

Tax Office in Wieliczka – innovation through local actions

What does this case study demonstrate?

Strong and responsible management staff of the Tax Office in Wieliczka successfully combat the negative stereotype of a tax collecting institution, creating a positive image of a tax officer. The office, as a territorial public administration entity, is changing its approach to taxpayers, showing them understanding and anticipating their needs. The office and its representatives treat taxpayers as customers rather than as petitioners. The employees of the entity are aware that the tax revenues determine the functioning of their institution and they treat entrepreneurs and individuals with respect and interest.

Communication and information flow in the office are at a high level, despite the traditional, hierarchical organisational structure of the entity. The technical and organisational solutions implemented in the office encourage the employees to present ideas to improve working conditions, increase productivity and the effectiveness of the procedures.

Workplace innovation elements:

Improvement of working conditions, involvement of the leader of the organisation, involvement of the employees, dialogue and communication, learning and thinking, pro-social initiatives, improvement of the image of the employer and of the civil servant.

Context

The organisation described is a public administration entity operating in the territory of the town of Wieliczka. The Tax Office is responsible for collecting all sorts of national and local taxes from the residents of the town along with 29 neighbouring municipalities. It is organisationally subordinated to the Ministry of Finance and currently employs 108 workers, including 106 civil servants.

The employees of the Tax Office in Wieliczka are aware of individual taxpayers' difficulties in understanding and adapting to the rapidly changing tax legislation. Therefore, in addition to campaigns informing about changes, the entity undertakes training activities and initiatives of practical support of residents and local entrepreneurs in the execution of tax obligations. The unit has been recognised in the region as a reliable local administration centre supporting local business. Thanks to the positive relations between officials and taxpayers, it was possible to obtain an increase in the level of tax revenue while maintaining a positive image of the institution. The activities associated with the organisation of information campaigns, were initiated in 2007, along with the election of a new head of the unit.

WPI – innovation through local actions

The Tax Office in Wieliczka undertakes actions and solutions aimed at the improvement of the quality of service and increase of customer satisfaction. It promotes modern solutions in the field of customer service standards by raising the quality of the services provided by the office. It willingly takes initiatives aimed at streamlining and improving the efficiency of tasks carried out.

The head of the Tax Office in Wieliczka is aware that effective performance would not be possible without the involvement of the employees. Employees feel that their voice does matter in the organisation and they have real influence on the functioning of the institution.

The head of the office promotes individual initiatives aimed at the improvement of the civil servants' working conditions, particularly the ones which make it easier for them to perform daily duties and

reduce the number of possible errors. Openness to improvement ideas on the part of the employees results in the implementation of innovation in the workplace, in particular:

- IT application for monitoring and communication with taxpayers with tax arrears;
- Flexible target project teams created to carry out the entity's tasks. Their structure and composition are independent on the traditional hierarchical structure of the entity; they are created on the basis of individual employees' competence and commitment. Project teams are created in case of ad hoc implementation of new tax office functions or structure improvements. One of the recent teams has been working on the implementation of the new department for tax claims recovery system that combines functions of debts collecting and public communication.

The organisation is characterised by a high level of communication thanks to the use of an IT application, in particular the QASYSTENT platform. The platform functions as an information channel, a bulletin board, a repository of documents and legal acts, as well as an instant intranet messaging service and an archive of reports and documents generated in the office (reports, statements, evaluation assessments and announcements produced by the entity). The system provided by the QASYSTENT platform is positively evaluated by the employees as well as by the management.

WPI – Human Resources Management and Employee Development Program

Since 2013, the Head of the Tax Office in Wieliczka has implemented an innovative, synchronised Human Resources Management Program. The program includes, among others, innovative solutions:

- Organisation of a preparatory service of the Civil Service Corps members and a support program for new employees and interns. The support program was established on the basis of an innovative new mentoring scheme for new employees, to whom a formal mentor is assigned for the period from 6 to 9 months. The mentor is responsible for providing advice and guidance in the familiarisation of the new employees and trainees with their obligations. The program is going to be applied in other tax offices.
- Individual Professional Development Program;
- Internal anti-mobbing regulations;
- Internal communication based on the QASISTANT multifunctional platform;
- Anti-Corruption Guide for administration staff "Preventing Corruption in Practice";
- together with Individual flexi-time programs for employees with young children (upon request).

The employees assess the programme positively it offers solutions which give them an opportunity to express their opinion in the office, as well as a chance for a balanced career development in accordance with individual plans and predispositions.

Who benefits?

Implemented innovation and change in the approach to taxpayers resulted in an increase of the rate of tax payments carried out without delay.

The employees are satisfied with their work and have a sense of mission – "... what matters is not only work, but the feeling that what we do is important..."; "... it feels nice when taxpayers appreciate our work"; "... I have been collecting letters and emails from satisfied entrepreneurs

A positive image of the organisation – awards and distinctions across the region and positive assessment of the activity of the office by the central administration.

Prognosis

The new management model, combined with strong leadership, has transformed the conditions of work in the office. At the same time, a change in the approach to taxpayers may result in the change of mentality

in the tax collection sector. The employees feel responsible for the entity and get involved in various activities aimed at the improvement of the society's tax awareness. Individual employees' commitment and sense of responsibility for the organisation result in positive relationships with the environment and entrepreneurs. The employees feel they have influence on the functioning of the office and share their ideas. They see their activity is connected with the positive evaluation of the whole office. The staff becomes more effective seeing real results of their work.