

### **General information on the company**

DEANTE Antczak Sp.J. was established in 1990 in Łódź. The company is a distributor of bathroom and kitchen products and mainly specialises in mixers, sinks, shower cabins, shower panels and shower sets. The company operates both on the Polish market (about 90 % of sales) as well as sells the products abroad to e.g. Russia, Ukraine or Kazakhstan. During its successive expansion over years, accompanied by investments made in building of a warehouse and distribution centre in Zgierz (near Łódź), DEANTE developed into a modern managed enterprise with stable market position, employment of about 90 people and turnover exceeding 55 millions PLN (ca.14 million EUR).

The enterprise has a hierarchical – four level – organisational structure but there is a significant involvement of its employees into a decision making process. The great majority of strategic decisions is taken by its General Director - currently, owners of DEANTE do not have to participate actively in coordination of its everyday activities. Being aware of the fact that successful performance is largely dependent on the quality of the company's human resources, it actively supports professional development of the employees, financing their trainings or postgraduate studies. The enterprise has established a social fund for its staff which is used for co-financing sport or recreation activities.

DEANTE has a strong position and is perceived to be an important player on the national market. Although it can not compete with the world's biggest potentates in the field, depending on the category of products, it ranks second to sixth place in sales in Poland.

### **Motivations to carry out CSR and origin of the specific activity**

External factors had a dominant influence on the company's policy towards quality of products and services. The owners of the company have been aware of the fact that high quality and professional guarantee services are among key determinants of success. From the very beginning of the enterprise, this approach was transferred into DEANTE's strategy of action. Moreover, priority importance has been given to issues related to business ethics, aiming at development of positive image of reliable and honest trade partner.

Nowadays, DEANTE perceives CSR as a market driven requirement. It could be said that the enterprise performs in a socially responsible way as there is no alternative – it is a necessity, because otherwise the business would fall out of the market.

### **Characteristics of the CSR practice in the company**

Company's activities are determined by a strive for maximisation of profits. However, without a socially responsible approach to running the enterprise there is no possibility to achieve significant profits. This concept has been followed by the owners of company since its very beginning and resulted inter alia from the good knowledge of western European markets. CSR is thus perceived to be a very important aspect of DEANTE's strategy.



There is no person that would be directly responsible for issues regarding CSR activities within the company. In this field, the major influence on the decision making process have the General Director, the Head of Trade Department, as well as Promotion Department which includes CSR aspects in its marketing plans for each year. The company tries to assure that the socially responsible approach to running a business is reflected in an everyday work of its employees. In realisation of the policy the enterprise had never used assistance of external companies or organisations, however representatives of DEANTE occasionally participate in conferences and seminars devoted to business ethics or CSR.

The company is a member of "Reliable Partner" Club (Klub Rzetelnego Biznesu "Solidny Partner") established within the "Reliable Partner" programme, realised under an honorary patronage of the EC Representation in Poland and the President of the National Bank of Poland. The programme aims to promote modern management methods, reliability and responsibility in business as important rules in the process of developing and functioning of the society. The "Reliable Partner" also intends to provide education activities through dissemination of "Good Practice" cases illustrating reliable performance of companies involved in concerns of society and natural environment. DEANTE decided to participate in the programme in order to join the group of people that think about business in an honest way.

The company desires to offer its customers exclusively the products of highest quality and to assure that DEANTE trademark is identified with top quality bathroom and kitchen products. It has strict rules concerning selection of its suppliers and applies an internal system of quality norms that have to be met by products distributed under its trademark. This is a multilevel system of verification of suppliers and monitoring of their reliability. The policy is to provide the company with a dead certainty of high quality of the products offered. Therefore, DEANTE can provide its customers with a guarantee for 7 years! Usually periods of guarantees offered by competitors operating on the market are shorter. Moreover, the company has a certificate of products' insurance for value of 1 million zlotys. There are about 20 employees working in the quality control department.

For about 5 years, DEANTE has been providing its clients with continuous and efficient, free of charge, technical assistance and guarantee service (visits to clients). This covers both a nationwide network of authorised service points as well as special toll free service phone number. There are 10 people working in the central service and guarantee department. Apart from the internal system of products' quality control there is also an external evaluation - managerial staff of the enterprise visits its customers (wholesalers) in order to get their feedback. Moreover, the company introduced a system of monitoring of the services provided by its consultants from the guarantee services - selected customers are contacted in order to examine their satisfaction with the technical assistance obtained.

One of the main barriers for realisation of the policy based on high quality of products and services is a strong price competition, noticeable especially in case of large market networks. The distributors often offer bathroom and kitchen products on low prices but also of low quality. DEANTE has never been interested in the segment of products of lowest prices - according to its strategy the company offers high quality for a good price. However, there is an increasing number of clients that look for products of good quality and, therefore, more often price is not the only purchase criterion that counts. Another problem is unreliable suppliers. In order to fulfil assumed quality standards and maintain positive reputation, the enterprise must realise an on-going process of monitoring and quality control of products received from its suppliers - this activities generate costs.

The business promotes its responsible approach towards clients, mainly through the company's web site. Moreover, for marketing purposes it uses a logo of "Reliable Partner". The company also takes part in competitions promoting the culture of entrepreneurship.

### **Impact of the CSR activities**

The company is aware of benefits gained through the CSR practices. Its socially responsible strategy helped in development of a positive image of the company. The DEANTE trademark is associated with good quality and reliability all over Poland as well as abroad. This results in higher volume of sales. The company believes that if they did not care so much about the



quality of its products the sales probably might be even higher, but this could only be a very short-sighted strategy, leading to the business failure.

The development of a comprehensive guarantee service opened a new market for the company – it was possible to reach a new (previously unavailable) group of customers requiring producers' guarantee services. Moreover, the dynamic development of the company and its stable market and economic position, achieved inter alia through its client oriented policy, contribute to eliminating problem of migration of employees.

One should also remember that the final users of company's products benefit from the strategy as well - they receive products of high quality and a long-term technical assistance.

Finally, DEANTE earned the reputation of a reliable and honest trade partner, being awarded with honorary title of "Business Fair Play (Przedsiębiorstwo Fair Play)" six times repeatedly (years 2001-2006). The company's participation in the "Reliable Partner" programme allows it to use the logo for marketing purposes.

The results of responsible approach to running the company are not immediate, and major effects appear after minimum 5 to 7 years. Achievement of the goals was possible mainly due to consistent realisation of the strategy and particular investments - the guarantee service of products offered by DEANTE costs for example about 1 million PLN (over 250 thousands EUR) per year. Moreover, successful implementation of the CSR policy requires proper selection of employees, and in some cases also changing their mentality regarding relations with clients. Another success factor is a time of reaction to claims or technical enquiries made by clients – to reduce the time company decided to establish a special telephone line for technical assistance.

### **Future issues**

The enterprise intends to continue its hitherto strategy which is compliant with the concept of CSR. One of the challenges identified by the company for the nearest future is shortening the time of reaction to customers' claims up to a maximum of 48 hours from the moment of their receipt. Moreover, it is considered to extend the scope of CSR activities, if there are some interesting new proposal or ideas.

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