

Profile of the SME manager

Competences defining the profile of the European entrepreneur

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Abstract

In a dynamic and competitive world, understanding the existing and required knowledge, skills and competences of managers of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is an important endeavor to ensure that both academic and business training institutions offer well formed programs/courses and curricula. Several studies, conducted by academic researchers and business associations around the world, focused on managers' skills and competences, but there isn't an overall perspective on today's requirements for European managers of SMEs specifically. This is a critical aspect because managers' competences strongly influence enterprises' competitiveness and, therefore, the economic competitiveness of countries themselves. To help overcome this problem, we conducted a study in six European countries (Portugal, Italy, Greece, Austria, Finland, and Romania) through an extensive literature review and several interviews with business associations' executives. The result is a list of more than 30 competences, covering a rich set of complementary areas, on which an SME manager should be well prepared in order to perform her/his job. The findings enable a better understanding of the profile of SME managers and may help in the design of new training programs.

The 34 competences defining the profile of the European SME entrepreneur/manager

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attitude towards uncertainty and risk• Innovative spirit• Fulfillment of tasks and goals• Self-confidence• Communication skills• Ability to discover new opportunities• Conceptual ability (understanding the business as a system)• Negotiation and decision-making abilities• Time management for own work and team's work• Communication to the team of clear expectations of performance• Regular provision of information to the team about its performance• Fully leverage the capacities and the knowledge of employees• Promotion of mutual confidence• Development of the autonomy of a group• Raising awareness of collective responsibility• Ability to build and lead a team (leadership spirit)• Project management ability• Ability to create and provide Strategic/Tactic/Operational plans• Allocation/attribution of tasks to human resources in an organization• Management of other (non-human) resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge of what to think about when deciding whether to found a business or not• Awareness of corporate social responsibility• Knowledge of legal requirements for business• Knowledge of the most important legal forms of business ownership• Process analysis and change management• Knowledge of the administrative/bureaucratic procedures for founding a company• Knowledge of general business conditions and functions• Knowledge about foreign trade and international business relations• Knowledge about the difference in financial issues between different types of enterprises (manufacturing vs. services, for instance)• Knowledge about how to manage the different functions within an enterprise (production, sales, financial management, research & development...)• Understanding the different forms of financing (self-financing, external financing)• Basic skills for sales planning• Knowledge about accountancy and taxes• Ability to plan and control: direct costs, overhead costs, cost prices, gross and net sales price, and earnings/profit |
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