


**A STUDENT'S GUIDE  
TO  
REMOTE AND SELF EDUCATION  
OF  
SOCIAL AND PERSONAL COMPETENCES  
IN THE  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
ADMINISTRATIVE INDUSTRY**



# 1. INTRODUCTION

**Social competence** concerns the ability to deal with social situations. It is important in every aspect of our lives - including our professional lives.

The ease with which we establish contacts, the ability to work in a group, communicativeness, the ability to organise one's time and adapt to the prevailing rules can be a ticket to a dream career in the economic and administrative industry and more.

Social competence enables us to:

- Understand others
- Make friends
- Work in a team
- Resolve conflicts

Social competence is a term which psychologists use. In colloquial language, we more often talk about interpersonal skills or simply dealing well with people.



## 2. SELF-EDUCATION

We gain interpersonal skills through everyday experience. We acquire these skills throughout our lives, through every interaction with people.

We are almost constantly trained in social competences so we can constantly improve them. The effectiveness of improvement depends to a large extent on us. We will develop our skills if in problematic situations we open up to what other people communicate to us, analyse our attitudes and draw conclusions.

Social competences can also be strengthened through special training, e.g. social skills workshops.

### **Social competences: so, what are they?**

**The latest definition explains them as:**

**"Complex skills conditioning the effectiveness of coping in specific types of social situations, acquired by an individual over the course of social training."**

To find out exactly what they are, what determines them, and how we can develop them, let's take a closer look at them.

### **What are social situations?**

**These are all situations involving other people, such as:**

- **action partners** - e.g. when we work in a group, have a casual conversation, participate in joint activities.
- **observers** - e.g. when we are speakers, we are giving a lecture, when someone's attention is directed at us
- **source of influence exerted by an individual** - e.g. when we negotiate, convince someone to our point, persuade someone to do something
- **objects of influence exerted by it** - vice versa - when someone influences us

All these interactions can take place both **directly** - "live", and **indirectly** - **via the internet, telephone.**

They include two-person and group relationships. They also cause greater or small-scale problems.

## 3. TYPES OF COMPETENCES AND SELF-EDUCATION

**Does someone who is a great conversationalist always perform well in a group setting?**

**Is the ability to advise a friend related to assertiveness?**

All of these skills can go hand in hand, but it is usually the case that we are able to perform better in some situations, and our behavior in others still needs work. So we talk about social competences as complex skills, closely related to the type of social situation in which we find ourselves.

**Some highlighted social competences include:**

- 1. Social competences determining the ability to cope with intimate situations** - intimate situations are associated with close interpersonal contacts and the so-called “disclosure” of interaction partners (listening and making confessions). Yes, the fact that you can listen and open up to allow others to confide in yourself is an important feature that proves social competence!
- 2. Social competences determining the effectiveness of coping with social exposure situations** - social exposure situations are those in which we are the object of attention and potential assessment by others. They are stressful because they involve the risk that this assessment will be negative.
- 3. Social competences determining the effectiveness of coping with situations requiring assertiveness** - situations requiring assertiveness are all the situations in which we achieve our own goals and needs by influencing or resisting the influence of others.

All types of competence make up the general level of social competence, i.e. the degree to which we can define ourselves as a socially competent person.

If thanks to our behaviour we achieve the assumed goal (e.g. winning someone's sympathy, good performance despite a large number of listeners, resisting the influence of others), then this behavior is socially competent.

However, it is worth remembering that our behaviour must be adequate to social standards. Pursuing social goals while causing harm to others is not social competence.

### **Social training is required to develop all of the above types of social competence**

In the sphere of personal development, we cannot complain about the deficit of various types of training; both those related to the body and our skills. We are subjected to natural social training almost all the time.

This consists of all the social experiences to which a person is subjected. Each social interaction potentially affects the development of social competences because thanks to them we build knowledge about the rules of relationships, learn to coordinate our behaviour, regulate the level of intimacy and resolve conflicts.

However, we must accept and use the feedback that the environment provides us with in such situations and be aware of the habitual nature of some of our behaviours .

**In other words, social situations that are problematic for us should be analysed, and the conclusions should be put into practice despite reaching a certain optimum level of competence.**

In addition to natural social training, we can also distinguish laboratory training, i.e. all exercises related to communication, e.g. role playing.

If social competences depend on social training, then why do we not possess them at a similar level to our peers or people involved in similar activities?

The effectiveness of training depends on social and emotional intelligence, i.e. the ability to process information of a social nature. Our personality and temperament traits, in turn, are responsible for the intensity of training, and therefore our tendency to interact with different people.

### **What can we do to improve social skills?**

**The bad news :** there is no job where social competence is not at all essential. Social competences are responsible for how we will present ourselves at a job interview, a date, or meeting potential future friends and colleagues.

**Good news :** social competences grow throughout life, and despite some limitations which our personal characteristics are responsible for in terms of the intensity and effectiveness of social training can provide, we can constantly improve them.

Despite self-knowledge and general orientation in which social situations we cope better and in which worse, it is worth examining them all.

The market of psychological tests is increasingly used both in the recruitment process and in individual testing. Furthermore, we can put our strengths confirmed by a specialist into our CV to stand out within the labor market.

Increasingly, employers may also surprise us with a request to fill in a psychological questionnaire (e.g. examining social competences) to check whether our "openness" included in the CV will be confirmed in the test results. There are many psychological tests and questionnaires examining the indicated issue, certified ones can be used and interpreted only by a psychologist. They also have the highest prognostic value and thus the ability to predict our real behaviour .

The result of the study may also be helpful in selecting workshops and other forms of developing soft skills.

## 4. EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL COMPETENCES

A person endowed with high social competence knows and understands the rules of proper conduct in a specific environment.

In relations with people, they can achieve their plans and goals without harming others.

### Examples of these skills include:

- treating other people with respect and without prejudice,
- communicating effectively with them,
- cooperation in a group,
- conflict resolution,
- backing one's own arguments,
- assertive expression of one's feelings and beliefs,
- dealing with criticism.

### What are social skills useful for?

#### Interpersonal skills facilitate:

- establishing contacts,
- building satisfying relationships,
- exerting the desired influence on others,
- public speaking,
- dealing with new situations,
- employing support provided,
- helping others effectively.

People with high social competences usually have friends, cope well with stress, are able to manage their own development, and feel happy.

# 5. PERSONAL COMPETENCES

## 1. Empathy

A person with this competence has the ability to capture and share the mood of the interlocutor. They care for the feelings and interests of others as part of the implementation of a common mission.

**In what situations can this competence be developed?**

**In professional work :**

- Ability to interact with co-workers, managers, people under care - with an open mind and to create good relationships, taking into account the specific role of each person.

**While volunteering :**

- Ability to establish an active and personalised relationship with people supported by volunteering.
- Ability to understand, communicate and exchange ethical, human and social values related to volunteering - with potential supporters of the cause and participants of activities.

## 2. Commitment

A person with this competence is aware of what they know, what they can do and what their strengths are. When one starts working on a task, they always try to understand it well first, and then think about how they can use their knowledge, skills and strengths to best perform it.

Cooperation with a person who has this competence is pure pleasure - by entrusting them with a task, you can be sure that this person will treat it as "their own", approach it professionally and analytically, complete it to a 100% standard, and additionally suggest ideas for improvement of the action in the future.

I



In what situations can this competence be developed?

#### **In professional work:**

- When tasks are distributed in the team - choosing those that you are best able to perform thanks to your knowledge and skills, and then carrying them out with great commitment.
- Cooperation with organisations whose mission and values are in line with your own, thanks to which you have a sense of purpose as a volunteer.

#### **In everyday life:**

- Taking care of family.
- Pursuing your passion/hobby.

These are just a few examples - remember that you can show "commitment" in many different situations, while performing various tasks.

So, if you feel you gave 100% on a task, that task has most likely increased your commitment.

### **3. Initiative**

A person with this competence has the ability to take advantage of emerging opportunities and possibilities, and to turn ideas into actions. They willingly take up challenges. They are active and volunteer to perform various types of tasks. This activity drives them into action. They are an inventive and active person.

In what situations can this competence be developed?

#### **In professional work:**

- Actively looking for ideas to develop new solutions.
- Ability to set the direction of one's work and to work based on your own initiative.

#### **While volunteering :**

- Involvement in fundraising activities for the organisation, such as identifying new sources of funding.
- Coming up with ideas for new projects and introducing new activities to meet emerging social needs.

#### 4. Responsibility

A person with this competence can take responsibility for entrusted duties, perceive the assigned task as one's own, understand the limits of independence and recognise when it is necessary to ask for help from others. They can report own behavior and results.

#### In what situations can this competence be developed?

##### In professional work :

- Ability to report to your immediate supervisor the results of your completed activities.
- Ability to recognise your own mistakes.
- Ability to identify solutions in crisis situations and avoid putting yourself and your colleagues at risk.

##### While volunteering:

- Focusing on the goal and mission of the organisation.
- Demonstrating the consistency of one's own behavior with the values professed in the organisation.



## 5. THE ROLE OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL COMPETENCES IN LIFE AND WORK

Tommy is a programmer at a large corporation - he is a great specialist and can quickly solve almost any problem. The computer has no secrets for him, he knows several programming languages perfectly. However, he does not get along with his superiors and co-workers at all. He is often snappy, easily irritable and reluctant to perform the tasks entrusted to him .

Tommy is a classic example of a person with hard skills. He has low soft skills, i.e. social and personal.

**Hard competences** are primarily measurable skills that can be learned relatively quickly, e.g. at school, courses, or at work.

The employer can verify them based on your experience, obtained certificates, during an interview, or through tests and tasks (e.g. very good knowledge of EXCEL). These qualities are primary and fundamental and without them you can lose your chance for a desired position.

For example, if one of the requirements in the job offer is "C2 English language skills" , then a person with B1 level will not have a chance to get this position. In this case, the lack of specific knowledge and hard skills excludes candidates.

**Soft skills** are completely different. These are more difficult to measure and assess competency in: often called interpersonal, social, or personal abilities.

Interestingly, many studies show that the demand for employees with soft skills is growing all the time.

## Types of competencies - what is the difference between hard and soft skills?

| Hard skills                                                | Soft skills                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Specific specialist competencies                           | Personal competences (e.g. coping with stress)                            |
| Substantive knowledge                                      | Interpersonal skills (e.g. motivating others to work)                     |
| They are easy to verify, measure and evaluate              | Difficult to verify, subject to subjective assessment                     |
| They are usually related to a specific profession          | Universal competences that are useful in various positions                |
| They allow you to perform the assigned tasks at work well  | They help to collaborate with the team, superiors, and clients            |
| Relatively easy to train at school, on courses, or at work | The process of developing them is more complex and usually more difficult |

Until recently, soft skills were considered “worse” and less important.

Currently, this division is blurring, and employers often pay more attention to this type of competence.

Why? Very often it is easier to teach an employee hard skills than to invest in the development of their soft skills.

## Three ways to improve your communication skills

### 1. Join an organisation where soft skills are practiced.

There are many organisations both nationally and internationally dedicated to fostering leadership and rhetorical skills. It is worth taking the first step and signing up for classes as a guest. Taking a deep dive will make what scares you now, six months from now, child's play.

**Active listening** - an element of interpersonal competence.

### 2. To improve communication skills, it is worth practicing paraphrasing the words of the interlocutor.

**It is good to start a sentence with the following phrases:**

"If I understood you correctly"  
 "so, you think"  
 "in other words"

Remember to be very precise - you should not add your own judgment to the message. Paraphrasing gives many benefits: it makes us gain the recipient's respect and sympathy - everyone likes to be listened to and understood, it prevents misunderstandings, and gives time to organise thoughts.

### 3. Learn to formulate open-ended questions.

If during conversations - both at the professional and private level, there is an awkward silence, it is worth having a few ready-made, open questions up your sleeve (those for which it is impossible / not enough to answer yes or no).

**You will develop interpersonal skills by asking questions starting with the words:**

„co myślisz?”,  
 „jak chciałbyś?”

# 6. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS VALUED BY THE EMPLOYER

**Communication skills** (in a team, with clients, in an international environment) are important in the labour market.

Employers increasingly admit that interpersonal skills will be a better predictor of success than, for example, the results of psychometric tests. That is why more and more companies use the assessment centre method during recruitment, which allows the assessment of social competences.

Almost every work environment requires interaction: with co-workers, superiors or clients. This means that communication skills are highly valued.

Therefore, the ability to establish and build relationships, send clear messages (whether in speech or writing), but also the ability to listen will be important. More and more often, the ability to communicate in an intercultural environment is in demand, which is associated not only with the knowledge of a foreign language, but also with sensitivity to cultural differences.

When a group of people spend several hours a day together, misunderstandings are inevitable. Therefore, employers highly value the ability to resolve conflicts or negotiate, as well as teamwork.

If the employee's role is to manage a group of people, then the ability to motivate or delegate tasks will be highly valued.

**Interpersonal communication** is how we communicate with each other. In everyday contact, we communicate a lot of information with words. Conversation is the most natural way of communication between people.

It is two-way and interactive, which means that the participants of the dialogue switch roles, sometimes speaking, sometimes listening.

# 7. OUTLINE OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

In order to better understand the essence of communication through language, it is worth getting acquainted with one of the most popular models of language communication proposed by Russian linguist Roman Jakobson. According to him, effective interpersonal communication, including the act of correct speech, consist of six elements:

1. message sender
2. recipient of the message
3. context
4. message
5. contact between sender and receiver
6. code – a language common to the sender and receiver

**It is built around our interlocutors, one of whom is the sender, the other - the receiver. These roles, of course, are not fixed and change.**

In order for them to start a dialogue, they must be in contact with each other.

**A contact is a channel through which information can be exchanged.** Usually it is direct (face to face), but it can also be indirect when we write to each other or when we talk on the phone.

**In order for interlocutors to understand each other, they must use the same code.** It's simply about the free use of a given language, (e.g., Polish) but not only. The code can be a system of symbols or agreed gestures (e.g., finger patterns shown during a match to members of the volleyball team).

Thanks to code, it is possible to create messages: statements and thoughts put into words. The meeting of the interlocutors always takes place in established circumstances of the place and time. These are called the context or setting.

## Why are these elements so important for communication?

Because each of them has an impact on whether we will communicate or not. If the interlocutors do not have contact with each other or the contact is disrupted, there will be no consensus.

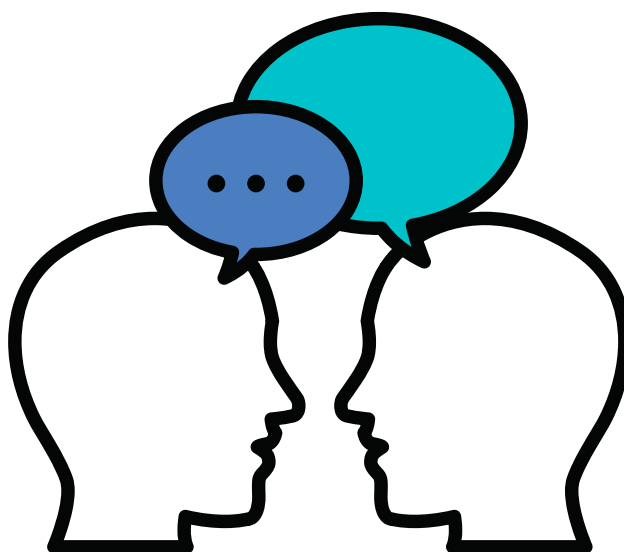
It is enough to recall situations from life, for example, when someone does not answer our phone or when our connection is interrupted due to poor coverage. Difficulties may also lie in insufficient knowledge of the code.

As an example, there are prisoners who, although they all use a familiar language, some speak in such a way that only they can understand each other in their environment.

Trying to read the intentions of the interlocutor without knowing the context can mean we also may make a mistake.

Imagine a situation where one person says to another:  
"Congratulations! This is a spectacular achievement."

Not knowing under what circumstances this was said, we can only assume that either someone really sincerely praises another, or, is trying to hurt someone with irony.





# 8. CODES IN VERBAL INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

**Communication does not have to be linguistic in its essence because it can take various non-verbal forms.**

Interpersonal communication involves not only the production, but also the perception of speech.

Speech, on the other hand, is primal in relation to other forms of linguistic communication, e.g., writing.

**Linguistic competence** - the ability to use language.

**Communicative competence** - the ability to use language appropriately to the situation and the listener.

**Within the language code, the following subcodes are distinguished:**

**phonological code** - includes models of sounds, i.e. the so-called phonemes. These models contain rules for creating individual speech sounds;

**morphological code** - contains rules for creating larger meaningful wholes from phonemes, e.g. new words;

**lexical code** - a set of words occurring in a given language (dictionary);

**syntactic code** - allows you to combine words into larger wholes (phrases and sentences). Syntactic rules are related to the grammar of the language;

**semantic code** - responsible for the logical form, i.e. the meaning of a given word or sentence;

**stylistic code** - allows you to build longer texts thanks to the knowledge of the rules for combining sentences into longer wholes.

**The basic function of language is to convey information.** We use it when we say what, where, when and why happened and who was involved. This so-called a cognitive function that usually relates to context.

When the interlocutor tries to impress us ( focuses on the recipient), e.g. by praising us, they uses the expressive function of language.

When they complain or share emotions (distinguishing themselves as the sender), they use the expressive function. When they nod or say " mhm ", they try to maintain contact using the phatic function.

Sometimes for a family celebration you need to say or write something nice and appropriate; we then draw on the poetic function (focusing on the message).

When talking about language (code), e.g. about its inconsistencies, meanings of words, we use the metalinguistic function.



# 9. NON-VERBAL INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

To ensure the efficient course of the communication process, it is necessary to use both linguistic and non-linguistic messages.

Linguistic communication predominantly takes place using the sound channel as a medium, but it can also use other channels, e.g. the manual-visual channel, in which the sign language of the deaf is implemented.

**Non-verbal communication includes messages flowing from gestures, facial expressions, body posture and appearance of our interlocutor.**

Non-verbal communication is very important from the point of view of the effectiveness of informing someone about an idea. Research has shown that 7 percent of people respond to our statements influenced by its content (i.e. what we say), 38 percent – the sound of the voice (as we say), and as much as 55 percent – our body language and our appearance.

## Why does this happen?

Understanding speech is an intellectual process that involves extracting the most important content from a stream of words, and then recognizing the speaker's intentions. We reach these messages not directly, but after analysis and through paths of reasoning (intellect).

This is different when observing and hearing the voice of the interlocutor. Data coming from the senses (usually sight and hearing) reach us directly and usually allow us to quickly assess, for example, what attitude the other party has towards us (hostile or friendly) and whether we will want to listen to them.

**Among the many classifications of forms of non-verbal communication, Albert Harrison's division stands out with clarity and simplicity, according to which there is:**

**kinesthetics (kinetics)** - mainly body and limb movements and facial expressions;

**proxemics** - distances in space, intimate space, physical distance;

**paralanguage** - indicators of the way of speaking, e.g. key of speech, accent, resonance;

**articulation, tempo, rhythm, volume of voice.**

An important rule in the field of interpersonal communication is to maintain consistency between verbal and non-verbal expression.

Inconsistency of messages in the scope of these two communication channels is considered to be an indication of deception. Non-verbal and verbal communication has a universal and culturally dependent dimension.

Some words can be replaced with a gesture (e.g. "yes" with a nod of the head), and gestures can be translated into given phrases.

Language undoubtedly has a greater potential in creating new meanings, because theoretically with the help of language you can express everything that you can think of. But sometimes people prefer gestures over words.

Undoubtedly, in general, people combine both forms of communication (words + body language), i.e. they treat them as complementary to each other.

# 10. COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

**Poor communication results from misunderstandings in interpersonal relations and the inability to interpret the meaning of the words conveyed by the sender of the message.** The reason for difficulties in communicating is not only in inconsistency of the message, but also a misguided understanding of intentions, veiled expectations, and an inappropriate accent.

**Communication barriers are all the factors which make it difficult to understand the message contained in the statement, which result in the so-called 'communication noise'**

**The basic communication barriers include:**

**Cultural differences** - some facial expressions of emotions are universal for all cultures, which is confirmed by the research of Paul Ekman, who originally included the following as basic emotions:

**fear**  
**anger**  
**sadness**  
**joy**  
**hate**  
**surprise**

However, there are some differences in the interpretation of the message based on nationality.

For example, we talk about contact cultures (Arabs, Latinos) and non-contact cultures, which prefer further spatial distances between interlocutors (Scandinavians). In addition, emblems, i.e. gestures expressing specific meanings and replacing words, are culturally conditioned, e.g. nodding your head in Bulgaria is interpreted as a negative.

**Stereotypes** - sometimes they allow for quick perceptual categorisation and immediate reaction to the message, but to a large extent "thinking in shortcuts" leads to misunderstandings and misinterpretations, e.g. people tend to ignore the words of people whose image seems to indicate a low social status, but they willingly listen to authorities or people who pose themselves as authorities by external attributes.

**Lack of decentration skills** - lack of ability to take another person's perspective. Egocentrism leads to a lack of empathy, inability to listen and a lack of understanding of the interlocutor.

**Perceptual difficulties** - problems in receiving the message, e.g. hearing problems, unclear articulation of words, too fast pace of speech, stuttering, incorrect accent, etc.

**Selective attention** - focusing only on selected fragments of the statement, and not on the whole message, which may distort the meaning of words and may be taken out of context.

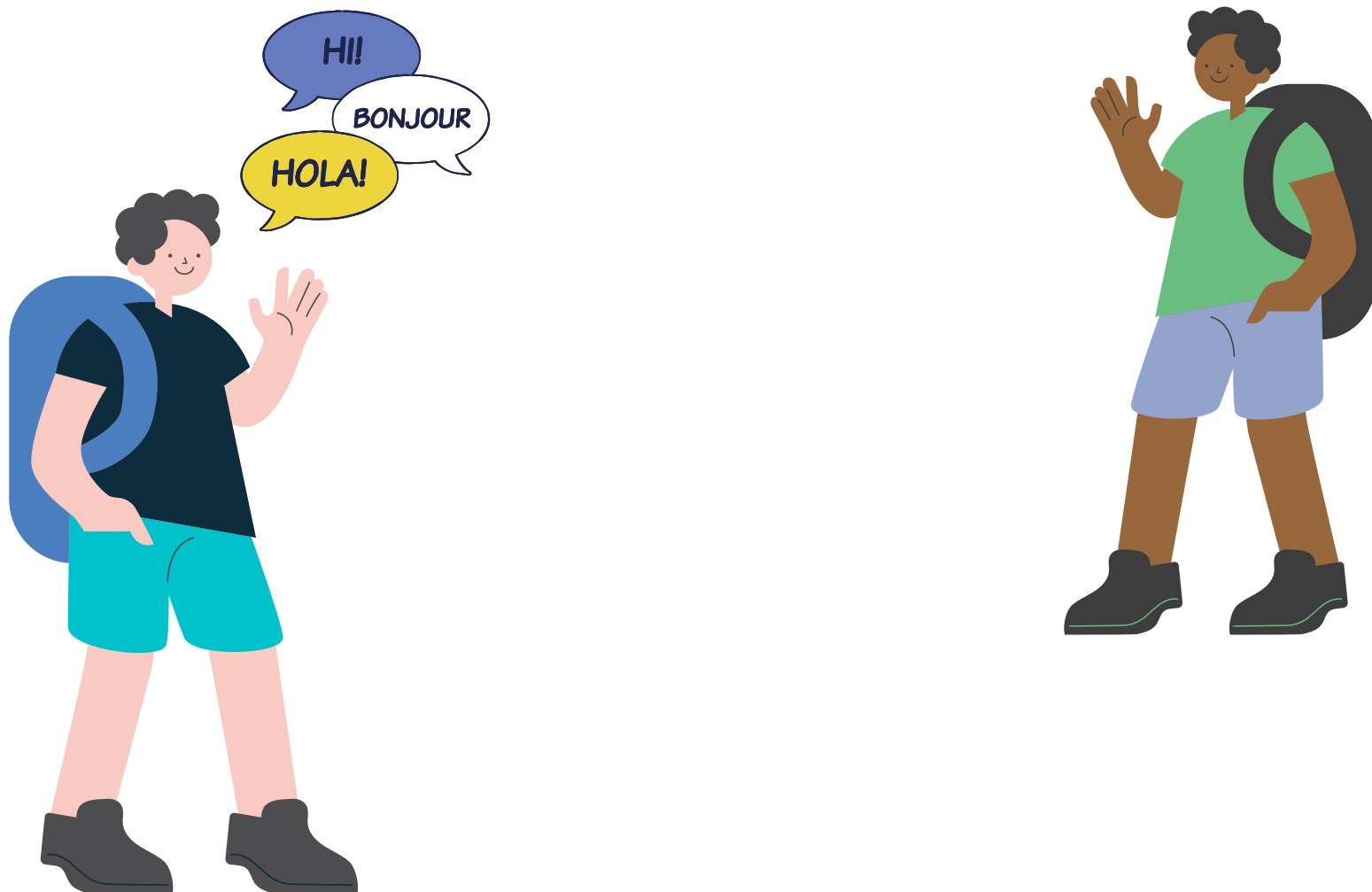
**Well-being** - fatigue, stress, irritability, irrationality, affect the poorer quality of the production of the message, as well as decoding the meaning of the words contained in the message.

# 11. POLITENESS IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

It is essential to establish lasting contact. Linguistic politeness is about showing respect to our interlocutor with words.

The general rule of politeness we use in language behavior is the rule: "It is improper not to say...", e.g. "Good morning".

For this reason, politeness tends to be forced and can be dishonest. Nevertheless, if it is not a means of manipulation (which we are not always able to check quickly enough), it should be reciprocated.



# 12. THE LANGUAGE OF NON-ACCEPTANCE

The American psychologist and psychotherapist Thomas Gordon spoke about the language of non-acceptance as a cause of misunderstandings and interpersonal conflicts. He claimed that most explicit messages (spoken aloud) are imbued with a hidden message.

A person speaks indirectly, e.g. a message:

"Do it now, immediately, without discussion" means in a veiled sense: "Your opinion does not count, you are to follow my orders."

**Gordon listed the typical twelve communication blocks:**

**ordering, commanding;**  
**warning, admonition, threats;**  
**persuading, moralising;**  
**advising, dictating solutions;**  
**making reproaches, instructing;**  
**judging, criticising;**  
**ridiculing, shaming, inventing;**  
**incorrect praise, undeserved approval;**  
**reassuring, comforting;**  
**distracting, making you laugh;**  
**interpreting, making diagnoses;**  
**questioning,**



The above communication barriers cause the recipient of the message

**anger**

**rebellion**

**disappointment**

**frustration**

**aggression**

**feeling hurt**

**dissatisfaction**

**low self-esteem**

**insulation**

**excessive submission**

**feelings of guilt, which secondarily fuels the spiral of conflict.**

### How can you counter the language of non-acceptance?

Through the so-called "I" messages.

These are direct statements that express a feeling and evoke the reaction of the interaction partner that led to the feeling of the emotion, such as "I get nervous when you interrupt me" or "I am sorry you forgot your notes".

## 13. REMOTE COMMUNICATION

During the pandemic, we had to quickly learn to work together almost exclusively remotely.

In the case of many businesses, especially those focusing primarily on personal contact, such as in the administration industry, such a change could be difficult.

This model of communication did not function well. Today we know that you can work remotely - with your team, subcontractors, partners, and clients... provided we have the right tools.

The foundation of remote communication includes programmes for remote work, allowing the possibility of making multi-party calls; both text, voice and in the form of video; creating teams; sending files or text messages; and sharing the screen. With all these functionalities at our disposal, we are able to collaborate as if we were in the same room.

Additionally, you can streamline meeting scheduling and integrate communicators with your calendar and Outlook.

This makes it easy to check the availability of colleagues, keep an eye on meeting dates or other planned activities. These types of remote work programmes are especially useful for activities which require many meetings and consultations.

Even when working stationary in the office we use such facilities - they improve communication, do not disturb the rhythm of work, and allow you to organise subsequent tasks.

# 14. REMOTE COMMUNICATION TOOLS

**Skype** - it can be successfully used to communicate with the team. Skype is available both in the browser and as a downloadable application for computers and mobile devices. On Skype, you can conduct a group call, training with a shared desktop, and send messages or files.

**Google Hangout** - this is a Google tool for communication. It allows you to record conversations, which are then used, for example, to record training sessions or interviews. Such material can later be made available to the public or to selected people. Voice and video calls are possible on Google Hangout. There is also a chat function. It is worth mentioning that, as with any video calling tool, a good internet connection is required.

**Zoom** - is a tool known primarily for the conduct of webinars, but it also works well as a tool for online meetings. The free package includes the possibility of 40-minute broadcasting for a group of up to 100 people. In one-on-one communication, the tool has no limits and is free.

**Whereby** - is another tool for communication, with the ability to share the screen and create conferences. The tool is so convenient that participants do not have to install anything or log in anywhere. We send a link to the participant, and after clicking they are able to join us. The tool is intuitive and has different pricing plans, among which you will find a free option for one user with one discussion room.

**Discord** - Messenger known amongst gamers. It gives great opportunities to organise communication in a remote team: chat, voice and video calls. You can set up a server for your company. An interesting option is the ability to configure teams on the server - a default chat for all team members is possible, as well as smaller chat rooms for departments. The tool can be downloaded or run in your browser. Very helpful in teamwork.

**Slack** – is a popular messenger app, especially used by remote teams. It enables communication both with individual team members and with the group. Slack gives you space to share ideas on a regular basis like a newsfeed. This can be problematic, but you just need to set up notifications accordingly. It is not just an ordinary messenger, but also a channel for discussing and managing projects.

**Trello** - is a tool liked by many for planning projects and tasks. Trello will be good for people who like to develop their own style of planning and organising work. There are boards at our disposal, and on them, you can move cards like in solitaire. On Trello cards, you can note the content of tasks, dates, checklists, add notes, links, etc. How you use Trello depends only on your needs and creativity. Trello will also work as a complementary tool, e.g. to collect all matters and information related to a specific project in one place.

**Google tools** - Google Drive, Docs, Spreadsheet, Slides: are ideal when a team is working on one document. Instead of emailing documents, files and presentations, you can edit and comment on them online. Just grant access to the Google file to selected people.

**Google Docs** and other tools look like familiar Microsoft Office tools, so the transfer of work will not involve any implementation of training.

**A separate aspect is Google Drive:** a virtual drive where each user has 15 GB storage free of charge. It's the perfect way to share larger files instead of emailing each other. On Google Drive, you can organise the space as you like; creating folders just like on your computer. Sharing with other users can be done from any level - folder or file. Interestingly, if we keep a folder with files on Google Drive and then want to send them by e-mail - in Gmail we have the option of adding files directly from the drive as an attachment or link to files.

The entire suite of Google office tools is extremely useful and has many important features. For demanding users, of course, there are options to pay for additional disk space or access to paid services, such as a corporate Gmail account and additional security for GSuite documents .

**Dropbox** - Easily share files with Dropbox. From the level of the tool, you can also edit them, e.g. text files or pdfs (comments). You avoid sending another patch email, and everything happens in free space. Dropbox requires logging in to this extent. You do not necessarily need to register an account: you can use your Google or Apple account to log in.

**Below is a list of tools for remote work. Check which ones you know and consider what function they play in your private and professional life:**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Hootsuite               |  |
| Workplace from Facebook |  |
| Basecamp                |  |
| Proofhub                |  |
| Backlog                 |  |
| Jira                    |  |
| Workzone                |  |
| Hive                    |  |
| ClickMeeting            |  |
| Functionfox             |  |
| weekend                 |  |
| Bitrix24                |  |
| Hubstaff                |  |
| Buffer                  |  |
| Coschedule              |  |
| Gotometing              |  |
| Join.me                 |  |
| Belive.tv               |  |
| Invision                |  |
| Actioned                |  |
| Todoist                 |  |

## The most commonly used remote company communication tools for videoconferencing:

- **Skype**
- **MS Teams**
- **Zoom**
- **Hangouts**
- **emails,**
- **internal intranet,**
- **business phones,**
- **company social networking sites (e.g. Slack , Yammer, Emplo, Workplace),**
- **newsletters,**
- **the company blog.**



zoom



Google Hangouts

# 15. BUILDING AND DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF REMOTE WORK BASED ON EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

**“Corporate communication plays a key role in the daily management of the organisation”** – this sentence has been said countless times. After all, other aspects of the company mainly depend on the quality of internal communication, e.g. motivation of employees, effectiveness of teams, level of tasks performed, streamlining processes, shaping employees' attitudes, adapting to changes and many, many more.

In short - proper communication affects the overall functioning of the organisation, its competitiveness, and better business results.

**Communication in a remote team is a foundation on which mature, strong organisations based on a culture of remote work are built .**

In fact, it is quite a challenge - remote communication is often reduced only to the resulting settlement of tasks.

However, it is more difficult and requires mindfulness - it is much easier to communicate "in real life", when you can talk face to face, explain, define, and observe the reaction or body language.

Employee management and remote communication within the team means everyone must double their effort, while also exposing all the company's communication shortcomings.

Even though we communicate in different organisations (on many levels, directly and virtually) the common denominator of every communication is – so often underestimated or overlooked in online work – trust and interpersonal relationships.

## How do we take care of them?

Trust should be based on clear communication of goals and mutual expectations. It is in other words "playing open cards" or "call a spade a spade". It includes openness in talking both about successes and failures.

Building team trust requires the leader to create space for asking questions, free discussion, submitting ideas, comments and suggestions.

Transparency is the most important thing in communication.

**Interpersonal ties** - good relationships that affect internal motivation and willingness to work. They build the unique atmosphere of each team. Positive relationships respond to the need to belong, and on their basis harmonious teams are formed. It is important that the leader takes care of team integration, which can be especially difficult in the virtual space.

It may be helpful to small talk during online meetings asking "how's everyone" in the team. It is also a good idea to organise casual activities during a break at work (e.g. meetings in the kitchen will be replaced by a shared coffee remotely, the team celebrates small and large holidays together, meets at thematic calls, virtual competitions, etc.).

**Building a team where people know each other and feel comfortable, is determined by systematic communication .**

The universal foundations are described above, on the basis of which, by means of the selection of appropriate tools adequate in a given situation, we can "build" effective communication in a remote team .

Adjusting the right content and tools depends on the goal, intention and level of communication.



## Company-wide communication

**Company-wide communication enables effective flow of information at all levels of the organisation.** It is extremely important because it usually concerns "high-level" matters - strategic, company-wide, structural, etc. All employees of the company should know what is happening in the organisation. In this case, there is no room for selective information and understatement.

Company-wide communication should be well-thought-out, prioritised and anti-gossip. The commitment and cohesion of the management staff is fundamental - before a message is sent to employees, one should be sure that the management department speaks with one voice.

The consequences of the lack of or poorly conducted corporate communication are serious: gossip and writing black scripts instead of understatements, disturbed sense of security of employees, uncertainty, decrease in commitment, and sometimes even dismissal.

In remote organisations, systematic virtual meetings in the form of so-called face-to-face meetings work well i.e., summaries of the quarter, indication of the direction of the company's activities and goals for the coming months, discussion of successes, failures and changes regarding the organisation at the global level.

In addition to tools for online conferences, the current exchange of information can be supported by means of an intranet, internal blog, video, application or e-mail. Each of these tools has its own character and the combination of several of them will allow you to build the entire information architecture. In this way, not only will it be easier to transmit all messages, but also to archive and find them.

### **The most common errors in this area include:**

- complete lack of company-wide communication in remote companies,
- lack of involvement of the management staff, e.g. CEO, directors, etc.,
- inconsistency of messages coming "from above" of the organisation,
- providing selective information,
- providing strategic information "after the fact",
- "colouring" reality in place of reliable, authentic data,
- irregularity of messages.

## Team communication

It usually concerns specific project groups, departments, and individual divisions in the organisation. In remote teams, it is often limited to cooperation for a specific purpose, planning, monitoring and accounting for tasks.

**However, the leader should make sure that all team members first know the answer to the following questions:**

- Why are we doing this?
- What results can we achieve together?

How will our actions translate into the development of the organisation?

It is important to conduct two-way communication and to invite people to create various ideas and solve problems together.

Next, it is necessary to organise, divide and implement tasks - clear assignment of responsibilities, setting deadlines, etc. It is worth taking care of clearly communicated purpose and agenda of online meetings, selection of participants (only people interested in a given issue), cyclical summaries of work progress and action plan for the next days/weeks.

You should also take into account the natural specificity of the group (dominant people vs. the more timid ones) and ask questions by name, as well as encourage meeting participants to turn on their webcams. Tools supporting this type of communication include: online conferences or teleconferences, project management programs/platforms, dedicated team channels in company messengers, intranet.

### **Common errors in remote team communication:**

- lack of preparation of the leader (agenda, purpose of the meeting),
- unproductive meetings that lead to nothing,
- too long online meetings that result in a loss of concentration,
- no space for asking questions - one-way communication,
- defensive meeting - verbal scuffles between participants, through which the idea of the meeting escapes,
- lack of care for relationships, team integration,
- "soldier" settlement of project stages/work progress.

## Individual communication

Individual communication consists of individual interactions with co-workers that build a bond between the employee and the supervisor. Every leader should be aware of the individual needs of their team members. Especially when among people working remotely it is much harder to notice the signs of emerging problems.

This type of communication requires appropriate matching of the message to the personality and temperament of a particular person. A tool that will make it easier to understand the differences in the communication of our colleagues is, for example, the DISC personality model.

It may also be helpful to choose the right management style depending on the level of advancement of the employee in the organisation and duties performed.

A solid basis is, for example, Situational Management according to Blanchard. We must be aware that providing feedback, learning the needs of employees, monitoring their commitment and the achievement of individual goals online may not be an easy task.

However, it should be remembered that instead of written communication, a conversation via a voice or video call will be much better.

### **In the area of individual communication, the leader's mistake is:**

- communicating with the employee only in writing, e.g. by e-mail or via messenger,
- only contacting when wanting to make critical comments or show that you have 'interest',
- failure to adapt the message to the interlocutor,
- mismatch of the management style to the employee's development stage,
- lack of care for the relationship with the subordinate; complete lack of contact,
- being unavailable, not replying to messages, ignoring voice calls.

An inseparable element of remote work is the definition of communication rules and the standardisation of tools together with the determination of the purposes for which they should be used. Their selection should depend on what you want to achieve and convey.

# SUMMARY

Interpersonal communication is one of the basic forms of contact between people, therefore the use of principles and rules applicable in this communication leads to the satisfaction of human needs, which are, among others, the desire to associate with another person and life in a team.

Based on the views of many sociologists, it can be concluded that humans are social beings and can develop the skills described in this handbook throughout their life. They are necessary not only at school or work, but in life.

