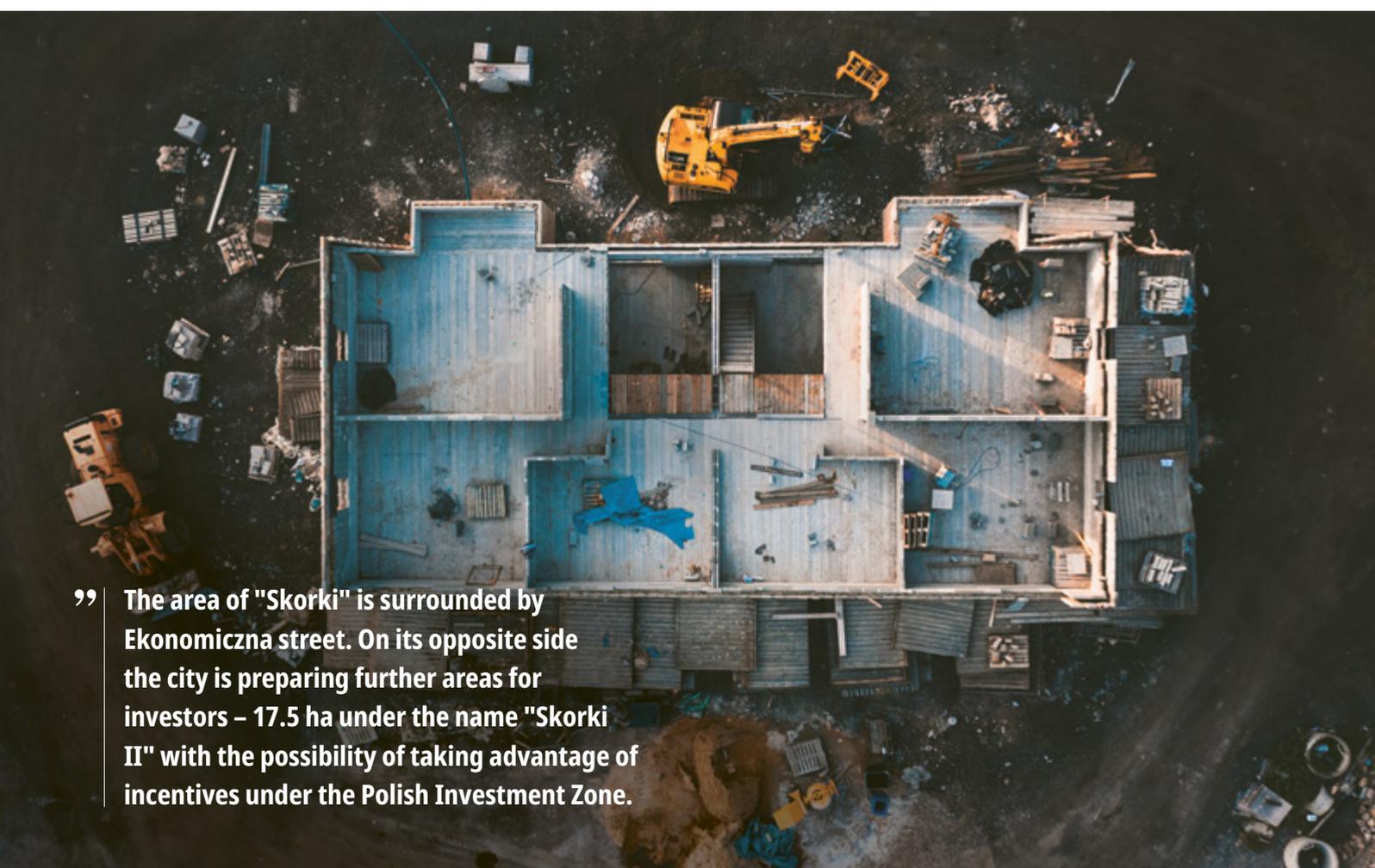
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#### More information



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” The area of "Skorki" is surrounded by Ekonomiczna street. On its opposite side the city is preparing further areas for investors – 17.5 ha under the name "Skorki II" with the possibility of taking advantage of incentives under the Polish Investment Zone.

# Closer to business and to your dream job. Kielce promotes vocational schools

*The City of Kielce focuses on vocational education. The project "Closer to business and to your dream job" completed by the Kielce City Hall has resulted in films promoting vocational schools as an attractive alternative to high schools. This material is available to everyone on the popular You Tube website and can be a guide for eighth graders at the stage of choosing a secondary school.*

The idea to produce 3 films promoting vocational education has been growing in Kielce for several years. The inspiration came from entrepreneurs who pointed in talks with Mayor Bogdan Wenta that a great difficulty for the development of companies in Kielce was the shortage of qualified workforce, in particular new generations of employees replacing long-serving staff. As a result of discussions and consultations with various circles, including many conversations with business and business environment institutions, 3 sectors of the economy with the shortage of qualified employees in Kielce have been selected: metalworking industry, construction industry and creative industry in the broadest sense.

## **SKILL SHORTAGE OCCUPATIONS**

Particularly acute shortages are felt by the metal processing and automotive industries, which are looking for mechanics, painters, tinsmiths, welders, as well as CNC and other equipment operators.

We are also dealing with the emergence of new professions that did not exist several years ago. This is especially true in the world of social media, where the vast majority of marketing is going to. Professions such as youtuber, Google Ad specialist, copywriter, e-commerce employee are rising. Undoubtedly, the demand for specialists in the field of online promotion is on the increase,

and these activities fit the definition of the creative industry, which also includes professions related to the implementation of own, original projects, including fashion.

For years, the construction industry has experienced greater difficulty in finding qualified specialists, electricians, fitters, plumbers, finishing and general construction workers. Work in the construction sector changes day by day, it is less and less physical work, and more often it is associated with the operation of modern machinery and equipment.

” **Work in the construction sector changes day by day, it is less and less physical work, and more often it is associated with the operation of modern machinery and equipment.**

And yet young people are reluctant to choose certain professions. On the one hand, young students have no idea what working in a construction industry looks like at present, on the other hand, they do not know the companies where they can work. Young people graduating from

primary school feel lost in the maze of possibilities. Lack of maturity and rapidly changing world around them do not help them make good decisions about choosing a high school.

Parents who youngsters turn to for advice may also feel confused. They do not know the needs of local economy and what are all the possibilities of continuing education. For them, high school is often the safest option, which will allow to postpone the decision about choosing a future profession or studies.

Another group that can benefit from the project "Closer to business and to your dream job" are educators and career advisors. It is them who bear the burden of providing students with knowledge about various paths of professional development and support in making decisions. Teachers are equipped with a number of tools to work with students, such as diagnostic tests, but they do not have sufficient knowledge about the key economic sectors in the city, about locally operating companies and employers' staffing expectations. Another problem is the perception of students, parents and carers about work in a given profession, which is not always consistent with reality. As a result, many young people with general education or freshly graduated enter the labour market, but there is still a lack of qualified employees working in key industries for Kielce.

### "TRENDY" VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The idea behind the filmmakers was that the choice of a technical school or a trade school does not close the path of education, just the opposite: it allows to get a profession demanded for the local economy. It is necessary to present trade education as an attractive alternative to high school and to promote the "fashion" for technical and trade schools. We need a change of awareness in society and convincing young people that it is worth choosing a vocational school. This does not close the possibility of career development in the future.

The films also show the advantages of living in Kielce: the city is well-connected and compact. It provides the opportunity to develop passion, do sports, stay in the bosom of nature, enjoy entertainment. These are very important aspects of life that matter for today's youth.

### VIDEOS AS A PROMOTION TOOL

As a result of the project financed by the City of Kielce, in 2022, 3 films were created to promote vocational education among primary school students, their parents and teachers. These are:

- Closer to business and to your dream job: creative industry
- Closer to business and to your dream job: construction industry
- Closer to business and to your dream job: metalworking industry

They can be easily found on the ITV Kielce channel and via the website: [kielce.eu/pl/dla-biznesu](http://kielce.eu/pl/dla-biznesu) in the Edukacja Przedsiębiorczości tab.

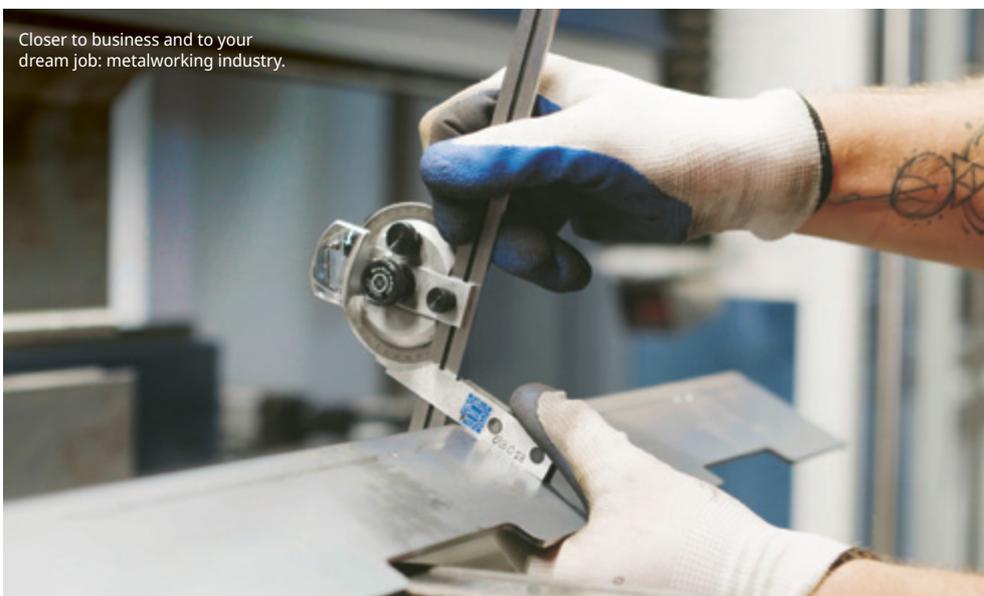
Every year, after the end of the winter holidays, the films will be presented to eighth grade students and their parents. It is also planned to monitor whether the ambitious goal of promoting vocational education among primary school students in Kielce brings the intended results.◆



Closer to business and to your dream job: creative industry.



Closer to business and to your dream job: construction industry.



Closer to business and to your dream job: metalworking industry.

### More information



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# We can now see what Wrocław's ICT industry may look like in 2037

*Developing more effective forms of cooperation between education, administration and business, based on open dialogue and mutual understanding, creating a resilient strategy for the Wrocław Agglomeration, the courage to act, as well as a tolerance for experimentation and failure – these are some of the most important recommendations arising from the report "Digital Co-creation and other scenarios for the future. ICT development in the Wrocław Agglomeration 2037".*

The ICT industry is currently a driving force for the economy. It also directly influences all business sectors. Meanwhile, the Wrocław Agglomeration is a place where the industry is developing exceptionally fast, to the point that the region is increasingly being called the Polish Silicon Valley.

## WROCLAW ICT INDUSTRY HAS FOUR SCENARIOS FOR THE YEAR 2037

The recently published report "Digital Co-creation and other scenarios for the future. ICT development in the Wrocław Agglomeration 2037" presents the current situation of the industry and the changes taking place in the sector. It also shows the development prospects based on four scenarios for its future – growth, transformation, status quo and collapse.

*– Future scenarios are a tool used in strategic management to better understand how one might operate in a given reality. Scenarios should not be seen as prophecies that are destined to come true, but as a certain vision of the future, a kind of strategic exercise through which you can identify possible opportunities and threats and answer questions about what needs to be realised, what steps need to be taken, what technologies need to be implemented in order to take responsibility for building a sustainable future – says Aleksandra Trapp, Head of Culture&Trends in infuture.institute.*

In order to prepare an accurate analysis and forecast for the future, a series of three research workshops were conducted, attended by representatives of the ICT industry, universities, NGOs, investors and the administration of the Wrocław Agglomeration. During these workshops, they discussed what the four future scenarios might be that will affect the development of the industry in the agglomeration.

## THE CITY AND BUSINESS ARE CONNECTED VESSELS

As part of its work on the report, infuture.institute also carried out an analysis of historical changes in the ICT industry, extensive research into the companies operating in the area and several expert interviews with representatives of the IT sector, investors and municipal authorities. All this was done in order

” **In order to prepare an accurate analysis and forecast for the future, a series of three research workshops were conducted, attended by representatives of the ICT industry, universities, NGOs, investors and the administration of the Wrocław Agglomeration.**

*– Together with representatives of the IT sector from the Wrocław Agglomeration, we considered what the condition of the industry is – says Mateusz Jarzombek, director of the Business Support Centre at Wrocław Agglomeration Development Agency (ARAW).*

*– We tried to assess its strengths and weaknesses, to find certain advantages and distinctive features against other competitive centres. The greatest value of the report is the process of its creation, states Magdalena Okulowska, President of the Board of ARAW. – We would like to thank the many industry stakeholders for their active participation in this project.*

to accurately identify the factors influencing the development of individual areas of this industry in the Wrocław Agglomeration.

*– This allowed us to look at the city and the ICT industry from a strategic level. We predict what it will look like in 15 years – says Marcin Miedziński representing the Education Department of Wrocław Municipality. – The city and business have to work together because they depend on each other. Without business there is no developing city, without a developing city there is no business. And this is full synergy.*



Foresight workshops, Google, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Wrocław.

**KNOWLEDGE IS IN PEOPLE AND NEEDS TO BE SHARED**

The study identified trends and changes taking place in Wrocław’s ICT industry. It also identified uncertainties for 2037, classified them and identified which will be of crucial importance for the agglomeration.

The result of all this work is a report containing four different multi-domain scenarios of the industry’s development in the 2037 perspective. They allow you to effectively move into the world of each of the four scenarios. Their purpose is to prepare well for the future.

*– The workshop format was appropriate for the development of the report, because we believe that knowledge is in people and such meetings of people who do not have the opportunity to work with each other on a daily basis provide a chance to exchange this knowledge – believes Aleksandra Kulińska, Future change analyst at infuture.institute.*

**WROCLAW IS COOPERATIVE**

The report clearly shows that Wrocław, also culturally and historically, is a cooperative city and that this advantage should be strengthened. It is also necessary to continuously develop more and more effective forms of cooperation between education-administration-business, which should be based on open dialogue and understanding. On the other hand,

the mutual network of connections and support may become an even more distinct feature of the Wrocław Agglomeration when the world is becoming increasingly unpredictable and the role of cities is being redefined.

**” The report clearly shows that Wrocław, culturally and historically is a cooperative city and that this advantage should be strengthened.**

Another conclusion from the report is the need to build a flexible strategy for the Wrocław Agglomeration which would support urban resilience, including climate, technology and energy resilience, and help it react quickly to unexpected external factors. It should also enable the creation of innovation between business, education and the city.

**FURTHER COOPERATION OF THE CITY WITH STARTUPS AND ICT COMPANIES IS ESSENTIAL**

According to the report, for the agglomeration to develop dynamically, it is necessary to continue the city’s cooperation with startups or ICT companies that could test and implement their solutions here. It is already yielding tangible results in

the form of the most dynamic startup ecosystem in Poland. It is also necessary to have good relations with education at every level and to include the youngest generations in building and being responsible for the city.

A mix of digital and soft skills is also needed for the ICT industry to thrive. In turn, in order to support diversity and inclusion in the industry, an active equal opportunities policy is needed – both in terms of gender, experience and active integration of people from other cultures or nationalities. Undoubtedly, however, supporting local communities and local businesses in the area of technological development can drive the development of the agglomeration and help to create its image as a modern urban ecosystem. It is therefore important to create a development environment for entrepreneurs and to work at the interface between education, administration and business to develop the necessary technologies and smart solutions.

**INTERDISCIPLINARITY NEEDED**

The participants of the survey predict the reality of the ICT industry in 2037 in different ways.

*– For me, the future of this industry is interdisciplinarity, using the management or technological knowledge we have created in this area to quite different industries so that this is combined into one whole*



Expert panel, SoftServe, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022, Wrocław.

– says Tomasz Gondek, Co-Founder & CTO, Food4Future Technologies. – *This is also how I see the city following global trends. As much as possible, because of its DNA, Wrocław is always ready for change. It is now about the power that will trigger this.*

**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN RECRUITMENT**

According to workshop participants, the desired profile of an ICT employee will also change.

– *The ideal candidate for a job in ICT in 2037 may be very different from the one today* – believes Katarzyna Szklarska, Recruitment Manager at Michael Page. – *I think that particularly the issue of diversity and the inclusion of people of different genders, ethnic backgrounds and backgrounds in IT recruitment will mean that we will no longer associate the word ‘programmer’ as typically as we do at*

*the moment. Recruitment in 2037 will certainly be more automated than it is now. Some HR or recruitment resources may be replaced by artificial intelligence.*

In 15 years’ time, the working model may also change.

– *Looking at the current trend, when everyone is enthusiastic about remote or hybrid working, it is unclear whether we will still be working from offices in 2037* – says Paweł Boczar, director, and head of Wrocław Regional Office CBRE. – *In our opinion, there will be a renaissance of offices, but they will already be completely different – more customised and flexible for the employee than it is now. For example, today it is a workplace and tomorrow it will be a conference room.*

**GOOD RELATIONSHIPS NEED TO BE BUILT**

According to representatives of Wrocław companies, the ICT industry in 2037 will be, above all, even more human-centred.

– *This will define it very strongly in terms of how it will operate* – believes Sebastian Drzewiecki, VP, Country Manager Poland SoftServe. – *However, as far as leadership qualities are concerned, they will be even more focused on building good relations with people, such as trust, a good delegation of authority, and responsibility, but also very good communication. This is due to the fact that we are working in an increasingly remote and culturally diverse environment.*

– *I think that the ICT industry in the Wrocław Agglomeration has a bright future thanks to the cooperation of local authorities, social factors and companies* – says Konrad Weiske, CEO SpyroSoft, CO-Founder and VP SoDA. – *I am confident that we will develop a strategy that will make Wrocław one of the main IT hubs on the European map in 2037.*◆

**More information**



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A large, central image of a woman with blonde hair and black-rimmed glasses, smiling broadly. She is wearing a white button-down shirt. The background shows a white bookshelf filled with books. The text 'Work With Us. Work The Future.' is overlaid on the left side of this image in a large, white, sans-serif font. A thick teal horizontal bar is positioned below the text.

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# Investment boom in Katowice

*Summing up the data for the last year, it is clear that the Silesian market is able to cope well with the challenges faced by business. As in previous years, in 2022 many investors decided to locate their branches in Silesia or expand their existing operations in the region.*

The industry that has been constantly developing, e.g. by implementing subsequent stages of recruitment, is modern business services. The growth of this sector is noticeable in Katowice and the GZM Metropolis, where, from 2017 to now, it has generated over 12,000 new jobs. It is expected that the total employment, for which Katowice is responsible in the vast majority, will exceed 32,000 people in Q1 2023. In the past year, the activity of investors did not decrease, there was an increase in the number of new investment projects and reinvestments of companies located in Katowice.

## ADVANTAGES OF KATOWICE

Investors are invariably attracted by access to qualified specialist and managerial staff, educational centers, supportive business environment and developed infrastructure. Currently, the most important asset of Katowice are human resources, which are growing annually by nearly 23,000 graduates of Upper Silesian universities whose educational profile meets the needs of SSC/GBS, IT and R&D centers. In addition, in Katowice, investors, HR agencies, universities and schools implement activities to increase the availability of human

resources through various jointly implemented programs, e.g. Corporate Readiness Certificate (CRC) – addressed to students and graduates, P-TECH for high school students, or "Katowice, business and my future".

Foreign companies locate processes related to finance and customer service in local service centers, and more and more often they also consider the creation of IT hubs.

## GLOBAL BRANDS' INVESTMENTS

It is true that investors see the potential of Katowice and associate their business



In January PwC SDC moved its office to .KTW II, the newly constructed office building. Photo: PwC.

future with the city, which translates into new, attractive jobs for residents. The best example – PwC Service Delivery Center in Katowice started 14 years ago with 15 people, and in mid-January this year nearly 1,800 employees moved to new headquarters in the most prestigious location, where the company rented 9 floors in the city's tallest office building .KTW II which is nearly a quarter of the office space available in the skyscraper. In 2009, PwC helped build the investment credibility of Katowice and was one of the factors that stimulated the development of the modern business services sector in our city. Today, we are an important economic center of our country, which can compete with other European cities.

The turn of 2022 and 2023 is also an important moment in the development history of the Vaillant Group, which chose Katowice as its place to grow its IT and Data Processing potential. As part of the investment, the Vaillant Group opened a modern IT Hub in Katowice with which ultimately delivers 200 new places, attractive and challenging work. Representatives of the Vaillant Group emphasize that the development of operations in Poland is one of the key strategic priorities for the company.

GlobalLogic, a company from Silicon Valley, operating all over the world and a leader in the digital engineering industry, has also decided to take advantage of the business potential of our city, opening a new branch in Katowice. Within a year, over 100 IT specialists dealing with projects for the automotive sector will find work in the center.

**” Many entrepreneurs has increased significantly last year, e.g. SD Worx – in 2022 it tripled employment compared to 2021 and currently employs about 130 people.**

Nexi Digital continues to develop, already recruiting more qualified software engineers. In fact, the Polish office is already a Center of Excellence for delivering high-end software products dedicated to digital payments and e-commerce platforms in the Agile methodology.

Adverity is another company with a branch in Katowice, which, through its

marketing and data teams, provides and shows one, accurate picture of company data. The well-known American company Genpact Services, with the support of PAIH, decided to develop its business services center and create almost 300 new jobs.

Many entrepreneurs has increased significantly last year, e.g. SD Worx – in 2022 it tripled employment compared to 2021 and currently employs about 130 people. Ammega Business Services Center – today it employs over 100 people and this number is still growing. And finally, LKQ Europe with its innovation and service center, which plans to employ up to 250 people in the medium term.

Companies associated with Katowice for years do not rest either, they change, they invest here, it is worth mentioning: Capgemini with a new Cloud Infrastructure Services center, ING Tech Poland, Rockwell Automation, TMF, or Sopra Steria, which in 2022 celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Katowice. It is also impossible not to mention the recent recruitment achievements of Keywords Studios – a leader in the gaming industry, which in just 4 years recorded an impressive increase in employment from less than 50 to over 1,000 people.



SD Worx new office opening. Photo: Agencja Komunikacji Życie.



Visualization of Grundmanna Office Park. Photo: Cavatina.

**A CLIMATE THAT SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT**

The city is aware that its potential, i.e. thousands of university graduates, a network of universities, a favourable geographical location and a wide range of office space attract investors. At the end of 2022, the stock of office space in Katowice reached a high level of 735,000 sqm, while in 2023 it is expected to increase by 60,000 sqm. Last year, such office investments were completed as: .KTW II, Global Office Park A1 and A2, DL Tower and Carbon Office. At the end of the year, it was also announced that a new office project was launched: Grundmanna Office Park, which will provide 48,000 sqm of surface.

It is equally important to take care of the quality of life in the city so that both residents and investors feel stable and comfortable. That is why the city conducts constant investments – from greenery, through financing clean energy

” **At the end of the year, it was also announced that a new office project was launched: Grundmanna Office Park, which will provide 48,000 sqm of surface.**

sources and supporting road transport infrastructure so that it does not make life difficult but improves it. In Q2 of 2023, construction works worth PLN 148 M will start, which will significantly relieve the most heavily used arteries, but also improve the safety of road users.

Such a strategy brings results – according to the INRIX report "Global Traffic Scorecard" 2022, the analysis of

traffic around the world indicated that Katowice is the leader among the LEAST congested cities in Poland and Europe. Among 1,000 cities on 5 continents, Katowice took a very good 250<sup>th</sup> place in the ranking with a loss of 34 hours per year. For comparison: Wrocław is ranked 35<sup>th</sup> in the world and 1<sup>st</sup> in Poland, where we lose 80 hours a year. 44. Position for Poznań where the driver spends 74 hours in traffic jams. Warsaw 51<sup>st</sup> place and 64 lost hours. Krakow is 53<sup>rd</sup> on the list, where we lose 66 hours of life, in Lodz, which has 78<sup>th</sup> place, we stand in our car "only" 58 hours.

And at the end of this good news for Katowice, taking it with a grain of salt but not trivializing it – KATOWICE was in the top of the ranking for THE MOST CUTE CITY in Poland! Only Szczecin and Wrocław were higher.

As you can see, we have solid evidence that Katowice is worth investing in!◆

**More information**



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# Elbląg: Focus on vocational education

*Interview with Romuald Mackojć – Director of the Centre for Vocational and Continuing Education (Centrum Kształcenia Zawodowego i Ustawicznego) – Elbląg Vocational Education Centre (Elbląskie Centrum Edukacji Zawodowej).*

**FOCUS ON Business:** After a period of neglect in the 1990s, vocational education is enjoying increasing popularity again. To what extent is this trend visible at the Centre?

Romuald Mackojć, Elbląg Vocational Education Centre: Policies and decisions taken in the 1990s did indeed lead, among other things, to the winding up of vocational schools teaching such professions as plumbers, butchers, cooks, locksmiths, welders, bricklayers or car mechanics. Today, we know that the liquidation of vocational schools was a mistake.

Fortunately, at the end of the 1990s, a reform began, which also included vocational education. In 2011, there was a major change in the model of vocational education at the secondary level – starting with the implementation of a new curriculum for vocational education and a change in the classification of school professions, and finishing with the restructuring of secondary education. The goal of Polish education also changed – it was to align vocational education to the labour market.

All these transformations had an impact on the institution that I have been managing since 2008 and based on which the Elbląg Vocational Education Centre was established in 2014. Along with the fact of acquiring funds from the EU and the city budget, its development was encouraged by two main factors, namely the labour market facing a shortage of specialists in various professions and the growing popularity of vocational education in Elbląg.

Romuald Mackojć has been managing the Center since 2008. Initially, it was an institution on the basis of which the Elbląg Centre for Vocational and Continuing Education was established in 2014.



As a result of many years' efforts, our institution has two educational facilities and thirty specialised laboratories, including the famous foundry workshop or numerically controlled machine workshop, as well as the High-Tech Education Centre (HTEC) established in cooperation with the ABPLANALP company from Warsaw. Our pride is also the carpentry and joinery workshop, which is the only one in Poland to be equipped with machinery and equipment used by cutting-edge furniture manufacturers in Elbląg. Young people's interest in new training profiles has led, among other things, to the creation of a renewable energy laboratory and a material strength testing laboratory.

**Please tell us more about the functioning of the Elbląg Vocational Education Centre (ECEZ) – who is it addressed to, what system does it operate in and what specialisations can be acquired there?**

The main objective and task of the ECEZ is the delivery of practical vocational training to pupils and students of the Centre, those studying at vocational schools in Elbląg and the Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP). This is the largest group of people who attend classes at the Centre. The educational offer is designed for primary school pupils who, after graduation, will continue their education directly at existing schools within the CKZiU [Centre for Vocational and Continuing Education] or at vocational schools in Elbląg.

Another important task is the provision of education, further education and skills improvement for adults in both in – and out-of-school forms. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the interest of adults in improving their qualifications. This is why ECEZ operates schools for adults including primary school, general secondary school, upper secondary vocational school, vocational qualification courses.

In addition, there are also short-term skill training courses available in the field of, among other things, welding with the possibility of obtaining qualifications and certificates recognised on the national and European labour market (European welder and TÜV), operation and programming of numerically controlled CNC machine tools, and other training that is ordered by employers or the interested parties themselves.

” **The largest group is made up of students who are trained as mechanics and car mechanic technicians. Another popular profession is a machine tool operator.**

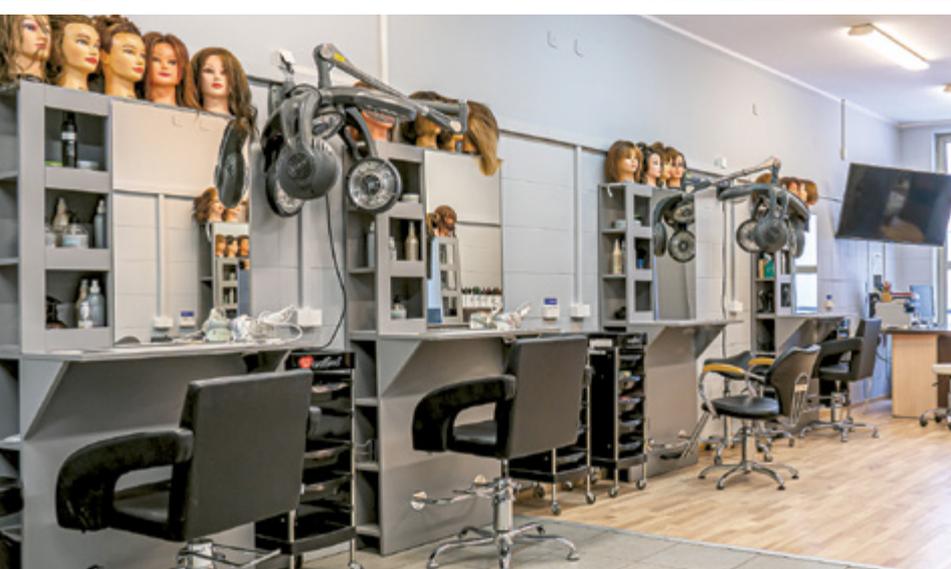
We operate on a full-time, part-time and extramural basis, seven days a week. Practical vocational training for students is provided on a full-time basis. Our first-degree vocational schools and the primary school for adults also work in the same way. The second-degree vocational school provides part-time classes in the evenings. The general upper secondary school for adults, post-secondary schools and vocational qualification courses for adults are provided in the extramural system.

Currently, around one hundred staff members are involved in educating almost one thousand pupils and around two hundred adults in twenty-two different occupations.

**Which professions the Centre teaches are the most popular? To what extent is this related to the specific nature of the local labour market?**

The most popular profiles at our Centre are those that are geared towards the Elbląg and regional labour market.





The largest group is therefore made up of students who are trained as mechanics and car mechanic technicians. The automotive industry is still dominant in the market and labour demand in this area is high.

Another popular profession is a machine tool operator. It appeared in vocational education in Elbląg when the metallurgical industry was facing staffing problems. At present, despite the fact that the market has become saturated, we are seeing great interest in vocational training for this profession. Graduates with a solid knowledge of technical drawing, machine drawing, metrology, operation of conventional machine tools and operation and programming of numerically controlled machine tools have no problems with finding employment in industry.

Another group are electricians and welders and welding technicians, who are still in demand by employers and who are trained at our Centre.

It should also be assumed that the current dynamic development of the renewable energy sector will have a positive impact on interest in training in professions related to this industry.

**How does the Centre cooperate with Elbląg's entrepreneurs and companies that operate here? How do companies initiate actions to build the professional competence of their potential employees?**

As part of its statutory tasks, the Elbląg Vocational Education Centre is responsible for organising and maintaining cooperation with Elbląg's enterprises and companies. The institution effectively cooperates with metalworking enterprises, the timber industry, the furniture industry, the Pomeranian employers' cluster, the services cluster and the broadly defined craft sector. The theoretical assumptions of the cooperation include joint preparation of curricula, organisation of practical classes and apprenticeships for pupils and students, organisation of traineeships for teachers, joint delivery of vocational

qualification courses, increasing students' and teachers' access to cutting-edge techniques and technologies, joint activities in the area of vocational counselling. However, employers engaged in the manufacturing process are not always able to devote their time to fully implement these tasks, so the ECEZ decided to create conditions close to the actual professional work environment by consulting the equipment of many laboratories with companies.

” **ECEZ decided to create conditions close to the actual professional work environment by consulting the equipment of many laboratories with companies.**

Often, the establishment also benefits from the employers' support in the implementation of internships and apprenticeships for pupils, students and, more recently, for teachers, who are required to undergo forty hours of in-plant training every three years. The cooperation benefits both ways. The ECEZ organises short-term skills training courses at the request of entrepreneurs, and on completion of the training it issues certificates and certificates recognised on the national and European labour market. It acts as an intermediary in providing information to graduates about employment opportunities in the specific company.

The openness of the mutual cooperation can also be seen in the donation of post-production training materials by the companies, which are then used in the training of pupils and students.

Particularly noteworthy is the cooperation with Warsaw-based companies,

which together with the Centre organise technology workshops for employers at regional and national level.

We consider the implementation of career counselling, which is carried out in all Elbląg schools, to be integral part of our cooperation with employers. This is increasingly supported by employers who open their facilities to visiting primary school pupils, teachers, careers counsellors and parents. His way they also help themselves. This is a very useful and simple way of attracting future specialists to their workplaces.

**Do you have any observations and studies that may indicate which specialists will be needed in the labour market in the near future? What new courses and training courses might the Centre offer?**

ECEZ systematically observes and analyses the labour market, the developing industries and scientific developments. It is already safe to say that the argument about the superiority of university education over vocational education is pointless in a world dominated by robotics and artificial intelligence. Industry 4.0, which combines manufacturing with information and communication technology, is the industry of the future. It is a number of interconnected systems – robotics, cloud computing, etc. The regional labour market will also have to adapt to these requirements.

We observe with some disbelief the workplaces where there is still great resistance to using cobotics, i.e. collaborative robots and automation, in the production process. Looking at the future and the development of cutting-edge technology, our institution also needs to change its approach to training for the professions of the future. This will certainly include robotics in a broad sense, industrial automation, the Internet

of Things, the industrial cloud, industrial communication, drones, 3D printing. We should also focus on educating the specialists currently most in demand by employers, e.g.: operators and programmers of CNC machine tools in metalworking, in furniture board and wood-like plastics processing, specialists in renewable energy, welding.

Vocational education is strongly influenced by the construction of the channel through the Vistula Spit, which, in addition to tourism-related professions, will demand boatbuilding skills. It is likely that specialists in woodworking, plastics, automation, control, electrical engineering, electronics and automotive sectors will also be needed.

Given these forecasts, we will continue to work towards developing vocational education in the coming years, following the expectations of businesses in our region.

**Thank you for the interview.♦**

” **It is already safe to say that the argument about the superiority of university education over vocational education is pointless in a world dominated by robotics and artificial intelligence. Industry 4.0, which combines manufacturing with information and communication technology, is the industry of the future.**

## More information



**ELBLĄG**

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# Bielsko-Biała – a city that attracts talents and investors

*The city of Bielsko-Biała is a rapidly growing economic center of Silesia's southern subregion. In the past, the local economy was based mostly on highly developed industries. Today, the economic profile of the city is visibly changing. More and more companies from the IT sector as well as modern business services decide to locate their branches in Bielsko-Biała.*

The trend of development gives young people a chance to find in Bielsko-Biała a well-paid, interesting, and challenging job, which, combined with the attractive location of the city, becomes the basis for building a competitive advantage of Bielsko-Biała over other Polish cities.

## CITY'S INVESTMENT POTENTIAL

The systematic increase of the city's investment attractiveness is one of the development policy priorities of Bielsko-Biała. Local authorities do their best to enlarge the pool of "talents" and thus attract new investors to the city.

One of such activity was the development, by Grafton Recruitment, in December 2022, of a report about the investment potential of the city of Bielsko-Biała. The publication presents the key factors determining the investment attractiveness of Bielsko-Biała, mainly in the context of human capital, but also concerns other important aspects that make Bielsko-Biała an optimal location to set up or develop business in Poland.

## HUMAN POTENTIAL AREA

The report mainly focuses on information about the local economy, labor market, real estate market, education, and quality of life. Analyzed data mainly come from the Central Statistical Office, the results of the National Census published in 2022, as well as the preliminary results on higher education from the academic year 2021-2022.

The presented data concerns Bielsko-Biała itself as well as the surrounding poviats, which, together with the city, are defined as Human Potential Area (OPL) for Bielsko-Biała. Such approach to the presented data, especially in the context of the observed demographic trends, underlines the strong position of Bielsko-Biała as the center of the region with a large pool of qualified specialists from different industries.

A particularly important part of the report is the analysis of the availability of employees for future investors. As we read Bielsko-Biała is also a key workplace for the residents of neighboring poviats, especially Bielski, Żywiecki, Cieszyński, Pszczyński and Wadowicki. It has a positive effect on the pool of talent available for companies that invest in the city. The availability of employees with various levels of education in the OPL area for Bielsko-Biała provides opportunities to both companies that are looking for white-collar as well as manual workers.

The authors of the report point out that companies in the modern business services sector centralize a number of processes in Poland. The most popular are: finance and accounting, supply chain management, and HR. In case of the IT industry the most popular one is software development. The analysis of the availability of talents contained in the report shows that such specialists either already live in the OPL area for Bielsko-Biała, or they are willing to move

” **Bielsko-Biała, a city located among the mountaintops, is a unique place. A place where one can find a good atmosphere for both life and business.**

– Jarosław Klimaszewski,  
Mayor of City  
Bielsko-Biała

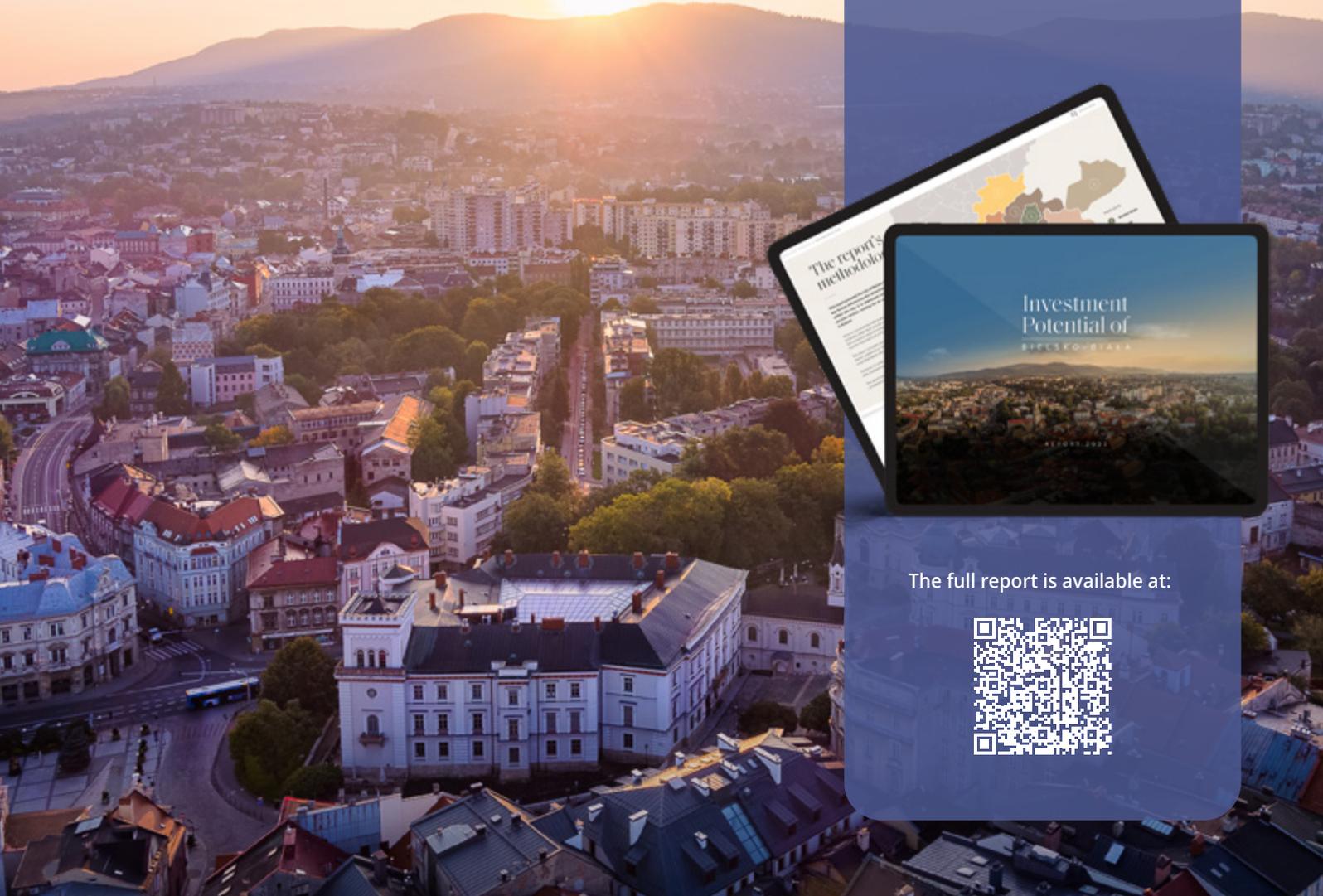
Photo: Paweł Sowa.



here with the perspective of finding a well-paid job, professional development, and an attractive place to live with their families.

## THE BUSINESS' VOICE

The report also includes the opinions of entrepreneurs who run their businesses in Bielsko-Biała. Representatives of such international companies as Cooper Standard, Pitney Bowes, and Precisely Software expressed their point of view about the city. They all agree that the great advantage of the city is its beautiful location at the foot of the Beskid Mountains. Good communication with larger agglomerations such as Katowice and Krakow is also a favorable factor. In addition, the proximity of international airports makes it easy to travel outside the country. They also confirm that great opportunities for the development of companies



The full report is available at:



result from access to a large pool of talents as well as the presence of local universities that are very willing to cooperate with business. Moreover what is also important is the fact that, compared to voivodeship cities, in Bielsko-Biala there are still relatively few companies operating in the IT industry or modern business services sector. Thanks to this, it is easier to create an attractive workplace and compete on the market for the employees.

The advantage of Bielsko-Biala over other cities also results from systematic investments related to various areas of life, including transportation investments or investments in the hospitals or kindergartens. An important advantage of Bielsko-Biala emphasized by entrepreneurs as well as by employees is a wide range of real estate and, above all, attractive prices, both for renting and buying flats

or houses. In addition, Bielsko-Biala is a city with a rich cultural, educational, and sports offer, which gives unlimited opportunities to spend free time in an active way. Positive opinions from entrepreneurs about the investment potential of Bielsko-Biala are an important voice confirming the city's position and its competitive advantages.

The report prepared by Grafton Recruitment indicates that the most important assets of Bielsko-Biala, which determine its investment attractiveness, are:

- the position of the leader of the southern subregion of the Silesian Voivodeship,
- high availability of human resources, including the city's OPL area,
- the city's location at the crossroads of international routes,
- fruitful cooperation between the city authorities, business, and universities,

- high level of tertiary, secondary and vocational education,
- city policies focused on increasing the residents' quality of life.

Thus, Bielsko-Biala is a unique place. You can find here a good atmosphere for both living and doing business. More and more investors from the IT sector and modern business services see the advantages of the city and decide to locate their branches here, taking advantage of the availability of highly qualified staff and attractive office space, also of the highest A-class standard. Modern transport infrastructure, a great number of green areas, a rich cultural and entertainment offer, as well as numerous opportunities for various types of recreation, make the city a perfect place for ambitious and active people who appreciate the idea of work-life balance.◆

### More information



#### City Hall in Bielsko-Biala | Strategy and Economic Development Department

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# People, experience, passion – what is the economic potential of the City of Bydgoszcz?



Bydgoszcz is successfully changing its image from an industrial centre to a centre of modern production, technology and services. Its industrial traditions are an important context for creating the contemporary character of the city. Stable pillars of economic growth are provided by a diversified economy – in addition to a strong manufacturing sector, the warehousing and logistics market and modern business services are developing intensively here. An attractive investment offer and a friendly climate for living and doing business make Bydgoszcz a market with a great potential for further growth.

For both business development and the city, the most important aspect today is the people who create its climate, build its potential and define its identity

– and I am proud to say that this is also a great asset of Bydgoszcz. The inhabitants of Bydgoszcz are passionate professionals, pursuing various projects on a global scale. They are also business leaders whose open minds and creative approach allow them to dynamically develop the local economy. At the same time, they successfully find the work-life balance in our city, which is so valued today. There is both the space for career or business development and for private life, as well as for pursuing one's passions. It is a place where balance is of great value.

Our city attracts a growing number of investors and tourists, and at the same time cares about being a place that is friendly to live in. Bydgoszcz is not only

the most important business and academic centre in the region, but also a city of culture and sports. It is also one of the greenest cities in Poland, where residents and visitors can enjoy relaxation in charming parks, forest complexes and riverside areas. Everyone here has a chance to find something for themselves.

Let's meet in Bydgoszcz! I cordially invite you.

**Rafał Bruski**  
The Mayor  
of the City of  
Bydgoszcz



**DISCOVER BYDGOSZCZ**



## WHY BYDGOSZCZ?



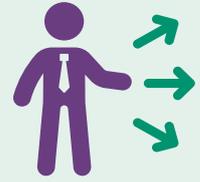
Perfectly connected location, with an international airport



Industrial roots in a modern version



Dynamically developing warehouse and logistics market



City open to outsourcing



Success stories of companies in Bydgoszcz



Qualified and educated staff



Rich base of investment offers



Work-life balance friendly city

The Bydgoszcz Regional Development Agency is a municipal company established in 2013 by the City of Bydgoszcz for the purpose of broadly understood support for investors and entrepreneurs as well as the economic promotion of the City. Tasks of the Agency are focused on comprehensive servicing of investment processes in the City at each stage of their implementation, as well as

assistance to entrepreneurs in post-investment care.

The Agency offers one-stop-shop services providing a dedicated manager for each investment project. It provides a detailed analysis of the labour market, academic resources, real estate offers and available investment incentives. The Agency cooperates in the field of investment promotion, staff recruitment

and trainings for employees. Our staff will be happy to assist and provide answers regarding the opportunities of investing in Bydgoszcz.

**Edyta Wiwatowska**  
CEO, Bydgoszcz  
Regional  
Development  
Agency



### More information



BYDGOSZCZ  
REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
AGENCY

### Bydgoszcz Regional Development Agency

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# HR NEWS

## TMF GROUP TO RECRUIT OVER 100 SPECIALISTS TO SERVE WORLD'S LARGEST COMPANIES

TMF Group, a leading provider of business administration and compliance services to companies in the area of international growth, is planning to expand its team in Poland by adding more than 100 additional specialists. The new hires will be based in its Regional Delivery Center located in Katowice, which serves Fortune Global 500 and FTSE 100 companies. 25 per cent of the specialists recruited by the company in Poland are experienced professionals, over 40 years of age.

TMF Group's services are used by more than 60 per cent of Fortune Global 500 and FTSE 100 companies and nearly half of the world's 300 largest private equity firms.

*– TMF Group's Regional Delivery Center is constantly expanding the range of services for global clients hence the need to hire more people. We are open to people with experience as well as beginners.*



*Every fourth person we currently recruit is a specialist over the age of 40 – emphasises Maja Mandela, Service Quality Director at TMF Group.*

In the first instance, the company will need candidates to work in human resources, accounting and tax and payroll. The company plans to be more open to the Spanish market, so knowledge of Spanish or experience of working with this market will be an advantage.

*– Despite the difficult economic and political situation, inflation and rising unemployment, we are pleased that TMF Group – against the trends – continues to grow and offer new jobs in Poland – emphasises Joanna Romańczuk, Director of TMF Group in the Central and Eastern Europe Region.*

Source: TMF Poland

## PAWEŁ SAWICKI JOINS SOFTWAREACT AS MANAGING DIRECTOR



Softwareact, based in Wrocław, Poland, and in the United States, announced that Paweł Sawicki is joining the company as the new Managing Director.

Prior to joining Softwareact, Paweł Sawicki honed his skills at industry-leading companies such as Valeo and SoftServe, where he worked in Agile methodologies. He is a graduate of Wrocław University of Science and Technology, where he studied Automotive Engineering. He has over 10 years of experience in the fintech and automotive industries, and a proven track record of success in managing innovative projects for global customers in the APAC and EMEA regions.

*– Paweł possesses a deep, practical understanding of industrial automation*

*processes from concept to final realization. With a proven track record of success in managing innovative projects for global customers in the APAC and EMEA regions, his expertise in both technical and managerial aspects makes him a valuable asset – a company press release states.*

*– I am excited to join Softwareact and help drive our growth and success – said Paweł Sawicki. – I look forward to working with the talented team here and helping our clients achieve their goals through innovative solutions.*

Softwareact is a European provider of services in the areas of team building, software development, cloud, and infrastructure, as well as cyber security and metaverse.

Source: Softwareact

## THE PROFESSIONS OF THE FUTURE. THE LABOUR MARKET COMPETITION FOR THESE GRADUATES WILL BE FIERCE

Antal experts have developed a tips on the fields of study whose graduates will have the greatest chances for lucrative job offers in the coming years.

Due to the growing threat arising by the use of new technologies, experts observe a greater need for recruitment in positions related to network security such as: Cybersecurity Engineer; Cybersecurity Architect, Pentester, Cloud Security Engineer, DLP Engineer or Cyber Risk Analyst. The average salary of a cybersecurity specialist in Poland may vary depending on the level of experience, qualifications and location. According to data from 2022, cybersecurity specialists can earn from PLN 6,000 to PLN 12,000 gross per month at the beginning of their career, and specialists with many years of experience can earn up to PLN 20,000 gross per month.

With the maximum growth of projects in the IT industry, there is a particularly increased demand for: programmers who know Java and .NET languages as well as DevOps. To become a programmer, one must first get the appropriate education or experience. This can be done not only by studying computer science or related fields at a university or polytechnic, but also by completing a specialized course or bootcamp or learning programming on your own by reading books and tutorials and writing code. It is



also important to constantly develop and learn new technologies and programming languages.

Professions of the future also include e-commerce specialists, digital marketers or social media managers – there is still a demand for this type of competence, and candidates have several offers on the table.

There is also rising demand for financial controllers who are responsible for advanced analysis of the company's financial situation and the risks it faces. A person in this position is required to graduate from a university – preferably in a field related to economics. The average monthly salary at the beginning of this position is PLN 9,290 gross. Senior specialists and managers with more experience can receive remuneration from PLN 12,000 to PLN 20,000 gross.

The developing professional groups in Poland also include engineers of renewable energy sources, biotechnologists and nanotechnologists. In some of these industries we are already dealing with shortages of employees, in others the fight for a qualified engineer is just beginning. The reason for such an increased demand for engineers is the development of the photovoltaic and wind energy sectors. The deficit of electricians, electromechanics and electricians is indicated in the report "Barometer of Professions 2022".

The development of Industry 4.0, which concerns not only technology, but also new ways of working and the role of people in industry, has generated a great demand also for engineers specializing in mechatronics, automation and robotics.

Source: Antal

## EMPLOYERS ARE STEPPING UP AS 53% OF FRONTLINE COLLEAGUES REPORT SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Research released by the CCMA (Call Centre Management Association) highlights the changing nature of calls taken in the contact centre are having an impact on frontline wellbeing, with more than half of frontline colleagues reporting at least one symptom of work-related stress or burnout.

The research report Wellbeing in the Contact Centre, unveils the cognitive load on the front line is becoming consistently more intense as simpler queries that offer advisors respite are increasingly deflected to self-serve. As a result, it's getting harder for frontline colleagues to take appropriate breaks and recharge during the working day. The ability to take breaks

is the most important factor separating those who experience signs of stress and burnout, versus those who do not.

Stephen Yap, CCMA's Research Director, led the project and said: – *Resilience is a collective concept and organisations and leaders have a critical role to play as the onus has shifted from self-managing to organisations' responsibility to support. When you have more than half (52%) of frontline colleagues concerned about their ability to make ends meet, it's not really surprising that more than a third of colleagues turn up for work when sick. It has become evident that organisations should be building*

*shrinkage time into resourcing plans to allow people to take those valuable breaks.*

Interestingly, the research also revealed that 28% of frontline colleagues say they have cut back on essentials such as food and energy, with 17% saying they have used a food bank in the past year. In addition, 23% say they already spend more time in the office due to rising energy costs, and a further 41% say they may do so in the future, fuelling a return to the office.

The good news is that employers are stepping up, with 42% of frontline colleagues receiving a bonus payment in 2022.

Source: CCMA

# Is it possible to avoid hiring a fraudster?

— Text | **Monika Smulewicz, Honorata Zakrzewska-Krzyś** —

*Poles lie on their CVs on a massive scale – at least that is what surveys carried out in 2015 and 2020 concluded. While white lies can be tolerated to some extent, the situation becomes dangerous for the company when a recruiter comes face to face with a professional “camouflage specialist” who applies intending to deceive the employer or clients. Can such a time bomb be defused in advance?*

Imagine that you are looking to recruit a sales director. Once again. The previously hired one did not do a good job managing the team and the one hired before him stole the customer base and opened a competing business. Do you know how to avoid another recruitment mistake?

Six months later, another challenge arises – you need to hire a new CFO. Sitting in front of you is a candidate who seems to be perfect. Their MBA documents confirming their studies overseas are OK, other certificates too, their English is perfect, work experience is

impressive and their manners are impeccable. However, you are still thinking about that story of an employee in your sector who regularly gets top management jobs at different employers with the intention of cheating them – and is frighteningly effective at it.



” We most often lie about our work experience (44%) and language skills (41%). Less often about our specialist skills (28%) and scope of responsibilities (25%).

### **THE APPALLING SCALE OF RECRUITMENT "FRAUD"**

Unfortunately, picking out real pearls among the dozens or hundreds of job applicants is not an easy thing to do – mainly because Poles' application documents are riddled with lies. According to the "2020 CV lies survey" carried out by LiveCareer Poland on a sample of 1,254 respondents, we most often lie about our work experience (44%) and language skills (41%). Less often about our specialist skills (28%) and scope of responsibilities (25%). Almost half of the respondents (48%) who describe themselves as truthful admitted to at least one lie on their CV in subsequent questions and one in four candidates openly admitted to lying on their professional resume.

Many applicants stretch the truth or claim the credit of others without realising that providing false information in a CV is a misdemeanour and sometimes (in the case of document forgery, for example) an offence punishable by a fine or imprisonment of three months to eight years.

Obviously, recruiters know that cheating in CVs is a common practice in Poland as it is confirmed by a study entitled "CV lies on the Polish job market" conducted by IBBC Group in 2015. It shows that 81% of recruiters have encountered lies in job candidates' resumes. Fortunately, usually, 95% of them were revealed during the recruitment process. Who lies most often? Representatives of sales (60.3%), production (31.4%) as well as administration (29.7%) and finance (18.2%) departments. Marketing (11.6%), HR (11.6%) and PR (3.3%) representatives are the least likely to "stretch the truth" in their CVs.

### **BEWARE OF HIGH BUSINESS RISK!**

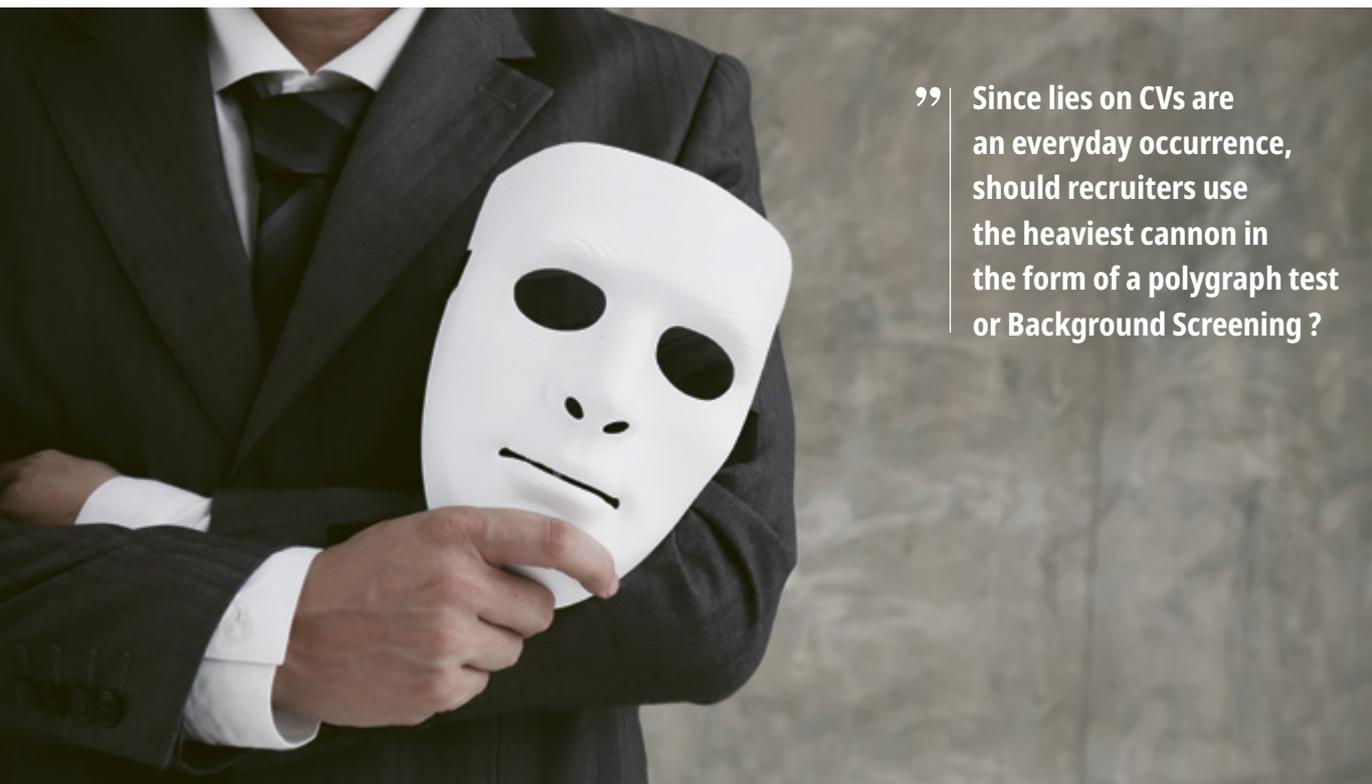
The more common unethical behaviours are also painful for companies. Examples of employee anomie (as the manifestations of unproductive behaviour at work are called) include theft, private use of company equipment, failure to respect company confidentiality, accepting gifts from clients, simulating illness and, in

the age of remote and hybrid working, mainly pretending to work or artificially adding to working hours. Is the employer defenceless in such situations? Of course not – firstly, it has the right to punish the employee by means of a warning, reprimand or fine, and ultimately (if the anomie occurs regularly) it can treat it as a serious breach of basic employment duties and terminate the employment contract without notice. The risk increases when a company encounters a serious "player" whose aim is to blow the company apart from within through, for example, sabotage or other acts of unfair competition.

It is worth being aware that not all incidents end up on file or the docket. Research on economic crime carried out in 2014 by PwC Poland shows that as many as 13% of perpetrators acting to the detriment of a company go unpunished (the case ends with a settlement, for example). What does this mean in practice? That the dishonest worker is back in the labour market.

” Marketing (11.6%), HR (11.6%) and PR (3.3%) representatives are the least likely to “stretch the truth” in their CVs.





” Since lies on CVs are an everyday occurrence, should recruiters use the heaviest cannon in the form of a polygraph test or Background Screening ?

#### **USING A LIE DETECTOR OR A DETECTIVE AGAINST THE CANDIDATE?!**

Since lies on CVs are an everyday occurrence, should recruiters use the heaviest cannon in the form of a polygraph test or Background Screening by a professional detective (verifying the veracity of provided dates of employment, the authenticity of diplomas or certificates, etc.)? In some situations, this may be justified, especially in recruitment for senior management positions that cost tens or hundreds of thousands per month. But are such methods legal?

The Act of 6 July 2001 on detective services says that “detective services are activities consisting in obtaining, processing and transmitting information on persons, objects and events, performed under a contract concluded with the ordering party, in forms and scopes not reserved for state authorities and institutions under separate regulations, in particular (...)” – in an open catalogue, the legislator delineates the areas of competence for the agencies. The range of matters listed in Article 2 is obviously not a closed catalogue. The only restriction applies to issues reserved for state bodies and institutions, e.g. law enforcement authorities, under separate legislation. As can be seen from the above, hiring an investigator to verify the integrity of a job applicant is legal under

national law and often prudent. Especially given that, as the PwC report “Economic Crime Survey 2014” concluded, top managers are responsible for 50 per cent of fraud, with amounts stolen by them being significantly higher than for lower-level employees.

With regard to the legality of the use of the lie detector during recruitment, there is a lack of precise legislation in this area – with the exception of regulations on recruiting for the Customs Service. The psychological and image aspect in the context of this type of test remains a separate issue. HR professionals argue that one can hardly hope for a positive reception of a proposal to run a polygraph test on a job candidate. It is widely perceived as violating personal dignity and reputation, as well as being deeply intrusive, and thus rejected by the defence mechanisms of the vast majority of the population.

#### **HOW TO VERIFY THE INTEGRITY OF A JOB CANDIDATE?**

The vast majority of recruitment concerns positions where standard methods can be successfully applied. The most common one, i.e. the recruitment interview, is not one of the most effective ones. Another one, i.e. observation (e.g. of body language) in a compilation of results from 39 different experimental studies

(carried out between 1980 and 1999) scored an effectiveness rate of 31-63%, according to the Institute for Variographic Research. On the other hand, the so-called Content Based Criteria Analysis (CBCA) is considered to be effective – its predictive value has been estimated (in a study by Roulin and Powell) at 64% but it requires proper training of the recruiter. Another tool valued by professionals is honesty (integrity) tests which (according to a 2015 study by Schmidt, Oh and Shaffer) score an effectiveness rate of an additional 20% of predictive value over GMA-type tests (which measure general cognitive ability).

There are, of course, many solutions available on the market – unfortunately, most do not have Polish adaptations and are only available in English. Tools readily used in Poland include, for example, Midot, which measures personality integrity and risk factors as well as safety and loyalty to the employer. Another popular solution is the Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist (CWB-C) questionnaire which measures the frequency of selected behaviours in a candidate’s career to date. In the USA, on the other hand, the Staff Selection Inventory, the Reid Report and the Stanton Survey are popular. The well-known assessment centre is a method with the highest documented success rate for

accurately selecting job candidates but it works in terms of competency-based matching to the future job, rather than integrity testing.

### GDPR – A GAME CHANGER!

The entry into force of GDPR legislation has significantly reduced the options available to recruiters when it comes to checking the credibility of job candidates. Pre-employment verification of an employee based on references or telephone calls with former employers was already controversial – as was checking a candidate on social media or seeking information about him or her at the universities listed in the CV – but these methods have become illegal (also in light of the current Labour Code regulations) following the entry into force of GDPR regulations. They can only be used with the candidate's consent. However, employment history can be verified by browsing portals such as LinkedIn or GoldenLine or by asking the candidate directly. If he or she provides letters of reference on his or her own initiative, one has to take into account the code restrictions on the processing of an additional catalogue of personal data (one cannot, for example, inquire the previous employer about matters not included in the letter of reference). A statement of a clean criminal record, on the other hand, cannot be requested “just in case” nor can it be processed even with the candidate's consent – there must be a legal basis for such action.

Those interested in how to check documents listed in a CV, please consult Article 22(1) of the Polish Labour Code.

### THE COMPANY'S MOST VALUABLE ASSET

When we hire an employee, we put our trust in them – we give them access to assets and company secrets and provide time for acclimatisation and onboarding. Treating him or her as a valuable asset to the company, we invest in their training and take responsibility for their mistakes, especially during the initial period of



” **There are also more difficult situations when the employee turns out to be a professional... fraudster. It is then extremely difficult to avoid a recruitment mistake as such a candidate usually has all the pieces in place, knows how to mislead the employer and make them less vigilant.**

difficult situations when the employee turns out to be a professional... fraudster. It is then extremely difficult to avoid a recruitment mistake as such a candidate usually has all the pieces in place, knows how to mislead the employer and make them less vigilant.

There is also the other side to this coin – the integrity of employers during recruitment and the employment relationship. In this case, too, there have been multiple examples of abuse and introducing the SA8000 standard on the organisation's social responsibility comes to mind but that is not what this article is about.

Unfortunately, the tendency to “circumvent the system” and in fact to show and tolerate unethical behaviour seems to be our national speciality. Should we, therefore, conclude with the sad statement “everybody lies”? We choose to remain moderately optimistic and trust in human honesty and sincerity which we have experienced. Lately, we have often heard that “karma returns” and hope that is the case.♦

### Authors



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# Training courses as an investment in employee development

— Text | **Natalia Kojło** —

*Employee professional development is one of the main pillars of organizational culture. Unfortunately, in many companies, the promise of development opportunities and an offer of countless mentoring programs ends with the signing of the contract. Training courses very often do not keep up with current market trends and are offered only to a selected group of employees.*

According to the Harris Pool's study from 2017<sup>1</sup>, one-third of employees left their previous workplace because they were not acquiring any new skills and had no opportunities for advancement. Lack of career growth is one of the biggest reasons workers leave. It leads to a question – how to minimize that phenomenon and at the same time improve employees' satisfaction and performance?

For the purposes of this article, we are looking at the internal training programs that Alcon Poland provides to its employees.

## ” Lack of career growth is one of the biggest reasons workers leave.

All associates in the company have access to an extensive number of e-learning platforms such as LinkedIn Learning, GoFluent and DigitalEyes. The last one is an internal website focused on the development of digital competences. The company also has a comprehensive global mentoring program. Additionally, the firm offers Lean Six Sigma training, which is a process improvement methodology designed to eliminate problems and remove inefficiency. The first level of Lean Six Sigma certification, “White Belt,” is mandatory for all employees.

<sup>1</sup> Why Are Employees Leaving Their Jobs? Here Are the Main Reasons (businessinsider.com).

However, the most important as well as popular advancement activity among employees is the program called “Foster Your Brilliance.”

The idea to create this innovative training crystalized at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. Confinement at home, inability to meet others and socialize took a toll on the well-being of employees. Therefore, Training Managers from all four Alcon Global Services centers around the world joined forces and decided to create a program during which they would share materials and training courses from various areas. In the beginning, they wanted to spread knowledge by sending resources to the most informative self-development webinars, films, or e-books.

With time, when the return to the office started taking place, Training Managers decided to develop a training package and introduce development programs organized in person at the company's headquarters in Warsaw.

– *This is how “Foster Your Brilliance” started* – explains Małgorzata Radziszewska, Training Manager at Alcon Poland, emphasizing that program stands out for being created by employees for employees.

– *At Alcon, we do not hire external companies to organize classes for a selected group of associates, who would later share the gained knowledge with their colleagues. The program encourages*

*employees to take over the role of the trainer and create a training themselves. Thanks to this, we build a unique environment, in which we engage, motivate, and inspire each other to grow* – Małgorzata Radziszewska emphasizes.

” **We build a unique environment, in which we engage, motivate, and inspire each other.**

What is the process of becoming a trainer and what are the benefits?

The first stage is registration, which is open once a year. The applicant must indicate their function, responsibilities, and area of expertise. They also need to describe their experience in teaching. The selected candidates are invited to a three-day long “Train the Trainer” course, which is divided into two parts. During the first one, employees learn how to build an encouraging and captivating program, find out how to conduct effective lessons and the importance of body language. The second part takes place two weeks later. The participants present the program they prepared and receive constructive feedback. All of that means that training courses are created and conducted at the highest level, and newly trained trainers can effectively transfer knowledge.



Paulina Gutkowska, Customer Operations Service Manager, has decided to become a trainer because it is a great opportunity to expand her competences and develop in a role that lies in the area of her interests such as coaching. Thanks to organizing training courses, she has not only the possibility to inspire others, but also gets a unique chance to network and meet her colleagues from other functions. According to Paulina, the “Foster Your Brilliance” program is an ideal solution to evaluate your strengths and build competence in the field of professional content creation, public speaking and testing your own expertise.

Currently “Foster Your Brilliance” program comprises more than 19 different training courses that are available to every employee. However, some classes are organized only for managers, such as Recruitment & Onboarding or Leadership Skills. The most popular topics are strictly related to business and technical, for instance, Excel for various levels of advancement, Project Management and Finance for Non-Finance. The only condition for participation in the training of your choice is to inform the supervisor. Courses, depending on the chosen topic, last from 2 to 8 hours and combine theory with practice. Trainers use various types of games, case studies and group work. Employees are informed about available opportunities and open registration via e-mail. After completing the training, participants are asked to take part in a survey in order to evaluate the course’s

content and the way the classes are conducted. Thanks to the feedback, trainers have a chance to constantly improve.

It is worth remembering that professional development is not limited only to courses organized in the office. – *We focus on maximizing efficiency, which is the reason why we work in the 70:20:10 model* – says Małgorzata Radziszewska.

” **As many as 94% of employees would stay in the organization that invests in their development.**

These numbers represent the three main sources of knowledge that employees can draw on. 70% means learning by doing, 20% is learning from others (for instance receiving feedback from supervisors), and only 10% are courses. Therefore, some training courses are deliberately created for specific functions, synchronized with their duties and address problems from their daily work. This makes it easy for employees to use the acquired knowledge on a daily basis.

Internal training courses turned out to be a tremendous success. In 2022, 357 employees took part in them, and the satisfaction rate was as high as 93%! It is as if each employee underwent at least one training during the year. Alcon Poland still wants to continue working on its development offer. In the future, the company would like to expand the so-called on-demand courses, created for specific problems and tools.

Development training courses are undoubtedly a valuable investment for both the company and the employee. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that they should be tailored to the current needs of both parties and had previously set goals. Thanks to the comprehensive development offer, the employees’ satisfaction rate can increase as well as their skills can improve. This translates not only into their performance, but also into the competitiveness of the employer. As many as 94% of employees would stay in the organization that invests in their development<sup>2</sup>; hence it is worth creating diversified advancement opportunities from the very beginning of the business.♦

<sup>2</sup> LinkedIn’s 2018 Learning Workplace Learning report Lack of personal development is costing you talent and increases staff turnover – Bookboon.

#### Author



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Communication Intern, Alcon Poland  
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# STARTUP ELEVATOR PITCH

## Discover startups' offer for business

We are surrounded by innovative companies and people behind them. Many ideas are brought to life and quickly gain market interest from both customers and investors. In the FOCUS ON Business magazine, we share innovative solutions offered by startups. Join us for the Startup Elevator Pitch.



### WE PRESENT: **PETHELP** – AN INNOVATIVE STARTUP OFFERING THE FIRST VETERINARY PACKAGES FOR DOGS AND CATS IN POLAND



#### MAIN PROJECT IDEA:

The main idea of the project is to promote veterinary prevention by providing comprehensive veterinary care (preventive packages + insurance) to the market. The goal is to improve the quality and length of life of dogs and cats through education. The tools used to achieve this goal are preventive veterinary packages, insurance, and a gamification platform for pet owners.



#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

PETHELP is a comprehensive veterinary care subscription service for every dog or cat owner, also available as an employee benefit. The service consists of preventive packages that can be expanded with insurance. PETHELP is the first project of its kind in Poland, integrating the fragmented veterinary market by creating a network of collaborating facilities.

PETHELP has its own technological infrastructure for handling packages and insurance, an original CRM, a gamification platform, a purchasing group for veterinary doctors, a discount platform, and a client panel.



#### TARGET GROUP:

- Dog and cat owners
- Companies and corporations (employee benefit)
- People who treat pets as family members



#### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TIME:

The project is constantly evolving, and we are continuously improving it.



#### BENEFITS FOR THE USER:

- Savings
- Safety
- Possibility of financing through an employer (as an employee benefit)
- A comfortable way to ensure preventive care, receive reminders about visits, access to visit history, test results, and a discount platform where you can find discounts on purchases in many pet stores and beyond.



#### PRODUCT/SERVICE COMPARED TO THE COMPETITION:

In the veterinary package market, there is no competition. In the market for pet insurance, we have competitive advantages:

- Cashless transactions – the client pays nothing at the facility in the event of an incident. Costs are covered in advance.
- No waiting period
- Insurance against NW (non-accidental damage)
- Liability insurance
  - Financial compensation for theft and death, as well as funding for the search for a missing pet
- Assistance
- Organization and coverage of services by the Help Center
- Offer for cats



#### SALES MODEL:

For B2C clients, sales are based on e-commerce, digital, but also materials in veterinary facilities, collaboration with influencers, and referral programs.

For the B2B market, sales are based on offering it as an employee benefit to companies and corporations. As part of the offer for B2B, we also implement a range of well-being services, such as the Pet Owner Club initiative, which integrates employees who own pets, with numerous webinars, contests, and events like PetDay in the office.

#### MORE INFORMATION:

[www.pethelp.pl/en](http://www.pethelp.pl/en)



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**-LOFTMILL-**  
OFFICES

*The Future is Flexibility*