

# The Importance of Communication between Managers and Subordinates

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is an introduction to the importance of communication between managers and subordinates in office settings. The work follows three different methods to investigate the most crucial elements of the relationships between the mentioned parties, focusing on the communication and/or miscommunication, the problems and mistakes, and their possible solutions. The first method is a literature review that explains the importance and different methods of leadership, and sums up the most relevant literature about downward and upward communication techniques, mistakes and solutions. The second part is a qualitative analysis four interviews held with company leaders and managers, finding out the crucial aspects of today's organizational cultures and their principles of communication. Finally, the third part is a quantitative survey where the reader can look into the thinking of the subordinates. Various tables and figures explain the tendencies concerning the subject. The thesis is closed by connecting all three analyzed parts.

# Table of contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>1. Literature review</b> .....	5
1.1. Leadership .....	5
1.1.1. What is leadership?.....	5
1.1.2. Transactional, transformational and laissez-faire leadership .....	7
1.1.3. Leader Member-Exchange Model.....	9
1.1.4. Authentic leadership .....	9
1.2. Managerial communication .....	10
1.2.1. Barriers to effective communication.....	11
1.2.2. Effective communication .....	11
1.3. Subordinate communication .....	12
<b>2. Interviews with leaders</b> .....	14
2.1. Zoltán Szabó – Ghibli Ltd. ....	14
2.2. Zoltán Venter – Essity AB.....	18
2.3. Cristina Farelo Lanseros – TechStyle Fashion Group .....	21
2.4. Juan Martínez Baragaño – Cepillos Sacema S.L. ....	24
2.5. Conclusions.....	27
<b>3. Survey</b> .....	29
3.1. Demographics .....	29
3.2. Base information .....	31
3.3. Opinion about manager/s.....	33
3.4. Summary.....	43
<b>4. Results</b> .....	44
<b>5. Conclusion</b> .....	45
<b>References</b> .....	46
Print .....	46
Online .....	50
<b>Appendixes</b> .....	51
Appendix A .....	51
Appendix B.....	76
Appendix C.....	81
Appendix D .....	81

## Introduction

As the title of this thesis indicates, this work is an investigation of office culture, more specifically the communication between leaders/managers and subordinates.

My objective was to observe several companies to find out the most crucial elements of the relationships between the mentioned parties, focusing on the communication and/or miscommunication, the problems and mistakes, and their possible solutions. I also mention the workplace structure and the evolution of the hierarchical structure of organizations.

This subject is especially important for me since I have already worked in some offices and I have seen different ways of how the communication and the relationships between employers and employees are.

Furthermore, my goal is to continue on researching this particular aspect of the corporate culture, since I believe that it is one of the driving factors that can influence the productivity and competitiveness of any company. The positive or negative psychological welfare of any employee and/or manager can benefit or destruct not only relationships between co-workers but it influences motivation, productivity and the communication with out-of-the-company stakeholders.

The research consists of three main branches. First, a literature review that analyses papers and theses based on the relationships and communication between leaders and their employees, and the main ideas and theories that have been created until today.

The second part is a qualitative research; a set of interviews with 4 leaders, 2 from Hungary and 2 from Spain. The goal of these interviews was to find out the different methods of communication and leadership of several managers and their ideas and opinions about the proper ways of – both upward and downward – behaviors.

The third and last part of the research is a quantitative questionnaire. The survey was filled out by people who work in or have already worked in office settings. The participants were asked about several aspects of work environments and corporate culture, further explained in the *Survey* chapter.

My goal is – with the help of these three branches – to give the reader a complete panoramic picture of how the communication works in the examined companies, what the main problems and possible solutions are and what the similarities and differences are between the thinking of leaders and subordinates. Finally, I intend to propose some ideas that could be followed, based on the findings of this thesis.

# 1. Literature review

This chapter reviews different concepts and explanations of leadership and various theories concerning the subject. Moreover, the importance of downward communication and its undeniable connection with effective leadership is explained.

The second part of the chapter examines the question from the opposite perspective, the subordinate point of view. The most important aspects of upward communication and attitudes will be presented with the help of articles and books.

It is important that managers and their teams must learn the how to communicate perfectly as this will not only help teams to complete their projects successfully, but also enable organizations to achieve success and growth (Lee Froschheiser).

## 1.1. Leadership

“The art of communication is the language of leadership”- James Humes

In order to understand what proper communication is in a company, we need to understand what leadership is, since effective and accurate communication act as an important factor to grow as an efficient and successful leader or manager (Luthra & Dahiya, 2015). Leaders have mastered the six basic functions of management: leading, planning, organizing, staffing, controlling and communicating. But what’s the one golden thread tying all those functions together — and the most important key to great leadership? Clear communication (Froschheiser, 2020)

### 1.1.1. What is leadership?

Leadership is one of social science’s most examined phenomena. The scrutiny afforded to leadership is not surprising, given that it is a universal activity evident in humankind and in animal species (Bass & Bass, 2008). Leadership has been studied for centuries both in classical Western (e.g., Aristotle, Plato) and Eastern writings. In the West, the Greeks were considered by many to be the first to consider the concept of leadership and what characteristics made up good leaders (Nelson, 2015) and in the East there were several theories created before 350 BCE. Among others, the Chinese said leaders should lead by example rather than give orders, and should elicit support from their subordinates (Rindova & Starbuck, 1997).

For students studying leadership, trying to figure out what leadership is can be rather daunting because the topic is complex and diverse (Antonakis, Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004). There are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are people who tried to define it (Sdogdill, 1974). After decades of extensive researches on leadership, there are more than hundred definitions of leadership (Northouse, 2009) and there is a little consensus on definition, assessment and its associated outcomes (Birnbaum, 1989).

Besides the massive amount of confusion, there are a number of widely agreed concepts which help understand the true meaning of leadership, in fact, leadership has been defined

and studied from different perspectives like trait, ability, skill, behaviour and relationship (Northouse, 2007).

In the following paragraphs I am going to focus on two main theories to understand leadership. These two theories are the trait theory or “Great Man theory” (Northouse, 2004 & 2007), and the behavioral theories, what leaders do and how leaders act (Northouse, 2004).

### ***Trait theory***

This idea explains that there are innate qualities or personal characteristics in leaders that distinguish them from everyone else. Some leaders from history like Mohandas Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Napoleon, and Hitler were studied and it was noticed that such leaders were effective due to some unique and innate leadership qualities (Northouse, 2007). In the last century there have been several studies created in order to find out what these traits are that make someone a leader.

One of these researches was conducted by Mann (1959) where he studied relationships between personality and performance in small groups. In his study he found hundreds of personality measures for leadership traits. He combined these more than five hundred measures into seven main characteristics: intelligence, adjustment, extroversion-introversion, dominance, masculinity-femininity, conservatism and interpersonal sensitivity.

Later, Kilpatrick and Locke (1991) mention six characteristics of effective leadership: leadership, motivation, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, and knowledge of the business. Finally, Posner (2003) sets four key leadership traits: honesty, forward-looking, inspiring, and competency.

We can see that all of these researchers focused on basically two main capabilities, the interpersonal qualities, and the individual intelligence and skills. This conclusion underlines the importance of the connection between leadership and the relationship with employees.

However, Mann (1959), Stodgill (1974) and Fiedler (1967) agree that effective leaders cannot be predicted on the basis of only traits for every situation.

### ***Behavioral theory***

Unlike the trait theory, behavioral theory investigates the behavior of leaders, how they act in certain situations. Given the early pessimistic reviews of the trait literature, leadership researchers began in the 1950s to focus on the behavioral styles of leaders (Antonakis, Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004). The most important studies were created by Ohio State University (Stodgill & Coons, 1957) and the University of Michigan (Katz et al., 1951). The studies identified two overarching leadership factors generally referred to as consideration (i.e., supportive, person-oriented leadership) and initiating structure (i.e., directive, task-oriented leadership) (Antonakis, Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004). In consideration, they develop an atmosphere of respect and trust with the followers and in initiating structure, the leaders organize work, define the tasks and schedule the work activities for their followers. The effective leaders use both initiating structure and consideration at the same time at different degrees (Stodgill & Coons, 1957).

Likert (1967) classified leadership styles into four categories: exploitative autocratic, benevolent autocratic, consultative and democratic.

### **1.1.2. Transactional, transformational and laissez-faire leadership**

In the following, I am going to present some leadership methods that have been widely used in the last more than thirty years, since Burns (1978) identified two types of political leadership: transactional and transformational. Later, Bass and Avolio (1994) proposed a full-range theory of leadership, which consists of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire.

Downton (1973) is believed to be the first person who used the terms transformational and transactional leadership and Burns (1978) was the first person who distinguished leadership styles based on followers' motivation as either transformational or transactional.

#### ***Transactional leadership***

According to Burns (1978), the transactional leaders focus on the followers' self-interest through exchanging different things to motivate them. These exchanges may be of different natures like salary or bonus in exchange for some task accomplishment. In other words, transactional leaders control their followers through different types of rewards. Transactional leadership helps leaders and followers reach their own goals by supplying lower-level wants and needs so that they can move up to higher need (Antonakis, Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004). Moreover, the transactional leaders work within systems, try to avoid risks and try to achieve the goals on already set parameters (Bass, 1985).

Effective transactional leaders must regularly fulfil the expectations of their followers. Thus, effective transactional leadership is contingent on the leaders' abilities to meet and respond to the reactions and changing expectations of their followers (Kellerman, 1984). Transactional leaders are influential because it is in the best interest of subordinates for them to do what the leader wants (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Transactional leadership has been argued to support organizational learning and renewal by providing organizational members with clear goals, expectations and rewards (Vera & Crossan, 2004).

This leadership approach has been the traditional model of leadership with its roots from an organizational or business perspective in the 'bottom line' (Bolden et al. 2003). Thus, to ensure the attainment of performance (financial), such leaders resort to the establishment of specific parameters, guidelines, rules and performance standards, coupled with the establishment of reward and punitive systems to enforce positive work behaviors and discourage negative ones, respectively (Russell, 2011). This situation thus portrays transactional leaders as more task- or goal-oriented than people-oriented (Dartey-Baah, 2015).

### ***Transformational leadership***

Transformational leaders, on the other hand, encourage followers to exert and explore existing as well as new horizons. They are proactive and help followers to attain unexpected goals (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). Superior leadership performance – transformational leadership – occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group (Bass, 1990).

This type of leadership is an important antecedent to construct the collective confidence or strength required by groups to be successful when facing with difficult challenges (Bass & Avolio, 2003). Transformational leadership can create significant organizational change and act as change agents, foster higher level of intrinsic motivation and loyalty among followers, and introduce a new image or view of the future and create a commitment to this image among followers (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2008).

In this technological and competitive era, organizations prefer transformational leaders to motivate and help their workforce to achieve higher goals. They make them aware and able to accomplish beyond their expectations and perceived capabilities (Palestini, 2009).

### ***Laissez-faire leadership***

Laissez-faire leadership is considered as non-strategic or absent leadership which is at the opposite end of transformational and/or transactional leadership (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2008). Laissez-faire means the absence of leadership (Northouse, 2004).

Laissez-faire leadership has been associated with negative outcomes including stress, demotivation, or organizational outcomes (e.g. Bass & Avolio, 1994; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Kelloway et al., 2005; Skogstad et al., 2007). Consequently, laissez-faire leadership has been generally viewed as being ineffective whereas most research in transformational leadership and transactional leadership points out the effectiveness of the two leadership styles in a wide range of contexts including subordinates' job satisfaction or organizational effectiveness (e.g. Barling et al., 1996; Lowe et al., 1996; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

On the other hand, some recent studies argue that laissez-faire leadership may not always be equal to avoidance, ignorance, neglect, and indifference toward the needs of their followers (Skogstad et al., 2007). Even though most leadership theories emphasize the importance of leadership activities including leadership reward/punishment and consideration, the involvement of leader could have unintended adverse effects as employees' satisfied-needs can prompt self-absorption (Koprowski, 1981). That is, while rewards and punishments can reinforce leaders' standard, tighten controls, and increase supervision, they can also increase dependency of subordinates (Yang, 2015). Reinforcement with rewards and punishment may also have a detrimental effect on performance because they threaten the sense of self-determination and self-competence (Deci & Ryan, 1980). In laissez-faire leadership, the autonomy-supportive leaders cultivate the sense of self-determination among team members (Gagné, 2003).

All in all, leader should strive to achieve the right balance between involvement and non-involvement with subordinates and adapt over time depending on situations (Yang, 2015).

### 1.1.3. Leader Member-Exchange Model

There is an emerging general agreement that employee innovative work behavior is indispensable in daily tasks and assignments, if firms want to keep its competitive advantages and organizational survival in today's dynamic business environment (Herrmann & Felfe, 2013). A plethora of academics and scholars have found that leader-member exchange is particularly effective in promoting employee's innovative work behavior (Saeed et al., 2019).

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory is the foremost dynamic theory in the leadership literature (Erdogan & Liden, 2002; Liden, et al., 1997). LMX explains the effectiveness of leaders as the result of psychodynamic exchange between leaders and followers (Gill, 2006). LMX theory focuses on the quality of dynamic leader-member exchange relationships. These relationships can range on a continuum from ones that are based on mutual trust, respect, and obligation (high-quality LMX relationships), to ones that are simply based on the terms of the formal employment contract between leader and subordinate (low-quality LMX relationships) (Liden, et al., 1997). Liden, et al. (1997) further explain about high-quality LMX, leader-member exchanges go beyond the formal employment contract, with managers showing influence and support, and giving the subordinate greater autonomy and responsibility. In contrast, low-quality LMX relationships are ones in which subordinates are not favored by the leader and thus receive fewer valued resources. Leader-member exchanges simply adhere to the terms of the employment contract, with little attempt by the leader to develop or motivate the subordinate (Liden, et al., 1997)

According to Bauer & Erdogan (2015), researchers and business leaders alike begin to realize the impact LMX can have on important job outcomes such as job satisfaction, turnover, and performance.

### 1.1.4. Authentic leadership

Economic, geo-political, and technological developments over the past few decades have placed demands on leaders that require them to be transparent, be aware of their values, and guide organizations with a moral/ethical perspective (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009). Organizations have flattened their structures to compete globally, they require higher levels of autonomy and decision-making from employees at all levels (Connell et al., 2003), which necessitates a greater level of trust between employees and leaders and a greater need for employees to be empowered by leaders in order for them to be successful (Jones & George, 1998; Whitener et al., 1998). Moreover, trust in leaders has been shown to have a profound impact on subordinate outcomes (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). In short, we need a new kind of leader – *the authentic leader* – to bring us out of the current leadership crisis (George, 2003).

Authentic leadership has been identified as a root construct that may influence leaders who exhibit multiple leadership styles and behaviors, opening up an unexplored area in leadership research (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Several recent reviews of leadership theory also highlight that the future direction of leadership research must move away from a hierarchical, leader-centric approach to a more integrative approach in which followers, context, and group levels of analysis are hypothesized and tested to advance leader-ship theory (Avolio, 2007; Johns, 2006; Meindl, 1995). Clapp-Smith et al. (2009) suggest that a relationship exists between follower perceptions of authentic leadership, follower psychological capital, and

follower performance at the individual level. When followers believe their top management team exhibits the dimensions of authentic leadership, they will have greater amounts of trust in those leaders, which may lead to an increase in sales over the time period because the followers are more willing to invest time and resources toward some positive future outcome (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009).

Authentic leadership is a process by which leaders are deeply aware of how they think and behave, of the context in which they operate, and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths (Avolio et al., 2004). According to George (2003), authentic leaders genuinely desire to serve others through their leadership. They are more interested in empowering the people they lead to make a difference than they are in power, money, or prestige for themselves. They are as guided by qualities of the heart, by passion and compassion, as they are by qualities of the mind. The theoretical model of authentic leadership includes not only the leader's behaviors but also characteristics of the followers and leaders, such as their levels of psychological capital, suggesting a more integrative approach to studying leadership and organizational behavior (Gardner et al., 2005; Luthans et al., 2006).

According to Clapp-Smith et al. (2009), when leaders are aware of how their actions affect those around them and are open and transparent about the processes and influences inside and outside of their organizations, followers have a better sense of organizational goals/challenges. Attaining these outcomes of authentic leadership is only possible when followers perceive leaders to be authentic (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009), thus we must investigate subordinate behavior, communication and perception towards leaders.

## **1.2. Managerial communication**

The utmost essential key to great leadership is communication (Towler, 2003). Communications theory embraces the thought that the environmental context within which a message is sent and received can significantly influence the fidelity of communication (Duncan, 1973). Within a communication system, mutual understanding is key (Duncan, 1973). However, Emanoil et al. (2013) indicate that not all companies have fully understood the role of communication, being that managers tend to focus on obtaining immediate profit rather than on other aspects of a successful organization, such as the influence of communication on employee performance and engagement. Consequently, the inability among managerial staff to establish a connection with their workforce through effective communication can lead to organizational chaos, low productivity, and decreased profitability (Bisel, Messersmith, & Kelley, 2012).

In contrast, well-organized communications systems contribute to employee satisfaction and engagement within organizations (Aburge, 2011). The ability to lead and inspire employees to accomplish organizational objectives is a facet of managerial communication (Neves & Eisenberger, 2012). Organizational leaders, who focus on soft skills, including communication, enjoy 85% higher profits compared with those in firms who are least effective at communicating with their employees (Robles, 2012). Voinea et al. (2015) stated that managerial communication is not only the art of conveying and understanding information but also the art of allowing employees to understand management decisions that propel employees to meet organizational objectives. For these reasons, organizational leaders

should pay close attention to managerial communication behaviors, styles, and delivery and their effects on worker engagement (Hart, 2016).

The role of communication by executives and managers fluctuates between organizations and can change within an organization (Grandien & Johanson, 2012). There are various communication behaviors that managers may use when directing, counselling, and encouraging employees (Dasgupta, Suar, & Singh, 2013). Miller (2013) discussed how evolving demographics within an organization could change managerial communication behavior. Changing demographics result in a multi-cultural workforce, employees with the increasing responsibility of caring for aging family members, and employees with varied sexual orientations, races, ages, and genders (Miller, 2013). All of the noted changes force managers to find ways to communicate the organizational message in such a way that all employees can understand and relate to the message (Miller, 2013).

### **1.2.1. Barriers to effective communication**

Effective leader while communicating must ensure that there would be no chance of any kind of miss-communication or misunderstandings. But, on the basis of previous studies, practically it is not feasible for a leader to make all the communication effective as many barriers like noise, disturbance, unique understanding levels and different cultural backgrounds make it difficult to make communication effective (Luthra & Dahiya, 2015).

According to Luthra & Dahiya (2015) the barriers to effective managerial communication are the following:

- Lack of planning and purpose before communicating with others
- Not keeping in mind the nature of the audience
- Choice of inappropriate tools and techniques by a leader
- Choosing wrong language as a communication medium
- Lack of trust in each other and disrespect
- Wrong assumption about listener by ignoring their emotions and sensitivities
- Use of signals, postures and gestures which do not support the words used during communication
- Ignoring the feedback aspect while communicating
- Lack of self-confidence, values, courage, and knowledge
- Lack of major leadership qualities
- Inability to adapt to changes

### **1.2.2. Effective communication**

The manager-subordinate communication relationship is a function of the quantity and quality of interactions examined in terms of communication constructs (Hassan & Hatmaker, 2014). Kiyomiya stressed the importance of managers being forthright when communicating instead of employing deceptive techniques. Managers should use the communication techniques of being clear, concise, honest, and consistent in daily interactions with employees (Kiyomiya, 2012). Garcia (2012) concluded that effective communication behaviors include

learning two critical skills; gaining current and thorough knowledge of the intended audience (i.e., employees), and understanding how to deliver the message to achieve the desired reaction.

Luthra & Dahiya (2015) concludes that these are the most important principles for a leader/manager to follow in order to become an excellent leader and to reach effective communication:

- Communicating with confidence and without fear of making errors while sending the message, and in case of an error, admitting it in order to gain trust and respect of the team.
- Communicating the rules clearly to the team and following them. With other words, leading by example.
- Energy and self-motivation while communicating.
- Being focused, steady and trustworthy while communicating. There must be a value, grace, and regularity in the interactions with the teams, but being able to modify them if necessary.
- Approachability without barriers, in the team members are left with doubts about the information shared during the communication process.
- Clear thought process. There must be clarity in opting communication techniques, channels and approaches by keeping in mind the intellectual level and understanding of the listeners.
- Clear and brief communication, and valuing the thoughts, ideas and feelings of others.
- Transparent system of communication. Until unless very confidential, there should be no secret between the leader and the team.
- Being comprehensive in communication and overcoming differences positively and practically.
- Effective listening, because hearing out is as significant as saying effectively.
- Concentrating on communicating with teams rather than simply sharing information.
- Swapping ego with understanding.
- Full knowledge of the subject to be discussed to avoid confusions.
- Even if there is no chance of interacting with all team members individually, addressing the group as if talking to individuals and not a group.
- Being skillful in narrating stories and using anecdotes while communicating.
- Repeating the message several times to make sure that the message arrives to all members of the team.
- Using all communication technologies and channels like, video conferences, telephone conferences, emails, etc.
- Encouraging feedback system to improve workplace environment.

### **1.3. Subordinate communication**

Upward feedback, upward communication and open door policies deliver significant organizational benefits (Tourish & Hargie 2004). Organisations therefore need to foster upwards communication (Hargie, 2016). Upward communication is defined in a variety of

ways (Green & Knippen, 1999). One of these definitions combines four thoughts, employee achievements, progress and plans; unresolved work problems in which employees may need help; suggestions and ideas for improvement; and employee's feelings about their jobs, associates, and the organization (Ivancevich et al., 1997)). According to Green & Knippen (1999), employees communicate upward to understand managers, work with managers, ask managers, and help managers.

Green & Knippen (1999) further explain that most employees have trouble at one time or another with upward communication. For many employees, this causes numerous problems. In order to improve it employees need training in the subtleties of effectively communicating with their manager. Steinfeld (2017) gives some examples for why subordinates don't communicate upward:

- Fear of retaliation or looking stupid: Employees may harbor a strong fear of retaliation due to a lack of trust, or feel nervous about looking stupid if they don't have all of the right information.
- Appearance of challenging authority: Their upbringing may have taught them to never question authority, leading them to believe it is always good politics to agree with the boss.
- Previous bad experiences. A previous poor supervisor, or someone who took feedback but never acted on it, may cause them to believe it's not worth the effort.
- Unskilled with practical candor: Employees unfamiliar with the practice of giving feedback in a trustworthy but honest manner may feel that their comments are rude or unwelcome.

Even though Steinfeld (2017) explains that managers should be the ones to improve the communication, Green & Knippen (1999) also note that employees know that more communication is in their best interest. The key is for employees to take the initiative rather than waiting for their manager to encourage more upward communication. Green & Knippen propose that by using the following steps employees will be able to communicate upward more efficiently:

- Decide to make it work  
Look at the consequences of not communicating with the manager. Consider the benefits of better communication
- Determine what to do  
Identify the manager's contribution to lack of communication. Determine reasons the employee is not communicating. Come up with a solution approach.
- Decide how to do it  
Identify the skills needed. Practice and develop skills.
- Take action  
Focus on developing the skills of upward communication.

We can find many investigations concerning leadership and managerial behaviours. However, researches concerning subordinate, upward communication are scarcer. This study aims to observe the communication between managers and subordinates not only from the downward communication point of view but from both sides, in order to broaden our knowledge about how both organizational levels think, how communication works and should work in their companies. This study is a valuable addition in the current literature found on manager-subordinate communication.

## 2. Interviews with leaders

In this chapter I am analyzing four interviews that I conducted with leaders from different sectors. This part of my thesis is a qualitative analysis of the topic.

The aim of these interviews was to see how the managers/leaders see the importance of communication between the managers and subordinates in the workplace and to find out how the results of the literature review correlate with their answers.

I conducted the interviews with two Hungarian and two Spanish leaders. My aim was to find some higher ranked leaders but not only CEOs to see how higher management opines about the questions that I am investigating. Furthermore, I selected these two countries because of several reasons. The most important one is that the double degree that I am finishing is between Hungary and Spain, so I was interested to see the differences and similarities between the ways of thinking of company executives from both countries.

I have had work experiences in both of the countries and I had quite different experiences, so I decided to interview both of my former directors.

One of the Hungarian leaders (Zoltán Szabó) is the CEO of his own company, and the other one (Zoltán Venter) is a regional manager of a multinational company. I followed the same idea in the Spanish side too. One of the interviewees (Juan Martínez Baragaño) is the CEO and owner of his own company and the other one (Cristina Farelo Lanseros) is a director of several teams in an American multinational company.

I followed a previously set list of questions in all four interviews, however as a result of the qualitative nature of this chapter all the conversations differ in some points. Depending on the answers I changed a few questions and/or added or skipped some. Furthermore, I conducted my interviews in three different languages. With my Hungarian interviewees I had the conversations in Hungarian, with Cristina Farelo Lanseros in English and with Juan Martínez Baragaño in Spanish, meaning that the dynamics of the interviews were quite different, but all the answers are both translated and analyzed in English.

The most relevant parts of the interviews are presented below. The full texts of all the four interviews can be found in *Appendix A*.

### 2.1. Zoltán Szabó – Ghibli Ltd.

Zoltán Szabó is a Hungarian entrepreneur working in the field of transportation and warehouse logistics. He received his engineering degree in 1989 from the Budapest University of Technology and Economics. During his career he worked at three different companies. He started in the Volánbusz Zrt. in Hungary, and worked there for one year. After leaving this company he was employed by Eurosped Ltd., one of the biggest logistics companies in Hungary. During his 6 years at Eurosped he built his connections, mostly with Italian partners since he was responsible of the Italian branch and lived there for some years. In 1996, after moving back to Hungary he founded Ghibli Ltd., with his most important Italian partner.

Ghibli Ltd. is a Budapest, Hungary based logistics company focused on transport, warehousing and custom clearance all around the world. Ghibli transports in all possible

transportation ways and means, meaning road, railway, sea and air transport. The company's two biggest transport destinations are Italy and China.

Zoltán Szabó, in the following also referred to as Z.SZ., explained the short history of the company:

*Z.SZ.: I am going to explain it in three parts. First, the owners. In the beginning I was the owner and this earlier mentioned Italian partner. As a result of the globalization my partners decided to go back to the Italian market and they left as owners from Ghibli. With the help of a friend we bought their shares in 2001, and continued the business as co-owners. After this, we continued until 2008/2009 when the global economic crisis arrived. The crisis was a big hit on the company and my partner didn't want to continue. In 2012 I bought his shares and sold them to a Chinese company that continues as Ghibli's co-owner today.*

*The second part is the service side. In the beginning we only worked with Italy. Later, we started focusing not only on transportation but warehousing and custom clearance as well. We were continuously broadening our warehousing services and as a result of its strong growth, we decided to move the warehouse to a harbor in Budapest. Unfortunately the construction of the new buildings finished when the crisis started in 2008. As an answer I restructured the company to focus more on marketing and sales. When the Chinese partner joined the company, we started to focus on overseas transport and move away from solely road transport, and start sea and air transport as well. Today we have a warehouse at the airport as well, the custom clearance has enhanced, and we help the import of medical supplies needed during the COVID-19.*

*Finally, the third part is the leadership. I made the company alone. The beginning of this company leadership was something very low-level. The company was growing, we arrived to have around 8-10 people, so we created the company roles and functions. So it was kind of a culture change, in 2000-2001. We had to change the company from everyone knows about everything and everything is discussed together, to be a bit better organized and structured.*

After the introduction, Zoltán Szabó stressed the importance of the growth of a leader. In his words, *"it cannot happen that the company grows but the leader doesn't"*. He believes that a company cannot overgrow the leader. If the leader cannot get better, the company will either stay on the same level, or the boss will have to be replaced.

In the following, I am presenting and analyzing the ideas mentioned by Z.Sz. that are relevant to the research.

Zoltán Szabó believes that four main aspects are important for the success of a company: development, efficiency, differentiation and great organizational control. When he talks about development he expresses, from one part the self-development, and from another part, acting so the company can grow as well. By developing the company he means creating a technological background and creating an efficient team, and focusing on creating good communication.

When he talks about efficiency and differentiation, he means offering fast and special services that differentiate themselves from the competitors.

Finally, he stresses the importance of great financial control and flexible cost structures.

We can see that from the three mentioned aspects the first, development, includes the communication within the company. When I asked him about the importance of manager-subordinate communication, he answered, *"The basis of cooperation is the communication"*.

He explains in detail that without creating a proper honest and transparent environment where the communication works between the people, there is not going to be cooperation.

The thought that he stresses several times throughout the interview is the respect and that communication should always be based on information and functional question and never on the personal traits, identities and ways of being of the people. One example that he mentions more than one time is the following, *“We have several gay people in the company, we had more employees with different skin colors, and it is very important not to differentiate anyone based on these traits. You have to deal with the people based on how they work and nothing else”*.

He believes that creating the right environment in the company is the leader’s job:

*“We as leaders also have to create all these communicating channels in order to have effective communication. If there is no communication, there is no cooperation, if there is no cooperation, there is no success, if there is no success, there is a problem, if there is a problem, there is a big problem.”*

Zoltán Szabó stresses that in his opinion there is no such thing as perfect communication in a company. There is always room for improvement. There are some ideas that you can follow in order to develop, but you can never reach perfection. Furthermore, he explains that subordinates and managers need to have continuous meetings where the communication goes both ways and the leaders don’t only focus on talking and sharing information. He says that there always is and always has to be a small gap between the leaders and the subordinates in order to keep a functioning organization.

As mentioned before, he explains that in his opinion the biggest mistake is talking about someone’s personality instead of talking about the facts. We can see that he mentions how differently you need to communicate when you leave the office environment. There is a huge gap between office culture and outside the office culture, but this is a completely different setting, with very different backgrounds. This is one of the reasons why this work is focused solely on the communication in the office environment.

Another mistake – that we can see later in the interview with Cristina Farelo – is not finding the way to communicate to the different individuals. You need to approach everyone differently because every individual thinks in his or her own way.

Finally, he mentions the lack of communication which is more or less explaining the negative points of the Laissez-faire leadership that I explained in detail earlier in the literature review.

When I asked Zoltán Szabó to tell me a managerial mistake he explained his own mistake when he communicated towards his subordinates in an autocratic way, threatening people with firing them if they didn’t do what he asked for. As Bisel, Messersmith, & Kelley (2012) explain in the literature review, the traditional leadership methods focus more on hierarchy and power. This might work in some settings, but in most cases it seems to be contra productive. Here it appears perfectly what can happen if you try to force the people to do something instead of motivating them to cooperate.

Zoltán Szabó mentions that self-criticism is one of the most important aspects of the growth of a good leader since that was what he needed in order to solve the problem he created in the mentioned example.

Once again, when asked about a positive managerial communication example, he explains that clear and sincere communication is extremely important. In difficult times like today’s COVID-19 crisis, leaders need to communicate properly in order to avoid chaos, calm the

people, and to show that even though there is a complicated situation, the company will do everything in its power to keep on providing. Leaders play a key role in these situations, since they represent the organizations. If they are strong, the followers will be calmer.

When I asked him about the other side, the biggest mistakes that employees can commit, he focused on the lack of communication, lying, the lack of transparency and gossiping. He believes that many times these mistakes come from the personality of the subordinates. He explains that gossiping itself is not a problem, since there are many people that “feel fulfilled” when gossiping, and this might help their overall productivity, but when these secret conversations are about company members, especially managers and company processes, they can have extremely negative effects both on the office environment and on the company’s workflow. Z.Sz. mentions two solutions. One is firing the people in case there is no other solution, and the other one is a monthly co-worker meeting that is explained later.

Zoltán Szabó further explains that there are several mistakes that employees make, but the real question is the solution. Subordinates don’t have to handle these problems alone. Managers have to react properly and work together with their team members to find the best solutions. However, not being afraid of going to the boss with an idea, even if he or she is in a high position in the company, can be very positive. It is necessary to know when to reach out to them and when not to, but if an employee finds the correct moment for doing so, it can help the development of any organization.

When talking about how communication has changed over time, he mentions recruiting as a crucial part of an organization’s development. In case you select the right people, you will have to put much less effort in building the right communication.

Another subject that I was curious about is the layout of workplaces and how they affect co-worker relations.

Zoltán Szabó believes that it helps communication. There is a need for large open areas to make the communication easier and help the everyday processes. Also, the employees can see if their managers are available at the moment, or not, and the managers can control their teams easier, since they can reach out to all of their subordinates without having to organize a meeting. However, *“the noise or hearing the other people’s conversations can be negative”*.

One more time, Zoltán Szabó explains that even though hierarchy is important in order to have a proper organization, leaders/managers should be reachable for anyone. You need to create an environment where the subordinates don’t feel that they are being controlled by their authoritarian leaders. Zoltán Szabó believes that creating a friendly relationship between all members of an organization – until a certain level – is necessary.

Zoltán Szabó mentions several ideas for resolving problems, for team building and for enhancing relationships. The monthly co-worker meeting, that I mentioned earlier is a way of creating a common knowledge for everyone about the processes of the company. This idea is represented also in the last example that Z.Sz. mentions, talking about the integration program. Ghibli focuses on creating a culture where everyone speaks the “same language” in order to avoid problems that arise from misunderstandings.

Even though Zoltán Szabó sees the importance of team building, he believes that focusing on more practical issues, like the workflow of the company need more attention. You clearly need to create a good and friendly environment, but until you don’t reach certain organizational goals, having a good community is not enough.

Once again, he mentions in details, how important it is not to judge people based on their way of being, but solely on their skills and work effort.

In conclusion, Zoltán Szabó, as the head of his own company believes that building an organization has various key elements, and one of them is the growth. He refers to growth as the growth of the leader, and by that the growth of the whole organization.

When he talks about communication he underlines two main ideas several times. One of them is creating a culture and a common language in order to avoid misunderstandings and to have a common direction. The other idea is stressed throughout the whole interview. He believes that people have to turn away of some traditional ideas of how people should be, and judging people on any personal aspects like outlook or sexual orientation must be avoided. Everyone should be treated depending on their productivity and work. This idea follows Miller (2013), who said that changing demographics result in a multi-cultural workforce, employees with the increasing responsibility of caring for aging family members, and employees with varied sexual orientations, races, ages, and genders.

He believes that to reach all these you need a leader that practices self-criticism and is open to changes if necessary. He or she must lead the company and show the proper way of communication, because he or she represents the whole organization.

## **2.2. Zoltán Venter – Essity AB**

Zoltán Venter is the executive director at Essity Hungary, and CEE (Central and Eastern Europe) commercial director in consumer goods division in Essity Hygiene Products Company. He graduated in 1991 as an architect, but he never started working in the field. He has been working in Essity for the last 28 years, since the beginning of his career. Zoltán Venter further explains:

*“I started working as a sales representative, and I was in this position for around three years. After that, I got to be area manager, then key account manager, then sales manager, then since 2009 I have been the leader of the consumer division, which is our division with the biggest turnover. In 2012 I was promoted to be the executive director of the whole Hungarian branch. In 2016 I received three more countries to lead the consumer goods divisions. So today I am responsible for Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, but again, I am only responsible for the consumer division in these other three countries. This is a regional cluster setup, which means that I have one sales manager in each country and this way all the teams report to me.”*

Essity Hygiene Products Company is a Sweden based, global multinational commercial company working in the FMCG sector. In Hungary it is in the top four companies in its sector. Essity is present in 100 countries all over the world. The company has 44,000 employees and has a €11,000,000,000 yearly turnover. The company produces and sells hygiene products including household stationary, diapers and its accessories and menstrual and feminine hygiene products. Moreover, in Hungary the company has two more divisions outside the consumer goods. One is selling industrial hygiene products and systems to industrial productions companies, and a health and medical solutions divisions, producing and distributing medical devices.

The company entered Hungary in 1985 with a mixed corporate form. In Hungary Essity is either in the first or second place on the market in all their divisions. The Hungarian branch has around HUF 35,000,000,000 (€101,000,000) yearly net turnover. Based on the turnover the company counts as a corporation, but there are only 115 employees in the mentioned

branch, since there is no production in the country, only sales, so Essity Hungary is considered a medium-sized business.

In the following, I am presenting and analyzing all the ideas relevant to my research mentioned by Zoltán Venter, in the following also referred to as Z.V.

He believes that successful enterprise can be observed from many different aspects depending on the field, the products or services, if it is B2B or B2C, and so on.

In his opinion, the first thing that is necessary for the success of a company a good product or product portfolio, or a service, or a mixture of the two. He explains that even if you offer products, you need to offer services in order to grow.

After this step, there is a need for well-structured and planned long term strategy for each product and/or service.

Then, you need a well thought marketing concept. *“Today you cannot sell anything without that on the long run”*.

After all of these comes the properly selected and trained team. In this part Zoltán Venter started to explain the importance of good leadership and communication. He connects the two ideas together. He says, *“There are no good leaders without good communication”*.

According to Zoltán Venter, even if good communication structure is set in a company, without the right training or having the proper skills, managers will not communicate in the way they should. Miscommunication can also happen because people are different.

Companies have to focus on three different aspects, verbal, non-verbal and online communication. Today, online communication gets much more emphasis, and he believes that it is very important.

Z.V. explains that in most companies the human resources department is the one that manages the communication flow between employees. Furthermore, in Essity, they spend *“quite a lot of time, money and energy on communication trainings”*.

He says that there are two types of communication that managers have to master, the everyday- and crisis communication. The latter is extremely important because *maybe a crisis only happens once every two years, but if you don’t communicate these changes properly, you can ruin the whole process*”. Zoltán Venter further explains in details the function of crisis communication.

Even though the mentioned aspect is so important, the part that a company needs to develop consciously is the everyday communication. In his opinion there is a need for an analysis that shows what type of people are in the team and develop the strategies accordingly.

Zoltán Venter believes that communication has to work both ways and it always needs to be monitored. Furthermore, group communication is necessary, meaning that each member of a team has to get the same information in order to avoid misunderstandings. However, telling the subordinates about the decisions is not enough. Everyone has to understand the reasons behind the ideas, so employees will not forget about it and will feel integrated. He further explains that in case there is a problem with a subordinate, managers have to give clear information with examples, so the employees won’t misunderstand the messages, and after this, managers have to listen to the responses. With Zoltán Venter’s words, *“you need to listen to the subordinate’s response.”*

When I asked him about the other side, the biggest mistakes that employees can commit, he focused on fear. He says that the most typical mistake is that subordinates are afraid of speaking up because they are afraid of getting fired. Z.V. believes that this is the leaders’ fault

and not the subordinates'. Just as I explained in the literature review, Zoltán Venter explains that this happens in an autocratic leadership when the managers solely communicate downward and everything they say has to be done in the way they want. He further notes, *"Someone can be a good leader if they can change their opinion about something in case they are not right"*. This idea is very similar to the one Zoltán Szabó explained in the previous interview, when talking about the importance of self-criticism and self-improvement.

Zoltán Venter stresses that the communication is the leaders' responsibility. That is why if someone makes mistakes in it, either the managers or the subordinates, they are the ones that have to act and try to fix them.

As I mentioned before, he believes that recruitment plays a key role in the success of a company. He explains that today, in many fields, recruiters look for people that have well developed soft skills. One of these soft skills is communication. His company mostly employs people that are outstanding in the mentioned skills, and later teach them the operational knowledge. While these skills can be thought, psychological skills cannot.

When talking about the office display, he says that it is necessary to have peaceful and quiet areas and large, open areas, depending on what the employees need for their work. He says that this is necessary in order to optimize the processes of a company. If an organization cannot provide that, then it is wasting money and resources, because a home office is cheaper and calmer. However, he believes that home office is good, but not enough, because non-verbal communication is very important, and in a remote work situation it is more difficult to have it.

Zoltán Venter explains that the hierarchical structure has changed significantly in the last thirty years. When he started his career higher management and CEOs were not reachable and organizations were very tall. Today, even in his company, where more than 44,000 employees there are maximum 7 organizational levels, where the 7<sup>th</sup> is the cleaning staff and the 1<sup>st</sup> is the CEO.

Companies focus on flattening the organizations in order to reach better and more dynamic communication and relationships.

Finally, I asked him about new techniques for resolving problems, for team building and for enhancing relationships. One more time, he underlines the importance of technology. He says, *"First you need to implement the new tools, you need to train the employees how to use it, and finally create a system so everyone uses them the same way"*.

He finished the interview telling that there is a need for surveys, where the companies can measure employee satisfaction and act if necessary. *"This is the most important thing; you have to measure the quality and the efficiency of the communication"*.

In conclusion, Zoltán Venter talks about many aspects of the observed subject. He believes that good leaders can only exist if they have good communication. For this, they need the proper skills and the right training. He explains that since every single person is different, a manager needs to adjust his or her communication according to the receivers. This can be measured by analysis and questionnaires conducted by the companies. Throughout the whole interview he stresses the importance of verbal, non-verbal and online communication. Today, online communication gets much more emphasis and companies need to focus on this aspect, providing the necessary tools for the employees, train them in order to actually have use for these developments and you need to create a system that is going to be used by everyone. Furthermore, he explains that there are two main branches of management communication.

First the crisis communication, that needs special attention because of its strong possible impact on the company culture. The other one is the everyday communication that needs to work properly in order to have a functioning workplace. This, again, is the responsibility of the managers. All communication mistakes are the leaders' fault, even if it is something that the subordinate is not doing right, like being afraid of the managers. The good leaders need to create an environment, where communication flows both ways and each and every employee receives the same clear messages. Furthermore, a leader needs not only to monitor how the communication works, but him- or herself as well. Leaders need to adjust in case they are not right about something.

Zoltán Venter explains the importance of soft skills in today's corporate world. There is a very big emphasis on the recruitment process in order to select the people that have the right communication and psychological skills.

Finally, he notes that even though home offices are useful, to have proper workflow, you need a well-organized office and office culture. In this aspect, hierarchy plays an important role. There is a tendency and need for flattening the organizations and creating less distance between higher management and non-managerial employees.

### **2.3. Cristina Farelo Lanseros – TechStyle Fashion Group**

Cristina Farelo Lanseros is a director of the process management and optimization at the Barcelona branch of TechStyle Fashion Group. She finished her studies in translation ten years ago and started working as a freelancer for some time, but soon she became a project manager in a translation company. During her time at this company, she had her first experience as a manager and trainer of new employees. After some time, as the organization was growing, the management built a team around her with several participants. She spent a few years in this company. Later, she moved around in several companies where she didn't manage any teams, until her last position before the current one. There, she was managing a team of internal translators and at the same time, she was working with an agency that managed freelance translators. Finally, at her current position, at TechStyle, she started managing the localization team and two years later she took over the acquisition design team as well. She has been working at the company for three years. As mentioned before, she does not manage teams from the technical or expertise perspective, but from a process management and optimization, workload, and so on.

I asked Cristina Farelo, also referred to as C.F., what her company does exactly, and she explained as follows:

*"TechStyle is a group of online fashion brands with the part of retail in the United States, but it is a native digital company. We try to reinvent, or reimagine fashion for brands, and each of TechStyle's brands has its own personality and its own way of being, even though they share common principles such as diversity and fashion for everybody at affordable prices, depending on the prices. We have athletic ware; we also have shoes and fashion, lingerie, so we have different aspects of fashion."*

In the following, I am presenting and analyzing all the questions and answers that are relevant to my research.

Cristina Farelo puts the emphasis on two main ideas. The first is building the team to be functional. This starts with hiring the right people. She believes that talented people are the

key for a successful organization. However, talent is not enough; managers need to make sure that the team members are happy and that they are “nurtured” in order to reach greatness. We can see this idea during the whole interview. The second aspect is the technology. We see it in all the interviews. There needs to be constant innovation on the technology’s side.

She says that communication is a key factor for a company’s success. Transparency, goal oriented communication and motivating employees to get input from them are the three main tasks that managers need to accomplish in the mentioned aspect. We can see these ideas in the literature review, where I explain the right downward communication. A manager’s task is both to inform and ask for feedback. Sending the message is not enough. A leader has to listen to the subordinates as well. For this, she stresses that transparency is also necessary from the subordinates’ side.

She is not sure if perfect communication exists or not, because everyone is different, everyone has different needs. She believes that a manager needs to have psychological skills in order to talk to the different people in the way they need to be spoken to. There is no one universal method, everyone needs different treatment. For Cristina Farelo, perfect communication can start when there is trust between the people. It needs to be the foundation of building functioning relationships.

She says that healthy relationships between managers and subordinates are necessary, however she notes, *“I don’t like to call them subordinates, but any team member...”*. For her, this relationship means keeping a kind of hierarchy, but connecting on the personal level. She thinks that managers should be reachable, because *“the more communication I have with my direct managers, the better I feel, because I feel that they care for me, that my problems are their problems as well”*. She also says that in her experience this communication works fine, but there is always room for improvement.

As mentioned before, in her opinion the lack of transparency is the biggest mistake a manager can make. It can lead to miscommunication between team members, creating unrealistic theories, lack of trust, gossips, and so on. Leaders need to give all the information for their subordinates so they can feel included. In the same time, she notes that there are certain things that need to be kept in secret. A practice that she mentions that can be very positive is if a leader shows some vulnerability, that he or she is not perfect either and there is nothing wrong with making mistakes sometimes.

Another mistake that she mentions is not being close to the employees. Managers need to tighten the distance between them and their subordinates. Showing too much power does not help in building relationships. She notes that there is a practice in this idea as well. She says that taking part in the processes, in some tasks can be helpful, even if that task is not their responsibility, communication and respect can be enhanced by it. It is very positive if they show that they are part of the team.

When talking about employee mistakes in communication, Cristina Farelo explains the same idea, the lack of transparency. Employees need to talk to their managers just as much as the other way around. Not telling about their feelings can lead to many problems that the managers won’t be able to fix if they don’t have all the necessary information. She says all good and bad things should be shared with the direct managers and *“if it’s negative, make sure that you tell your manager so she or he can help you, because if not, you’ll get frustrated, and from frustration there is almost no coming back”*.

She believes that these upward communication mistakes happen for the same reasons she mentioned before. Managers need to build trust, and talk to everyone in a way they need to be

talked to. She experienced it in her own work that putting in the effort for the mentioned practices grants good results for everyone, *"The person can open up, can talk about anything that she or he doesn't feel good about"*.

When I asked her about how communication between managers and subordinates changed throughout her career, she explained why she mentioned talking differently to everyone so many times. In the beginning of her career she used the same methodology to every team member she had and after more than 2-3 people, this way of generalizing communication does not work. Cristina Farelo continued with saying that it is very important to always look at both the subordinates' and the managers' side when making a decision or communicating.

When talking about the workplace display, she notes that having a "transparent" workplace is just as important as in communication. Having glass doors on meeting rooms and open spaces in the middle of the office are very positive, however some private areas are also necessary in order to have some privacy when needed. She underlines that the ideal workplace is when the office is organized based on the employees' requests and necessities.

During her career, it is not the hierarchical structure that changed, but the communication between levels. She says that the smaller the company, the flatter the hierarchy, and if you have a bigger company, you need more levels to be able to organize better. However, she has seen a shift in communication. Before, top managers were unreachable; no one really knew them or talked to them. Today, leaders try to be more informal, and as the world is becoming more digital, enormous technology companies try to make their "big sharks" approachable. She feels that in this aspect companies are going in a "right direction", but she fears that this approachable idea that many CEOs show is just an act.

Finally, C.F. talks about team building activities and methods for enhancing relationships within organizations. Personally, she tries to motivate her subordinates to talk about some personal stuff if they want, or to have conversations that are not connected to their jobs. These little things can enhance relationships and can build trust and closeness.

She also notes that out of office activities are very important and they are extremely good for building relationships.

She closes with saying that manager training is also crucial and that companies need to invest in it, because, as mentioned before, managers are the ones that can initiate change and enhance communication.

In conclusion, Cristina Farelo follows two main ideas throughout her interview, transparency and building trust. She explains that there are many factors that make a functioning organization, recruiting the right people, nurturing them, a constant innovation in technology and finally the communication.

When talking about transparency, she says goal oriented communication, motivating employees and giving clear and precise information are key factors. However, sending these messages are not enough, a leader needs to listen to the subordinates as well. She believes that managers need to have psychological skills in order to know how to talk to the people. This is where transparency and trust is connected. Employees will only talk to their managers freely, if they feel that they can trust their managers without consequences. This means that managers should be reachable where the parties can connect on a personal level, while keeping a kind of healthy hierarchy. Everyone needs to be approached differently, because people are different with different needs and ways of thinking. These are the reasons why the lack of transparency is the biggest mistake that both managers and subordinates can make. If a manager makes this mistake, it can lead to miscommunication between team members. This leads to creating unrealistic theories and lack of trust. Some ways to build the trust are

showing vulnerability and taking part in some processes so the team members can see that the managers are part of the team as well.

An open workplace display can help communication the same way. Again, transparency is necessary in this aspect as well.

In her opinion, hierarchy does not have to disappear, but some flattening is useful, and being more reachable even in very high positions is extremely constructive.

Finally, activities outside the office are also great practices for enhancing relationships and building trust between the members of the organizations.

## **2.4. Juan Martínez Baragaño – Cepillos Sacema S.L.**

Juan Martínez Baragaño is a 37-year-old industrial engineer. He has been working in the field for 13 years. In the beginning of his career he worked three years as a freelancer and since then he has been focused on his own project, Sacema.

Juan Martínez is the owner and CEO of Cepillos Sacema S.L. (Sacema), a Gijón, Spain based industrial brush manufacturer and distributor.

Sacema was founded by Juan Martínez in 2011 with a former associate. The company started its activities by manufacturing industrial brushes for street cleaning purposes. At the same time Juan Martínez and his associate developed a side brush system and started to distribute these two products together. The company started growing and in 2015 Juan Martínez purchased all the rights for the company and decided to diversify his product range to various types of industrial brushes and brushing machines. Since then Sacema has been growing in a strong pace until a point in 2018 when Juan Martínez decided to found Conecta Industria, a both online and offline monthly newspaper that focuses on the tendencies in the life of the Spanish industry. Sacema's newest focus is on the cleaning and disinfection of all types of surfaces provoked by the pandemic of 2020, the COVID-19.

Sacema is a small company with a family-like atmosphere. The number of workers is continuously changing because they tend to work with several young students that are doing their internships. The maximum number of employees in the last year was 11. Due to this small amount of workers, the workflow of Sacema differs from other, more traditional, more numerous companies. The daily activities are developed in one room, so the communication between co-workers is dynamic and effective.

In the following, I am presenting and analyzing all the questions and answers that are relevant to my research. Juan Martínez is also referred to as J.M.

Juan Martínez explains that in his opinion there are five main aspects for the success of a company, a well selected, organized and motivated team, well developed technological tools, knowing the clients and adapting according to their needs, well-structured financial background and planning, and finally, the direction/management of the company. We can see from the five mentioned points, two of them – the first and the fifth – are focused on the employees, the relationships and the importance of leadership. He underlines the importance of both downward communication and the need for motivating and recognizing employees. Leaders need to listen to their subordinates. They have to involve them as much as possible. He stresses the idea of “Authentic leadership”, that I have explained in the literature review.

According to Juan Martínez, perfect communication can be reached if you have the digital tools and use them properly. *"Obviously this is a theoretical response"*. He says that the most important part of the communication is the confidence between leaders and subordinates. Bosses need to delegate, to trust their subordinates that they will do their jobs without *"looking over their shoulders all the time"*. In the same time, employees need to feel valued by their managers.

In his experience, communication works properly within his company, but it is something that needs a lot of work and effort. He says that it works fine because, as mentioned earlier, he delegates, and the aspects where there is need for development is the technology, so all the processes can work better and more efficiently.

Juan Martínez mentions three mistakes a manager can make. One, of them is the lack of communication towards subordinates in crisis situations. He believes that communication is most crucial when there are problems. When the company works properly, there is still need for communication, but in that case it is not that big of a mistake as in case of a real problem that needs to be solved. This is a quite traditional mistake in companies with tall organizational structures. In such companies, the relationship between leaders and subordinates almost does not exist or in some cases non-existent at all.

The second very serious mistake is disrespecting the subordinates. It can destroy office relationships, kill motivation, and maybe most importantly, it can lead to disrespect and lack of trust, which is, as explained earlier, one of the key elements for, not only successful communication, but for the all-around success of any organization.

Finally, a less serious, but still important mistake is the flexibility of the whole organization. The company needs to be flexible enough to show the employees that they are not only a piece in a machine, but that they are valued and appreciated.

We all know that learning is very important; and it should not stop just because we reach a certain position in a company. According to Juan Martínez, many leaders don't communicate efficiently because they either don't know how to, or simply have other concerns and don't even think about communicating. This mostly happens because, while these leaders are highly professional in their fields, they have not learned the right ways of communication. That is why managers need to train themselves or ask for help outside the organization in order to get better at it.

Another problem is that leaders do not put themselves in the subordinates' situation. Juan Martínez says that since the way of thinking of these two groups is so different, that by simply trying to imagine how the other thinks can lead to great results.

Not only outside help, but self-improvement is very important. You need to realize the problems and mistakes, and act on them. Juan Martínez shows it with an example that reaching out to the co-workers and apologizing in case a manager makes a mistake can lead to positive results.

In another example, we can see here the difference between a bigger company with many employees, and a smaller one, with a lighter structure. Organizations with many members are much more difficult to organize. That is why a well-planned communication system can make life much easier. A simple presentation can change the workflow of the whole company.

Juan Martínez mentions again, digital tools are necessary in order to get better at communication. In this sense, it does not matter if it is a small or a big company; the necessary information flow is a key element in optimizing an office environment and to lift some weights off of the managers' shoulders.

When talking about the employee communication mistakes, he brings three examples. For this research the most relevant one is the first one, an upward communication mistake, lying to the managers about anything. There can be many reasons for not telling the truth, but without knowing the exact answer, we can understand that in case there is trust and understanding between the parties, the number of these mistakes is probably going to drop. We have seen that managers do need to take steps in order to develop these relationships. However, as I introduced in the literature review according to Green and Knippen (1999) employees also need to take steps if they want proper communication.

Juan Martínez stresses the importance of organization and its correlation with technology. With a proper system and the use of technology workflow can be enhanced and in the same time letting managers work less. He explains this idea through an example and how it helped both the processes and the communication. He further explains that all these systems and structures are so important because people are not perfect, so with the use of technology we can take out the human mistake factor.

J.M. mentions the trust and not being afraid of the leaders. When subordinates start to trust their managers and go to them with ideas and solutions, the organizational processes can develop properly, because there is always need for employee input. We can see that the communication in the past – or in many cases even in the present – worked very traditionally. The emphasis was more on giving tasks and not having any personal connection with the subordinates. In the recent years, this has been changing significantly. Again, with the new technologies, and most importantly, with the freshness of young leaders, the whole business world is going through an evolution. He further explains that organizations in the past were much taller. Today, the focus is on being horizontal. Everyone is involved in the planning process and the communication flows to all directions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a new and uncharted territory of mass home offices. We can see one trend; many companies have realized that several operations can be done by using all the available technology. This way, organizations can use smaller offices saving huge amounts of company funds. Juan Martínez believes that this new situation will create a new organizational concept, where offices lose importance and *“people will be able to work from wherever they want and we will only need the offices to have a meeting once in a while”*.

When I asked him about new methods for resolving problems, for team building and for enhancing relationships, he noted that because of the small size of their company, there is no need for such methods, but in bigger organizations team building programs are useful not only for solving problems, but to create a friendly and happy environment.

Finally, he explains the importance of the human resources. It is a department that is often put out of the focus. However, a great HR team can create a much stronger environment, it can help solve various problems, and it can take a lot of weight off of managers’ shoulders.

To sum up, we can see that Juan Martínez is mostly focused on three ideas that he believes are crucial for the development of a company and its communication. You need to have great organization, you need to create strong and happy relationships, and finally he puts a lot of emphasis on the technology. Most importantly, these three aspects have to be in constant correlation.

Downward communication is extremely important. Leaders need to send clear messages, motivate their teams and recognize employees. Subordinates need to feel involved and heard. There needs to be trust between managers and subordinates and by delegating, letting the employees work on their own without constant supervision, this can be reached.

He explains that the lack of downward communication in crisis situations and disrespecting team members are the biggest mistakes a manager can make. They can destroy office relationships, kill motivation, and it can lead to disrespect and lack of trust.

In order to avoid problems, managers need to both train themselves and ask for outside help if necessary. Also, they need to put themselves in the subordinates' situation before making important decisions. Furthermore, bigger organizations need well-planned communication systems in order to make life much easier. Once again, digital tools are one of the crucial elements of these systems.

When talking about subordinate mistakes, the biggest problem is lying to the managers, and this is because of the mistrust between the team members. In these situations managers are not enough, employees also need to take steps if they want proper communication and trust.

He also believes that the bigger the organization, the more team building programs are necessary and the role of the human resources departments need much more attention.

The new trends that he mentions are the flattening organizations and involving everyone in the processes, new technologies and fresh young leaders, and with these new tools the new organizational concept, where offices lose importance.

## **2.5. Conclusions**

In this chapter I analyzed four interviews. My goal was to find leaders that see the subject from different perspectives. Since all the four work in different types of companies and markets, they are in different positions and not all have the same age, sex or nationality my objectives were accomplished. As a conclusion, I am connecting all the mentioned ideas observing the similarities and differences between the interviews.

There are 9 ideas that follow all the four interviews, trust, respect, clear and straightforward messages, self-improvement, training, psychological skills, transparency and technology. We can see that at one point all the four leaders mentioned these ideas and that their opinions about the observed subjects are very similar. In other words, they follow the same idea – authentic leadership – that I explained in the literature review.

There are some smaller differences between them. Each of them put their focus in something different. Zoltán Szabó is mostly concerned with the role of the leader and how she or he influences the company outcomes, and that a common language has to be set for everyone to follow differing in some points from the others, since they are expressing the importance of different communication with everyone. Zoltán Venter says that all communication is the managers' responsibility and that a leader that doesn't know how to communicate properly is not a good leader. Cristina Farelo talks about transparency and trust. She stresses that without these two the communication processes will never work. However, unlike Zoltán Venter, she says that the managers are not the only ones responsible for these things. Subordinates need to put in the effort as well. Juan Martínez also believes that communication is the responsibility of both the managers and the subordinates. He also notes that delegation is an important function of a leader, which is connected to the earlier mentioned trust.

Another very important aspect that all four leaders mention is the technology. Zoltán Venter and Juan Martínez explain in details why they think it is so important nowadays. Zoltán Venter stresses that providing the right tools is not enough, constant training and monitoring is necessary. Juan Martínez takes the idea to the next level and says that

technological tools are going to get so much importance in the corporate culture that the whole organizational structure will change as its result.

When talking about the communication mistakes that managers can commit, all of them talk about the lack of communication and transparency, not involving the team members, disrespecting them, and finally not accepting when they are wrong about something. The solutions they propose are constant self-criticism, showing vulnerability, getting closer and friendlier with the employees, giving clear and precise information, and most importantly trainings and self-improvement.

The subordinate communication mistakes that they mention are lying and not communicating. Here, there is a bit of difference in the opinions. As I mentioned, Zoltán Venter, for example, thinks that all communication mistakes are the fault of the managers. The others don't say this; however all believe that managers are responsible for recognizing the problems and initiating change.

Except of Juan Martínez, the other three describe the same idea of an office. They say that for good communication you need open spaces and transparency, but in the same time you need private areas so people can have some privacy if necessary. Juan Martínez, on the other hand, believes that the role of offices will lose its importance and remote work will be much more usual.

All four agree that the hierarchical structure of the organizations has gone through a huge change in the past years and that this tendency is rather positive. The number of levels in the companies has been reduced significantly and flat organizational structures get more attention. Furthermore, company leaders are getting to be much more reachable than in the past, and all four participants believe that this is something very positive.

Finally, each of them mentions at one point or another that human resources need attention because it is the department that takes care of communication mistakes many times and it is the one responsible for the recruiting. The leaders also say that recruitment is a crucial part of the decision making, because most problems can be avoided if the right people are selected. Everyone stressed that psychological skills, soft skills are very important in today's companies, Zoltán Venter even says that many times it is more important than hard skills.

All in all, we can see that according to these leaders, good communication can work if the managers and subordinates trust each other, they are not afraid of speaking up and they communicate clearly.

### 3. Survey

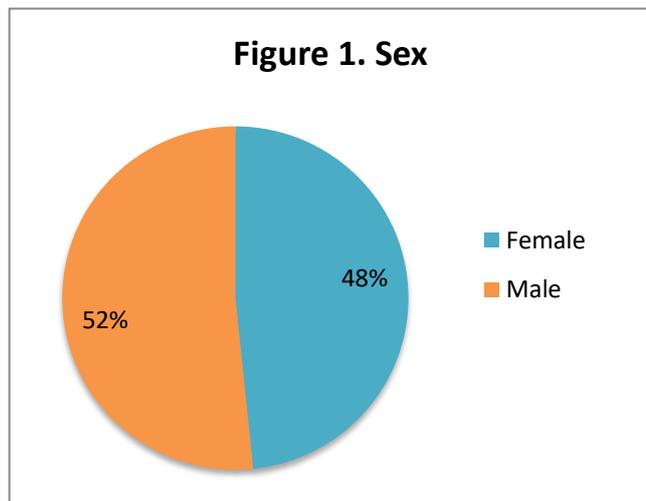
The purpose of this survey is to trace back what employees think about the communication between managers and subordinates. After interviewing the four leaders, I wanted to out the opinion of the subordinates, to see what problems they face and what solutions could be found when it comes to communication within an organization. The only criteria to participate was to have an already existing experience working in an office environment.

#### 3.1. Demographics

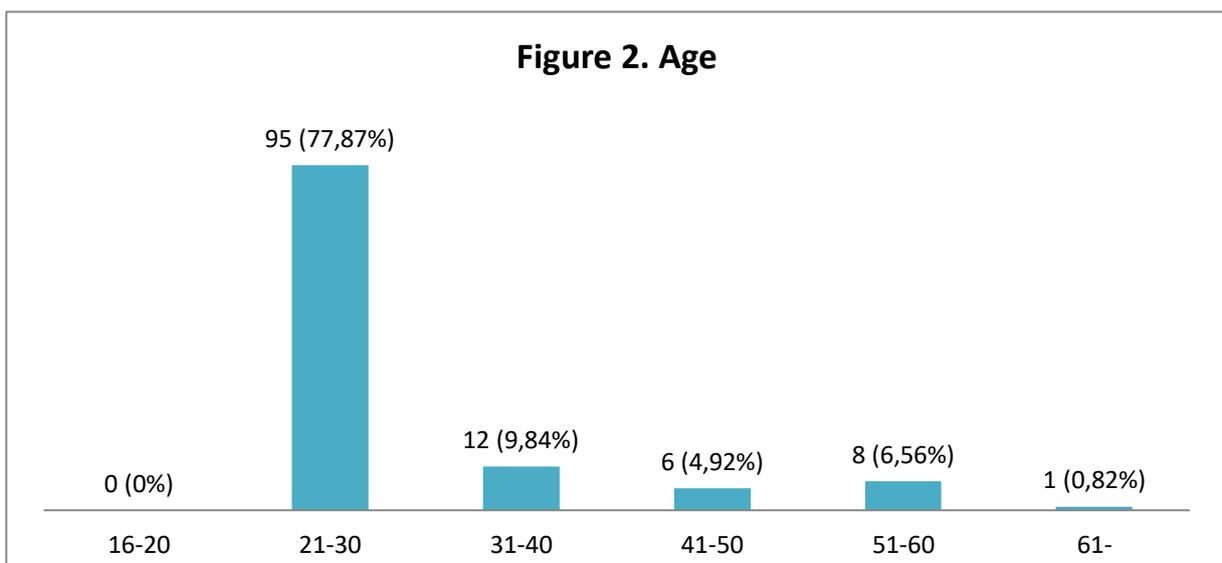
The base of this survey was 122 participants from 18 different countries. Out of all the responses 59 were female and 63 were male (*Figure 1.*), meaning that the results are very well balanced according to genders.

The age of the people that took part in the questionnaire is much less balanced (*Figure 2.*). 77.87% of the participants were between 21 and 30 years old. This means that the answers that are going to be analyzed mostly represent the young generation's point of view.

However, we can see some ideas from other generations as well, since there were 15 participants that are older than 41 years, including the oldest, 72-year-old participant.



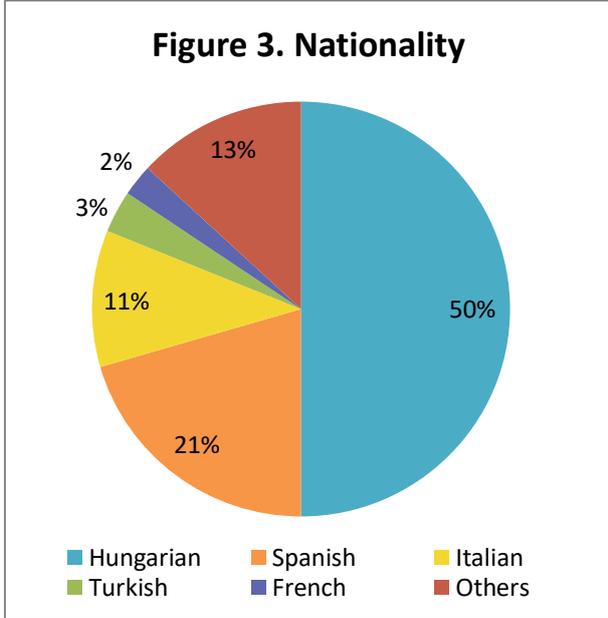
Source: Google Forms - N: 122



Source: Google Forms - N: 122

Out of the 122 answers, 54 (44%) were single, 24 (20%) married, and 44 (36%) in a relationship. This means that there was only a 12% difference between the people who are and who are not in a relationship. This means that this aspect was also quite balanced.

As I mentioned before there were responses from 18 different countries. However, three of these eighteen countries make the 82% of the responses (*Figure 3.*). The most important group is the participants from Hungary. 50% of all responses (61 people) came from Hungary. This means that although various countries represent themselves in this survey, the biggest body of the nationalities is the Hungarian. This is followed by Spain with 21% and Italy with 11%. After these the next 15 countries make up the total of 17%, where Turkey has 3% and France 2%. The exact number of nationalities can be found in *Table 1.*

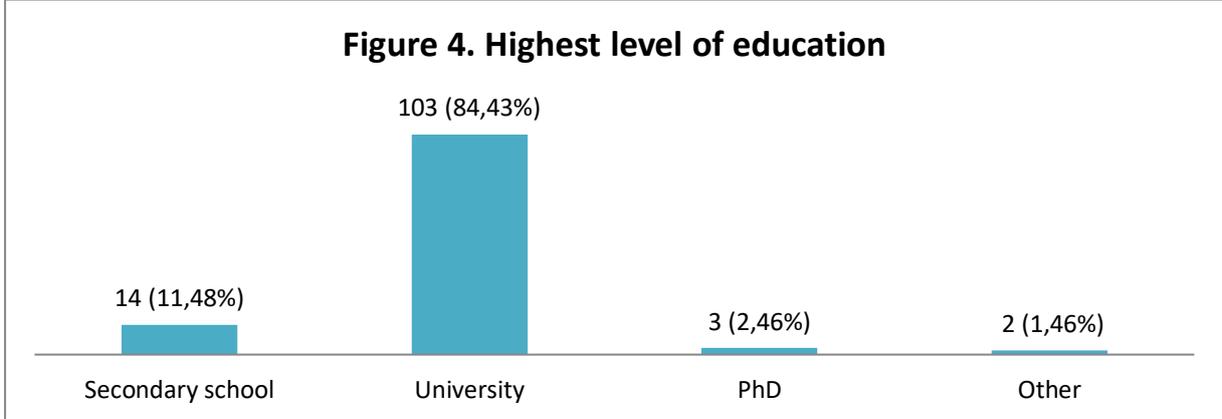


Source: Google Forms - N: 122

Nationality	Number of participants
Hungarian	61
Spanish	25
Italian	13
Turkish	4
French	3
Belgian	2
German	2
Vietnamese	2
Canadian	1
Czech	1
English	1
Greek	1
Lithuanian	1
Macedonian	1
Mongolian	1
Peruvian	1
Portuguese	1
Russian	1
Total	122

Source: Google Forms - N: 122

The level of education (*Figure 4.*) can show the intellectual level of the participants. We can see that in this survey out of the 122 responses 105 has at least a university degree.



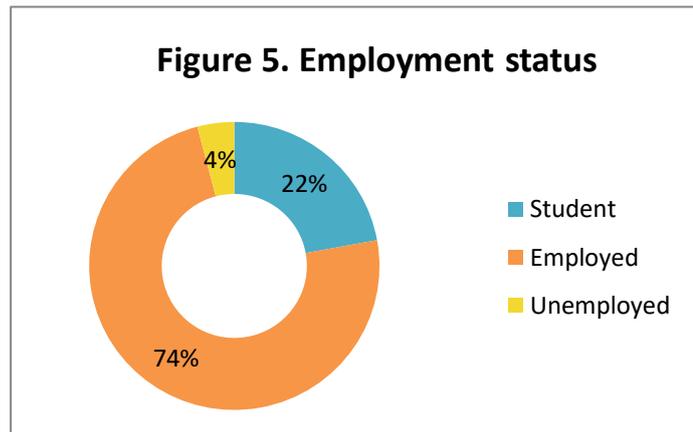
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Finally, 90 people were employed, 27 were studying, and only 5 people were unemployed when the survey was conducted (*Figure 5.*). This means that most of the answers reflect on current and/or recent experiences.

All in all, we can see that in some aspects, like gender, the participants of this survey are in balance, but in other aspects considerably less.

Several countries are present in the answers, but the Hungarian group is significantly bigger than the other ones. Moreover, we can see that the people between 21-30 years old are represented mostly, with 78% of the answers. Finally, both the level of education and the employment are quite high.

In total, the most represented group in this survey is the young, Hungarian professionals with university degree.

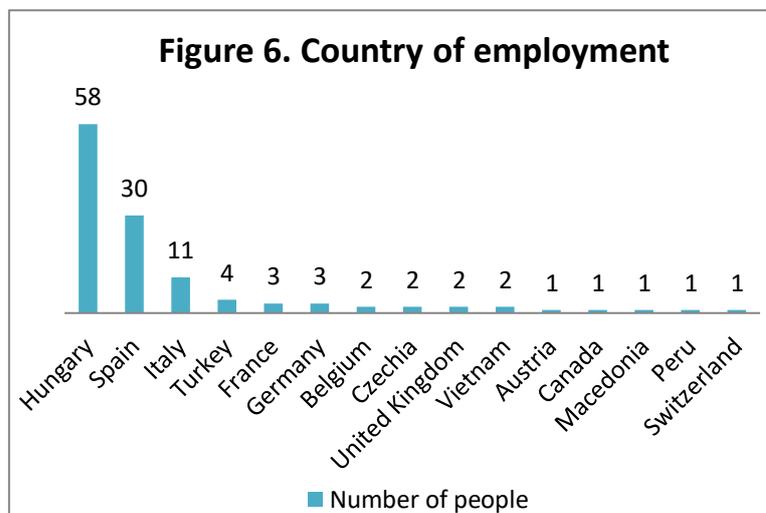


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### 3.2. Base information

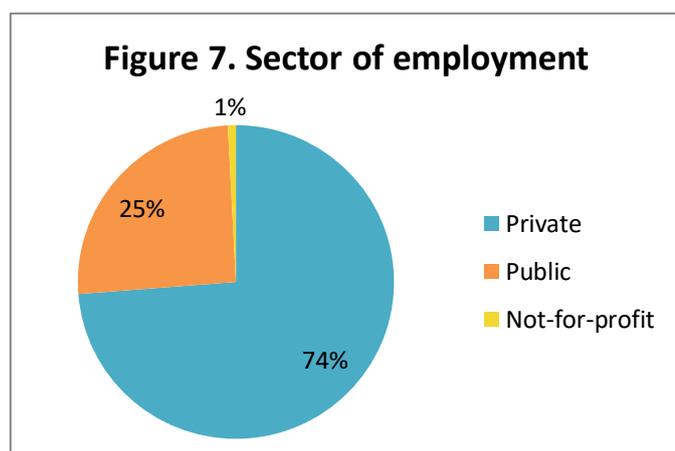
In this section, I asked the participants to give some basic information about where they work/worked, in what sector, what industry, and their highest function in a company.

As I mentioned before, Hungary, Spain and Italy are the three most represented countries in the survey. This can also be seen in *Figure 6*, where I wanted to see the difference between the nationalities and the countries of work experience.



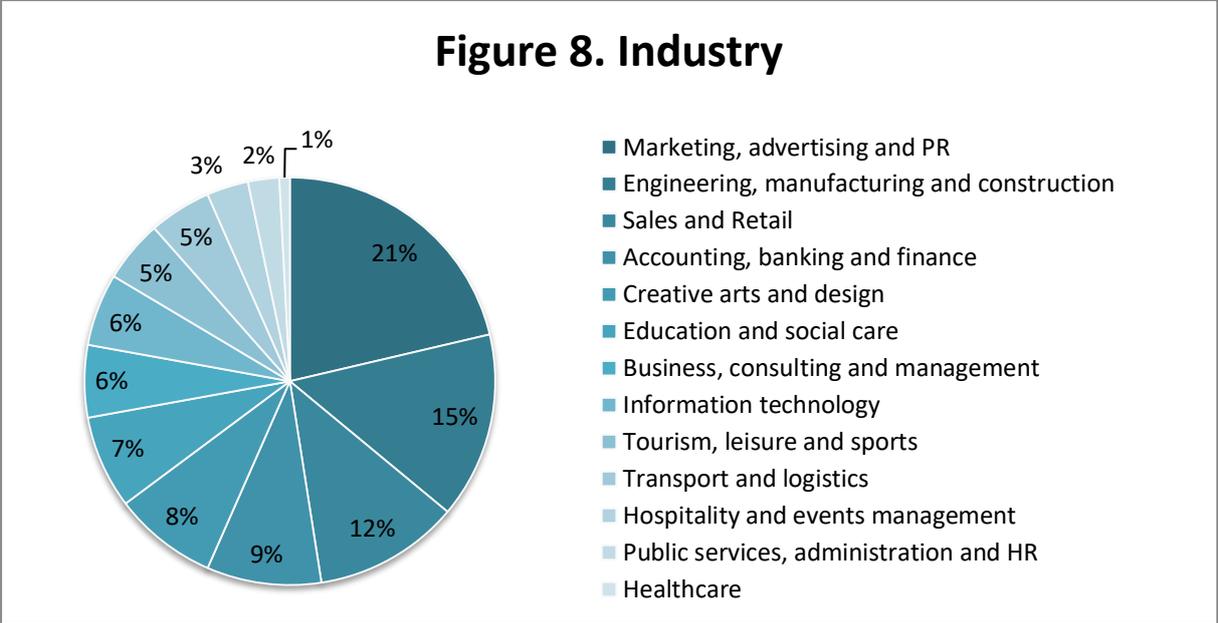
Source: Google Forms - N: 122

The earlier mentioned eighteen nationalities work in fifteen different countries. The result shows that there is some, but no significant difference. The biggest changes are that there were 3 people less working in Hungary, 5 more working in Spain, two less working in Italy, one more in Germany and two more countries appeared, considering their country of origin.



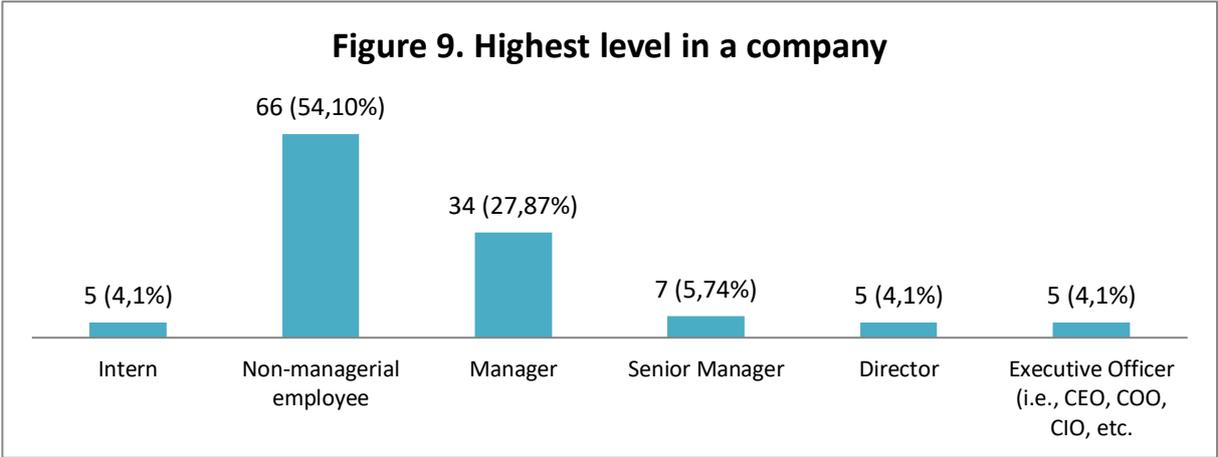
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Furthermore, in *Figure 7*, we can see which is the most relevant sector represented in this survey. According to the questionnaire there is a significant majority of people working in the private sector. 90 people said that they worked in the private sector, 31 in the public sector, and only one person in a not-for-profit organization.



Source: Google Forms - N: 122

I also asked the participants about the industry of the company where they work or worked at. The results of this question were much more spread out than most of the previous answers. This means that several industries are well represented in the investigation. There were people employed in 13 different industries. The five most relevant ones are, Marketing, advertising and PR, with 26 people; Engineering, manufacturing and construction, with 18; Sales and Retail, with 14; Accounting, banking and finance, with 11; and Creative arts and design, with 10 (*Figure 8.*). The complete results of this question can be found in *Appendix C*.



Source: Google Forms - N: 122

Finally, I asked about the highest position that they have ever reached in any company (*Figure 9.*). We can see that the biggest group is the *non-managerial employees*. Although the results are not as spread out as in the previous question, for the objective of this chapter – the

subordinates' opinion about the importance of communication between managers and subordinates – the high number of non-managerial employees is very positive.

To sum up, we can see that most represented group is non-managerial employees or managers, working in the private sector, in Hungary. Even though the type of industry has quite high standard deviation, the most present industries are marketing, engineering and sales.

### 3.3. Opinion about manager/s

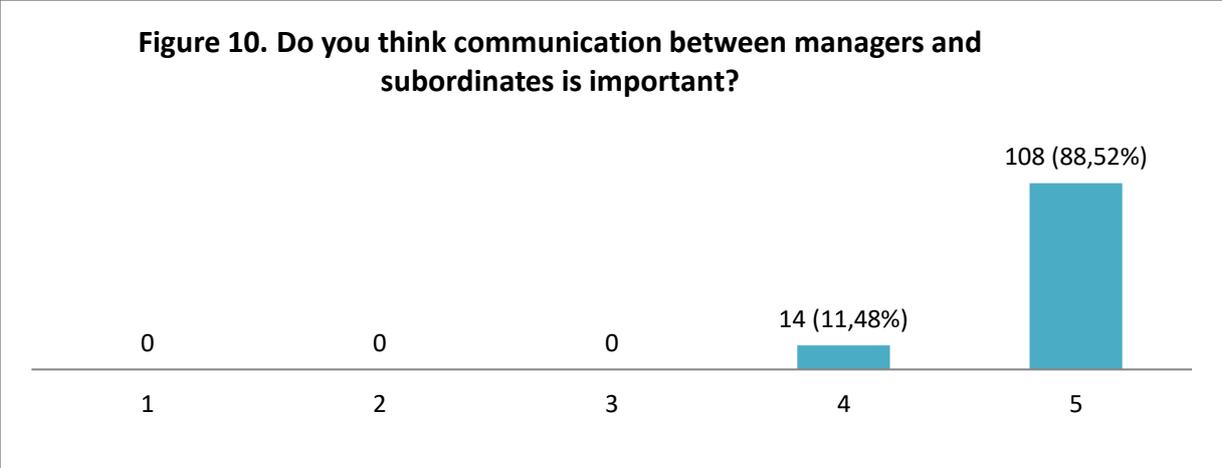
In this final part, I am presenting the results of the main questions of the survey. My aim was to find out how subordinates think about the earlier presented and analyzed topics. First and foremost, I wanted to see whether employees believe that their managers communicate properly towards them or not. In case they don't, why not, what managerial communication mistakes occur usually and how they could be solved. Furthermore, I was investigating not only the communication procedures, but the relationship between leaders and subordinates. Thirdly, I asked the participants how they see the subordinates, whether they communicate properly towards the managers, or not, and why. Finally, I asked who should solve the communication problems, how, and whether it actually happens in practice or not.

In the following, I am going to present each question and analyze them one-by-one:

#### 1. Do you think communication between managers and subordinates is important?

In the first question I gave the opportunity to choose a number in a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means "Do not agree at all", and 5 means "Completely agree".

The results (Figure 10.) represent completely my expectations that most people think the communication between managers and subordinates, is very important. 108 people choose the number 5 and 14 choose the number 4, meaning that communication plays a vital role in a company's life.



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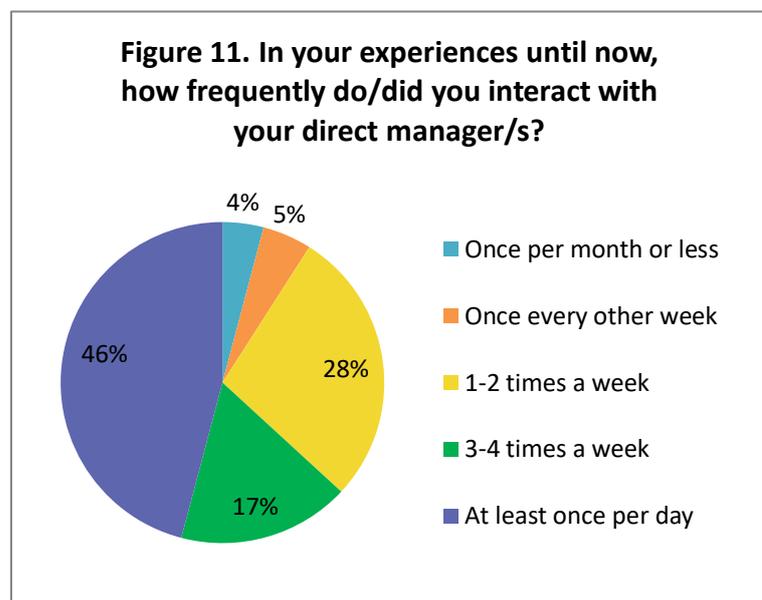
## 2. In your experiences until now, how frequently do/did you interact with your direct manager/s?

In the next four questions I wanted to see how the relationships between the managers and the subordinates are.

The frequency of interactions between managers and subordinates can mean many things. I focused on two ideas. First, the number of times a non-managerial employee and his/her manager interact usually needs to be higher, than the number of interactions between a manager and his/her boss. This is because managers usually need to give tasks and review them every day. This can vary from company to company.

Second, this high-rise number of interactions can lead to not only better results, but it can enhance relationships because the more people interact, the more they can get to know each other. We saw this idea both in the literature review and in the interviews' results.

The responses demonstrate that 91% of the people interact with their direct managers at least once per week (*Figure 11*). This high number confirms the idea that we saw in the interviews that managers nowadays try to interact with their subordinates as much as possible. 56 people said that they interact every day with their direct managers, 21 said 3-4 times a week, 34 said 1-2 times a week, 6 said once every other week, and only 5 people said that they interact once or less than once per month.

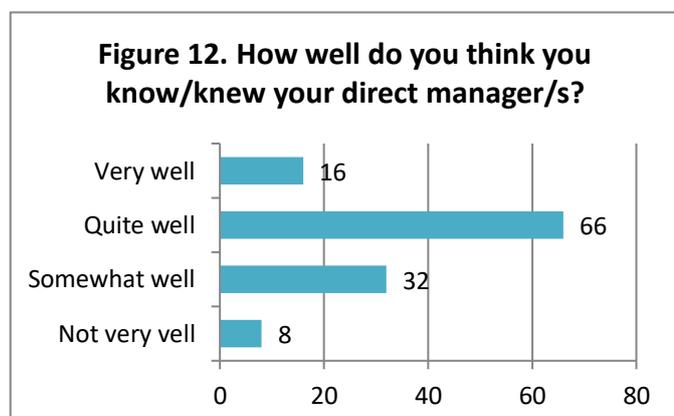


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## 3. How well do you think you know/knew your direct manager/s?

Another aspect that can represent the relationship between the observed groups is to see how well employees know their managers on a personal level. Knowing your boss does not necessarily mean that the relationship is also good, but according to the upcoming answers, in the case of this research it does appear to be true.

The result of this question shows that most people feel that they know their direct managers (*Figure 12*). More than half of the participants said that they know their bosses quite well; more than 25% said

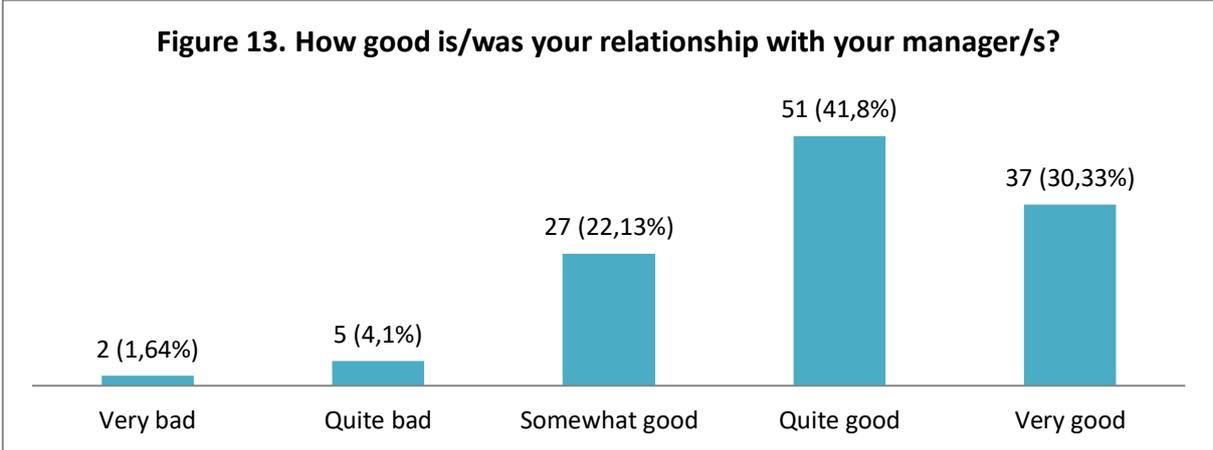


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that somewhat well, 13% said that they know them very well, and only 8 people (7%) said not very well. As I mentioned, we can see that subordinates believe they know their managers. However, we can see that only 13% thinks that they know their bosses very well, which means that even though there is a good amount of communication between the two parties, most of these relationships don't grow to be so strong as to achieve a deep knowledge of each other. As we saw it before in the interviews, this does not mean that it is a bad thing, because this way the relation can be strictly professional. Very interestingly only 7% believes that they don't know their bosses, which is quite positive information, if we assume that knowing your manager is a positive output in a workplace.

**4. How good is/was your relationship with your manager/s?**

As I mentioned earlier, most people believe that they have good relationships with their managers. The next figure explains very clearly what the tendencies are concerning this question (*Figure 13.*). Only 7 people, out of the 122 said that they had either quite bad or very bad relationships with their bosses. This means, that employees are genuinely happy in this aspect, and as we have seen before in this thesis, a good relationship and happy employees are a crucial part of the foundation of a successful organization.

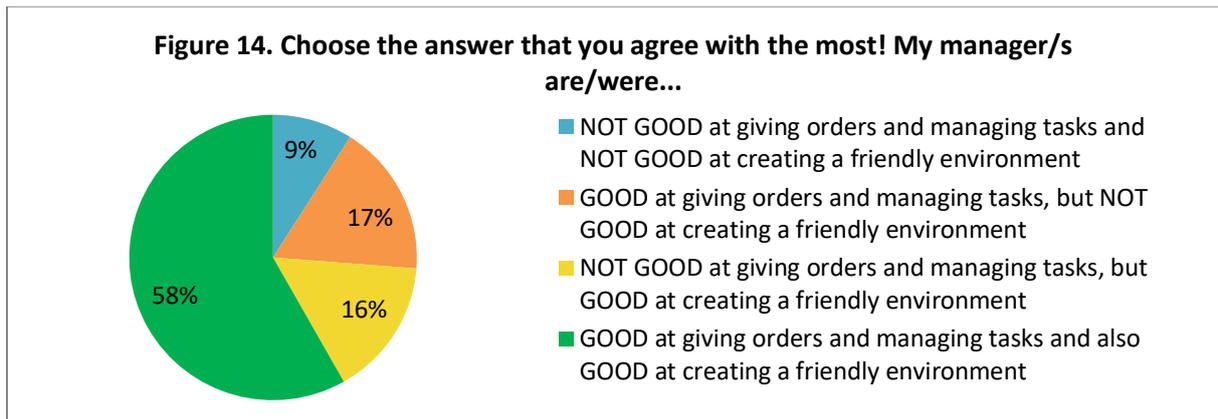


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**5. Choose the answer that you agree with the most! My manager/s are/were...**

In this question I offer four choices in order to see the competences and skills of the managers. The options and answers can be seen in the *Figure 14.*

We can see that the responses were very positive. 71 of the survey respondents chose the option that the managers were both good at giving orders and good at creating a friendly environment. To the options where the managers are good at either one of the two but not good at the other were mostly in balance. 21 said that their bosses were good at giving order, but not good at creating a friendly environment, and 19 answered the other way around. Surprisingly, only 11 people (9%) answered that their bosses were not good at either one of these two aspects.



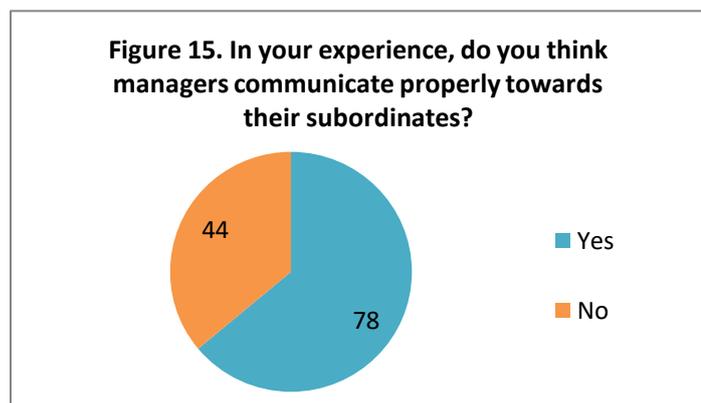
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We can look at these results from two directions. One, the positive side is that we can see that the vast majority, 91% of the people believe that there is some positive aspect about their bosses. This does not mean that their managers are perfect, but there is a general satisfaction. We can also see this tendency in the following.

The other way to look at the results is a bit more pessimistic, but also more focused on development. We can see that there is a small group of people, in our case 9% that feels that their bosses don't have the competence to be team leaders. As we have seen before, without the good leadership, there is no success. Even though this group that we see is quite small, if we look at it on a bigger scale, this 9% could mean an enormous amount of people.

**6. In your experience, do you think managers communicate properly towards their subordinates?**

In the following, we can see similar tendencies as before. The next part of the questionnaire focused on the communication of the managers towards their subordinates. As in the previous questions, there is a greater amount of satisfied people (64%), than the ones that believe that their bosses are/were not communicating properly 36%) (Figure 15.).



Source: Google Forms - N: 122

**7. If your answer was "no" to the previous question, what are these communication mistakes according to YOUR EXPERIENCES? (please select MAXIMUM 3)**

In this question, I wanted to see what the mistakes were exactly. If there is perfect communication, there is nothing to improve, although as we saw before, according to many leaders, there is no such thing as perfect communication.

In the next table (*Table 2.*), we can see two types of percentages. Since this question was not compulsory, there were a different number of people who answered (46). Furthermore, I gave the option to select more than one answer in case someone feels that there are more problems in the communication. The total number of selected answers is 122. I created a percentage looking at the number of people responded, and the number of responses.

In the column called “From all the answers” I analyzed all the 122 answers. We can see that the three most selected aspects were, not communicating in time, not having a two-way communication, and not providing clear and sufficient messages towards the team members. If we analyze from this perspective, it is visible that, although these three aspects stand out, they don’t dominate the answers.

If we observe the other percentages, where we can see what percentage of the people choose which answer, the results are much more obvious. Almost two thirds of the participants believe that not communicating in time is one of the mistakes that happen in their companies. All the other answers stay behind, however since the number of participants in this case is only 46 people, these percentages vary greatly.

<b>Table 2. Managerial communication mistakes</b>			
<b>Options</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>From all the answers</b>	<b>From all the people that responded</b>
<b>Not sharing important information in time</b>	29	23.77%	63.04%
<b>Not listening to the subordinates ("she/he does all the talking")</b>	21	17.21%	45.65%
<b>Providing Unclear or Insufficient Directions</b>	21	17.21%	45.65%
<b>Failing to connect on a personal level</b>	17	13.93%	36.96%
<b>Not being available to talk with the subordinates</b>	13	10.66%	28.26%
<b>Unwillingness to talk with the subordinates</b>	8	6.56%	17.39%
<b>Being disrespectful with the subordinates</b>	8	6.56%	17.39%
<b>Not keeping the relationship professional</b>	5	4.10%	10.87%
<b>Other:</b>	Micromanagement		

Source: Google Forms - N: 46 ; Total number of answers: 122

In all, we can see that, although all the mistakes presented in the table happen, subordinates feel that the efficiency of how the information flows doesn’t work properly in their experiences. Later, we can see that the lack of communication and not creating a personal connection also happens, but according to this survey, not as much as the earlier mentioned problems.

Finally, one of the participants mentioned micromanagement as a managerial communication mistake. As we saw it in the interview with Cristina Farelo Lanseros and in the literature review where I explained the managerial communication mistakes, these mistakes can happen because of the lack of trust. Managers sometimes feel that they need to check on everything their subordinates do. This is a typical managerial mistake.

**8. How do you think managerial communication mistakes could be solved? (please select MAXIMUM 3 options)**

In this question I followed the same idea. There were more possibilities to choose in order to let people select more solutions if they felt its necessity. The method of analysis is the same as before.

In this part we can see very clearly what subordinates feel the solution could be to overcome common managerial communication mistakes (*Table 3.*). More than 70% of all the people who answered believe that managers should listen more to their team members. We could see it in the previous question that the second most usual mistake was that leaders only communicate to one direction. When I asked about the solutions this aspect was even more visible. Just as we could see in the literature review, within a communication system, mutual understanding is key (Duncan, 1973).

<b>Table 3. Solutions for managerial communication mistakes</b>			
<b>Options</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>From all the answers</b>	<b>From all the people that responded</b>
<b>Listening more to subordinates and other co-workers</b>	87	27.10%	71.31%
<b>Delivering clear and concise messages</b>	77	23.99%	63.11%
<b>Communicating more to subordinates</b>	51	15.89%	41.80%
<b>Telling the truth</b>	44	13.71%	36.07%
<b>Communicating from the subordinates' perspective</b>	40	12.46%	32.79%
<b>Being MORE friendly and LESS professional with subordinates</b>	16	4.98%	13.11%
<b>Being LESS friendly and MORE professional with subordinates</b>	4	1.25%	3.28%
<b>Communicating less to subordinates</b>	2	0.62%	1.64%
<b>Other:</b>	Less micromanagement		

Source: Google Forms - N: 122 ; Total number of answers: 321

Furthermore, just as before the information flow and the amount of communication is present. Almost two thirds of all the participants believed that delivering clear and concise messages is one of the solutions for the earlier mentioned communication mistakes.

After these two aspects, that make 50% of all the answers selected, there are three solutions that received more or less the same amount of answers. As mentioned before, the amount of communication towards the subordinates, telling the truth – just as we saw it in the interviews – and communicating from the subordinates’ perspective. We can see that all these ideas were introduced earlier in this thesis and that these results confirm their importance.

Finally, we can see that although some people feel that a friendlier environment is more necessary, it is much less present than all the earlier mentioned ones. Even less present, almost non-existing are the people who want more professionalism and less friendliness in their offices, and only two people felt that there should be less communication towards the subordinates. Following the earlier introduced theories and ideas it is not a surprise to see this low percentage concerning the mentioned idea.

Again, the same person as before added less micromanagement as a solution for the communication mistakes.

**9. According to YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE, what are the key points for the success of a company concerning the RELATIONSHIP between directors and their teams? (please select MAXIMUM 3 options)**

Once again, I followed the same method as in the previous two questions.

The distribution of the responses is very similar to the last question (*Table 4.*). Most of the people believe that a good relationship between directors and their teams is the key for the success of a company. This result does not come as a surprise due to all the theories, ideas and tendencies that I have been presenting in this work. Moreover, almost one third of all the participants said that mutual trust is another aspect that is necessary. I have mentioned this idea several times already and we can see that it is not only theoretically necessary, but both leaders and subordinates think that it is true.

<b>Table 4. The key points for the success of a company concerning the RELATIONSHIP between directors and their teams</b>			
<b>Options</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>From all the answers</b>	<b>From all the people that responded</b>
<b>Good relationship between directors and their teams</b>	93	27.76%	76.23%
<b>Mutual trust</b>	78	23.28%	63.93%
<b>Regular team building sessions</b>	51	15.22%	41.80%
<b>Regular 1-on-1s between managers and subordinates</b>	41	12.24%	33.61%
<b>Friendly managers</b>	38	11.34%	31.15%
<b>Horizontal organizational structure</b>	19	5.67%	15.57%
<b>Strict managers</b>	8	2.39%	6.56%
<b>Hierarchical relationship between directors and their teams</b>	7	2.09%	5.74%
<b>Other:</b>	Clear structures and responsibilities		
	Respect		

Source: Google Forms - N: 122 ; Total number of answers: 335

One more time, the first two aspects make more than half of all the answers received in this question and the next 6 the other half. The next two responses focus less on everyday processes and more on actual actions in order to create proper communication between the studied parties. These two activities are team building sessions and 1-on-1s between the managers and the subordinates. Team building sessions – as the name suggests – put the team in the focus, and the inter-relations between its participants, while 1-on-1s focus completely on the communication between the manager and the subordinate.

Furthermore, we can see that subordinates feel that managers should be friendly. It gets less importance than the previously mentioned aspects, and as we saw it in the last question, it is not considered to be the most crucial part of solving managerial communication problems. However, still almost one third of all participants said that it is necessary in order to have a successful organization.

Then, a bit more than 15% of the people feel that horizontal organizational structure is necessary. Even though this is not considered to be something so important, we can see that it received three times more “votes” than the hierarchical structure, which was the least popular choice in this question.

Finally, 6.56% of the participants said that strict managers are necessary. While this number is very small, I have to note that there is a small group that believes that this is the way to have a successful organization.

**10. In YOUR EXPERIENCE, what are the biggest subordinate mistakes in relation to the communication with managers? (please select MAXIMUM 3 options)**

Following the same method, I observed the communication from the other direction as well. As we saw at the end of the literature review, Steinfeld (2017) explained some reasons for the lack of upward communication that are not because of management mistakes and Green & Knippen (1999) gave some ideas how subordinates can work on these issues. In this question and the next one, I wanted to find out what mistakes subordinates feel they make and who they think should take steps in order to solve them.

Table 5 shows that the most selected answers are strongly connected. More than two third of the participants said that first and foremost, not asking questions, is the biggest mistake subordinates can make. Almost two third also said that being afraid of the managers is a mistake as well. Then, not giving feedback and not telling about mistakes were also selected by a significant number of participants. This means that employees need to be working on finding confidence when talking with their bosses because usually all these problems come from not being confident enough and thinking that the leaders will respond negatively. As we could see it both in the literature review and the interviews, this is something that managers believe to be crucial, that their team members need to be confident enough to approach them.

<b>Table 5. Biggest subordinate mistakes in communication</b>			
<b>Options</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>From all the answers</b>	<b>From all the people that responded</b>
<b>Not asking questions</b>	87	25.97%	71.31%
<b>Being afraid of the managers</b>	80	23.88%	65.57%
<b>Not giving feedback about managerial mistakes</b>	59	17.61%	48.36%
<b>Not telling about mistakes</b>	52	15.52%	42.62%
<b>Complaining about managers behind their backs</b>	34	10.15%	27.87%
<b>Being too confident</b>	16	4.78%	13.11%
<b>Asking too many questions</b>	7	2.09%	5.74%

Source: Google Forms - N: 122 ; Total number of answers: 335

Then, a bit less than the third of the people feel that talking about managers behind their backs is something to worry about. As we saw in the interview with Zoltán Szabó, there are companies that take steps in order to reduce the number of these harmful comments and gossips.

Finally, being too confident and asking too many questions were selected by much less participants than the earlier mentioned mistakes. This is because, as I explained, confidence is the key to proper communication from the subordinates' side. However, there are some people that believe that these aspects can be problematic as well. Confidence and asking questions are necessary, but when you overdo it is possible that you achieve the opposite output of what you intend to achieve and instead of getting better, you just slow down the processes and give too much work to your managers.

**11. Who do you think should take steps to solve these subordinate mistakes? (you can select more than one option)**

I am going to analyze this part somewhat differently than the previous questions. Even though, we can see in *Table 6* that managers are considered to be the parties that need to take steps in order to solve the earlier mentioned mistakes, there are several combinations that are worth mentioning.

<b>Table 6. Who should take steps to solve subordinate mistakes</b>			
<b>Options</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>From all the answers</b>	<b>From all the people that responded</b>
<b>The subordinates</b>	64	27.47%	52.46%
<b>The managers</b>	96	41.20%	78.69%
<b>Human resources</b>	34	14.59%	27.87%
<b>Higher management</b>	39	16.74%	31.97%
<b>Other:</b>	This should be a common effort		
	Both side		
	I think you need everybody to solve this problem but the initiator will be the managers, because the managers have the authority to change things.		
	Coach		

Source: Google Forms - N: 122 ; Total number of answers: 233

In total, more than half of the people said that, among others, subordinates need to take steps in order to solve the mentioned problems. It is important to note that only 4 people (3%) of all the participants of the survey believe that subordinates are the only people who need to take actions.

About the same amount of people believe that human resources (34) and/or higher management (39) should take steps towards the solution of these problems. Just as before, only 4 participants think that human resources and no one should act, and only 6 people said the same for the higher management.

Even though the vast majority believes that managers are the ones that could be the solution, only 7 out of the 96 choose only them.

The answers suggest that there is a need for a mutual cooperation. We can see in the *other* answers that three of them say it should be a common effort.

In conclusion, we can see that almost everyone – 83% of the people – thinks that there is a need for some kind of combination. The biggest percentage of these is the people who said both the subordinates and the managers need to act (43%). Finally, there was only one person that selected all the four options.

**12. Does/did YOUR COMPANY take steps to improve the relationship between leaders/managers and subordinates?**

The final part was to ask whether the companies actually take steps in order to improve the relationship between managers and subordinates or not, and in case they do, what these steps are.

As we can see in *Figure 16*, a bit less than two thirds of the people said that their companies try to improve relationships. In total, 76 participants said yes, and 46 no.

This is a rather positive percentage, because, according to the survey, most companies do act in order to reach these goals. On the other hand, almost 40% does not take any steps, which means that a significant amount of organizations don't believe that these activities are necessary. However, as I introduced it during this thesis, companies need to take part in these processes, even if communication and the relationships seem to be working properly.



Source: Google Forms - N: 122

**13. If your answer was "yes", what steps does/did YOUR COMPANY take in order to make this improvement? (you can select more than one option)**

The participants that said that their companies did take steps in order to improve the relationship between subordinates and managers were asked to select what these steps were exactly.

Table 7. Steps in order to improve the relationship between managers and subordinates			
	Total	From all the answers	From all the people that responded
Events (Christmas party, family day, etc.)	59	25.32%	76.62%
Regular 1-on-1s	44	18.88%	57.14%
Performance reviews	36	15.45%	46.75%
In-house team building programs	34	14.59%	44.16%
Off-site team building programs	34	14.59%	44.16%
Coaching sessions	26	11.16%	33.77%
Other:	Trying to switch to a "liberated company"		

Source: Google Forms - N: 77 ; Total number of answers: 233

As we can see in the *Table 7*, in the companies of more than 76% of the participants try to strengthen the relationships in the company by organizing events. Then, the earlier mentioned 1-on-1s seem to be the second most popular technique. The remaining four are a bit less used, but they received a quite elevated amount of "votes". Interestingly, off-site and in-house team building sessions were said to be equally used, in 44% of the cases.

Only 13 people (17%) didn't select more than one option. This means that the majority of the companies that take actions to improve relationships use various methods. Finally, out of these 13 answers, 9 said *Events*, meaning that with 4 exceptions all the other ways are used in some kind of combination with different techniques.

Finally, one person said that her company tried to switch to a “liberated company”, that according to Carney & Getz (2016), is an organization which, according to the authors, unleashes employees' initiative and responsibility by treating them as adults. We can say that it is more or less – explained in the literature review – a Lessaiz-faire leadership.

In the final question the survey respondents had the opportunity to write some additional opinions. The answers can be found in *Appendix D*.

### **3.4. Summary**

In conclusion, the majority of participants were young (mostly Hungarian) intellectuals working as non-managerial employees or managers in office settings.

We can say that all the 122 people who took part in the survey believed that communication between managers and subordinates is a crucial part of an organization. Most of them have various interactions with their managers every week. They know them quite well and have rather good relationships. Moreover, the majority said that their leaders communicate properly towards them and are generally good at creating both a friendly and professional environment.

The participants that didn't experience positive communication believed that the main reasons are the wrong timing of the information flow, only communicating in one direction and not sending clear messages.

Most of the people think, among others, that the best solutions would be including more the co-workers and delivering clearer messages.

Almost everyone thought that having a good relationship with the managers and trusting each other are the most crucial points for the success of a company when focusing on the relationship between the mentioned parties.

The biggest subordinate mistakes in communication are all in connection with not being confident enough to talk with the managers. Not asking questions and being afraid of managers are the two biggest issues to be solved according to the answers.

In order to solve all these problems, the vast majority believed that, in general, the participation of more than one function is needed. Even this way, managers are believed to be an important part of the solution.

Finally, about two thirds of the people said that their companies take steps in order to strengthen relationships within the company. These companies mostly organize events, but just as in the previous part, some kind of mixture of activities and involving them is considered to be crucial.

In the next chapter I connect the overall results of my research and give a personal opinion and develop some ideas concerning the future.

## 4. Results

In this chapter, I am going to introduce the results of my research through the theory of the authentic leadership. As I explained in the literature review, authentic leaders genuinely desire to serve others through their leadership. They are more interested in empowering the people they lead to make a difference than they are in power, money, or prestige for themselves. They are as guided by qualities of the heart, by passion and compassion, as they are by qualities of the mind (George, 2003). This idea is being represented in both the qualitative and quantitative research of this thesis. The most important ideas that I obtained from the interviews are the transparency and trust in communication, clear and straightforward messages, the use of psychological skills and technology and the flattening of the organizational structures. If we look at the survey results the participants said these ideas to be the most important aspects to develop. They mostly focus on the clear messages and the involvement of the employees in the processes. This is the reason why I am connecting these results with the authentic leadership, as it clearly mentions the same principles.

We can see that the two words that follow the whole investigation are trust and transparency. As a consequence, I believe that these are the aspects companies should focus on. The survey participants, the interviews and the literature review explain that leaders are the ones that are responsible for the right communication and company culture, however subordinates also need to be active parts of these processes, because without their involvement managers will not be able to develop.

Moreover, we can see that there is a clear tendency of flattening organizations, the rise of levels of autonomy and decision-making from employees at all levels and I believe that it is also necessary to note that the emergence of technology has had a great impact on both the organizational structures and the processes of communication between all stakeholders.

For all these reasons, I underline that the use of authentic leadership could be the right way for future organizations, since it includes all members of the companies and steps away from traditional autocratic theories.

At the same time, I believe that there is need for further researches, because the bases of both the qualitative and quantitative research are rather small. In the survey the participants mostly reflect on the way of thinking of young professionals, and the nationalities are not balanced either. Because of this, I plan to continue my research in the future by widening the basis of my research, turning my attention to questions regarding authentic leadership and how it could be used properly, and finally, I believe that there is need for more research from the subordinates' side of the subject, so I intend to create studies regarding the question, since the existing literature today does not show a well-developed and reviewed picture.

## **5. Conclusion**

This work is an investigation of office culture, more specifically the communication between leaders/managers and subordinates. My objective was to observe several companies to find out the most crucial elements of the relationships between the mentioned parties, focusing on the communication and/or miscommunication, the problems and mistakes, and their possible solutions. I also mentioned the workplace structure and the evolution of the hierarchical structure of organizations. For this I created a literature review and conducted both a qualitative research by interviewing leaders, and a quantitative research by asking the opinions of subordinates.

All in all, I believe that this thesis shows an all-around picture of the relationships between managers and subordinates. I concluded that the results of all the three parts of my thesis introduce the importance of emerging managerial solutions, most importantly the theory of authentic leadership.

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# Appendixes

## Appendix A

### Interviews full text:

#### Zoltán Szabó:

G.K.: Could you talk about your career in a few sentences?

Z.Sz.: *I finished my studies at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics in 1989. Back then, I had no idea what I wanted to do. In 1989 de Volánbusz Zrt. gave me a scholarship and I started to work there. I realized immediately that it wasn't the place where I wanted to work, so after one year I changed and started working at Eurosped Ltd, a logistics company, just like Ghibli. I was really into this transportation sector and I was also recognized shortly after starting at the company. After some time I received the Italian branch and I got sent out to Bologna. I learned Italian and started building my connections in the country. At some point I received a transport that no one wanted to take because of its low potential, but as I was young I took the job. I became the right hand of this partner and we built a very good relationship. After moving back to Hungary, in 1996, I founded Ghibli with the help of this Italian partner.*

G.K.: In a few sentences, could you explain the biggest milestones of your company?

Z.Sz.: *I am going to explain it in three parts. First, the owners. In the beginning I was the owner and this earlier mentioned Italian partner. As a result of the globalization the cotton production lost its power, and there was much less need for transportation between Russia and Italy since the textile industry fell. Because of this, my partners decided to go back to the Italian market and they left as owners from Ghibli. With the help of a friend we bought their shares in 2001, and the continued the business as co-owners. After this, we continued until 2008/2009 when the global economic crisis arrived. The crisis was a big hit on the company and my partner didn't want to continue. In 2012 I bought his shares and sold them to a Chinese company that continues as Ghibli's co-owner today.*

*The second part is the service side. In the beginning we only worked with Italy. Later, we started focusing not only on transportation but warehousing and custom clearance as well. Back then all the transports we had were road transports. In 2004, when Hungary joined the European Union, the custom clearance lost its importance, but we kept on offering the service anyways. We were continuously broadening our warehousing services and as a result of its strong growth, we decided to move the warehouse to a harbour in Budapest. Unfortunately the construction of the new buildings finished when the crisis started in 2008, so it was a very difficult period for the company. As an answer I restructured the company to focus more on marketing and sales and the warehousing received a bit less importance. Around the time when the Chinese partner joined the company, we started to focus on overseas transport and move away from solely road transport, and start sea and air transport as well. Today we have a warehouse at the airport as well, the custom clearance has enhanced, and we help the import of medical supplies needed during the COVID-19.*

*All these changes weren't really planned ahead; we always went to the directions where it seemed correct.*

*Finally, the third part is the leadership. Obviously, I made the company alone, as a one-man company. Later of course, I hired a second person, which was much more dynamic. Later, a*

*third person; but the beginning of this company leadership was something very low-level. We didn't really know anything about the subject. The company was growing, we arrived to have around 8-10 people, when I realized that it was much more difficult to control that many people as in the beginning, so we created the company roles and functions. So it was kind of a culture change, in 2000-2001, meaning that we had to change the company from everyone knows about everything and everything is discussed together, to be a bit better organized and structured. At this point we created an organizational blackboard where we explained every functions importance, what you have to do exactly in that role, what are the requirements, and so on. I wrote all this down basically, but it was important that I had to do this, because if you don't write it, it's not yours. Based on this structure we started building the company and we have the same structure today.*

*Something I realized throughout the years that if there were some problems, it was my fault. I either didn't know how to do it, or I wasn't able to, or I couldn't handle it emotionally, and so on. So, the next step was that I had to develop as well. It cannot happen that the company grows but the leader doesn't. I mean, it can happen, but either the boss will grow to the level of the company or the company level will fall back. If the leader cannot grow, he/she has to change to another leader that knows how to get better. The problem is that usually someone that has his or her own company also has a huge ego and thinks that he or she is the best, and doesn't realize if there is a need for change. It is very important that you always have to get better, and if you can't, you have to give this leading role to someone else. Many companies that I see have this problem. The leader doesn't realize that he/she is not perfect, he/she acts like this higher entity in the company and in everything and this happens in many Hungarian companies; and this is very harmful. That's why I try to avoid this mistake.*

G.K.: In your opinion, what are the most important aspects for the success of a company?

*Z.Sz.: The first is that the leader needs to be able to develop him or herself and the company. Be able to work efficiently, offer services that are fast and special, that can differentiate themselves from the competitors and have a great financial control.*

*To the first point we can add the technology, the efficiency, meaning that creating a team that does only what is necessary and not extra, not useful things. Focus on the things that create results and on good communication. So, all these things can go to the first part, the organization and development.*

*The second part, the services are important because you cannot close yourself. You cannot create one system that you use forever. You have to realize continuously what needs to change, where you need to grow, what the customers ask for and what will happen in the next period of time, and you need to get ready for all of these. All these are connected; this can also be part of the first aspect that I mentioned. You need to have a flexible organization, flexible services and a flexible cost structure. The labour cost for example is a very high percent of the costs in this profession. It can be around 50% of all costs. So, you have to be very flexible, using outside people and have a very well planned labour cost system, because a crisis like we have now, the coronavirus crisis, can affect you very badly if you are not prepared.*

G.K.: Where would you put the manager-subordinate communication on this list of important things for a company's success?

*Z.Sz.: The basis of cooperation is the communication. If you don't communicate or keep secrets, you are not going to be able to cooperate. It is very important to create an*

*environment so the communication can happen properly. The most important is to have an honest environment. This is maybe the most important thing when it comes to communication, to be honest and say what is happening. If you have a problem with someone, you have to tell them, not in a hurtful manner, but saying it clearly, staying with the facts. The message you are trying to send cannot be about his or her personality, it has to be solely about his or her acts. If you do this right, it can get to be part of the company's culture. It is very important not to hurt the other. Today the personal identity became so important that you have to be really careful how you talk with the people. We have several gay people in the company, we had more employees with different skin colours, and it is very important not to differentiate anyone based on these traits. You have to deal with the people based on how they work and nothing else. This is very important, you have to talk about that, not about how the person looks like or whatever, but about how they work. So, what you have to do is create this type of environment in the company, and this is the leader's job. For example, in the company we have a monthly co-worker meeting in order to reduce the number of informal channels, where I explain more or less what is happening in the company clearly, so people will not start creating their own stories, and start whispering about all types of gossips. Obviously there are always gossips that you cannot stop, but that is normal; there are always people who do that.*

*We as leaders also have to create all these communicating channels in order to have effective communication. For example, with the Chinese projects we use WeChat group chats, so all the participants can be part of the conversation. Also, you have to always answer to the emails. So, communication is very important. If there is no communication, there is no cooperation, if there is no cooperation, there is no success, if there is no success, there is a problem, if there is a problem, there is a big problem.*

G.K.: In your work experience, does this communication between managers and subordinates work properly?

*Z.Sz.: Well, that it works properly... Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Maybe the leader thinks it works properly and in reality it doesn't. So, I would say that you always have to work on it. It is very important to have weekly meetings between the leaders and the subordinates and to have an environment where the subordinate tells what the problem is; he or she is open and is not afraid of telling about his or her suggestions. On the other side, the leader has to listen to these ideas, think about them and respond to them. This is the theory. I tell this to all the managers all the time, but obviously there is always a huge gap between the theory and the practice. The question is how we can we shrink this gap. I think that none of the companies in the world can say that it works properly, or maybe it does work properly but that it could work even better, that is without question. You need to always work on this and make the gap smaller. If the gap disappears, or turns on the other side and the leader gets below the subordinate, that is when we arrive to anarchy and the leader will stop being a leader. We said it in the army for this, the tail wiggles the dog. You have to make sure that this gap should always be a bit towards the manager and never the other way around.*

G.K.: From your point of view, what are the biggest managerial mistakes in communication?

*Z.Sz.: One of the biggest mistakes is if a manager qualifies the personality of a subordinate. If the manager hurts the feelings of the subordinate. It is a big problem when you don't talk*

*about the job, the tasks and the goals, but about how that person is, how he or she looks like. Obviously sometimes you do have to talk about this too if someone doesn't behave according to the norms. Like if someone comes into work smelly and not clean, you have to tell them that it is not the proper way to present themselves this way in the workplace. Obviously, in a manner that you don't hurt their feelings. You always have to stick to the facts and not the feelings. The same again that I mentioned before. We have several gay people, if someone talks to them in a manner that's disrespecting their sexual identity, it's not alright. On the other hand, in our work we have drivers who need a much harsher communication. If you ask them nicely they sometimes won't even hear you. Not because they are stupid or anything, it is because they had a different way of socializing.*

*Another mistake in communication is if you don't find the right words or way of sending the information. This can happen because you need to talk differently with everyone depending on how they are.*

*Finally, it is a communication mistake if you don't communicate. When you think that the other knows it and you don't go there personally. For example there is some very urgent situation and the only way you communicate towards the person is that the e-mail conversation is copied to this person. Maybe this person is so busy that he/she doesn't have time for checking all the emails. You need to go to the people, or call them and talk to them.*

G.K.: Do you have an example for bad manager communication?

*Z.Sz.: Yes, of course, there are a lot. I am going to say an own example. I don't want to seem like I am perfect or anything. When there was this organizational change in the company that I mentioned before, I was leading this change. The problem was that I did it quite "violently". It wasn't the way I wanted to do it. The thing was that I read a book that said how to do these things and I followed that method. Obviously, later I read another book that said completely the opposite and was criticizing the ideas of the first book, but I didn't know this back then when I acted according to the first book's ideas. So, I was following these ideas, I was telling the people that from the next day there were going to be huge changes, if someone doesn't do what I said they will be fired, and so on. It wasn't even me, I was saying everything that was written in the book. Obviously, this didn't work at all. The people felt attacked, some of them left the company – later I realized that it was actually a good thing that they left – and it took like half a year to realize all the changes that I planned and to recreate the good environment and to do all the changes a bit more softly and gently. After all this, I realized that it was not the correct way to communicate all this. I should have followed a different book, or my own instincts. You have to think these things through much more. I was really unexperienced back then and in the same time I had a lot of ambition and the result of these two was not the best communication.*

G.K.: So this problem got resolved in the end, right?

*Z.Sz.: Yes, of course. I realized that I made a mistake. I try to use self-criticism all the time. Of course, it is difficult sometimes, but self-criticism is one of the foundations of growing.*

G.K.: Do you have an example where a manager communicated especially good?

*Z.Sz.: I can say again an own example. I think now, during this coronavirus situation I communicated quite well. We told everyone that this is a difficult situation, it is going to be a*

*longer period and that we really need them to accept all the decisions that we might make during these difficult times because all the decisions we make are to keep on going together and to survive this situation. After all this we will organize a party where we'll be able to be together again, but until then the road will be bumpy. We might have to cut some wages and change some things that we would never have thought that we'd change, but this is the situation and in some sense we are quite lucky because our profession is always needed so we will be able to keep on working. So, I think that this was a good thing; I told this to the whole company in front of everyone, clearly and sincerely.*

G.K.: In your opinion, what are the biggest mistakes that employees can commit when it comes to the communication with managers?

*Z.Sz.: The lack of communication, not telling if they have a problem, or telling it to someone else and not their managers, because you can't really do anything about the problem this way. Not telling the truth, starting gossips and making up unreal things that they don't even know.*

G.K.: Why do you think these mistakes happen?

*Z.Sz.: Sometimes it is a personal thing. There are some people that enjoy gossiping and they feel the need for gossip because that's when they feel fulfilled. It is not a problem, but the important thing is to try to turn the harmful gossips away from the company processes and the managers; and hopefully they'll start talking about the events we organize or whatever. So it is not a lucky thing if someone is a negative person, but it is how life is, you cannot always get on well with everyone. In case there is someone that is really harmful for the team or the company you have to take the step and you need to either put them in another team or fire them if it comes to that. Even if they work good by themselves, if they destroy the team, that one individual work will not make up for it. Then, if the competitor asks if you think that they should employ them you should say yes so this person will weaken them instead of you. So these are the biggest mistakes, not being honest is a huge mistake.*

G.K.: Do you have an example when someone was communicating very badly towards his or her manager?

*Z.Sz.: Well, there are sometimes misunderstandings. When the employee doesn't explain the things properly and the manager just accepts it without asking further questions. We have these situations sometimes. For example, there was a case when one of the workers damaged some goods and didn't tell it to anyone. Obviously there was video footage of him breaking the things. There are a lot of these little mistakes. The real question is how the manager handles these problems. It is very important that the communication is not only the responsibility of the person who communicates but the one that receives the message.*

G.K.: Do you have an example where a subordinate communicated very positively?

*Z.Sz.: There are a lot, when they come to you and they say what new ideas they have. We have an idea box where you can put new ideas you have. A few days ago for example, one of my employees come up to me telling a way to save quite a good amount of money. We work with a tender writing company. What they do is about 10% of all the work needed for writing a tender, and this employee that came to me does the 90%. So this person told me that I*

*should go and talk with them to say that we won't pay them as much money as before because it's not proportional to the effort they put in. So this is very positive, we saved a lot of money because of this idea.*

G.K.: During your career, how has the communication between managers and subordinates changed or evolved?

*Z.Sz.: It gets better a lot. Especially that we are hiring better and better people.*

G.K.: When it comes to the workplaces' display, like furniture, office display, do you think it influences the relationships between the people?

*Z.Sz.: Yes, of course, it helps the communication. That is why we organize them in a way that the people that work together sit close to each other. Having one big office area is useful in one hand, because it's easier to reach each other, and on the other hand not so much, because the noise or hearing the other people's conversations can be negative. So this is just one aspect that a leader needs to organize. You can mess this up if you sit the wrong people next to each other, for example.*

G.K.: How did the hierarchical structure change in your career? I mean flat and tall organizational structures.

*Z.Sz.: In general it is difficult to say, I can't even tell you how it is worldwide. I can tell you how it changed in our company. Obviously you need some kind of hierarchy. Of course it can be a friendly relationship. My goal is that everyone should be reachable. You can go to the bosses and talk to them because they are also people and not gods. This depends on the culture of the different companies. I can't really tell you how it works worldwide, but it works like this in our company, or at least this is what I'm trying to reach. Maybe if you go up to my colleagues and ask them about me they'll tell you, "Zoli?? No, I would never have the courage to talk with him".*

G.K.: What new methods do you use for resolving problems, for team building and for enhancing relationships?

*Z.Sz.: I think the most important is for the manager and the employee to talk with each other. You can organize team building programmes, but just because we go camping together it doesn't mean that someone will be better at organizing transports. Maybe it will make the relationships better, but it is not enough. You have to focus also on the professional part of the question. The leaders have to create an environment where we can get over the point where we judge people based on their looks and ways of being, like having tattoos for example. Many managers that are my age still think that having tattoos is a problem, obviously it's not like that, but 5-10 years ago this was still a bigger question or problem. All this is because back in the socialism every role had its way of clothing, of being. This is how we grew up and it is difficult to get over this idea, but we have to do it. If you can do this in your company that the people don't care about the others' personal issues and realize that the real value is how it is to work with the other person, if he or she is reliable and so on, than*

*you can be successful. One of the ways we try to do this is, for example, with the help of my sister. She is a psychologist and she organizes some talking sessions between the teams that have to work together. This is a self- and other developing training. Also a part of this is the employee integration program that my wife does, when someone is new at the company, they go through this training where we explain who we are, what we do and basic ways of thinking in the company. For example, what the word work means in our company, or what leader means, because all these things are different for everyone. Everyone has different ways of growing up, they teach you differently at home. All the families are different. So, our idea is to create a “common language” in the company so everyone understands what we mean when we say something and this way we can avoid misunderstandings.*

G.K.: Do you have anything else to add?

Z.Sz.: *No, I think I said everything.*

### **Zoltán Venter**

G.K.: Could you please talk about your career in a few words?

*Z.V.: Alright. So, I started working at this company in 1992 as a sales representative. We can say that this is the lowest position. I worked in Hungary, in the Békés County. At this time this sector was quite new. The multinational commercial and producer companies were arriving to Hungary in this period. Our company works in the FMCG sector. Essity is a middle sized multinational commercial company. In Hungary it is in the top four companies in its sector. Our competitors are Henkel, Unilever, Procter & Gamble, and so on. Our company is a Swedish company, but it is multinational. We are present in 100 countries all around the world. The company has 44,000 employees and has a €11,000,000,000 yearly turnover, so it is a middle-size company on international level. We produce and sell hygiene products in almost all countries of the world. The company entered Hungary in 1985 with a mixed corporate form. Our full name is Essity Hygiene Products Company and in Hungary it is called Essity Hungary Kft. We have four main branches in hygiene. Household stationary, in Hungary it is branded as Zewa; in baby category we have diapers and its accessories, branded as Libero; and in female category we offer menstrual and feminine hygiene products, branded as Libress. Moreover, in Hungary we have two more divisions outside of the consumer division that I manage personally. One of them is a B2B type industry, selling hygiene products and systems offering the products mostly to industrial productions companies. Here, the brand is called Tork. Finally, our third division is called health and medical solutions. Here we produce and distribute medical devices. In this division, our most known brand is Tena. In Hungary we are in either first or second place on the market in all our divisions. So, we are in quite serious positions. Our Hungarian branch has around HUF 35,000,000,000 (€101,000,000) yearly net turnover. Based on the turnover it counts as a corporation, but we only have 115 employees in Hungary, since there is no production in the country, only sales, so we are considered as a medium-sized business.*

G.K.: What is your function exactly, and how did you grow in the company?

*Z.V.: So, as I mentioned before, I started working as a sales representative, and I was in this position for around three years. After that, I got to be area manager, then key account manager, then sales manager, then since 2009 I have been the leader of the consumer*

*division, which is our division with the biggest turnover. In 2012 I was promoted to be the executive director of the whole Hungarian branch. In 2016 I received three more countries to lead the consumer goods divisions. So today I am responsible for Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, but again, I am only responsible for the consumer division in these other three countries. This is a regional cluster setup, which means that I have one sales manager in each country and this way all the teams report to me.*

G.K.: So, what is your position called exactly?

Z.V.: *So it has two parts. In Hungary it is called, Essity Hungary Executive Director, and CEE (Central and Eastern Europe) Commercial Director in Consumer Goods Division.*

*One more thing, originally I graduated as an architect, but when I finished in 1991 I didn't start working in this field. I have been working in this company since the beginning of my career. This is because during these 28 years I received many different types of functions and tasks, so this way it could always motivate me.*

G.K.: In your opinion, what are the most important aspects for the success of a company?

Z.V.: *A successful enterprise can be observed from many different aspects. You can look at it from the field where it is present in, or whether it produces and/or sells products and/or services, if it is B2B, B2C, and so on. So it is a huge and very wide question. As I worked my whole career in a multinational company and these types of companies already have a pre-existing corporate strategy and culture, I really don't see into the world of a startup, or a new company, how it has to grow from nothing, so I am not going to talk from that side.*

G.K.: It is not a problem. I am really looking for all the different types of companies and aspects of the corporate culture.

Z.V.: *First of all what you need for a company to be successful is a good product or product portfolio, or a service, or a mixture of the two. What I realized is that having a good product and having a basic product sales structure is not enough. Even to these products, you need a high quality service. This is because all the transportation and the connection between the partners have to be very high quality. So, we cannot talk about solely a product. It is either product and service, or service.*

*Once you have a product or a service, you need to have a well-structured and planned strategy. When talking about strategy I mean a long term plan for each and every product, in what position they are today in the market and what is going to happen to them, because something you sell today, you cannot sell the same thing 10 years later.*

*Then, this is not enough. You need a very good marketing concept. This also has to be involved in your strategy. Today you cannot sell anything without that on the long run.*

*Then, the next point, you obviously need an amazing team to do all this. This means properly selected people, properly trained people and a properly structured team. This can be between two people or a lot, the point is to manage it efficiently. Because of this, quality of the leadership is very important. You can lead big teams very bad and small teams very good, so the leadership plays a key role. Then, here comes in the communication, which I wouldn't put in a so elevated position. I mean that it is extremely important, but if you have good leaders and it works properly, then it means that the communication also works properly. There are no good leaders without good communication.*

G.K.: Alright, you basically answered my second question, so let's go to the next one. In your opinion, if proper communication exists between managers and subordinates, how does that look like?

*Z.V.: This is the one million dollar question. Without good communication, there is no good leadership. But even if you have a good communication structure, if the leader personally cannot communicate – that happens quite a lot of times – because he/she wasn't trained or doesn't have the proper skills, or he/she is introverted or way too extroverted, than he or she won't be able to work with the team. This is because people are different. The goal of good communication is to find the proper way of communication between different positions', people's and co-workers with different geo locations. Then, there is the outside communication. There are many ways of communication, like, verbal, non-verbal, online, which is for me for example the most important today, and for our industry also, the online communication. For now most companies don't invest enough in these channels, but they are very important.*

*Then, if we talk about the inside communication of the company, most of the times it is managed by the HR and there are many trainings. We spend quite a lot of time, money and energy on communication trainings. This is because, first we need to train people individually to be better at verbal, non-verbal and electronic communication. Then, we train the team leaders to so they learn how to communicate with the team members and how to create the proper channels so the communication within the team can work. Then, there is the communication towards other companies.*

G.K.: In your opinion, what are the biggest managerial mistakes in communication?

*Z.V.: There are a lot. I would cut it in two parts. The first is the everyday communication and the second one is the crisis communication. Everyday communication is what we use day by day, when the company works as usual. The crisis communication is when there is a crisis in the company. Fortunately, this is not happening every day. This happens usually when there are bigger changes or problems in the company. For this type of communication, there are many very serious techniques and trainings. This is so important because maybe a crisis only happens once every two years, but if you don't communicate these changes properly, you can ruin the whole process. One example, a market leader company buys the fourth company on the market. They do this to reach an even better position and to optimize their size and processes. However, if this 1 to 3 year-long acquisition process is not communicated well, the smaller company might go bankrupt. This happens frequently. Or, the newly created company falls down to the third position in the market. So the crisis communication is essential. It can cause greater damage for shorter periods of time than the everyday communication.*

*Even this way, the everyday communication is the one that you have to develop consciously. The first step of this – in my opinion – is to create an analysis for the people who communicate. We have to find out how the leader is, what type of person he or she is. The leader should get to know him- or herself. So, the first step is to analyse everyone in the team. There are four main types and their mix characterizes the people. For example, there are colleagues that don't understand the communication if you don't present them some numbers as well. The other type doesn't understand if you try to explain something with numbers, but he or she is controlled by emotions. This person is quite social and he/she only works properly if you communicate to him or her positively. So, this is why it is important for us to understand how both the team members and the leaders are. In a team, for example, where everyone is an extrovert and you put in an introvert as a leader, that team is not going to*

work. For this, you need to train both parties to be able to talk with the other type of people and to be able to get out of the comfort zone sometimes when needed.

*The communication always has to work both ways and it needs to be monitored always. It is important to have a group communication. This means that if a manager communicates, he or she needs to communicate the same information towards each member of the team. It is good if you write this down. One of the first mistakes that happen is that the reasons are not communicated; the reasons for the actions and tasks. Because of that, many people won't even remember the change, or there will be misunderstandings. So you need to communicate many times the same information and check whether everyone understood the message or not. If you don't give reasons, there no chance for the team members to understand what the managers are talking about. If you give the reasons and they understand the situation, maybe there is no conversation about the subject for months, but if once they talk about it again, the team will remember. Then, if necessary, you have to alter the way of communication depending on how the receivers' characteristics are.*

G.K.: Do you have an example where a manager communicated positively or negatively?

*Z.V.: There are many examples. There are managers who talk only in a positive way. This is actually a mistake. The messages that leaders give sometimes are saying so many positive things about the subordinates that when they tell them a criticism they either won't consider it or maybe won't even realize that they need to do something differently. If you as a leader give examples about what the subordinate did right and wrong, then they will understand if there is some aspect where they need to change. Then, you need to listen to the subordinate's response. The communication that only goes in one direction is always bad and harmful. You need to ask what they think about that because maybe they will see it differently. Maybe the manager is actually not right about what he or she is saying. In these situations you might lose the best people because you didn't communicate properly. You cannot attack them; you have to be prepared and open. After this, you always have to re-evaluate these decisions and conversations, whether they were productive or not.*

G.K.: Let's look at the communication from the other direction. What are the biggest communication mistakes that a subordinate can make, and what solutions do you see for them?

*Z.V.: This is why I'm saying that verbal communication is not enough. For example, in today's home office situation, they can work beautifully, if you have the right channels and technology for it. However, a face to face communication is way more productive.*

*One of the mistakes is fear. The first and most typical mistake is that the subordinates are afraid of talking about their opinions because they are afraid that they will be fired. This usually happens in with a bad leadership. If there is an autocratic leadership the managers solely communicate downward and everything they say has to be done in the way they want it to. In some cases there is a great amount of discussion about a certain decision and maybe the team wants to do it in a way, but the manager or leader is the one that takes the decision and he or she decides otherwise. Even if the team does not agree with this decision, the only way you can tell it to the boss is, first accepting the decision, doing the task the way it was said, and in case it does not work, you can tell the boss that, "Look here is the data, we can*

*say that it does not work this way, maybe you could consider doing it our way”.*

*In these situations leaders have a key role. Someone can be a good leader if they can change their opinion about something in case they are not right. There are leaders who cannot work like that and they say that the team has to do everything the way they said it even if “we die” in the process. These are the people who usually destroy organizations.*

G.K.: So you say that for these mistakes the leaders can find the solution, right?

Z.V.: *Exactly, the communication is the leaders’ responsibility. Managers with bad communication are not good leaders. So as I said before, the communication skills of a leader can destroy or make flourish a company.*

*If you look at these days with the pandemic, you can see how important communication is. All the verbal, non-verbal and online communication changed a lot. Sometimes colleagues work together for years without even meeting each other. They can have amazing relationships and be able to work very well. This is because of all the communication processes that the company provides.*

*One more very important thing is the recruitment because many people are not up for communicating through these channels. One example, people think that they are so good at non-verbal communication and start saying that the company must go very badly because the boss makes angry and sad faces all the time. Maybe it is not true at all and the manager just has some personal problems at home. This is in the end the mistake of the manager, because he/she doesn’t realize that the people create gossips. In this case the manager needs to tell about these things to the team because they can clear everything in one minute and there is no more fear in the company.*

G.K.: How has the manager-subordinate communication changed since you started working?

Z.V.: *It has changed a lot. Already when it comes to recruitment is completely different. Today what companies look for are solely the softs skills. They say that they can teach everything else. Of course in many cases it doesn’t work like this, like when you work as a brain surgeon or something, but in a lot of companies the softs skills, the communication skills are just as important, or even more important than the hard skills. If you have a genius for example, maybe he or she is perfect with the numbers and can do his or her job perfectly, but is a person who is horrible with people, if you put him or her in a team, that team is going to fall apart. These people have their place as well, but then you cannot put them in teams, but let them work alone, with minimal amount of communication.*

G.K.: How does the display of the offices influence the communication within the people?

Z.V.: *There are two types of jobs and you have to organize based on these two types. There are the types where you need concentration and cannot be bothered by the people in your surroundings. This is mostly in the case of the individual contributors, like an accountant. Then, there is the other type, like a key account manager. People, who need to communicate with customers or other companies and need interactions with the co-workers in order to have new ideas, work in teams and so on. These people need to be put together so the communication between members does not have barriers. In these cases, when there is a huge*

*office with a lot of people together, you need to put some private areas, where you can go in case you need some privacy in your work.*

*It is sure that in case you cannot provide the right office with all the necessary functions, then it doesn't make sense to have that office. You can create home offices, it is way cheaper, because you don't have to spend money on a huge office building and they can have their privacy and all the necessary tools. Of course this is not true. Offices are necessary, but then you have to grant all the necessary parts. This is a huge responsibility, and again it is the responsibility of the leaders.*

G.K.: How did the hierarchical structure change since you started working?

*Z.V.: Also a lot. Again, a very good question. About thirty years ago the structure was having about 10 board members and one CEO as a leader, that no one ever meets. Maybe once a year in a huge company conference he gives a 20 minute speech, and he is the leader and no one talks with him. Then of course there is the other side, when the leader is the best friend of everyone and he goes out to drink with the employees all the times and everything. I think this is also negative extreme. So you need to find the middle somehow. I think it is very important to be able to reach the higher management as well.*

*In the past there were way more hierarchical companies. Today we see that companies need to flatten the hierarchy and you need to organize the communication between the company groups. This means that you need to be fast and accurate. It is better to divide the functions more horizontally and less vertically. In our company for example there are maximum seven levels. This means that on the seventh level there are the office cleaners, and on the seventh the CEO. This, in the past was around 10-12. Even in a company this big where there are 44,000 employees, there are only 7 levels. And we want to make it five soon.*

G.K.: What new methods do you use for resolving problems, for team building and for enhancing relationships?

*Z.V.: Something that is starting to get a lot of attention, mostly because of today's coronavirus situation, is the technology. Fortunately we started investing in it about a year ago, so for us it wasn't that big of a hit. You need to provide online accessibility for every single employee. Moreover, everyone needs to know to use these tools, providing them is not enough. The problem is that many companies provide the tools and then they don't train the employees. You need to create chat systems so people don't start to repeat the same information, and the necessary news will only arrive from one person, because if everyone starts sending me long messages that are actually talk about the same thing, I won't be able to follow it, or I might miss something that is actually important. If you have these chat groups and systems everyone gets necessary information about everything and the process will be much more dynamic.*

*So, first you need to implement the new tools, you need to train the employees how to use it, and finally create a system so everyone uses them the same way. For example, I have a manager that usually sends messages Sunday because that is when he has time to write e-mails. The problem is that with having smartphones we receive all the messages in the moment. Even though it is not something important, you might feel responsibility to answer, or forward the message, or whatever. This can turn into stress and people might feel that the*

*company doesn't let them rest, and so on. There needs to be a system so everyone knows when to send messages, when to communicate and when not to. Of course, if this boss only has time on Sunday, he can write the message on Sunday, but then he has to programme it so it arrives to the co-workers on Monday morning. One more time, this is the responsibility of the managers and it has to be part of the corporate culture.*

G.K.: Do you have anything else to add?

*Z.V.: Well, this subject is enormous. There are careers that only focus on crisis communication techniques and training. These things are very important, because as I said before a company can really easily be destroyed if you don't follow the right communication methods.*

*There is one thing that we do. We send a survey every year to our co-workers where we ask 28 questions about how they would change the processes and so on. At least four of them are entirely about the communication. Here you can find out if there is a problem. This is the most important thing; you have to measure the quality and the efficiency of the communication.*

### **Cristina Farelo Lanseros**

G.K.: Could you talk about your career in a few sentences?

*C.F.: I studied translation ten years ago more or less. After that I studied a master and worked a bit as a freelance translator, but then, I started working as a project manager in a translation company. That was my first experience in the world of management. The company was growing a lot, so I started training a new person. Basically I mentored her more or less. The company hired a new person, they put people around me, they started, sort of, building a team, and that was when I realized, wow, I have a team now. That's when I became a team leader, so that was my first official experience with the management side of an organization. I spent another year and a half at that company and I ended up with a team of seven people in total. Then, I was moving around in several companies and I didn't have a team until my previous company, where I was managing also a team of internal translators and also I was working with an agency to manage freelance translators. Then, at TechStyle, I started with the localization team and after two years I took over the acquisition design team. I have been working at TechStyle for over three years now. I'm not so much managing the team from the technical or expertise perspective, but more from a process management and optimization, workload, making sure that the team has what they need, and the relations with stakeholders, and so on.*

G.K.: In a few sentences, could you explain what your company does?

*C.F.: TechStyle is a group of online fashion brands with the part of retail in the United States, but it is a native digital company. We try to reinvent, or reimagine fashion for brands, and each of TechStyle's brands has its own personality and its own way of being, even though they share common principles such as diversity and fashion for everybody at affordable prices, depending on the prices. We have athletic ware; we also have shoes and fashion, lingerie, so we have different aspects of fashion.*

G.K.: In your opinion, what are the most important aspects for the success of a company?

C.F.: *I think the first thing to have is talented people. I think without people companies are nothing, so you need to make sure that you have and you build a great team. You can hire great talent, but then you need to keep it and you need to nurture that talent, so it grows in the company.*

*Secondly, and I think it is very important nowadays, you need to have a proper technical setup, on the side of technology. You need to innovate constantly on the technology's side. Especially at TechStyle because we are a native digital.*

*Thirdly, I think its related to the first point that I mentioned, that is, to build healthy teams. This side is very keen and its very much on top of the pyramid for us. You need to make sure that the people you have are happy in terms that they feel that they are doing a job that they like, or at least that they are satisfied with what they are doing. Also, you have to make sure that you nurture the talent you have and you need to push people to grow, to make sure that they develop themselves.*

G.K.: You basically answered my question, but where would you put the manager-subordinate communication on this list of important things for a company's success?

C.F.: *I think it is basic. It has to do a lot with the general concept of the topics that I have mentioned. I think communication is key, so you have to be transparent about what is going on in the company. You need to make sure that people have goals and communicate these goals effectively, and then, you also need to not only communicate out, but also try to get input from the employees. Especially from your direct team to really know what they are feeling, what they are thinking. Maybe they don't feel like they are doing the right work, or they feel like they want to develop onto other areas, so you need to listen to them as well. I think its key.*

G.K.: If you could imagine the perfect manager-subordinate communication, how would that look like?

C.F.: *That's a big question. I don't know if the perfect communication exists, because in the end everybody is different. We are talking about human beings, and of course I am sure that you studied a lot of literature about it, but in the end we are talking about people. This is my humble opinion, sometimes you need to develop some soft skills, some skills in psychology, in order to make sure that you are talking to the different people in the way that they need to be spoken to. You cannot just have one method and spread it out for everybody. You need to treat everybody as an individual. Also, you have to choose the right moment, when to talk to somebody about certain topics. So, for me the perfect communication is that you can start once you have built trust, because, of course in the end it is going to be a subordinate-manager relation, but in order to talk to anybody, even if it is your manager, you need to have a little bit of trust. And the other way around. So I think trust is key also to start, not to have, but to start having this kind of perfect relation or communication.*

G.K.: In your work experience, does communication between managers and subordinates work properly?

C.F.: *In my case, I try my hardest just to have regular touch bases, not only in the touch bases, but also to have any time, any team member, I don't like to call them subordinates, but any team member can approach me and talk about anything they feel like talking and I think, we go back to this concept of healthy teams culture and I think that we build a healthy relationship with the different team members, like "Hey, I'm your manager, I'm accountable for whatever happens in the team, but you can talk to me. I'm not your friend or anything, I mean we can get to be friends, but I am here to help you grow. you are not here to do something for me." It is like a symbiotic relationship. So, I think so far its working fine. I must confess that sometimes I miss that from my managers if we talk about me as a subordinate. I know that the more communication I have with my direct managers, the better I feel, because I feel that they care for me, that my problems are their problems as well, or at least that they are trying to help me solve those problems if I get stuck. I think I'm in a good state, but I keep on learning. There is nothing perfect, there is always room for improvement.*

G.K.: From your point of view, what are the biggest managerial mistakes in communication?

C.F.: *That's a big question as well. I think lack of transparency. I can tell you from my perspective. Lack of transparency; so when you feel like your manager is telling you something but not everything. That obviously reflects on the trust concept that I mentioned earlier. Also there is something about the five dysfunctions of a team. I don't know if you are familiar with that book, but it's something that I recommend reading. It says all the things that they recommend. One of them is showing vulnerability. I think it's a positive thing when a manager shows vulnerability. You are a manager, but you don't know everything. You are not the expert of everything. You are part of the team, you are leading the team, but in the end it's the team's workforce that gets response. So I think vulnerability and as a manager say, hey, I did this wrong, it is good as well. Another mistake from a manager, again, transparency is also related to not being close. When you see the manager on top of the mountain and you are there trying to reach the top, it's very difficult to have a conversation when you don't feel like there is equality. Sometimes managers are like, hey I'm the manager, I want respect, or you have managers that are like, I have responsibility, but I'm here, at your level and I understand what you are doing. I think one of the things that I have experienced is very useful for a manager, even though, in my opinion, a manager doesn't need to know everything that the team is doing, sometimes they have to roll their sleeves up and get to work and help the team sometimes to really understand what the team is doing. I know that this is not the theory of what a manager should be, but for me it is very useful and I think it's an eye opener for a lot of managers when they see what the team is actually doing, and even trying to work on stuff that the team is doing.*

G.K.: Would you say that these aspects are the most important things for a manager to do?

C.F.: *Well, feeling that the manager is part of the team. Trying to remove this distance and the pedestal you put managers on that prevents your manager to be reachable. I think when the manager is part of the team and expresses himself or herself that, we are in this thing together, I think that kind of vulnerability or closeness is very positive.*

G.K.: Do you have an example for bad manager communication?

C.F.: *I can go back to the lack of transparency. In one of my past companies you could feel that they were not sharing all the information about a specific topic. Rumours started to spread out and it was like a snowball effect, people were inventing the craziest stuff. This pushed the company to have a regular touch basis with the full staff to explain things in detail and to show figures to say, hey we are doing poorly and this is what we need to do. Everything that they were discussing was so, “positive”, they were only saying that everything was going good, but then you read it in the papers that the company was actually not doing that great, so everyone was like, “What’s going on?”, “Why are they lying to us?”. Then they started to say, and again, accepting vulnerability, “Hey, we’re not doing great, but here is what we can do to make it better”. It had a team building effect, everybody came together. If they hadn’t have come to us, it could have ended up with firing people, or the company going very badly. So, for me, lack of transparency is something that should never happen. Of course there are things that you cannot tell and you need to measure how to tell them as top manager, but in the end people appreciate when you are honest.*

G.K.: Would you say that this problem was solved then?

C.F.: *Yes*

G.K.: What do you think the biggest mistakes are that an employee can make when communicating with the managers?

C.F.: *Again, lack of transparency. Not saying when they feel that something’s wrong, or when they don’t feel happy, or when they just keep on working and not really expressing how they are feeling. It’s not that you have to say everyday whether you are happy or not, but when you talk to your manager you have to make sure that you share everything that’s going on, both positive and negative. If it’s negative, make sure that you tell your manager so she or he can help you, because if not, you’ll get frustrated, and from frustration there is almost no coming back.*

G.K.: Why do you think these mistakes happen?

C.F.: *Maybe it’s the matter of building the trust with the employee, or maybe it’s the matter of learning how to approach the particular employee. As I said earlier, I don’t think you need to approach everybody the same way. You need to make sure that you understand how that person is and how that person is feeling. There are a lot of factors that are coming to play. I think building this trust is something very hard to do, but it’s something you need to put a lot of time and effort in, but in the end it grants you good results. The person can open up, can talk about anything that she or he doesn’t feel good about, or something that she or he wants to do, but maybe doesn’t know that there is some opportunity. I have somebody in my team now that wants to go to another team, not because she is not happy with the role that she has, but she wants to grow. She wants to explore new areas of the business. She told me the first time, and she was super honest with me and she was like “Look, it’s not that I’m not happy, I love the team, but I want to try this”, and I said “ok, I support you. I’m not going to force you to stay in the team if you don’t want to”. I felt sad of course because she wanted to leave the team, I wanted to keep her because she is good, but in the end I was happy because I was like, she comes to me with trust and saying “Hey, I wanna*

*do this, and I trust you because I know that there is not going to be any consequence of this". I felt really happy about having achieved that kind of trust with her.*

G.K.: Perfect, you have answered my next question about an actual example, so let's go to the next one. During your career, how has the communication between managers and subordinates changed or evolved?

*C.F.: I think one of the things I started doing when I started having people within a team and I was the manager, was to apply the same methodology to everybody. That's why I told you that it doesn't work. Sometimes it may work when you have two or three people, but when you have 7 people you have to realize that people are different in all aspects of life and work is one of them, of course. I also learned the best practices through bad practices. Besides what I practiced, treating everybody the same way, which doesn't work in any aspect of life, I had a manager once that had a very specific way of managing. I didn't agree with it, of course I had to go along with it because she was my manager, but I learned what not to do as a manager because I didn't like her style of managing. She wasn't a bad manager at all because she was encouraging and she helped you grow and everything, but then there were some aspects where I said, "Ok, I'm not going to do that because I know how that feels". So, I think to be on both sides helps you also to have this kind of empathy to see what you want to do and what you don't. You can learn a lot from the different managers also. What to do and what not to do.*

G.K.: When it comes to the workplaces' display, like furniture, office display, how is your place, and how do you think it should be?

*C.F.: Well, now it's great. We changed offices four days before the state of alarm was declared so we could enjoy the offices for only four days, but we have doubled the space. We have also set the seating area per department and per team. It used to be like that, but because of space constraints we couldn't do it that much, so some teams were kind of divided in a smaller office that we had earlier. I think the workspace right now is great, all the meeting rooms have glass doors so you can see what's going on, but also you have some privacy. I think that the fact that the managers don't have a separate office is great as well because they are part of this team also physically. In that aspect the current office that we hold and will hopefully enjoy again soon I think is very good. It's open space, but then you have more private areas if you want to meet and you have a private conversation. You can see everything, there are no hidden places where people can just hide.*

G.K.: Do you think it is the ideal workplace display? Is it how you imagine how it should be?

*C.F.: Actually it is because all of us, all the employees can give feedback, and it has been built with very little constraints, but I would say that 90% is built on the input of the teams and the employees. So, that means that it is an office built according to the necessities of the teams and it's customized to what we wanted and how we wanted the office to look, so I think that's great, and again I felt really part of the team when the top managers asked everybody what we needed the office to have, and that they built it from scratch and they tried to include all the requests from all the teams.*

G.K.: How did the hierarchical structure change in your career? I mean flat and tall organizational structures.

C.F.: *In my personal experience, I think the smaller the company, the flatter the hierarchy is for obvious reasons. So, in a startup you don't have as many managers and as many people, so obviously everybody is together and everybody is working towards the same goal. When I worked for bigger companies, I felt that top management is something that you barely can talk to. Not in a bad way, because I understand that they are super busy, but that kind of closeness is lost and I don't think that it is something that needs to happen just because the company is big. The company I mentioned before, I think the moment they started having these kind of group updates, or team updates and you saw people that you know is your manager, maybe a top manager, and you see him or her talking in a very informal way to explain everything, you start to feel that they are closer to you. Better than when you just hear the name or hear the picture, but never really get the chance to come and interact with them. At least this is my experience. I don't know, maybe there are some companies that have a more physical hierarchy, but in the smaller companies I felt that the hierarchy is flatter, in my opinion not just because there are less people, but because maybe the business of the company was built from a very small concept and then it grew.*

G.K.: Do you still feel today in a bigger company that the higher management is not really reachable?

C.F.: *No, I think as we, as the world is becoming more and more digital, I don't know why, but you feel in all these big technology companies like Google and Facebook and everything, they try to, and this is my perspective, they try to make their big "sharks" approachable. They are normal people because they just started this in a garage, or started this from nothing. So, I think that it is positive not to have this typical CEO with the Italian suit sitting in a very separate office from everybody. I don't think that that's the trend anymore. Of course there are still companies that do that, but for me it's more positively headed the other way. Sometimes, and of course it's just my personal opinion, it may be only an act, maybe these people are not approachable at all, they are wearing t-shirts and they are like "I'm cool", that's at least my perception.*

G.K.: What new methods are there that you use for resolving problems, team building and enhancing relationships?

C.F.: *I don't know if they are new or not. I just try to be a person with my team, like I'm a person and therefore I'm nothing more than them. Of course I may have more responsibility but I'm still a person, the same as they are. I try to also leave some space and some room too, if anybody wants to, because some people are not willing to, but talk about personal lives, like "What did you do today?", or we have been having a lot of silly conversations lately, like "What did you do today in this lockdown?", like, "Oh, I took the trash out, so exciting", to kind of relax. So, leave time for this kind of sharing personal stuff, or day-to-day stuff, just talk about something else besides work. I think it is also good, and it helps you to build this trust and closeness.*

G.K.: And when it's outside of work? I mean team building sessions, or events together.

C.F.: *I think team building activities are great. It is something that definitely should be done because you can learn a lot from the people you work with. Also, it helps building*

*relationships between the different team members. It is not you, the responsible to make sure that they get along, not personally, but workwise. You also need to make the effort and I think being away from work, in a different environment helps a lot.*

G.K.: Do you have anything else to add?

C.F.: *Not really, I hope that I have been helpful. I actually want to ask you about this last question. Is there any new trending methodology that you can tell me about?*

G.K.: My question was actually pointed at seeing if you have experienced anything that seems like a new practice that you know is new. If companies do something else besides of big office parties once or twice a year. I mean like coaching sessions, focused team building with fewer people, and so on.

C.F.: *Actually, it's something new, I haven't had this in previous companies. I mean, you always have like the Christmas dinner and things like that, but taking people away from work and do some kind of random activity like escape room, or paintball, or something like that, it's not something that I've seen in the past and I have been working for ten years. I've only seen this in the last five years. These team building activities, bringing coaches as well to go to the companies and to train managers. Invest time in manager training. TechStyle is doing that in the moment, and I think it's super important, especially between your managers. So, I think there is an interest in having these activities become part of the whole training of a manager.*

### **Juan Martínez Baragaño:**

G.K.: How long have you been working, not only as a boss but in general?

J.M.: *So, I finished my studies when I was 23 years old as an industrial engineer. I started working when I was 24 and since then I haven't stopped. I was working for the company Contagena for a few years in two different companies. After that, I started working on the Sacema project before actually founding the company and at the age of 28 I created the company. So, basically I was doing internships and so for a few years in Contagena and in 2011 I founded Sacema, so the company has been active for 8 years. It means that I have been on the field for twelve-twelve and a half years. It depends on the dates but I have been working basically between 12-13 years. 10 years as an entrepreneur and 3 working at Contagena.*

G.K.: In your opinion, what are the most important aspects for the success of a company? Please list the four-five most important ideas!

J.M.: *Very good, a very good question and a quite difficult answer. For the success of a company there are a lot of important things. First of all, the most important aspect is the team, with other words the employees, the people. Let's put ourselves in the place of an already existing company, not a new start-up. So the most important aspect for an already existing company with already set basics and structure is that the team is motivated, that they actually want to work and that they put down something on the table. Also, that they have some amount of autonomy and that they create value. So for one part, the people.*

*The second aspect that is very important is the organization and the tools. It is very important to have developed technological tools that's professional and gives productivity to the companies in order to obtain information and to have an organized workflow.*

*It is very important to know the clients. With other words, know the market where they work, know how to get to know the clients, which channels of communication they use and what demands the clientele. This means, you need to know their market. Here we can connect my previous answer. If the technological tools are good enough and they obtain useful information, the company will have very useful information and knowledge about the clients. So, what buys the client, what products are demanded, on which channel does this demand happen, which way, what is it they like the most.*

*Then, a very important part is the financial side. This means the economic activity of the company has to generate sufficient capital to maintain all costs. The company costs, the salaries, the taxes and to have some extra for extra spending. In case of the need for extra spending, have the capacity to finance yourself and to continue without any problems. This means, to have a stable financial structure.*

*And finally, the fifth very important point for me is the direction/management of the company. The manager has to lead the team. You need someone, a man or a woman that has enough studies to be able to direct and lead.*

*So, more or less these are the most important points. From all of these the first three are the most important. We can even add an extra idea to the third point, to know what product you should offer. I cannot stress enough how important it is to know your customers. A company can only be successful if they listen to the customers and adapt according to their needs. It is never a good way if the customer has to adapt to what you are offering.*

G.K.: You more or less answered my question. Where do you put the importance of communication between leaders and subordinates on this list?

J.M.: *It is very important. It is basically at the first point that I have said. The way to motivate your employees is through communication. A downward communication is needed, that the bosses tell their employees the goals, the processes that are happening in the company, and their concerns. Also it is very important to involve the subordinates, to motivate them to participate, to have an opinion and to collaborate. In order to reach this, you need to listen. The boss needs to hear them out, to let them express their opinions and to actually listen to them. Sometimes, not always, but sometimes. This is important, because the subordinates need to feel that they are appreciated and that they are accounted for, that their opinions matter.*

G.K.: If you can imagine a perfect communication between managers and subordinates in a company, how would that look like?

J.M.: *To have a perfect communication you need to have the digital tools. If you have the proper digital resources they will let you have the perfect communication. Nowadays there are a lot of softwares that are focused on this. If you use these resources, you can have the perfect communication.*

*Obviously this is a theoretical response. The practical one is that the key is confidence. You need the confidence between the bosses and the employees. The bosses need to delegate, meaning that they let the subordinates do their job without looking over their shoulders all*

*the time. Obviously they need to check what they are doing but with a certain amount of confidence through delegating. It is also true the other way around. The employees need to feel valued by their bosses. An employee will feel valued if their work is recognized and they are able to participate.*

G.K.: In your experience, does the communication between the bosses, meaning you, and the employees work properly?

J.M.: *In my opinion, it does work properly. I really have to work for it but it does work.*

G.K.: In what aspects does it work properly and in what aspects doesn't it?

J.M.: *One of the most important aspects is that I delegate a lot. I like to let the people work. And the aspect where we still need to develop is the technology. Even though the technology is constantly getting better, it is still not prepared for everything. Because of this, we have to do a lot of work manually. This is when the problems appear, because the technological tools are there for you to help, so we need to acquire more in order to be able to work better.*

G.K.: In your opinion, what are the biggest mistakes that a boss can make in communication?

J.M.: *The biggest mistake is not communicating when problems appear. This means, when everything works properly the communication also tends to be working, but when there are problems, the communication also starts to fail. A lot of people react wrong in these situations and they don't communicate the complications. This is a problem. Another problem or error is disrespecting the subordinates. Insulting an employee in front of the others, complain about their mistakes. These are serious mistakes. One more mistake that is not as serious but also negative is not making the work environment easy and friendly. A very rigid and strict organization is a mistake. For example, if an employee needs to change his/her working hours for some reason you need to be flexible because helping in these kinds of situations will create the good environment. In contrast, a non-flexible organization that doesn't give flexible working hours, for example, will create discomfort, and that is really negative. It is a quite common mistake.*

G.K.: Why do these mistakes happen?

J.M.: *They happen because the bosses don't have enough education in leadership. It is difficult. A lot of bosses are engineers, people that work in finance, economists, lawyers, and so on, and they don't have the education and the capacity for developing teams and workers. These mistakes come from both the lack of empathy and education. Furthermore, many times the mistakes are that they don't put themselves in the others situation, meaning not looking at the problem from the others' point of view. The bosses' and the employees' points of view are completely different, so if you put yourself in the others place everything changes.*

G.K.: How can these managerial problems be solved?

J.M.: *Yes. It is difficult. You need experience for that, learn from your experiences during the years. The other thing, you need to give opportunities, meaning if there is a problem you have to realize it and continuously improving it. This is the way, realizing the problem and trying to improve even if it is difficult.*

G.K.: Do you have an example from your own work experience?

J.M.: *Yes. Once, a long time ago, when there were only three of us working at the company. One of my two co-workers was on a sick leave so the two of us had to do the work of three. And one day, the other co-worker that was not on sick leave had her holidays programmed for that period. She asked if she could still go to her holidays and I said of course but be available because there was a lot of work and I had to keep on working alone. The next day I needed something from them so I called her but I couldn't reach her during the whole day. I got stressed and sent her a message that it wasn't alright to just disappear, I basically told her off, I told her that it is not alright this way because I was alone and I needed her help and I couldn't reach her for a whole day. My reaction really bothered her and she said that it wasn't fair because she was on her holiday so obviously she didn't have to be concerned with work. So this was a mistake that I made.*

G.K.: Did you solve this problem in the end?

J.M.: *Yes, of course. I apologized and said that my way of communicating wasn't alright. I explained her why this problem happened, because she went on her holiday and she didn't finish her task before, but of course it wasn't right how I responded. So we talked about it, I apologized and that's it. The good thing is that she realized that she also committed an error and it wasn't right to just leave without finishing her task since she knew that I was alone at the office.*

G.K.: What are the most important examples that you have witnessed during your career when a manager communicated in an outstanding manner?

J.M.: *I have to think, do you mean my communication or when I was a subordinate?*

G.K.: Whichever you feel that is more relevant.

J.M.: *Alright, I have a memory from when I was still working at Contagena. There was a problem, because it is a quite big company and there were a lot of people working in each team. There was a problem in dividing the tasks between the people. The people that had been working at the company for a longer time didn't want the young people telling them what to do, giving them directions. So one day the boss made a presentation explaining the workflow of the team with arrows and other visual tools. He presented the workflow and who directs what, who decides about what and so on. After that it was clear for everyone what they had to do and who they had to listen to so the problem was solved. I think that that was a big success from his part.*

G.K.: Would you also use this solution in your company?

J.M.: *Yes, of course, but the thing is that Sacema is way too small for this type of solutions. It is not really necessary at this company because it is for companies with bigger structures.*

*Something else that is very important is communicating towards the employees. Informing them all the time, telling them what is happening in order to avoid problems. And here comes again the importance of the digital tools, so the employees don't have to ask so many questions from the managers, but that these tools give them all the necessary information.*

G.K.: In your opinion, what are the biggest mistakes that employees can commit when it comes to the communication with managers?

J.M.: *Lying. Lying, not telling the truth. Hiding the truth when there are problems. Second, blaming other co-workers. Third, when there is a group task being lazy and letting the other co-workers do all the work. I think these three are the most important mistakes.*

G.K.: Do you have any examples that happened at your company?

J.M.: *Yes, for example in one team work there were two people working, one of them was really good at organizing the work and highly effective, and the other person was more creative and less organized. So when they had to do tasks the creative person never finished them and the other one had to solve and close all the tasks that the other one just left open.*

G.K.: How did you solve these problems?

J.M.: *Yes. Again, with the technology. We used a computer programme for dividing tasks. This gave clear directions so even the creative person had to force himself to finish the given tasks. The programme was informing them in case they were behind schedule.*

G.K.: Alright, so are these solutions more focused more on organization and less on communication?

J.M.: *Yes, the organization is really important in order to reach an efficient workflow. And from the communication point of view it is the same as always. Tell everything that's happening, give information, make that the teammates participate. If there are problems to face and you talk about them, it will always help to get better.*

G.K.: Why do these subordinate communication problems happen?

J.M.: *They happen because no one is perfect. We make mistakes every day. So I am going to mention the same again, the important thing is to be organized, to have a structure, a way to minimize the possible mistakes and again the solution is the technology.*

G.K.: Just like before with the managers, do you have an example where you remember that a subordinate communicated exquisitely?

J.M.: *Well, in the example that I told you with the creative and the very productive teammates, the productive one told me one day that he was really exhausted from doing both his and the other persons job at the same time. He explained what the problem was and that there was a need for a solution. He explained it in a way that he wasn't trying to blame anything on the other person, he was simply looking for a solution to have a better workflow. So the three of us solved the problem together. In a way it was thanks to him because he wasn't afraid of telling the boss that there was a problem to be solved.*

G.K.: How has the manager-subordinate communication changed during your carrier so far?

J.M.: *It has changed a lot. In the traditional companies the top management was basically not communicating to the employees. I know an example where a company had to close because of economic reasons and the employees found it out one day before the company closed its gates. The workers didn't even know that the company was not going well. The next day the workers just received a mail that the company is closing and that everyone was being fired. So this was the traditional way of communicating. Nowadays, the model is changing a lot, the companies are much more focused on participating and they are way more dynamic and the information flows to all directions.*

G.K.: When did this change started to happen?

J.M.: *When I started working in 2006 the communication was very traditional. You basically didn't know anything. Everyone had their tasks, their positions and that's it. In the last 4-5 years it has been changing a lot. There are a lot of young companies with young people in higher positions and they are leading this change. The new companies with the new technologies are completely different, they have a distant workflow and it is changing the whole business world. The most important thing is not as much dates, but the difference between generations. The bosses that are less than 35 years old have nothing in common with the bosses that are 55 years old.*

G.K.: How do you think the display of an office influences the communication of a company? I mean the furniture, the office layouts, open spaces, and so on.

J.M.: *I believe that as a result of the coronavirus the offices are going to lose a lot of importance. It doesn't matter anymore where you are or how the office is. I think that we are going to change to a system where the people will be able to work from wherever they want and we will only need the offices to have a meeting once in a while. That's it; the offices are going to lose their importance. What is important is that the place where you work should be comfortable and clean. We, for example, work in a quite old house with antique furniture, but the office itself has all the necessary resources. The computers are mostly new, the internet connection is good and fast and there is heating. So in all, the companies are going to give much less importance to the offices and more to the comfort and the happiness of the team.*

G.K.: How has the hierarchical structure changed in your career?

J.M.: *It has changed a lot also. When I started working, the structure was like a pyramid. The bosses were really up on the ladder and they only communicated with the directors of each*

*department. There wasn't really communication between leaders and employees. The bigger was the company, the more levels it had. This has completely changed since then. Today, the structures are way flatter, much more horizontal. Obviously there always has to be a leader or more leaders that are in charge but the structure is much more horizontal. Before the system was much more vertical, there were really tall organizations, and now they are much more horizontal, much flatter.*

G.K.: What new methods do you use for resolving problems, for team building and for enhancing relationships?

*J.M.: We don't really use them because our structure is really small, but if the structure gets bigger, there are companies that use group activities. They organize programmes to take the employees out of the offices and they focus on resolving problems or just to spend time together in order to build a better team. It is really important to have a good relationship between the people and to work together efficiently. For this you need to offer more than just work, and because of this there a lot of new techniques like coaching, collaboration and skill development that are all set outside of the office.*

G.K.: Do you have anything else to add?

*J.M.: Yes, actually there is something that is very important in my opinion. Human resources should have more importance in the companies. Usually the other departments are receiving more importance. In the industry, for example, the production has the biggest focus. Then, in other companies or sectors the sales and the marketing get all the attention. The human resources always stays as a department that is not involved in the strategy, a department that doesn't create value. In my opinion it does create value and it has to be really important and involved in the strategy. The important thing is for the company to employ a professional as the head of human resources that does create value and that he/she concentrates on all these communication problems that we have been talking about and that they focus on making the teams better, because as I said it in the first question, the most important thing is the structure, the team.*

## Appendix B

### Survey questions:

## The importance of communication in the workplace

The goal of this questionnaire is to see the crucial characteristics of the manager-subordinate relationships and communication in office settings from the employee point of view. This questionnaire is completely anonymous. The results will be interpreted and used for academic purposes and will not be shared with unauthorized individuals.

Note: Please only fill out this form in case you work or have worked before in an office environment.

**\*Required**

1.1. In what country did you have most of your work experience/s? \*

\_\_\_\_\_

1.2. Which is the most relevant sector you have worked in until now? \*

Not-for-profit

Private

Public

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

1.3. Which is the most relevant industry you have worked in until now? \*

Accounting, banking and finance

Business, consulting and management

Charity and voluntary work

Creative arts and design

Education and social care

Engineering, manufacturing and construction

Healthcare

Hospitality and events management

Information technology

Law and law enforcement

Marketing, advertising and PR

Public services, administration and HR

Sales and Retail

Science and pharmaceuticals

Tourism, leisure and sports

Transport and logistics

1.4. What is/was your highest level in a company? \*

Non-managerial employee

Manager

Senior Manager

Director

Executive Officer (i.e., CEO, COO, CIO, etc.)

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Opinion about manager/s

2.1. Do you think communication between managers and subordinates is important? \*  
(1 = Do not agree at all; 5 = Completely agree)

1  2  3  4  5

2.2. In your experiences until now, how frequently do/did you interact with your direct manager/s? \*

- Once per month or less
- Once every other week
- 1-2 times a week
- 3-4 times a week
- At least once per day

2.3. How well do you think you know/knew your direct manager/s? \*

- Not very well
- Somewhat well
- Quite well
- Very well

2.4. How good is/was your relationship with your manager/s? \*  
(1 = Very bad; 5 = Very good)

1  2  3  4  5

2.5. Choose the answer that you agree with the most! My manager/s are/were... \*

- NOT GOOD at giving orders and managing tasks and NOT GOOD at creating a friendly environment
- GOOD at giving orders and managing tasks, but NOT GOOD at creating a friendly environment
- NOT GOOD at giving orders and managing tasks, but GOOD at creating a friendly environment
- GOOD at giving orders and managing tasks and also GOOD at creating a friendly environment

2.6. In your experience, do you think managers communicate properly towards their subordinates? \*

- Yes
- No

2.7. If your answer was "no" to the previous question, what are these communication mistakes according to YOUR EXPERIENCES? (please select MAXIMUM 3 options)

- Not being available to talk with the subordinates
- Unwillingness to talk with the subordinates
- Being disrespectful with the subordinates
- Not sharing important information in time
- Not listening to the subordinates ("she/he does all the talking")
- Providing Unclear or Insufficient Directions
- Failing to connect on a personal level
- Not keeping the relationship professional

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2.8. How do you think managerial communication mistakes could be solved? (please select MAXIMUM 3 options) \*

- Delivering clear and concise messages
- Listening more to subordinates and other co-workers
- Telling the truth
- Communicating from the subordinates' perspective
- Communicating more to subordinates
- Communicating less to subordinates
- Being MORE friendly and LESS professional with subordinates
- Being LESS friendly and MORE professional with subordinates

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2.9. According to YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE, what are the key points for the success of a company concerning the RELATIONSHIP between directors and their teams? (please select MAXIMUM 3 options) \*

- Good relationship between directors and their teams
- Hierarchical relationship between directors and their teams
- Friendly managers
- Strict managers
- Mutual trust
- Horizontal organizational structure
- Regular 1-on-1s between managers and subordinates
- Regular team building sessions

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2.10. In YOUR EXPERIENCE, what are the biggest subordinate mistakes in relation to the communication with managers? (please select MAXIMUM 3 options) \*

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being afraid of the managers                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Being too confident        | <input type="checkbox"/> Not asking questions                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asking too many questions                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Not telling about mistakes | <input type="checkbox"/> Complaining about managers behind their backs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not giving feedback about managerial mistakes | Other: _____  |  |

2.11. Who do you think should take steps to solve these subordinate mistakes? (you can select more than one option) \*

- The subordinates
  - The managers
  - Human resources
  - Higher management
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2.12. Does/did YOUR COMPANY take steps to improve the relationship between leaders/managers and subordinates? \*

- Yes
- No

2.13. If your answer was "yes", what steps does/did YOUR COMPANY take in order to make this improvement? (you can select more than one option)

- Regular 1-on-1s
  - In-house team building programs
  - Off-site team building programs
  - Performance reviews
  - Coaching sessions
  - Events (Christmas party, family day, etc.)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2.14. (optional) Ideas that haven't been mentioned in the survey but you consider important:

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## Demographic questions

### 3.1. Sex \*

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

### 3.2. Age \*

\_\_\_\_\_

### 3.3. Marital status \*

- Single
- In relationship
- Married
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3.4. Nationality \*

\_\_\_\_\_

### 3.5. Hometown (optional)

\_\_\_\_\_

### 3.6. Highest level of education \*

- Mark only one oval.
- No education
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- University
- PhD
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3.7. Employment status \*

- Mark only one oval.
- Student
- Unemployed
- Employed
- Retired
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Supporting table for question 1.3.:

Supporting Table 1. for Figure 8.	
Industry	Total
Marketing, advertising and PR	26
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	18
Sales and Retail	14
Accounting, banking and finance	11
Creative arts and design	10
Education and social care	9
Business, consulting and management	7
Information technology	7
Tourism, leisure and sports	6
Transport and logistics	6
Hospitality and events management	4
Public services, administration and HR	3
Healthcare	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>

Source: Google Forms - N: 122

## Appendix D

### Supporting table for question 2.14.:

Supporting Table 2. Question 2.14. (optional) Ideas that haven't been mentioned in the survey but you consider important:
Even though my company did not do it, a good idea would be to have courses of professional formation and team management
I am not satisfied with my current manager but my belief in managers are generally good. So i didnt know what to tick as an aswer because you cannot do it as a general aswer. Somebody is good, someone is not. Out of 4 managers 3 were good but the current one...
Common tripp to leisure enviroment
The size of the organization
Communication channels
Communication channels
Internal questionnaire in the companies by HR dept.
Riuscire a creare un gruppo omogeneo (specialmente di età) credo possa essere un grande aiuto per sviluppare più coesione. Invece per me che ho 25 anni, alla mia prima esperienza di lavoro, in un ufficio, non è stato facile rapportarmi con gente di 30 anni molto più spavalda e altezzosa.

Source: Google Forms - N: 8