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"Global Challenges and Prospects of the Modern Economic Development"****PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT IN KNOWLEDGE-INTENSIVE  
BUSINESS SERVICES**

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***Abstract***

The study examines the specifics of the formation of effective partnerships in business ecosystems. The necessity of creation of joint consumer value as one of factors of formation of competitiveness of the companies in digital economy, including its reputation capital is proved. The features of business ecosystems as an innovative type of partnership are determined in order to increase its participants' competitiveness. The expediency of using the potential of Knowledge-intensive business service firms as the core of the business ecosystem is substantiated. The problem of relationship management within the business ecosystem is studied in detail, including criteria for the selection of partners, areas of relationship creation, criteria for the effectiveness of relationships. The problems that can be faced by participants of the partnership, taking into account the specifics of firms in the KIBS sector, are determined. The authors of the article, analyzing the approaches and research to this problem, substantiate the relationship between the relationship of business partners and their economic benefits, including the formation of competitive advantage of each of the participants in their market. The methodological area is based on the research of business ecosystems, the core of which are KIBS-firms. Commercialization in the business ecosystem model is based on the joint development and knowledge and technologies usage, services for their development and implementation, as well as related services, and is ensured by involving a wider range of companies and specialists from different fields in the process of creating joint value, based on mutual interest from the partnership.

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**Keywords:** Knowledge-intensive business services, business ecosystem, partnerships.



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## 1. Introduction

Among the factors of competitiveness, the value of partnerships is almost not directly affected in modern research, although at the same time, it is natural that the problem of competitiveness itself is under the close attention of both theorists and practitioners in such areas as marketing, strategic management, corporate culture development. In the Russian market one of the most important tasks of management is to establish stable relationships with partners as one of the most important resources of competitiveness.

It should be noted that relationship marketing is, on the one hand, a philosophy of attitude to the outside world, and on the other, a set of marketing methods, tools and technologies for building and developing a network of economically and socially beneficial, emotionally positive relationships based on mutually beneficial interaction between the parties.

In connection with the changes taking place in the external environment, with the development of digital technologies, new forms of partnership come into modern business. They have more complex network and virtual forms, becoming an integral part of the reputation capital of any company.

Partnership structures are formed both on the initiative of the state and on the initiative of business. The initiative of business to develop partnerships was the creation of business ecosystems. In the business ecosystem there is no rigid geographical binding of organizations, which makes it more economically flexible, and therefore effective (Markova & Trapeznikov, 2016).

## 2. Problem Statement

The modern interpretation of the concept of business ecosystem includes a set of participants interacting with the organization and directly or indirectly involved in the creation of a "value chain" (educational institutions, research organizations, business partners, the state, customers) (Gaysina, Abolentsev, & Borukhov, 2019)

However, the creation of ecosystems is a complex and long-term process. Companies often face many challenges.

- Partnership architecture issues. The more participants, the more difficult their interaction.
- Information issues, including the structure of existing organizational networks and ecosystems.

Economic relations within the ecosystem are carried out almost blindly.

- Managerial problem. These are the problems of building a business model of ecosystem functioning, organization of coordination of activities, monetization, extraction of synergistic effect.

- The technological infrastructure of business is not always ready for the full functioning of ecosystems. It is necessary to develop platform technologies, mobile applications, etc.

- Formation of systemic relationships between ecosystem participants, formation of trust mechanisms between partnership participants. This is a key problem for all partner organizations.

Given the specificity of firms in the KIBS sector, it is difficult to underestimate their possible contribution to the progressive development of such innovative alliances. KIBS-firms form the nodal points where the interests of public, research organizations, business partners and customers meet. In addition, employees of KIBS firms are often connected with the scientific world, having the opportunity

to synthesize innovative knowledge from daily practice and academic Foundation (Kuznetsova & Markova, 2017).

Knowledge-intensive business service firms (KIBS) - organizations that provide a special type of service, which is an innovative customer-oriented process of interaction between the client and the organization, aimed at solving customer problems on the basis of creating the best consumer values.

KIBS firms provide a wide range of services, combine and bring together different types of business, transforming them into high-tech partnerships. This convergence is typical for many KIBS-firms and traditionally distinguishes KIBS sector.

Relationship marketing technologies have long been used by leading foreign companies and are actively implemented in the Russian market. Specialists define the purpose of relationship marketing as the creation of an effective marketing system of interaction with key partners of the organization (customers, suppliers, manufacturers of goods and services, research institutions, universities, personnel, media), focused on creating the best consumer values and sharing the benefits for each of the participants of this system (Amara, D'Este, Landry, & Doloreux, 2016).

### **3. Research Questions**

Partner business ecosystem with knowledge-intensive core, which gives the possibility of flexible integration, as well as the synergistic effect of activities, is the object of this study. Business ecosystem programs with knowledge-intensive core will be investigated. The article will substantiate the possibility of creating this type of ecosystem, the benefits of partnership for all participants. The subject of the study is the development of criteria for the selection of partners and a program for managing relationships with partners within the ecosystem, when KIBS-firm becomes the core of the ecosystem.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Since the effectiveness of the coordination of participants within the ecosystem is determined by the effectiveness of their interaction and focus on meeting the needs of each participant, an important role in the effective management of joint activities is played by relationship marketing as a philosophy of organization and strategic management. Interaction marketing focuses on the company's strategy to build sustainable and long-term relationships with all partners, the development of which leads to the achievement of their sustainable development. Thus, it is not so much companies as ecosystems that compete in the market. In this case, the ecosystem that has managed to build the most effective system of relationships gains an advantage. The purpose of the study is to identify the criteria for selecting ecosystem partners, to determine the effectiveness of the relationship of ecosystem participants.

### **5. Research Methods**

In order to become the central coordinating element of the ecosystem, the organization must:

- have a large-scale customer based and own relationships with the client, use this data to improve the efficiency of interaction;
- be open to change and be able to adapt to a changing business environment;

- have a strong and well-known brand, as well as a positive perception of the organization in the market (including a high level of trust);
- have the maximum number of relevant competencies;
- manage the integration of new participants into the ecosystem;
- enable innovation management, coordination skills between different innovation areas;
- have flexible management of the own organization, including a corporate culture that motivates and encourages innovation;
- manage relationships with partners within the business ecosystem.

An ideal ecosystem with an intelligent service core has a number of advantages over other ecosystems. These advantages are based on the competencies of KIBS firms (Asikainen, 2015).

1. Possibility to create a convenient system of communication with partners (candidates for partners). For example, the partner section on the website, completeness of information for candidates to partners, the affiliate network, contacts, partners; contacts units KIBS-core exercising centralized communication with partners, ways of communication.

2. The economic component of the ecosystem, namely economic efficiency partnership from the partners ' point of view – cost ratio for maintaining affiliate status and income, the cost of training experts, the price of affiliate status.

3. Adaptation of academic knowledge and technologies and their transfer to partners in an accessible form. The completeness and quality of knowledge and technology transfer processes from the KIBS core to partners are of particular importance.

4. Holding conferences, participation in Russian and international conferences and seminars, issuing special editions for partners.

5. Support of marketing interaction of partners: joint marketing activities, compensation of marketing costs, etc.

6. Targeted actions of KIBS-core to support sales through partners.

7. Support for partner projects. Methodology of project implementation, consultations during projects are the main competence of KIBS-firms, as their own activities are implemented in the form of knowledge-intensive projects.

8. Extended technical support of partners by KIBS-core. Solving complex technical problems, research, audit, optimization.

9. Ensuring information security of the interaction platform and cyber stability of the ecosystem for all partners.

10. The presence of a unique adapted system of relationships, including trust factors between the participants.

Relationship marketing thus becomes an object of strategic planning for KIBS firms. The specificity of marketing technologies of formation of relations with key partners of KIBS-firm defines special conditions of formation of competitive advantages, special methods and receptions of achievement of competitiveness.

Relationship marketing includes the following steps:

- identify potential partners (attractiveness/vulnerability);

- attracting partners, establishing contact with them, which will allow to start a relationship;
- maintaining relationships with partners, creating emotionally positive relationships;
- expansion of existing relationships, which implies not only an increase in the volume or range of interaction, but also an increase in the degree of responsibility to each other;
- assessment of the relationship of partners in the ecosystem (indicators of the effectiveness of the relationship of ecosystem participants);
- termination of the relationship; the parties should part in such an atmosphere that in the future, if the situation changes, the relationship could be resumed.

Consider the stages of relationship marketing in detail.

Identification of potential partners. The attractiveness of a partner can be determined on the basis of the following criteria:

- Quantitative criteria related to the importance of the client, the type of turnover, sales volume, profitability.
- Criteria related to the capabilities of the partner to find out his position relative to other participants. The goal here is to understand whether the characteristics of the partner allow for continuous development and market sustainability of the entire business ecosystem. These opportunities arise from the dynamism of the partner in its markets and the growth of these markets.
- Criteria describing a common understanding of collaboration and partnership in the business ecosystem.

- The willingness of the client to innovative co-production

The vulnerability of a partner in a relationship can be defined as the uncertainty in the position of the company in the relationship compared to its competitors. Four categories of criteria are taken into account:

- The position and actions of competitors: the nature and importance of the funds that are available from competitors in comparison with this partner. It is important to understand what type of competitor action leads to a certain level of vulnerability. Vulnerability can change according to the behaviour of a potential partner, the nature of markets and situational relationships between participants.
- Criteria related to the nature of partnerships. This assessment helps to identify barriers and vulnerability. The quality of the supplier-client relationship can be analysed through elements such as: existing conflicts and disputes between the two organisations, the nature and impact of these disputes.

- Criteria related to a potential partner's innovation strategy. The use of innovative approaches leads to changes in relationship management, change priorities and communication styles.

- Criteria related to changes in partner companies. These changes can be opportunities or threats. For the ecosystem as a whole, anticipating the events that may affect the relationship becomes key when choosing a potential partner.

Attracting potential partners. According to the research platform "Vkontakte for business" and the company ResearchMe, of 746 respondents who took part in the survey, 34% noted that they did not agree on business or noticed negligent attitude of partners to their duties. For some 28% of companies, the reason for the termination of relations was non-compliance with agreements, 19% incompetence, 11% - negative feedback or its complete absence (TASS, 2019). Many startups benefit from developing within

existing business ecosystems. However, the ecosystem itself needs a good reason to "accept" a new partner. The subject of interest may be a new service produced by the startup, which will increase the overall value of the ecosystem. The search for such new interesting ideas is carried out at various specialized exhibitions and conferences. An example is the recently launched project of Facebook, Twitter, Google and Microsoft called Data Transfer Project, aimed at accelerating the transfer of data between the servers of these companies (Zima, 2019). Some ecosystems, led by KIBS firms, create special business accelerators to find potential partners. They create all conditions for effective targeted interaction between big business and startup. For example, MTS accelerator to search for technology startups in the areas of FinTech, Digital services for B2B, HR Tech. Promising projects can be integrated into the business ecosystem.

Maintaining relationships with partners. Consider the tools for maintaining relationships with partners used by some existing business ecosystems with knowledge-intensive core.

#### IBM.

- PartnerWorld program-more than 40 specializations, thanks to which business partners will be able to gain wider expertise in such fast-growing areas as cloud technology, cognitive computing and information security;

- initiatives aimed at accelerating the growth of business partners, involving the use of embedded solutions, new basic products;

- projects that accelerate growth in the partner ecosystem;

- in the field of information security-specialization Information, Risk and Protection to protect sensitive customer data;

- improving skills through additional educational initiatives;

- launch of marketing solutions and tools for developers aimed at stimulating demand and innovation;

- expanding partner ecosystems to stimulate growth.

#### MICROSOFT

- the program of joint sales of partner solutions Microsoft co-sell enables partners to implement their expertise in the market;

- additional pricing models, incentive programs and ways to bring products to market, customizable options for a specific customer, standard contracts and free SaaS trials, convertible into paid engagements;

- Azure Lighthouse solution provides partners with a single dashboard to monitor and manage all customers – more convenient resource management, a high degree of automation and efficiency, a higher level of transparency and security.

#### CISCO

- taking into account the experience of partners in various industries;

- application of Cisco's intuitive intent-based network-change of approach to networking, as a result-improvement of skills to provide customers with the solutions needed in the new network era;

- possibility of flexible adaptation and differentiation, uniform quality and level of technical qualification are provided;

- the Migration Incentive Program (VIP) enables partners to migrate customers using legacy equipment to new technologies;
- additional incentives for the implementation of certain technologies and help partners to save time when concluding contracts and implementing the latest technical solutions;
- building a sales strategy based on the life cycle of software – to simplify sales and facilitate the receipt of regular income;
- a joint programme of registration of transactions.

Assessment of the relationship of partners in the ecosystem. In the process of relationships between partners, additional value is created, it becomes part of the consumer value of the final buyer. The result of a process of interaction in the ecosystem should be considered in two main types: as a result of the created customer value and as a result created value relationship business partners in the ecosystem (Table 01).

**Table 01.** Relationship outcome indicators in the business ecosystem

<b>The result of the interaction</b>	<b>Performance indicator</b>
Creating consumer value	- consumer satisfaction - customer loyalty - competitiveness of product
Creating relationship value	- client capital - brand capital - partner satisfaction - loyalty of partners

The aim of ecosystem management is to maintain its market stability, create value and achieve maximum satisfaction of all ecosystem participants (Table 02).

**Table 02.** Performance indicators of ecosystem participants ' relationships

<b>Overall efficiency</b>	<b>Creating shared value</b>
Economic efficiency	Growth of profitability of activity of each participant
Strategic effectiveness	Growth of stability of functioning of each participant
Psychological effectiveness	The growth of satisfaction of the participants

## 6. Findings

The formation of an ecosystem with knowledge-intensive core as a new form of consolidation of stakeholders' efforts aimed at achieving competitive advantages. The benefits of such business ecosystems are obvious: expanding the range of applied scientific research, creation of the transfer " knowledge / technology-production of goods and services»; formation of an objective system of monitoring and evaluation of ecosystem performance, creation of a special trust funds, orientation to the world experience and introduction of technologies of the international level, activation of activities to attract funds from budgets of all levels, systematic search for new ecosystem participants based on competitiveness criteria, improvement of the system of protection of intellectual property rights and information security.

KIBS firms act as the coordinators of the joint value creation process. The task of the coordinating firm (KIBS-core) is to manage the process of creating the best consumer value, realizing the interests of all participants in the ecosystem. The idea is that in order to generate real consumer value, it is important to understand what kind of relationship should be built not only between the ecosystem partner and the KIBS core, but also between the ecosystem partners.

## 7. Conclusion

Business ecosystems with knowledge-intensive core are dynamic and jointly developing associations consisting of a variety of partners who create and receive new content in the process of both interaction and competition. KIBS-firms transfer new ideas and the best practical experience from one firm to another, combine sources of knowledge, connecting uniform ecosystems of consumers, producers, public institutes, research centers. Participation of KIBS-firms in various business ecosystems contributes to their market success by attracting a large number of partners, reduces research costs; the costs of analyzing knowledge about an industry, a region, a particular company, etc. are reduced; the costs of forming a system of relationships with participating firms are saved; the knowledge system is permanently formed, there are opportunities for initiating innovations within the ecosystem and piloting innovative projects.

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