



# INVOLVEMENT OF EMPLOYEES IN OPERATIONAL PLANNING OF MANUFACTURING ENTERPRISES: LATVIA EXPERIENCE

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## Abstract

*The main feature of teamwork is a common goal, and the involvement of employees is essential to its achievement. In a wider scope, it is understood not only by the involvement of employees in decision-making but also as the involvement of employees in operational planning and strategic issues. Research aim is to find out whether the involvement of employees in decision-making, goal setting and planning is inherent in manufacturing enterprises. According to a survey of 268 different level employees of 25 manufacturing enterprises in Latvia, it was found out that involvement of all employees in the decision-making process is not perceived by the enterprises' performance and strategic planning, and the involvement of employees in decision-making and goal setting can only be seen within the department.*

**Keywords:** decision-making, employee involvement, goal setting, operational planning, manufacturing enterprise, teamwork

## Introduction

A correctly chosen strategy in an enterprise promotes its long-term competitiveness and operational development in the market. A proper strategic planning can also have a huge impact on the enterprise's operations and long-term value (Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019; Mankins & Steel, 2009). It requires such decision-making as the choice of technology, allocation of resources, development of the necessary skills, etc. It is the way the decisions are made throughout the organization that has a very serious impact on the strategy, as the strategy will only be understood and implemented if it receives support in decisions for resource allocation made at all levels of the enterprise (Bower & Gilbert, 2009). "With the help of strategic, tactical and operational plans, the enterprise's management and employees plan the use of the enterprise's resources in compliance with the set goals" (Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019, p.504). Due to limited resources also in the enterprises' daily life, managers will have to take into account decisions refusing from the implementation of one activity and reallocating the organization's resources to other activities (Caune & Dzedons, 2009), which are hard to be implemented without the support of employees of different levels. According to a number of researchers, the enterprise's strategy development requires employees' participation, as does day-to-day planning and decision-making (Bower & Gilbert, 2009; Blanchard & Johnson, 2008; Caune & Dzedons, 2009; Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019). This is justified both by the above mentioned and the fact that responsibilities in enterprises are divided between different individuals and entities, which means that not only power but also knowledge in enterprises is scattered and located in unexpected enterprise's structural units, influencing how the strategy unfolds (Bower & Gilbert, 2009). "Nowadays important decisions in an organization are hardly ever made by one person" (Praude, 2012, p.351). Involvement of

employees in decision-making gives the opportunity to receive more information and knowledge, to combine different experience and professionalism, to obtain multiple original ideas and alternatives, different views on the same problem (Praude, 2012; Ruperte, 2010). Despite the fact that group decision-making is a relatively long and labour-intensive process, which has to be organized correctly, in the case of an effective decision, the costs will be justified, since it is possible to choose the best of the various alternatives, a much more precise decision has been made and the final decision has many supporters (Praude, 2012). It is the planning process that unites the enterprise's employees to achieve common goals (Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019). Similarly, to common decisions, a common view of the goal in the enterprise also serves as: a source of inspiration - an incentive to achieve it by developing the necessary resources and capabilities; basis for better quality decisions; promotes creative and innovative action; maintains enthusiasm (Bower & Gilbert, 2009; Caune & Dzedons, 2009; Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019). "Operations managers can refocus and improve strategy in particularly innovative ways" (Bower & Gilbert, 2009, p.133). As researchers have mentioned, managers and employees become surprisingly creative and innovative if they understand and support the enterprise's mission, goals and strategy (Caune & Dzedons, 2009). And it is the ability to see the vision that is also part of the employees' broader capacity to develop understanding of what the organization might look like in the future (Gratone, 2004). The goal in the strategic planning process is to prepare and unite the enterprise's employees in order to meet the strategic goals (Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019), therefore, gaining the understanding and participation of all managers and employees in the strategic management process should be set as the most important goal (Caune & Dzedons, 2009). The efficiency of the decision-making process itself is also determined by how the manager has managed to involve other employees into this process (Praude, 2012). The development of a strategy is a process in which the involvement of employees means that they begin to feel part of the company, they want to support it and are aware of the link between their own contribution and the enterprise's performance, participation ensures the interest in making the necessary changes, increases the organization's ability to eliminate problems and helps to improve products by creating a team that works with motivation and is able to change flexibly (Caune & Dzedons, 2009; Hill et al., 2014; Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019). This mentioned performance is ensured by the teamwork approach in enterprises, taking into account that the most characteristic features of teamwork are: ability to work in a coordinated way to achieve common results, positive thinking, flexible and variable division of functions between employees, professionalism and mutual cooperation in the duties performance (Zinkevich-Evstigneeva, 2004). As pointed out by Forands (2003), the team is inherent in common understanding of values, internal interconnectedness, expression of feelings, trust, interpersonal communication skills, coherence, listening, conflict resolution, consensus and cooperation (Forands, 2003). It is topical for teams to have a common external goal, mutual division of roles and tasks, responsibility for the result and jointly made decision (Ruperte, 2010). Workforce involvement and teamwork to address strategic issues in enterprises, collective decision-making, involving employees in discovering and solving company problems, creating conditions for the use of each employee's abilities and initiative, and providing support for team leaders' activities - strategic vision, are considered to be the hallmarks of a highly efficient organization (Zinkevich-Evstigneeva, 2004). Complementing this with an understanding of a common goal and expected outcome, a common view of the approach chosen to solve the tasks, increase of responsibility for individual performance, cooperation and mutual support in the performance of direct responsibilities, immediate and constructive conflict resolution, a friendly and supportive atmosphere, and team spirit in general, must also ensure the functioning of a healthy company (Sartan, 2005). Thomas Bothe (2017), a strategy and leadership coach practicing in Europe, believes that team members have personally identified with belonging to a team in order to achieve a common goal (Bothe, 2017). In this way, an effective implementation of change

(Adizes, 2018; Caune & Dzedons, 2009), launch of new products and development of existing ones, creative and innovative approach to tasks (Hill et al., 2014; Viksna, 2009) can be achieved. According to Linda A. Hill et al. (2014): “The ultimate innovation will almost always be the collective result which has been achieved due to the group’s interactions” (Hill et al., 2014, p. 41). The compliance of employees’ behaviour with the business objectives also has an impact on the enterprise's performance and specific financial results (Gratone, 2004), the same way as productivity, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is best achieved with the help of people (Blanchard & Johnson, 2008; Ozoliņa-Ozola, 2009). A value-oriented organization also requires a unified employees’ view (Barret, 2008). “The deep consensus on priorities and the set of actions that will enable an enterprise to achieve them lies in the essence of a strong culture” (Kristensen et al., 2009, p.164), just as teambuilding itself is based on a corporate culture that has certain values and norms (Forands, 2003). According to the management specialist I. Ruperte (2010), “The team determines the efficiency of the organization and the readiness for change and, most often, the viability of the organization” (Ruperte, 2010, p. 154). It should be remembered that the main role of the staff in the organization is related to the choice of the type of their activity organization and it is the staff that makes the technology, through its skilful application, become the creator of added value in the company (Freemantle, 2006; Praude, 2012; Sinicins, 2009; Svikis, 2018). People of an organization, as the most valuable part of resources, are the ones who provide the main advantages of competitiveness, because the development and implementation of new quality ideas depends on them (Praude, 2012). As new knowledge enters production and technology changes, it is the competencies of those who work that can take advantage of technology (Sinicins, 2009; Svikis, 2018). “There is a significant difference between people as a value and traditional and technological values or means, understanding the difference mentioned above, the way of thinking and operating style changes in the organization” (Gratone, 2004, p. 3-4). “A business-level strategy can only be implemented with the participation of people (Gratone, 2004, p. 4), since the key to success in every enterprise is the employees’ ability to react quickly and understand changes in the surrounding environment, as well as to take into account the current circumstances when planning further activities” (Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019, p.509). According to Ichak Kalderon Adizes (2018), one of the world's leading management experts: “A complementary team is needed to make effective decisions” (Adizes, 2018, p. 324).

### *Research Problem*

As business management approaches change, the pursuit of high performance by manufacturing enterprises remains unchanged. Business leaders are constantly looking for and implementing new approaches and tools in the management of manufacturing enterprises, in enhancement of their enterprise’s operational outcomes and increasingly appreciating the importance of the human factor in their companies. One of the potentially applicable tools is teamwork in manufacturing enterprises in order to achieve the specified work results. In the absence of a team approach in business planning, goal setting and decision-making processes, the manufacturing enterprise's management risks low competitiveness, quality problems, unfulfilled orders in time, performance of incomprehensible tasks on daily basis, lack of creativity among employees, low job satisfaction and loyalty in general (Bikfalvi, 2011; Flores-Fillol et al., 2017; Grant & Hallam, 2016; Maginn, 1994; West, 2004; etc.). Lack of cooperation at the functional level hinders problem-solving in the enterprise (Caune & Dzedons, 2009), and strategic planning fails if it focuses on individual business units (Mankins & Steel, 2009). The research aim was to find out whether the involvement of employees in decision-making, goal setting and planning is inherent in manufacturing enterprises.

*Research Focus*

In manufacturing companies, it is especially important for employees to know on a daily basis what the indicators of each production department are in relation to what has been planned, because operative information about the results can be very motivating to work as efficiently as possible (Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019). “An ongoing planning process involving the entire organization is an important prerequisite for achieving the enterprise's long-term economic goals” (Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019, p. 504). Therefore, the question is topical whether and to what extent the workforce participation and problem-solving in a team are inherent in manufacturing enterprises. A serious mistake is the belief that strategic planning is exclusively a function of top-level management - it leads to unrealizable strategies, strategies that do not work and tense mutual relationships (Caune & Dzedons, 2009). “Most strategy analysts ignore the role of work managers in strategy results achievement, assuming that these managers are too tied to the requirements of operations to think strategically” (Bower & Gilbert, 2009, p. 133), forgetting that hierarchy can hinder the free flow of information and the emergence of diverse ideas (Hill et al., 2014), or the fact that it is in times of crisis that common ground and concerted action are essential (Caune & Dzedons, 2009), where it is the operational leaders who have a very real impact (Bower & Gilbert, 2009). Taking into account the series of daily unforeseen events, decisions must be made immediately, so the awareness of the enterprise's goals and objectives, as well as the planning of resources in which employees have participated, is important for making quality and correct daily decisions (Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019). It is important to understand that much of the planning can and should be done by the lowest level executives who are the closest to the facts and purchasers. Therefore, corporate level planners have a responsibility to facilitate decision making for lower-level managers (Caune & Dzedons, 2009). However, the 'thinking with the herd' inherent in group decisions should also be largely avoided, but it should be borne in mind that strategic planning is only successful if strategic decision-makers make full use of all the information available to them. This means that it will only be successful if leaders at all levels are involved (Caune & Dzedons, 2009; Owen, 2017). “The primary task of management is to get people to work together systematically” (Kristensen et al., 2009, p. 164), but in order to develop a strategic approach to people, a strong dialogue must be ensured throughout the organization (Gratone, 2004). It is also important to ensure that employees receive feedback on the development of the company in the area in which the employee has been involved (Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019). According to the researcher Gratone (2004), this requires both a new kind of mindset and a new kind of activity in the enterprise - a kind of thinking that puts the search for purpose at the centre and an activity that creates a common vision, full awareness of the situation and a wide range of multifunctional work group involvement based on human resources strategy (Gratone, 2004). “The art of management is about making things happen through people you do not control” (Owen, 2017, p. 208). In addition, making effective decisions requires finding long-term common interests for the people who are needed to implement the decisions made (Adizes, 2018). When focusing on relationships with employees, an enterprise should be established where the set of core values is understood and demonstrated through the organization (Wellington, 2017). Observing that the enterprise must be designed to be able to move towards strategic goals, employees need to understand what they are and how each decision made contributes to their achievement (Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019). The lack of goals and objectives, both for the owner and for employees, is often a cause for concern, as a result of which resources are misused and fail to achieve the anticipated (Hofs & Alsiņa, 2019). It also reveals the main reason for the need to involve employees in operational planning processes, their own goal determination and the corresponding decision making towards them.

## Research Methodology

### *General Background*

The main attention in the research has been paid to the potential of teamwork application in manufacturing enterprises in Latvia - business planning, decision-making and common goal determination. In order to find out whether the operation of manufacturing enterprises is inherent in the employees' involvement in decision-making, goal setting and operational planning, 268 managers and employees of various levels (both manufacturing and administrative function performers) in 25 manufacturing enterprises in Latvia were interviewed that are economically active and operate in one of the subbranches of the NACE Revision 2 Group C "Manufacturing Industry" within the year 2019/2020.

### *Sample*

The breakdown of enterprises by subgroup section shows that in terms of share the most surveyed subgroups C10 - *Manufacture of Food Products* - enterprises (24%; 6) and subgroups C25 - *Manufacture of Prefabricated Metal Products, except for machinery and equipment* - enterprises (12%; 3), with a similar distribution for the number of enterprises surveyed in industry subgroups C14 (*Manufacture of Wearing Apparel*), C16 (*Manufacture of Wood and Wooden and Cork Products, except for furniture; Manufacture of Straw Articles and Plaiting Materials*), C28 (*Manufacture of Equipment, Mechanisms and Machines N.E.C.*) and C29 (*Manufacture of Motor Vehicles*) - respectively 8% (2) enterprises in each and 4% (1) enterprises in the other industry subgroups.

Based on the size of the company in terms of the number of employees, 12% (3) of the 25 enterprises involved in the study correspond to a large company (250 and more employees), 32% (8) to a small company (up to 49 employees) and 56% (14) to a medium-sized company (50 to 249 employees) group.

Looking at the enterprise's operating duration, 32% (8) of the enterprises with a duration of up to 10 years, 36% (9) with a duration of 11-20 years and 32% (8) with a duration of 21 years or more have participated in the survey.

15% (39) of all enterprises surveyed sell their products in the domestic market, 52% (140) in the international market, and the rest 33% (89) sell their products in both the domestic and international markets. 21% (57) of companies start their production before having received an order and 79% (211) produce after having received an order.

In 28% (74) cases of the production process, most of the work is done by employees and the equipment is used only as an aid, in 12% (33) of the production process most of the work is done by special equipment, but workforce is used to monitor the process, whereas 60% (161) of the respondents note that in the production process the enterprise uses special equipment and employees' skills to work with them equally.

Among the 268 employees of different levels involved in the study, 32% (85) of the respondents' position determines they have other staff under their authority, but 68% (183) have no other staff under their authority - 3% (7) manage the company, 20% (53) manage a department and 78% (208) are other employees of the company. The average length of the respondents' service in the company is 4.7 years (maximum length of service: 37 years; minimum length of service: 0.5 years).



### *Instrument and Procedures*

To achieve the aim of this study, an online questionnaire was worked out to clarify:

- What problem-solving issues are the enterprise's employees in the manufacturing companies involved in?
- Are employees involved in the decision-making, elaboration of the enterprise's development goals and plans?
- In what problem-solving issues would the employees' participation be the most relevant in the manufacturing enterprise?

The survey was conducted on the Internet by filling out a specially designed online questionnaire at [docs.google.com/forms](https://docs.google.com/forms). The questionnaire consisted of 9 questions. The structure of the questionnaire comprised closed questions:

- 3 questions were formed in the interval scale, allowing the respondents to provide their answers to several statements from 1 (*not at all typical*) - 5 (*very typical*) to evaluate the highly effective organizational features in manufacturing enterprises (9 statements) and employees' involvement in decision making (8 statements), and to provide respondents' answers to 8 statements from 1 (*very poor*) - 5 (*very good*) to evaluate a cooperation in manufacturing enterprises;
- 2 questions were formed in ordinal scale, allowing the respondents to provide their answers to 5 statements to evaluate cooperation for the day-to-day performance of employees' duties (scale: *not related at all, more unrelated than related, more related than not related, largely related*) and to find out the necessity for employees' participation in the management issues of the manufacturing enterprise (scale: *employees' participation is necessary, employees' participation is rather necessary, employees' participation is rather not necessary, employees' participation is not necessary*);
- 4 questions were in nominal scale. To find out, whether the groups of employees independent from the manager are being formed in the manufacturing companies, 1 question with 9 statements were formed in dichotomous scale (answers "yes" and "no"). 1 questions were formed to identify employee involvement in the development of the enterprise's development goals and plans, and respondents had to mark one appropriate answer from the list of the 4 values. 2 questions were formed as multiple response questions: 1) to find out at which of the operational stages in the manufacturing enterprise is the greatest need for the employees' mutual cooperation, respondents were provided to mark the appropriate answer or answers from the list of 14 operational stages and 2) to find out in which of the problem-solving issues relevant to the enterprise employees have been involved during the last year, respondents were provided to mark the appropriate answer or answers from the list of 10 problem-solving issues.

### *Data Analysis*

The survey results were analysed and the data processed by the authors of the paper within the present study by applying methods of descriptive statistics (frequencies and central tendency), data visualization method, and data reduction. Data reducing were applied with the aim to reflect an ordinal variable "the necessity for employees' participation in the management issues of the manufacturing enterprise" with 4 values (1) *employees' participation is necessary*, 2) *employees' participation is rather necessary*, 3) *employees' participation is rather not necessary*, 4) *employees' participation is not necessary*) as variable with 2 values - 1) *employees' participation is necessary and 2) employees' participation is not necessary*),

thus, only positive and negative responses are used in the analysis of the results. Reducing of values were applied

- by combining *Employees` participation is necessary and Employees` participation is rather necessary into one category "Employees` participation is necessary"* and
- by combining *Employees` participation is rather not necessary and Employees` participation is not necessary into one category "Employees` participation is not necessary"*

SPSS software (26 version) and MS Excel 2016 were used to analyze the statistical data.

## Research Results

Assessing the researched manufacturing enterprises according to the features of a highly efficient organization, which envisages employees' involvement and joint cooperation in solving issues relevant to the enterprise, the results show that on a scale of 1 (not at all typical) - 5 (very typical), respondents evaluated the given features as partially inherent in their enterprises (the mean rating ranging from 3.09 to 3.88).

The respondents indicated their enterprise's efforts to find out and meet customer needs efficiently as the most typical (Mean rating 3.88 ( $SD=1.035$ )) (Table 1), which in a market economy is reasonable and relevant for every enterprise, hoping for profit as a result of operations.

**Table 1**

*Evaluation of Highly Effective Organizational Features in Manufacturing Enterprises in Latvia, Average Rating (n = 268)*

Features of a highly efficient organization	Min	Max	M	SD
Find out and satisfy customer needs efficiently	1	5	3.88	1.035
Introduce innovations and evolve	1	5	3.69	1.107
Allocate existing resources efficiently and wisely	1	5	3.53	1.061
Continuous learning	1	5	3.46	1.240
Implement reasonable changes	1	5	3.40	1.035
Support the team leaders' activity and strategic vision	1	5	3.24	1.008
Work together as a whole	1	5	3.24	1.125
Create conditions for the use of each employee's abilities and initiative	1	5	3.18	1.051
Involve employees in the enterprise's problem identification and solving	1	5	3.09	1.088

At the same time, the features of effective organization that are directly related to teamwork are less characteristic of the researched manufacturing enterprises - to involve employees in the enterprise's problem identification and solving (Mean rating 3.09 ( $SD=1.088$ )), to create conditions for each employee to use their abilities and initiative (Mean rating 3.18 ( $SD=1.051$ )), as well as for the company to operate as a whole (Mean rating 3.24 ( $SD=1.125$ )). (Table 1)

Noting to what extent the performance of employees' duties in manufacturing enterprises on a daily basis is related to the "involvement and cooperation of other employees" - 51.9% of respondents indicate that "to a large extent" and another 51.5% of respondents also "to a large extent" indicate their daily duties "ability to work in concert to achieve a common result" (Table 2).

**Table 2**  
*Cooperation for the Day-to-day Performance of Employees' Duties, % (n=268)*

To what extent is the performance of your daily duties related to:	Largely related	More related than not related	More unrelated than related	Not related at all
Involvement and cooperation of other employees	51.9	29.5	16.0	2.6
Ability to work in concert to achieve a common result	51.5	38.1	8.2	2.2
Professionalism of other employees	45.5	36.9	15.3	2.2
Positive thinking of other employees	36.2	37.7	20.9	5.2
Flexible and variable distribution of functions between employees	29.5	44.8	20.9	4.9

The results confirm the need for mutual cooperation in the performance of daily duties for more than half of the employees of manufacturing enterprises. Noting in which of the stages of operation in the enterprise the mutual cooperation of employees is most needed, the respondents indicate: production planning and management (68.8%), quality control, monitoring (52.6%) and production technological process (51.9%). In terms of cooperation, respondents consider less relevant such areas as: accounting and financial management, IT services, marketing and market research - the need for cooperation is indicated in 16.5% and 18.4% in each of the areas, respectively. (Table 3)

**Table 3**  
*The Most Relevant Operational Stage of the Manufacturing Enterprise for the Employees' Mutual Cooperation, Number, (n=268) \*Multiple Response*

In which of the operational stages in the enterprise is the greatest need for the employees' mutual cooperation?	Count	Response, % (Base: Count)
Manufacturing planning and management	183	68.8
Quality control, monitoring	140	52.6
Technological process of manufacturing	138	51.9
Installation, provision of operation, technical support, equipment maintenance	123	46.2
Logistics (storage, warehouses, transport)	119	44.7
Procurement of resources	117	44.0
Designing, product development, design	113	42.5
Sales, order processing, distribution organization, customer service	101	38.0
Management, administration, strategic planning	92	34.6
Personnel management	59	22.2
Marketing and market research	49	18.4
IT service	49	18.4
Accounting and financial management	44	16.5



Studying the tendency of forming work groups in manufacturing enterprises, it has been concluded that the employees' work groups independent of the manager are formed in the company for team building (50.7%) and mutual experience exchange (41.8%) (Table 4).

**Table 4**  
*Formation of Employees' Work Groups Independent of the Manager in Manufacturing Enterprises, % (n=268)*

Are employees' work groups independent of the manager formed in your company:	Yes	No
To unite the team and strengthen traditions	50.7	49.3
For the exchange of mutual experience	41.8	58.2
To fulfil a customer's order on a daily basis	40.7	59.3
To solve complex work assignments	40.3	59.7
To deal with crisis situations	30.6	69.4
To implement changes	36.9	63.1
For project development	35.4	64.6
For implementation of innovations	29.9	70.1
For financing acquisition	15.7	84.3

The issues such as acquisition of financing (no - 84.5%) and introduction of innovations (no - 70.1%) are the least addressed in work groups in manufacturing enterprises (Table 4). 70.7% of respondents mention that during the last year they have been involved in the quality problem-solving issues, but another 61.9% in efficiency issues discussion and 56.3% in their own unit/ department's action plan development. (Table 5) Only 29.3%, i.e., ~ 1/3 of employees are involved in the decisions about the change implementation in the company. Employees' involvement in a complex issue/problem solving relevant to the enterprise's operations (36.3%) and product development (32.1%) is also low. Only 16.3% of employees have been involved in defining the enterprise's goals in the last year (Table 5).

**Table 5**  
*Involvement of Employees in Problem-Solving Issues Relevant to the Company during the Last Year, Number, (n=268) \*Multiple Response*

You have been involved during the last year in:	Count	Response, % (Base: Count)
Finding solutions to quality issues	152	70.7
Discussion of efficiency issues	133	61.9
Development of own unit/department's action plans	121	56.3
Assessment of performance outcomes in the enterprise/department	92	42.8
A topical, complex issue / problem-solving for the enterprise's operation	78	36.3
Product development	69	32.1
Decisions on change implementation in the company	63	29.3
Cooperation development with various stakeholders	59	27.4
At the enterprise's reputation promotion event	47	21.9
The company goal defining	35	16.3

The fact that only the enterprise's leading employees and specialists are involved in the development of the enterprise's development goals and plans has been indicated by 43.3% of the enterprise's employees. Also, in 34% of cases, the enterprise's employees have mentioned the opinion that setting the enterprise's goals and planning development is only a task for the management. (Table 6)

**Table 6**  
*Involvement of Employees in the Development of the Enterprise's Development Goals and Plans, % (n=268)*

Are the enterprise's employees involved in the development of the enterprise's development goals and plans?	Column Valid N
Only the enterprise's leading employees and specialists are involved	43.3
Setting the enterprise's goals and development planning is only a task for the management	34.0

Finding out how inherent certain statements about decision-making in manufacturing enterprises are, it clearly appears that only the enterprise's management participates in the manufacturing enterprise's day-to-day decision-making (Mean rating 3.6 ( $SD=1.078$ )) and it is not at all typical that all employees are involved in decision-making (Mean rating 1.93 ( $SD=1.010$ )) (Table 7).

**Table 7**  
*Involvement of Employees Decision Making, Average Rating (n=268)*

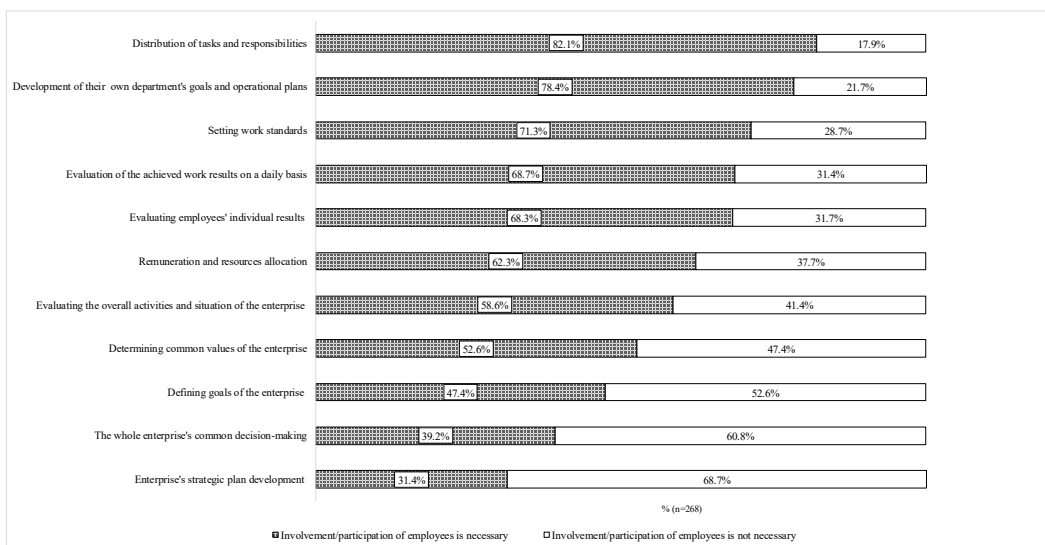
How inherent are the following statements in your enterprise in daily life?	Min	Max	M	SD
Only the enterprise's management participates in decision-making	1	5	3.60	1.078
The head of the enterprise makes unilateral decisions	1	5	3.33	1.163
Employees accept and support the decisions made in the enterprise	1	5	3.09	1.126
Your line manager makes unilateral decisions	1	5	3.08	1.154
Decisions are made between employees within each unit / department /among function performers	1	5	3.07	1.104
Employees of different functions and levels are involved in decision-making	1	5	3.05	1.048
Special work groups are formed to make difficult decisions	1	5	2.87	1.326
All employees of the company are involved in decision-making	1	5	1.93	1.010

53.3% of respondents have mentioned that only the enterprise's management participates in decision-making. The results also indicate that companies are inherent in unilateral decision-making by the manager - 45.5% of the respondents indicate that the enterprise's manager makes unilateral decisions, but 35.0% mention that unilateral decisions are also made by the line manager.

Regarding the need for employees' participation and involvement in various issues related to the management of manufacturing enterprises, 82.1% of respondents mention the need to involve employees in the division of tasks and responsibilities, but 71.3% - in

setting work standards. 68.7% indicate that the involvement of employees in the development of the enterprise's strategic plans is not necessary and another 60.8% deny the need for the involvement of employees in the overall decision-making of the entire enterprise. 78.4% support the involvement of employees in the development of the goals and operational plans of their department (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
*The Need for Employees' Participation in the Management Issues of the Manufacturing Enterprise, % (n=268)*



In terms of co-operation, the interaction among employees within one department has received a higher evaluation in the studied manufacturing enterprises. When giving evaluations of cooperation in their enterprise on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good), the employees have evaluated as the best both the employees' interaction within one department (Mean rating 4.07 ( $SD=0.747$ )) and employees and management's cooperation within one department (Mean rating 3.74 ( $SD=0.904$ )) (Table 8).

**Table 8**  
*Evaluation of Cooperation in Manufacturing Enterprises, Average Rating (n=268)*

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Employees' interaction within one department	268	2	5	4.07	0.747
Employees and management's interaction within one department	268	1	5	3.74	0.904
Managers' interaction in the enterprise	268	1	5	3.66	0.903
Employees' skills and willingness to collaborate	268	1	5	3.59	0.767
Employees' ability to act in a united and coordinated manner	268	1	5	3.51	0.897
Employees and management's interaction in the enterprise in general	268	1	5	3.38	0.939
Employees' interaction between different departments	268	1	5	3.37	0.912
Employees' ability to resolve conflicts	268	1	5	3.35	0.930

Employees' interaction between different departments (Mean rating 3.37 ( $SD=0.912$ )) and employees and management's interaction in the company in general (Mean rating 3.38 ( $SD=0.939$ )) have received a low average rating. Managers' interaction in the enterprise has been rated higher: mean rating 3.66 ( $SD=0.903$ ) (Table 8).

Taking into account the low evaluation given by the employees to the mutual cooperation between different departments (15.3% of the respondents mention it as bad; mean rating is 3.37 ( $SD=0.912$ )), it can be concluded that the work environment within one department is more positive for teamwork.

## Discussion

The studied manufacturing enterprises only partially correspond to the features of an efficient organization (Zinkevich-Evstigneeva, 2004). The employees of the enterprise mention the company's interest in finding out and satisfying the needs of customers efficiently as the most characteristic. This is justified in market conditions. But the features of an efficient organization, which are associated with teamwork - employees' involvement in common problem-solving, application of employees' initiative and the enterprise's ability to operate as a whole, are less characteristic. Even though more than 70% of the employees' day-to-day responsibilities in manufacturing enterprises are related to cooperation and 51.5% are "largely" related to the ability to work together in order to achieve a common result, the issues related to joint business planning and acquisition of a unified view in manufacturing enterprises have been neglected, preventing from the opportunity to make a full use of the previously theoretically substantiated advantages of the enterprise from the employees' involvement in these issues. In the frame of High-Performance Industrial Manufacturing, through the Industry standard 4.0. an importance of employee cooperation in manufacturing enterprises was highlighted also by Sandengen et.al. (2016), because in order to succeed with a complex technological integration, i.e., advanced Automation and Robotics, sensor-based computer technology, interconnected by wireless communication, and supported by BIG Data solutions, manufacturing enterprises need effective management and excellent Human/ Human cooperation, and thus, according to Sandengen et al (2016), effective management and human cooperation will be increasingly important in the future (Sandengen, et al., 2016).

Answering the research question and revealing the areas of the enterprise's activities in which employees have been involved, it has been concluded that in the last year most of the employees (70.7%) have been involved in addressing quality issues and discussion of efficiency issues (61.9%). Employees' work groups independent of the manager in manufacturing enterprises are mainly formed for teambuilding (50.7%) and mutual experience exchange (41.8%). A partially positive result is the involvement of 56.3% of employees in the development of business plans of their unit/ department, but only 16.3% of employees have been involved in defining the enterprise's overall goals over the past year. 43.3% of the respondents indicate that only the company's leading employees and specialists are involved in the development of the enterprise's development goals and plans, where most of the employees believe that this is also an area applicable only to managers. Employees' involvement in solving a complex issue / problem relevant to the enterprise's operations (36.3%) and product development (32.1%) during the last year has also been low. About 1/3 of employees have been involved in decisions about the implementation of changes in the company, which does not convince of a supportive work environment in order to create a common understanding of values in the enterprise. The results reveal that only the management of the company participate in the daily decision-making of the manufacturing enterprise, and it is not at all typical that all employees of the company are involved in decision-making. Unilateral decision-making by the manager is typical at the level of both the enterprise's management and department managers. The boundaries of mutual

cooperation within only one department are supplemented by the evaluation of cooperation provided by employees in enterprises. In terms of co-operation, in manufacturing enterprises, employees' interaction within the same department, both between employees and between employees and management, has been rated higher. The employees' interaction between different departments and employees and management's interaction in the enterprise in general has obtained the lowest average rating. Taking into account the low evaluation given by the employees to the mutual cooperation between different departments (15.3% of the respondents mention it as bad; mean rating is 3.37 ( $SD=0.912$ ), it can be concluded that the work environment within one department is more positive for teamwork. By covering the enterprise's processes at multiple levels and operating in parallel and independent directions, not only the top-level corporate executives but also the middle and operations managers and their teams who manage the fundamental processes by getting engaged in strategic decisions, can provide the corporate management with a holistic view of what specific companies can do today and what could be achieved in the future by identifying a set of plans, programmes and actions that should direct the enterprise's strategy (Bower & Gilbert, 2009).

The results show that the employees' participation in the operation of manufacturing enterprises, from the employees' point of view, is most necessary in the division of tasks and responsibilities, development of goals and operational plans of their department, as well as in determination of work standards, but the least interest is in the involvement in the development of the enterprise's strategic plans and the whole enterprise's common decision-making. Looking at the need for the employees' participation in solving specific functions, it is the most relevant, from the employees' point of view, in *business flows that add the value* (according to Svikis, 2018) - in production planning, management, technological processes and quality determination, but less relevant - in *supporting action flows* that do not add the value (accounting, IT, marketing, personnel management). The results show that employees appreciate the need for cooperation in those areas in which they have been involved so far. The employee, who has been involved in the team so far to solve a certain issue, has also assessed the importance of mutual cooperation in the respective field. Importance of team in the manufacturing enterprises was concluded also by Davila et al. (2016) which find out that by focusing on performance and team development, manufacturing enterprises' performance was significantly improved by enhancing manufacture planning and control capabilities, product development capabilities and by structuring commercial functions (Davila et al., 2016).

It can be assumed that the involvement of employees and promotion of cooperation in other areas relevant to the enterprise's operations would allow to appreciate the advantages provided by the teamwork in the progress of issues in these areas in the manufacturing enterprises as well.

## Conclusions

Such teamwork features in the enterprise as the understanding of a common goal and development of mutual cooperation, also mean the employees' involvement in decision-making, business planning and strategic issues, which results in a common understanding of values within the enterprise and provides support in the performance of duties among performers of different levels and functions. Equally, such involvement of employees and teamwork are also a sign of a strong corporate culture that contributes to the enterprise's sustainability. However, the results of the study enable us to conclude that the involvement of employees in decision-making and goal setting has been observed only within their own department. Quality and efficiency issues are addressed through the involvement of employees. The results show insufficient involvement of employees in the manufacturing enterprises' planning – in strategic issues. Therefore, a common concept of what a particular enterprise can do today and what it could achieve in the



future is underestimated. The involvement of employees provides an opportunity to receive more information, knowledge and experience for diverse solutions. This shortcoming may be felt by manufacturing enterprises that have not appreciated the involvement of employees in business planning.

To a certain extent, the results indicate the need to develop the skills of manufacturing enterprises' managers to delegate and acquire knowledge in teambuilding, as there is a tendency for managers to make unilateral decisions. Work groups are formed to unite the team, strengthen traditions, and exchange mutual experience. At the same time, from the employees' point of view, cooperation is the most relevant in production planning and management, quality control, as well as in the manufacturing technological process. Employees want to be involved in such issues as: "distribution of tasks and responsibilities", "determination of work standards", "development of goals and operational plans for their department".

### Declaration of Interest

Authors declare no competing interest.

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