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# Internal Communication and the Efficiency of Enterprises. The Employee Perception of the COVID-19 Pandemic Technological Transformation

## Abstract

In this paper, the author traces the causal relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes that have gradually been introduced in organisational internal communication since 2019. To make this possible, he briefly presents the relevant notions: the stakeholder approach, internal marketing and business communication model based on efficient business communication standards. All of them are designed to underscore that internal communication in an enterprise is not just a necessity but a competitive asset in itself, being recognised and applied by practitioners. The COVID-19 pandemic has explicitly shown that while organisations could not follow the guidelines offline, they were forced to make up for it online. Accordingly, the idea is confronted with the statistical data collected by three recognised institutions (Eurofound, Eurostat and Gallagher Communication). They examined six parameters in total, which can be encompassed under the umbrella of printed and digital communication streams. Although the modalities involved both traditional and innovative approaches, the latter category seems to have gained a significant advantage, proving its effectiveness.

**Keywords:** internal communication, enterprises, the COVID-19 pandemic, technological revolution, traditional and digital communication channels

The COVID-19 pandemic, forcing most organisations to react to unprecedented challenges without a reliable factual, technical, and financial background, has shocked the business environment and altered interaction methods. Remote work is a prime example of this transformation, with employees across various industries compelled to operate in this mode. This has triggered a re-evaluation of traditional internal communication strategies and the adoption of innovative approaches; however, maintaining

productivity remained the key amidst the turmoil. While offering a worrying prospect for the future, the ongoing crisis has also proved to test the organisations' ability to adapt and thrive. In fact, "[g]iven the large-scale economic and social upheaval wrought by COVID-19, this abrupt transition to remote work occurred at a time when organizational coordination, decision-making processes, and productivity were never more consequential" (DeFilippis, Impink *et al.* 2022).

Therefore, the paper aims to provide a theoretical background and present statistical data excerpted from Eurofound, Eurostat and Gallagher Communication surveys conducted within 2019–2022. The first two constituted isolated incidents, while the third was executed annually. All of them focused on examining the correlation between two issues: remote work and internal communication of businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were based on empirical data gathered from enterprises in selected countries, relying on the following six parameters in total:

1. previous experience with remote work,
2. providing remote access to corporate email,
3. providing remote access to other digital assets,
4. videoconference frequency,
5. represented business branch,
6. utilised modes of communication.

Despite posing a challenge for most organisations, a transition to new technologies in communication streams, usually called Information and Communication Technology (the abbreviation used further is ICT), should be considered a valuable accomplishment, irrespective of its initial, perhaps deceptive, insignificance.

Internal organisational communication is crucial to preserve relationships among individual workers and teams. Within this framework, a company's employees are expected to cooperate in implementing its financial plan, struggling with as few difficulties as possible. The process is defined as "the formal and informal distribution of meaningful and updated information […]. This information is one of the strongest tools for the company in terms of generating trust, perception of the quality of its products, customer loyalty, and even recommendation of the brand to third parties" (Mata, Buil and Gomez-Campillo 2021: 3171). It unfolds along different axes of the organisational hierarchy, using tools that typically revolve around printed and digital modes (Griffin 2017: 41) – this particular distinction has become pivotal in the context of the revolution induced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Still, the degree of transparency in this information exchange is reflected through the insight it provides into the company's goals and employee behaviour. Coupled with mutual understanding, the appropriate data flow affects the motivation of subordinate workers, their engagement in professional activities and their willingness to uphold the corporate culture (Smoląg, Ślusarczyk 2021: 48). In fact, employees should be considered the actual stakeholders of an organisation specifically because their perspective on the work-related duties is so important, as it will be discussed below. Enterprises recognise that success hinges on motivated and satisfied employees, as suggested by K. Klimek-Michno and K. Marciniak:

> Dzisiaj na rynku wygrywają organizacje, które stawiają na ludzi i komunikację. Coraz więcej pracodawców zaczyna mieć świadomość, że kluczem do sukcesu jest zadowolony i zmotywowany pracownik. Ci, którzy nie będą dbać o ten aspekt, mogą spodziewać się słabego zaangażowania

pracowników, a w konsekwencji – podwyższonej rotacji. A to z kolei ma przełożenie na wyniki biznesowe. (Klimek-Michno, Marciniak 2017: 108)

Conversely, problems in interpersonal relations are the fundamental facet of corporate life because they can lead to conflicts among existing workers and cause challenges in attracting new talent. During the COVID-19 pandemic, enterprises were almost required to develop methods for effective data dissemination and to preserve a sense of belonging among employees who suddenly dispersed. This situation underscored the magnitude of communication in shaping employee attitudes, productivity and overall organisational success (Smoląg, Ślusarczyk 2021: 489). G. Jacobs echoes this opinion, emphasising the necessity to be precise in this regard:

> But what does this mean in the current pandemic? I believe there may well be evidence to be found that, amidst the daily turmoil, we are insisting on clarity, planning, and effectiveness more than ever before. We expect it from our governments and employers alike. And in a way this is understandable: these are very uncertain times indeed, and we count on our elected officers and on our bosses to tell us exactly what should be done, to give us unambiguous guidelines that will help us navigate the storm. ( Jacobs 2020: 73)

The focus on the psychological aspect of business communication during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that while employees fulfil their responsibilities online, it is essential to foster a sense of unity, empathy and reliability within the community despite physical separation. The communication processes across different levels of the company's hierarchy can significantly contribute to its ultimate success, as outlined in the updated business communication model by M. Welch and P. Jackson. It applies to both online and offline corporate interactions, including those conducted through ICT (Welch, Jackson 2007: 192). Bearing this in mind, it is crucial for managers not only to cultivate a positive workplace atmosphere and enhance employees' interpersonal skills but also to promote suitable communicative strategies and tools.

It can be achieved through regular training sessions, workshops and team-building exercises. Moreover, managers are recommended to ensure that their employees are proficient in communication platforms, which have been expanded into multilayered email interactions, video conferencing, project management software or instant messaging applications. As such, "[t]he main implication for management is on the need for companies to adapt to the new reality, and the need for the communications industry value chain to offer what it is now demanded: more digital channels, social media network management, and communication of CSR practices" (Mata, Buil and Gomez-Campillo 2021: 3170). Adhering to this approach enables organisations to employ the most suitable interactional practices, such as setting clear expectations, offering timely feedback and sustaining inclusive lines of communication. An observation can be made that organisations' boards of directors should actively introduce and guide such practices in both remote and traditional communicative contexts.

Paradoxically, the significance of the workplace atmosphere is magnified when working online, as it is not accompanied by the nonverbal signals intrinsic to offline communication. "According to this reasoning, newly virtual teams adjusting to the pandemic should communicate more frequently via email and meet more often to compensate for the lack of rich social and contextual information previously conveyed through face-to-face interaction" (DeFilippis, Impink *et al.* 2022). By doing so, employees can maintain interpersonal connection and understanding, which is essential for effective collaboration and optimism.

As a result, this translates into a company's well-being, allowing it to organise, execute and supervise corporate activities while monitoring employees' mental state (Listwan 2004: 289). E. Brzezińska and A. Paszkowska-Rogacz (2009: 168) recognised this trend, tailoring the principles of effective communication to suit the business context, which proved adaptable for remote communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. They emphasised the need to integrate these principles into an organisation's code of conduct, regardless of the mode of interaction. The principles should be illustrated as follows:

1. Harmonising the message with the receiver's professional competencies to account for potential comprehension limitations. This approach ensures that communication is accessible and relevant to the audience, avoiding misunderstandings and nurturing a transparent information exchange.

2. Maintaining high-quality communication to render the message credible and consistent with the company's business plan. It also cultivates trust and ensures all stakeholders know the company's objectives.

3. Synchronising the activities performed within the organisation's sub-departments with its general goals. Such coordination is critical to maintain a cohesive strategy and ensure that all teams within the organisation are working towards the same end.

Having pinpointed the advisable characteristics of corporate communication, it is worth noting that the interactions can unfold along two axes. Regarding *the vertical one*, the organisation's management can be informed of problems occurring at lower levels of the hierarchy specifically by means of it, which facilitates issue recognition and response (Welch, Jackson 2007: 184). To be effective, downward vertical communication – primarily the manager-employee vector – requires implementing specific strategies. First, employees are expected to be aware of the existing information channels; their functions should be clearly defined, and the tools themselves must be easy to use, allowing direct contact between the parties. Moreover, as claimed by Ł. Skiba (2016: 145), it is worthwhile to develop a significant level of reliance within both the employee and managerial structures, for instance, by ensuring consistent dissemination of announcements in terms of form and medium. A potential mismatch between the two might result in the workers questioning the reasoning implemented by their employers, providing space for self-governance or, perhaps, even resistance to change.

Regarding *the horizontal axis* of internal communication, which focuses on the interactions between individual employees and teams, increasing their frequency and providing a common platform for information exchange is advisable. It can serve as a tool for clarifying and updating essential data, particularly resolving issues related to understanding and utilising terminology – a significant source of debate among professionals within the same field (Juszczak, Rachut 2021) – as well as for collaborative project work. The latter can be represented thanks to a telling example of the strategic shift explicitly enforced by the COVID-19 pandemic within *CD Projekt Red*, the internationally recognised Polish game development studio.

While trying to salvage the now-successful *Cyberpunk 2077* (which initially seemed to be a technological and PR failure), the board of directors of *CD Projekt Red* introduced the concept of "agile strike teams", which turned out to be revolutionary if compared with the strategies which had been applied before. The studio admits: "The idea was to flatten communication, making it much easier for different teams to interact. Rather than keep all the artists, designers and programmers together, the company created *strike teams* that consisted of developers from different departments" (GameSpot 2023). Because

of this, the specialists who represented separate professional branches could combine their skills, relying on the synergy effect, although all of this was happening online. Accordingly, such an accomplishment would not have been possible without the COVID-19 pandemic and the original problems with the *Cyberpunk 2077* release. Certainly, the case deserves an in-depth analysis in itself, yet it corroborates the core idea represented in this paper.

Consequently, the central aspect of a company's activities is fostering ongoing employee awareness of the importance of comprehensive communication within teams and aiding separate departments in enhancing it. Internal marketing is relevant here, encompassing everything designed to positively shape the workplace environment (Bednarska-Olejniczak 2016: 72). This can be facilitated through thematic workshops where employees fortify social bonds by sharing their knowledge and experiences. Integration trips also offer significant value, providing opportunities for participants to connect in an informal setting, which can be instrumental in building professional relationships. Thus, as a conflict resolution tool, communication significantly enhances team members' productivity, focus and determination (Bednarska-Olejniczak 2016: 74).

It appears indisputable that this theoretical framework is applicable in stable conditions unimpeded by external events such as global health crises or military conflicts. In 2020, its resilience was challenged as people's inability to adhere to these guidelines highlighted their significance. In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a slowdown in manufacturing processes and nearly devastated the service sector, exacerbating the financial status of entrepreneurs and corporations alike. However, this is only one aspect of the situation because the other pertains to subjecting workers to prolonged stress and compelling them to survive in adverse conditions.

Enterprises had to uphold continuous and transparent internal communication to face the challenges that originated from the COVID-19 pandemic. It was complicated by the proliferation of misinformation and fake news, which sowed doubt about the future and eroded mutual trust. The approach is shared by the research group of E. DeFilippis and S.M. Impink, who focused specifically on the domain of online communication channels: "With the COVID-19 pandemic forcing employees worldwide to work from home, organizations have had to make challenging and urgent decisions about how best to utilize digital communication technology in the absence of a shared physical workspace" (DeFilippis, Impink *et al.* 2022).

Accordingly, HR and IT departments, having to manage the abovementioned prospect, were expected to invent new operational patterns to maintain the continuity of enterprises. The most evident example was the alteration of existing communication strategies – face-to-face meetings became forbidden or severely limited, obliging organisations to create replacements. Where feasible, they turned to social media for internal communication. Initially, remote work may have hindered relationship building, employee engagement and understanding of the developing situation (Smoląg, Ślusarczyk 2021: 49).

Quite surprisingly, enterprises have ultimately realised that a significant portion of work can be done remotely, with adjusted internal communication being critical in order to make it possible (Czech, Karpio, *et al.* 2020: 5). Individual empirical studies suggest that this has eventually had an encouraging impact on employee productivity, although it caused psychological instability among most workers and serious uncertainty about the perspective of working online at the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (Future Business Institute 2021: 4). In turn, educational organisations, such as universities and

schools, had no other choice but to adapt to remote work – the communication channels which had been previously exclusive to business acquired didactic functions.

Introducing the analysis of the empirical data excerpted by the three institutions listed at the beginning of this paper, the authors of the Eurostat survey acknowledge the trend plainly. They reflect on the consensus that technology was not just beneficial but, in fact, necessary for survival during the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlights the role it played:

> [e]nabling access to an enterprise's resources from outside of the enterprise's premises, i.e. remote access to e-mail or to other ICT systems of the enterprises, created a possibility for employees to continue performing their tasks and thus sustain the enterprise's activity. The use of internet communication software allowed also internal business communication within the enterprises, as well as with the outside world. (Eurostat 2022: 1)

Organisations utilised ICT solutions and reorganised their work on a much larger scale than initially anticipated. The most substantial increase in remote workers during the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in countries where the necessary infrastructure was well-established before its outbreak. Additionally, a secondary correlation was reported concerning the mode of operation, the number of employees and the field of specialisation of particular enterprises (Smoder 2021: 28).

First, Eurofound discovered that approximately 60% of employees in Finland transitioned from office-based work to remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Comparable shifts were observed in Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Denmark, with the rate above 50%. Ireland, Austria, Italy and Sweden reported an estimate of 40%. It should be noted that nearly one-fourth (24%) of European employees who had not been previously engaged in remote work were forced to adopt it. Among the people who occasionally worked remotely, the prevalence increased to 56% (Eurofound 2020: 5–6).

Second, Eurostat focused on four data set categories that offered a different and significantly more extensive insight into the transition regarding utilised communication technologies and their internal perception. In 2020, the research revealed that one-quarter of EU enterprises expanded the range of personnel provided with remote access to the company's email systems and other ICT resources, constituting the initial two statistical categories. The majority of changes within this group was reported by companies in Malta (55% for email, 58% for other ICT resources), which only slightly preceded the Netherlands, Germany (42% for both communication channels in the Netherlands, 42% and 39% in Germany, respectively) and Belgium (40% for the former, 43% for the latter asset types). Conversely, Lithuania experienced the lowest increase, with only 12% of companies allowing for more remote access to both resource categories (Eurostat 2022: 2).

Another issue that Eurostat scrutinised was videoconference frequency – more than half of the European companies reported growth regarding this parameter. Finland represented the trend the most with a 79% surge, followed by Malta (76%), Sweden (71%), the Netherlands (70%), as well as Denmark and Belgium (both estimated 68%). Located on the other end of the spectrum, Latvia (33%), Poland (29%) and Bulgaria (23%) admitted the lowest increase in the frequency of online meetings (Eurostat 2022: 2). The spike in the expansion of remote access to email and other corporate ICT assets and the frequency of online meetings, as it was claimed internally, was primarily dependent on a company's prior experience with such technological arrangements.

Additionally, it correlated with the organisation's field of specialisation, being the fourth contributing factor. Over half of the EU enterprises involved in science and technology reported an uprise in allowing their employees to access corporate email remotely (55%). In comparison, information and communication companies noted a slightly lower incidence (48%). The minimal figures were observed in the construction (24%) and retail (22%) branches. Regarding the increase in remote meeting frequency, not only the information and communication sector (90%), but also the scientific and technical business spheres (81%) established themselves at the forefront. The smallest growth was experienced in the accommodation, transport and storage sectors (40% in the case of each business category), tailed by the construction (37%) and retail sectors (36%) (Eurostat 2022: 3).

The trend that emerges from the data remains in direct correspondence with the observations of E. DeFilippis and S.M. Impink, who considered the advantages of organising more frequent and shorter videoconferences. Their line of reasoning suggests that "[m]anagers may have found it necessary to correct this problem by increasing the frequency of "all-hands" meetings for their teams or departments to overcome feelings of social isolation […] and maintain a sense of identification with the organization" (DeFilippis, Impink *et al.* 2022). This strategy is also aimed at facilitating the synchronisation of tasks performed by individual workers who are not co-located, which would be considerably more feasible in a shared workspace. Indeed, the case of the *CD Projekt Red* studio and *Cyberpunk 2077* development scheme confirms that such ideas are not only theoretical.

It is worth noting that there is an aspect shared by both the Eurofound and Eurostat surveys: the employee evaluation of the crisis as triggered specifically by the coronavirus itself. According to the Eurostat survey, which noticeably broadened the perspective on the issue (2022: 4), 91% of the EU companies in 2020 claimed that the COVID-19 pandemic partially caused the transition towards remote work, while 39% pinpointed a direct correlation between the two parameters. To be exact, in Lithuania, all companies acknowledged the coronavirus as a factor in expanding corporate email access, followed by Cyprus (99%), Austria and Slovakia (both 97%), as well as Italy (96%). Furthermore, a significant portion of enterprises in Poland (55%), Lithuania (54%) and Austria (52%) recognised a direct link between the two. Among the EU enterprises that increased the online availability of ICT systems beyond email, 94% cited it as contributing. The highest percentages of such companies were found in Lithuania (100%), Cyprus (99%), Austria (98%) and Italy (98%), whereas Hungary reported the lowest rate of them all (71%) (Eurostat 2022: 7).

In 2020, as much as 97% of EU companies experienced an increase in the number of remote meetings and explained it by the COVID-19 pandemic. The difference in the proportion of companies mentioning at least a partial incline in this regard was less pronounced across EU member states than in the case of remote access to email and other ICT tools. The highest ratios were noted in Germany (96%) and Hungary (95%). Conversely, the lowest figures originated from Poland and Austria - 78% and 77%, respectively (Eurostat 2022: 10).

Excerpted by Eurofound and Eurostat, the five statistical vectors suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic exerted a noticeable impact across European nations. Nonetheless, an evident trend emerged concerning the prospect of adopting digital communication tools in these circumstances. Enterprises that either represented a technology-oriented business branch or employed staff already knowledgeable in such platforms experienced a smoother transition during the COVID-19 pandemic. It enabled them

to swiftly and effectively adjust the communication streams to the new reality as part of their routine operations, thus minimising disruptions.

Conversely, when seeking other determinants of the transition, one could refer to secondary characteristics of businesses. These cannot be perceived as demonstrating as noticeable an impact as it might have been expected: the total number of employees and the financial assets available. While they are intuitively associated with the stability of any business, they were not pinpointed as the ones which caused discrepancies in the context of pandemic-related transformations, at least not as clearly as the organisations' pre-existing familiarity with digital tools and specialisation field. Significantly, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of matching communication channels with the characteristics of different business sectors and consistent information dissemination.

Third, relying on textual and nonverbal communication can be deemed another contributor as it aids employees in staying updated about the evolving situation without requiring active engagement. It should be borne in mind, nevertheless, that such means can be divided into two competing categories: printed and digital. Indeed, the digitisation of internal communication tools within organisations was an ascending trend before the COVID-19 pandemic, yet remained explicitly reserved for scenarios that required rapid information exchange. A series of "State of the Sector" reports released by Gallagher Communication allows one to get a more in-depth insight into how the contest between the two modalities progressed.

According to the first report in the series, print was seen as an omnipresent and reliable medium of internal communication in 2019. Crucially, as much as 70% of employees in the United Kingdom, the USA, and selected EU countries considered posters and banners the most effective, which proved overtly significant if compared to other categories. Subsequently, desk drops were favoured by 31% of the workers, flyers and leaflets by 30%, while brochures, guides, and concertina cards by 27%. In contrast, the staff perceived letters or memos as efficient in only 18% of cases, while printed newsletters were trusted the least, achieving a popularity rate of 12% (Gallagher Communication 2019: 13).

Indeed, digital channels of information exchange were referred to in the responses of the survey participants; however, their perceived usefulness was inconsistent and scattered. The most universal of them were acknowledged as valuable by the survey participants, including the top three: email announcements (92%), intranet (85%) and video communication software (72%). Yet, regarding more innovative solutions, their applicability was considered marginal, represented by the mobile applications usage rate of 20%, messaging platforms – 12%, preceding extranet, which was noted in 10% of cases (Gallagher Communication 2019: 14).

Considering 2021[1], the information excerpted by Gallagher Communication suggests a noticeable relegation of traditional communication methods and a developing integration of digital tools in corporate communication frameworks. Interestingly enough, this is correlated with an alteration of the data segmentation method – the survey's authors dropped their previous classification into printed and digital modalities. Instead, they moved the few remaining traditional communication tools into newly introduced statistical categories: environmental channels and content. Posters, banners, and noticeboards were still the only significant means of this type that were awarded a 46% effectiveness rate. The other two, namely employee magazines and letters/printed materials sent to employees' homes, have almost

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1    The "State of the Sector" report for 2020 by Gallagher Communication has now become unavailable, so it must be omitted.

become wholly abandoned (being used in 16% and 15% of cases, respectively) even though they were recognised as effective from the theoretical standpoint (scoring 70% and 59% in this regard).

In contrast, the survey revealed that virtual conferences were deemed the most efficient among digital tools (94%), pursued by business chat software, for instance, Teams, Cisco or Jabber (91%), as well as by one-on-one web calls (90%). The three communication methods surpassed messaging applications, which were mentioned in 87% of responses. This situation can be interpreted as a reminder of their pre-pandemic domination in everyday interactions, which actually inspired their introduction into the business environment. However, email announcements, a far more classical digital communication method, received 78% of the votes for usefulness. Employee portals were also worthwhile since their effectiveness was estimated at 75%. Such figures demonstrate that employees did acknowledge the benefits of innovative software, maintaining trust towards conventional applications simultaneously. However, this constituted a decreasing portion of their professional skill set, being corroborated by the pinpointed methodology shift (Gallagher Communication 2021: 49–50).

In 2022, the final year under consideration, traces of traditional communication methods were present, although experiencing a general decline in reported usefulness rate (57% for both employee magazines and letters/printed materials sent to employees' homes). Environmental channels turned out as pragmatically and theoretically relevant, scoring 47% in this context. Thus, an observation can be made that corporate practitioners have generally marginalised print except for posters, banners, and noticeboards. They preferred to focus on digital communication channels – their evaluation suggests that this medium type has become a widespread standard. Specifically, 88% of survey respondents rated virtual conferences as effective, followed by enterprise chat tools at 86%. However, web calls experienced a minor decrease in popularity, scoring 81%. Messaging applications also faced a downturn, scoring a 13% reduction in positive evaluations to 75%. Email announcements remained efficient, though, receiving 71% of votes (Gallagher Communication 2022: 49–50).

Such an evolving perception of all communication tools supports the idea that the role of non-printed internal communication within enterprises has been on the rise since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees have developed the ability to evaluate them critically, prioritising those digital communication tools that offer the most perceivable benefits. Besides, they also seemed selective regarding the number and complexity of utilised applications. In an era of uncertainty and change, such a form of data dissemination was critical for organisational stakeholders – the workers. Researchers admit that "expanding the number of email recipients and meeting attendees increases the likelihood that important information is received by all relevant individuals in an organization" (DeFilippis, Impink *et al.* 2022). Thus, attempts were made to overcome communication problems, becoming crucial in gaining a competitive edge over other organisations within the same business branch. Communicologists support this approach, claiming that contemporary marketing strategies have been directly shaped by the technological transformation:

> a digital presence is now a must, not only in the sense that companies will need to increase their presence in digital media in general and, more specifically, in the different social media channels, but also in terms of the current and future offerings that communications, advertising, or media companies will have to present to their customers. For example, communication companies will need to develop new digital media, or, if these media already exist, commercialise them in a more active way or with a combination of traditional and general commercial proposals. (Mata, Buil and Gomez-Campillo 2021: 3184)

The time under review was marked by introducing new interaction methods and re-calibrating traditional communication strategies into digital formats, encompassing chats and corporate social networking sites, not forgetting about advertising campaigns. Historically speaking, remote work served as a means to attract and retain valuable employees, playing a peripheral role in fostering work environments and balancing professional and personal responsibilities. Nonetheless, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it excelled in the role of a contingency plan and became a proactive measure to prevent illness and financial breakdown (Dolot 2020: 42; Krzyszkowska-Dąbrowska 2020: 15).

Evaluating the abovementioned tendencies from the point of view of the COVID-19 pandemic aftermath, one could state that it does not necessarily entail a departure from physical workplaces. Instead, it should be interpreted as a way to provide additional opportunities for consultation with international experts, cost reduction and resolving unforeseen emergencies, not necessarily restricted to illness. Should in-person employment be minimised, significant expenditures could be directed towards other, more profitable goals (Jeran 2016: 52). An enterprise can assign its employees most tasks without having them on-site specifically if it can resort to an array of online solutions. As a matter of fact, some post-pandemic projections (Czech, Karpio *et al.* 2020: 108–116) anticipated substantial limitations on the return to traditional office settings.

Remote work inevitably presents a complex challenge for employers, requiring them to procure finances for essential assets such as equipment, software and training. Furthermore, it enforces following clear rules of cooperation, communication and consistent delegation of tasks. A. Smoder posits that this involves logistical and psychological support, remembering about the need to maintain a sense of company belonging and to keep employees informed about the ongoing situation along with project progress (Smoder 2021: 28). As such, the COVID-19 pandemic has catalysed the reinvention of pre-existing communication software, drawing employees' attention to the downsides of traditional channels. This shift has enabled organisations to appreciate the benefits of remote work; nonetheless, the necessity to limit the number of platforms in use has become apparent – the prospect of using an excessive range of applications seems overwhelming. It might deter the workers from engaging with them and cause a relapse of communication disarray experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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