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# Corporate culture diagnostics in management control: Evidence from Ukraine

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#### **Abstract**

The paper presents the model of corporate culture diagnostics for simulation in management control. Three approaches (symbolic, cognitive, and systematic) used for the diagnosis of corporate culture have been outlined. There have been provided 3 levels (basic underlying assumptions, espoused beliefs and values, and visual artifacts) to evaluate the state of corporate culture in a comprehensive way. Two methods of assessment (standard and dynamic) have been proposed for selection. 19 groups of indicators and 42 defined indicators that allow diagnosing corporate culture comprehensively have been provided. Based on the sample of 11 Ukrainian companies, the results suggest that application of the management control model provides a high quality informational base for decision-making on the trends and prospects of development, addressing problematic issues and weaknesses of the current corporate culture and use of its operating conditions and strengths to improve the overall efficiency of the company.

**Keywords:** management control, cultural control, corporate culture, management control model, corporate culture measurement.

JEL Classification: M41 M14.

#### Introduction

The modern world is characterized by increasing chaos and uncertainty. As a result, the economy is becoming turbulent, volatile, dynamic and prone to crisis. The current global economic and financial crisis constantly escalates. In this

context, Stiglitz stressed [Stiglitz 2012] that after every crisis there was an explanation that contradicted the next crisis or at least it showed that the previous explanation was inadequate. The result is an increase in state outlined risks at the international, country and company levels. Management control of corporate culture can be a powerful tool in stabilizing the chaotic environment [Kuznetsova 2011]. In author's opinion the role of information in the functioning of society, which is always important, has dramatically increased with the development of ICT and their expansion into all areas of life [Żelazny 2015].

It is important to form the assessment results not only of its current state, but also of the trends and prospects of development that helps to make the informed management decisions aimed at addressing problematic issues and weaknesses in the corporate culture management and take advantage of the company. Therefore, it is an urgent need to diagnose corporate culture as an object of management control and a subject of profitability and stable growth through the launch of cultural control mechanisms.

The research aim is to create a model of corporate culture diagnostics for simulation in management control. This model must provide comprehensive diagnosis of the corporate culture condition by: 1) the 3 structure levels (basic underlying assumptions, espoused beliefs and values, visual artifacts); 2) intensity of display of the functions that define the purpose of corporate culture for the company. The objective of using this model is to increase the efficiency of corporate culture as an additional quality tool of profitability and stability of the company.

To answer the research questions described above the paper is organized as follows. In the section 'theoretical background' is described the existing research on corporate culture and includes the literature review of corporate culture diagnostics and the levels and indicators of corporate culture diagnostics. In the next section the research method is selected. This is followed by the description of the model of corporate culture diagnostics defining the levels and indicators of assessment. The most important research results are introduced in the successive part. The key contributions are presented in the concluding section.

### 1. Theoretical background

A preliminary study of the literature [Bozeman, Kingsley 1991; Mohan 1993; Levin, Gottieb 2009; Schein 2009; Levy, Lammare, Twining 2010; Cameron, Quinn 2011; Jackson 2011] has helped to define the most fundamental research issues of corporate culture diagnosis in international science including the clinical research method [Schein 2009] and the method of corporate culture

diagnosis [Cameron, Quinn 2011]. It is necessary to evaluate these developments critically in terms of their effectiveness under the current conditions of formation of the knowledge-driven economy in the world, information support of society and general instability of the economic system.

Schein [2009] proposed to investigate corporate culture with the use of clinical research. While doing so, he draws attention to the fact that only this method can detect group members' deep understanding. According to Schein, effectiveness of culture is determined in accordance with formation of its components as follows: level 1 is the basis of corporate culture which includes the basic underlying assumptions fundamental for external manifestation and determining espoused beliefs and values as well as visual artifacts; level 2 is espoused beliefs and values which are based on the basic underlying assumptions and create visual artifacts; level 3 is visual artifacts: the rules and norms of behavior which are established based on the declared values.

Availability and materiality of this relationship gives the indication of the current level of corporate culture and its relevance as the underlying representation of staff and the overall company strategy.

Thus, the author suggests carrying out the diagnostics in the reverse order: first, exploring the visual artifacts, then espoused beliefs and values, and finally, identifying the basic underlying assumptions. It should be noted that in addition to absolute fundamental importance of this approach, it aims to identify the psychological aspects of corporate culture and a definite degree of subjectivity. It is confirmed by the evaluation technique suggested by the author, namely, conducting surveys of the staff using various forms. The major limitation of this method used by modern companies is the dependence of the results obtained on the 'human factor'.

Companies face similar problems while using the diagnostics of corporate culture of the organization proposed by Cameron and Quinn [2011]. The researchers use the method of questionnaires for the staff followed by the rated assessment of possible answers. Each question provides four alternative answers. It has been proposed to distribute 100 points – scoring between these four types of management alternatives of corporate culture in the weight ratio that best meets the organization. The greatest number of points should be given to the alternative which is more than any other one characterizes your organization.

The corporate culture is diagnosed by the authors in 2 blocks of indicators:

- I. Current organizational culture, which you can see at present; and
- II. Desired organizational culture, which you would like to see.

This diagnosis is aimed at assessing corporate culture management, and it prevents a comprehensive understanding of corporate culture formation as such.

In this case it must be taken into account that the authors use 'corporate culture' and 'organizational culture' as similar terms. According to the common trends in this sphere the term 'corporate culture' will be used.

In general, the analysis has allowed us to argue that a vast majority of literature considers diagnostics of corporate culture as performed in order to analyze and identify the level of integration of the proclaimed corporate culture and the stockholders expectations.

Under the diagnosis of a company's corporate culture there should be understood a target estimation of the condition of its corporate culture, trends and prospects of its development on the basis of indicators in order to make the informed management decisions aimed at addressing problematic issues and weaknesses of the current corporate culture and the use of operating conditions and the strong position of a company's corporate culture as the tool for management control.

The main feature of diagnosis is defining the reasonable criteria that characterize optimal functioning limits in different ranges and form the basis for comparing the actual values of indicators with the optimal ones. The optimal or benchmark levels of these indicators must be defined by stakeholders (for example, management team, customers, staff, shareholders, investors) in accordance with the strategy of the company.

Despite recognition of the importance of the diagnostics criterion base researched in the specialized sources [McNair, Richard, Cross 1990; Bleicher 1991; Berry, Jarvis 1994; Reason 1997; Hoskin, Macve, Stone 2006; Levin, Gottieb 2009; Wei, Baiyin, McLean 2010; Jackson 2011; Ashby, Palermo, Power 2011; Kuznetsova, Kuznetsov 2014] tools for this diagnostics require further development.

Corporate culture diagnostics should be based on the approach selected. Three approaches to the study of corporate culture are thoroughly singled out [Mohan 1993]:

- 1) The symbolic approach which is based on the company's insight as a system, the internal environment which is characterized by a certain level of social uncertainty (in terms of the given data the symbol, which a group is equally aware of, is the main focus and it is used by the employees for regulation of working conditions, that is why the management is seeking the formation of "right" meaningful symbols in the mindset of the staff with whose help it affects all areas of the company's management).
- 2) The cognitive approach where corporate culture is seen as a separate set of rules, beliefs, and knowledge learned by the members of the company during the presentation of external social and service relationships; patterns of behavior in the given approach based on joint efforts of employees (manage-

- ment culture is determined through various forms of education, training and informing of staff that helps solve the problem of insufficient knowledge and understanding the logic of economic behaviour and assimilation of values by employees).
- 3) The systematic approach which is based on selection as the primary determinant of the corporate culture climate that, on the one hand, is shaped by the objective properties of the organization (management style, mission of the organization, etc.) and, on the other hand, is characterized as the psychological environment that fixes complexes of subjective impressions and thoughts in the minds of employees (this is determined by the dominant culture either through official behavior samples, communication and attitude to prosperity demonstrated by members or on the basis of the existing beliefs and values which unite people in the community).

Critical evaluation and literature synthesis [Redfield 1941; Arrow 1963; van Maanen, Barley 1984; Rappaport 1986; Bleicher 1991; Reason 1997; Benedict 2006; Levin, Gottieb 2009; Wei, Baiyin, McLean 2010; Jackson 2011] have made generalization and systematization possible and added elements of corporate culture which may appear as its indicators.

On the first level of the basic underlying assumptions that are based on external manifestations it is necessary to diagnose corporate culture using the following indicators: the purpose of the company; social understanding (social responsibility, presence of significant social values and company image), legal representation (legal responsibility and confidentiality concern); public partnership of employees (company loyalty and attitude of employees to work), quality of working life (management style, social partnership, individual approach to employees), social and psychological climate. Accordingly, the image of the company is derived from the perception of its bearer as the one who is trustworthy and whose behavior is acceptable.

On the second level of espoused beliefs and values the following indicators of corporate culture can be seen: the declared mission of the company; the declared business principles; the corporate rules (a collective bargaining agreement, the rules of labor regulations, codes of ethics, regulations on structural units, job descriptions, rules and codes of conduct), the system of remuneration, promotion of employees and the personnel policy.

At the level of visual artifacts there should be used the following indicators of corporate culture diagnostics: corporate attributes (a flag, a trademark, a logo, an anthem, a motto, a company website); corporate history, heroes, myths; corporate identity (corporate clothing, letter-heads, corporate colors, branded printed products (business cards, catalogs, brochures, etc.), architectural envi-

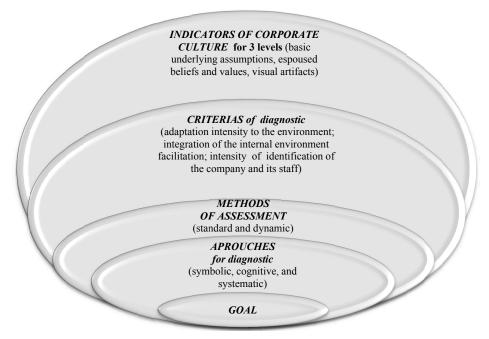
ronment of the company); corporate traditions (corporate events, corporate holidays, corporate rituals); corporate communication (corporate etiquette, a corporate communication language, slang, behaviour) and the company rating.

### 2. Research methodology

In general, system diagnostics of corporate culture is a set of technologies, methods, techniques, indicators, criteria, subjects, objects and resources that interact with each other and provide a comparison of the actual values of corporate culture indicators with the optimal ones.

To enhance objectivity of the corporate culture diagnostic results and a comprehensive study of its status and the structure (basic underlying assumptions; espoused beliefs and values; visual artifacts) as well as the intensity of the functions that define its purpose and effectiveness of the company in the development of risk culture we offer our own model of corporate culture diagnostics which is schematically shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The model of corporate culture diagnostics



Source: Own research results.

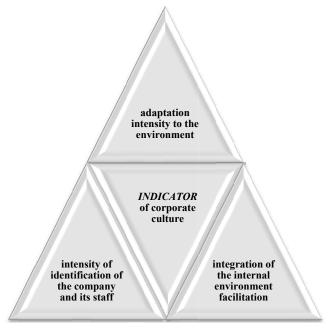
The starting step of this corporate culture diagnostics is to define its purpose.

The next step is to develop a system of appropriate indicators. Taking into account the specificity of corporate culture, diagnostics should be made in two aspects of its manifestation: the company's external and internal environment. Therefore, when analyzing corporate culture for each indicator, intensity of the functions of corporate culture for each of the criteria should also be assessed:

- adaptation intensity to the environment,
- integration of the internal environment facilitation,
- intensity of identification of the company and its staff.

The details are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Complex analysis for each indicator of corporate culture



Source: Own research results.

Corporate culture indicators should be the indicators that change corporate culture and are used to justify the management policy, orientation of corporate culture and evaluating their effectiveness.

Meanwhile, corporate culture indicators must be diagnosed by 3 levels.

In corporate culture diagnostics, a basic measuring approach should be defined for each of the indicators. It is quite logical to apply appropriate measurement criteria that determine the degree of perception of each indicator, i.e. the intensity of expression. In general, diagnostic criteria are optimal values of the

relevant indicator. Thus, measurement of the level of corporate culture for each indicator should be conducted through its benchmarking.

At the same time, when measuring the intensity, it is important to analyze each indicator from the perspective of compliance. The level 2 indicators of 'espoused beliefs and values' should be consistent with the basic underlying assumptions, and the indicators of level 3, namely 'visual artifacts', should rely on espoused beliefs and values and reflect the basic idea.

The difficulty of corporate culture diagnostics is driven by its specificity as an object of management including, on the one hand, quality measurement and, on the other hand, uniqueness for every company.

Based on the mathematical model [Voloshyn, Mashenko 2010] which is used in the solution theory and allows linking complex quality indicators (1) with the indicators of the lower levels of the hierarchy, the following formula can be used for calculating the complex corporate culture indicator for each of its levels:

$$KI_{n-1} = \sum_{l=1}^{m} Inj * Bnj$$
 (1)

where  $KI_{n-1}$  – complex corporate culture indicator according to n-level, Inj – actual value of j-corporate culture indicator at n-level of corporate culture, Bnj – weight of j-indicator at n-level of corporate culture, m – the number of corporate culture indicators according to n-level of corporate culture.

Accordingly, to define the consolidated complex indicator of corporate culture (2) it is necessary to apply the following formula:

$$SKI_{l} = \sum_{n=1}^{r} KI_{n} * Bnj$$
 (2)

where  $SKI_l$  – aggregate complex corporate culture indicator of i – company,  $KI_n$  – complex corporate culture indicator at n-level, Bnj – weight of integrated corporate culture indicator at n-level, r – the number of levels of corporate culture.

Therefore, it is important to establish the unified criteria for diagnostics whose use will make it possible to compare the state of the corporate culture of different companies, identify prospects for the functioning of the company's corporate culture and evaluating its dynamics as well as detect threats and obstacles in this area.

Taking into account the above-mentioned facts, the following overall methods of diagnostics can be used:

- a) the dynamic assessment method based on the diagnostics of the dynamics of corporate culture,
- b) the standard assessment method for assessing corporate culture.

Use of the method of dynamic assessment is aimed at identifying prospects for the development of the corporate culture of the company and provides for the assessment of dynamic changes and establishing the trends. The evaluation criteria in this method are the actual values of each indicator in the past or the baseline diagnostics. Use of the method of standard corporate culture evaluation allows evaluating and comparing the state of corporate culture of different companies with the maximum values. While determining the diagnostic criteria for this method in this way it is expedient to base on the standard value of the criterion. It can be equal to 1 or vary depending on the company policy.

## 3. Research findings and results

The developed model was used to diagnose 11 companies in Ukraine. The selection was made on the basis of different types of business representation (manufacturing of motor vehicles, shipbuilding, manufacturing of industrial refrigerating and ventilation equipment and equipment for agriculture and forestry, and manufacturing tools, in particular) and by size (large, medium and small).

The diagnostics was performed using the method of standard assessment of corporate culture. Participants for the diagnostics of corporate culture were selected from the representatives of the stakeholders of the companies. A special questionnaire was proposed for each participant for each company separately. For details see Table 1.

There were selected 12 participants for each group from the representatives of investors, company managers, and representatives of the company staff, customers and suppliers. Thus, the corporate culture of the company has been diagnosed with different perceptual positions for each company which allowed for objectivity of the results. The benchmark for each indicator was set as 1.

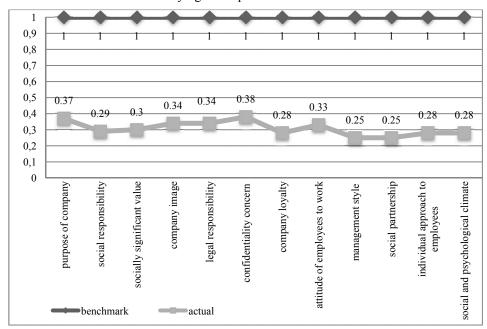
The actual value for each indicator was determined by measuring the intensity of its manifestation in the company.

These actual values of corporate culture indicators at the three levels (basic underlying assumptions, espoused beliefs and values, and visual artifacts) are presented in Figures 3-6.

Table 1. Special questionnaire 'Indicators of corporate culture diagnostics'

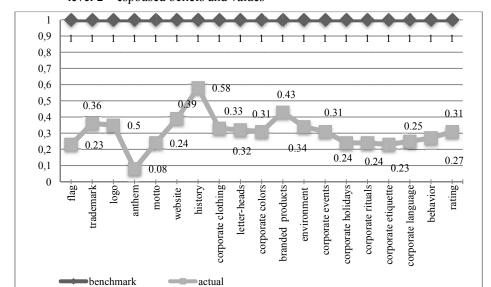
Levels of corporate	Group	Indicators of corporate	Actual level	Benchmark
culture	of indicators	culture diagnosis	(scale from 0 to 1)	Bellellillark
Level 1 –		1.1. purpose of company		1
Basic underlying assumptions	social	1.2. social responsibility		1
	understanding	1.3. socially significant value		
		1.4. company image		
	legal	1.5. legal responsibility		1
	representation	1.6. confidentiality concern		
	public	1.7. company loyalty		1
	partnership	1.8. attitude of employees to work		
	of employees			
	quality	1.9. management style		1
	of working life	1.10. social partnership		
		1.11. individual approach to employees		-
× 10		1.12. psychological climate		1
Level 2 –		2.1. declared mission of the company		1
Espoused		2.2. declared business principles		
beliefs	corporate	2.3. collective bargaining agreement		1
and values	rules	2.4. rules of labor regulations		
		2.5. codes of ethics		
		2.6. regulations on structural units		
		2.7. job descriptions		
		2.8. rules and codes of conduct		
		2.9. system of remuneration		1
		2.10. promotion of employees		1
		and the personnel policy		
Level 3 –	corporate	3.1. flag		1
Visual artifacts	attributes	3.2. trademark		
		3.3. logo		
		3.4. anthem		
		3.5. motto		
		3.6. company website		1
	ļ	3.7. corporate history, heroes, myths		1
	corporate	3.8. corporate clothing		1
	identity	3.9. letter-heads		
		3.10. corporate colors		
		3.11. branded printed products 3.12. architectural environment		1
				1
	ļ	of the company		1
	corporate	3.13. corporate events		1
	traditions	3.14. corporate holidays		
		3.15. corporate rituals		1
	corporate	3.16. corporate etiquette		1
	communication	3.17. corporate communication language		
		3.18. corporate slang		
		3.19. corporate behaviour		
		3.20. company rating		1

Source: Based on: Redfield [1941]; Arrow [1963]; van Maanen, Barley [1984]; Rappaport [1986]; Bleicher [1991]; Reason [1997]; Levin, Gottieb [2009]; Benedict [2006]; Wei, Baiyin, McLean [2010]; Jackson [2011].



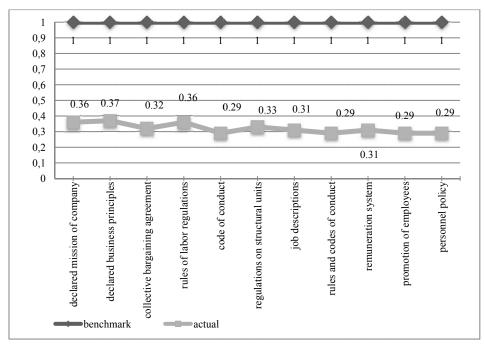
**Figure 3.** Results of corporate culture diagnostics in Ukrainian companies: level 1 – basic underlying assumptions

Source: Own research results based on application of own corporate culture diagnostic model in management control of companies.



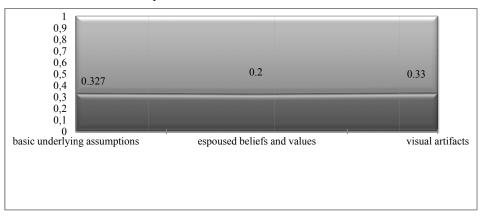
**Figure 4.** Results of corporate culture diagnostics in Ukrainian companies: level 2 – espoused beliefs and values

Source: Own research results based on application of own corporate culture diagnostic model in management control of companies.



**Figure 5.** Results of corporate culture diagnostics in Ukrainian companies: level 3 – visual artifacts

Source: Own research results based on application of own corporate culture diagnostic model in management control of companies.



**Figure 6.** Comparative analysis of complex aggregate indicators of corporate culture in Ukrainian companies

Source: Own research results based on application of own corporate culture diagnostic model in management control of companies.

At the level of basic underlying assumptions the investigated companies showed an insufficient level of corporate culture (within 0.16-0.56) in comparison with the optimal level which was established by the management teams to

implement the chosen strategy for these companies. So, the top three comprehensive indicator values for this level are 0.56, 0.46 and 0.37 in comparison with 1 as a standard value.

These companies have a clear idea about the goal of the company which is correlated with the prevailing notions of its social and legal compliance. Much attention is also paid to privacy protection. Correspondently, the lowest values are 0.16 and 0.17. Moreover, all the companies have unclear or insufficiently formed basic concepts about the management style and optimal social partnership. At the level of the espoused beliefs and values the integrated indicator which is in the range from 0.16 to 0.56 has been observed indicating the lack of a systematic approach by company management to determination (formalization) of basic underlying assumptions. The basic values that are proclaimed in the surveyed companies are the declared mission (0.36), declared business principles (0.37) and the rules of labor regulations (0.36).

Also relations with co-workers are regulated to some extent (regulations of units (0.33), collective bargaining (0.32) and job descriptions (0.31).

Corporate culture formalization in these areas is greatly influenced by the environment (complexity of doing business in Ukraine and the requirements of the regulatory framework, in particular).

Total comprehensive indicator values in terms of 'Visual Artifacts', in general, are in a wide range from 0.1 to 0.59 with the leaders keeping their place. The companies have shown significant heterogeneity in the use of visual displays of artifacts as espoused beliefs and values. The company website (0.58) and corporate printing products (0.43) are used most intensively both from the standpoint of strengthening the integration of the internal environment and identification of the company and employees and from the standpoint of adaptation to the environment.

Attention is also paid to the architectural environment (0.34), company outfits (0.33), letter-heads (0.32), corporate colors (0.31) and corporate holidays (0.31). This approach determines the increase of the company rating (0.31). In addition, a vast majority of the analyzed companies do not have their own anthem. Corporate rituals, corporate etiquette and behaviour do not fully reflect the declared values and basic idea of these companies.

The assessment and comparative analysis of the aggregate complex indicators of corporate culture in the Ukrainian companies have been investigated (Figure 3) and they have shown a general tendency of the unified structuring of corporate culture on its level which may indicate gradual development depending on the external environment and internal use.

However, a relatively low level of aggregate complex indicators of corporate culture from 0.15 to 0.58 in the companies in question, in comparison with the standard value of the criterion equaling 1, reveals the need for this approach to corporate culture as an object of management. After excluding the highest actual values, the range is significantly reduced to 0.15-0.36. In this case 3 of the 11 companies show the lowest values (0.15; 0.15; 0.16).

#### **Conclusions**

In general, the use of the developed model of corporate culture diagnostics as a management control tool that provides a comprehensive assessment of its condition according to 3 levels (basic underlying assumptions; espoused beliefs and values; visual artifacts) and 2 methods (standard and dynamic assessment) provides the results of assessment of corporate culture in the context of 19 groups of indicators and 42 defined indicators that allows a high quality information base for decision-making on the trends and prospects of its development, addressing problematic issues and weaknesses of the current corporate culture and use of its operating conditions and strengths to improve the overall efficiency of the company.

The proposed model was tested in 11 companies of Ukraine. The diagnosis was performed using the method of standard assessment of corporate culture. Comparative evaluation of aggregate complex indicators of corporate culture at the enterprises showed: 1) a general trend of the unified structuring of corporate culture on its level which may indicate the gradual development of corporate culture based on the external environment and internal purposes; 2) a low level of aggregate complex indicators of corporate culture from 0.15-0.58 with the standard value equaling 1, hence the need for this approach to corporate culture as an object of management; 3) the overall low level of corporate culture in basic underlying assumptions; espoused beliefs and values; visual artifacts.

The created model of corporate culture diagnostics could be implemented for evaluation and simulation in management control. Three approaches (symbolic, cognitive and systematic) for the diagnostics of corporate culture have been outlined. It is comprehensive gradual investigation of the cultural control specific to measurement and it elicits novel implications for management control practices in use in different types of companies without limitation. Our findings contribute to the cultural control as an element of MCS package through the diagnostic analysis, which outlines weak points to close the gap between basic underlying assumptions, espoused beliefs and values, visual artifacts and the

strategy in companies. The results could be presented quantitatively and graphically. The main feature of the diagnostics is defining the reasonable criteria that characterize optimal functioning limits in different ranges and form the basis for comparing the actual values of indicators with the optimal ones. It shows the ways to complex reformatting cultural control configuration in MCS package as an additional quality tool of profitability and stability of the company. This confirms the need for evaluation of corporate culture efficiency and corporate culture management needs in the direction of risk culture management control in the current conditions of the chaotic structuring of the economy and increasing risks.

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