

to set the direction and priorities of the company mark, leaving the freedom in terms of the specific treatment. This will allow for strategic planning to maintain a single direction, leaving the possibility of choice of ways in which the company will develop. In times of crisis increases the importance of coordinating the strategic planning function, ensuring the consistency of anti-crisis actions of all departments of the company.

Strategic planning should help to make operational decisions. Guide us maximum attention should be paid to the efficient exchange of information between departments. The key features of the approach to strategic planning in times of crisis are the reduction of detail, greater flexibility and efficiency. Detailed study of the medium-term plan can be reduced to indicative planning. The plan should provide exactly the level of detail that allows the management company to manage. In a crisis, in the framework of strategic planning is often used such a tool as a moving plan. Sliding plan is developed for three months and reviewed about 2-3 times a month. The world practice shows that the strategic planning for crisis planning involves long before the crisis at the plant.

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## **PRODUCT ASSORTMENT PLANNING AS A MAJOR STEP INTO THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET**

*Keywords: product range, product assortment planning, assortment policy, market research, product range management*

According to international experience, leadership in the competition reaches the one who is the most competitive in the assortment policy, who has its implementation methods of and can manage it effectively. Therefore, product range management involves the coordination of scientific, technical and supply-side activity. It is one of the most important components of export assortment policy.

Assortment planning is the first and major step in the strategic planning of the company presence in foreign markets. First of all product assortment is a group of products related to the similarity of operation, by consumers group or price. Main features in the product range are breadth, depth, richness and harmony.

Generally assortment planning, organization and management suppose that manufacturer offers a set of products, which matches his profile production activities, that meets the customer's requirements of specific categories in the best way. It is

very necessary for export-oriented company.

To control the product range we need the information about foreign market segments, products, purchasing preferences and prices dynamics to manage with product range, to determine break-even operation and for forecasting possible company investment in business development abroad.

The company has to do market research, not only to make a market choice, but to find out what goods the consumer needs, what benefits it should have, compared with competitors' similar products.

The process of export product assortment management is multistage and includes following steps:

1. Detection of current and appearing needs of foreign consumers and analysis of the studied market capacity.

2. Export products assessment from the position of foreign consumers.

3. Assessment of competitor's products.

4. Adding new features to the product, its elimination or differentiation.

5. New products offering, their modification, new ways of using the goods and determining which products should be replenished and what products have to be excluded from the range, because of low profitability, reduce competitiveness and others.

6. Analysis of production possibilities, their prices, net costs and profitability.

7. Market tests of new products abroad.

8. Proposals for parametric product series (price, packaging, service).

9. Export range assessment and correction.

Preference should be given to the product range, which provides constant profit increase (or its balance at least) for a long time.

Assortment policy determines the optimum ratio of products, which are at the stage of the life cycle, and in the market at the same time. Optimization of the products range, which exists in the market, but differs in the degree of innovation, guarantees the company relatively stable sales, costs covering and profit achieving. It is designed to provide gradual decisions and measures for product range organization and its management; maintaining the goods competitiveness at the appropriate level; finding best goods segments for products trading.

Consequently, product assortment planning is defined as the planning of all types of activities, which are aimed to select products for future realization abroad and to bring the technical, functional and aesthetic properties of these products in accordance with potential customers' requirements. However well thought out assortment policy helps not only to optimize the planning and management of product range, but also allows a manager to control the situation, which arises in the course of entering to the foreign market.