

**N. Bartosiak**

e-mail: bartosiak.natalia@gmail.com

## **CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION MANAGEMENT DURING REMOTE WORK**

**Summary:** The purpose of the study was to assess the effectiveness of remote work and identify factors that have a positive and negative impact on it.

The study was carried out in the period from April to May 2020 on a group of 50 people. The survey was conducted using the CAWI technique (*Computer-Assisted Web Interview*) – to collect information in quantitative market research. Respondents were asked five questions about working from home in special conditions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland, as many as 82% of respondents worked remotely. Over half of the respondents consider remote work less effective than stationary work (at the company's headquarters). In the opinion of the respondents, the greatest benefit of remote work results from the savings resulting from the time spent commuting – almost half of the respondents indicated this factor. The main barrier resulting from remote work is primarily the lack of direct

contact with other people – as many as 44% of respondents have marked this factor as key. As many as 58% of respondents would like to combine the opportunity to work at home with work in the office (2 days a weeks of the so-called home office, 3 days of work at the company's headquarters).

Direct relations in the world of new technologies and switching to the “on the web” contact formula are still crucial. For effective management, employers should, as far as possible, combine the remote work system with work in the office to strengthen the factors affecting efficiency and resulting from remote work, such as commuting. On the other hand, such a combination will allow you to meet the need for direct contact with other people, involvement in the life of the organization, or being a member of a team. Meeting the needs of belonging, recognition and self-realization is difficult to achieve during remote work.

**Key words:** management, management functions, remote work, motivating, coronavirus

## **Introduction**

Remote work, until now often treated as an employee benefit, has recently gained extraordinary popularity. Increased safety in the workplace, transition to a remote system, closing of offices – as a result of the coronavirus epidemic, many people's professional lives changed significantly and introduced many restrictions. The new SARS-Cov-2 coronavirus causes a disease called COVID-19. The disease is most often manifested by fever, coughing, shortness of breath, muscle pain and fatigue. Severe course of the disease is observed in about 15-20% of

people. Deaths occur in 2-3% of patients. The elderly are most at risk of developing severe disease and death, with reduced immunity accompanied by other diseases, especially chronic ones. The virus is transmitted by droplets [<https://www.gov.pl/web/koronawirus>].

Most companies were forced to switch to remote operation during the COVID-19 pandemic, whenever possible. Until recently, the topic of remote work, work from home or the so-called home-office was treated as something desirable. Employers wanting to recruit qualified employees often offered the opportunity to work from home as an additional employee benefit. In the current situation, remote work is becoming a standard, offered on a large scale, and is often the only solution that ensures the functioning of the enterprise.

The current situation forces employers to take less standard measures to contribute to maintaining work efficiency, and thus to motivation and employee involvement. The first part of the article recalls the management approach proposed by the field precursors. The new reality poses challenges for managers regarding motivating employees, planning, organizing, but also controlling them, that's why management functions are presented and described later in the article. The third part of the article attempts to assess the effectiveness of remote work and the factors that have a positive and negative impact on it by verifying two hypotheses:

H1: In special conditions, remote work is one of the most popular forms of business management.

H2: The effectiveness of remote work depends on the employee and other factors independent of him.

At the end of this article, the benefits and risks of using remote work have been summarized.

## **1. The essence and conditions of effective management. Remote work and its features**

We can find many definitions of management in the scientific literature. To understand the essence of management, it is necessary to recall the essence of the issue and its precursors. The first theories appeared in Europe and the United States at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Questions were then asked about understanding new employees in emerging enterprises. One of the precursors of the modern field of management was Fredrick W. Taylor, whose philosophy was based on four pillars:

- a. approaching management as a real science, which would allow to prepare and obtain the best method of individual activities
- b. assigning workers to work in scientific terms, thanks to which they would be assigned the work for which they are best suited
- c. scientific training and improvement of workers' skills
- d. friendly cooperation between workers and management based on direct relations [Stoner, p. 48].

The change in approach Taylor proposed concerned both managers and workers. In his opinion, one should address the increase of work efficiency, rejecting traditional working methods, taking time measurements as a basis. He also suggested that more efficient workers should receive a higher rate for their work. Taylor called it the piece rate differentiation system. Although the proposed method was associated with a significant increase in labour productivity and an increase in wages, both workers and their trade unions protested against the continuous increase in the pace of work. As a result, it laid the

foundations for the development and strengthening of trade unions [Ibid., p. 48-49].

Another precursor of management to mention was Henri Fayol, considered the founder of the classical school, which was founded to find the principles of managing complex organizations, which at the time were factories. Fayol's interests were not limited to the main functions of the organization, as in the case of Taylor. He was interested in a comprehensive approach to the organization, especially management aspects, which in his opinion was the most neglected function of the company. He prepared a set of 14 principles for efficient management that were to give guidance to other managers. Fayol was the first to define the specific leadership functions of planning, organizing, leading and controlling. He was convinced that these functions accurately reflected the content of the management process [Griffin 2017, p. 40-44].

Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company, played an important role in the field of management. He was a supporter of free competition. According to Ford, people's source of well-being is work, fair pay and quality. He avoided mismanagement and opposed production that exceeded demand, and criticized the tendency to lack of innovation among producers. In his opinion, focusing on earning money may be a limitation to business development, due to fear of possible failure [Czainska 2010, p.54-58].

Ford advocated a flat organizational structure that would have the advantage of being able to provide faster information and better time management. According to him, managers should have great independence and freedom of action, while they should be responsible for their own actions and the employees they manage. He used this method of cooperation in his own company. Ford saw employees as partners in the

company, each employee should apply to work and perform it in a solid and honest manner. In return for the work done, he should receive a share in the company's profit and appropriate remuneration [Ibid., p. 55-60].

In his book, Ford defined his basic principles of work organization, which concern:

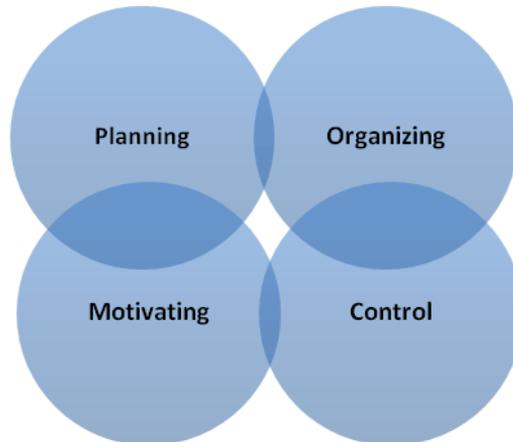
- a. no fear of the future and cessation of limiting one's own actions
- b. rejecting competition – people who are the best at the job should do it
- c. linking profit with high-quality service
- d. manufacturing is not about buying at a cheap price and selling at a higher price [Ford, 1926, p. 273].

Based on the achievements of field precursors and following Ricky W. Griffin, management can therefore be defined as “a set of activities (including planning and decision making, organizing, leadership, i.e. managing and controlling) directed towards the organization's resources (human, financial, material and information) and performed with the intention of achieving the organization's goals in an efficient and effective manner” [Griffin 2017, p. 7-8]. Breaking down the first definition into parts, we must understand that the way:

- efficient – means wise use of resources, ensuring economical management
- effective – making smart decisions focused on success

Key management functions are presented in Figure 1 and will be discussed in detail later in the article.

**Figure 1.** Management functions in organizations



Planning is a unique type of decision making regarding the future of an organization, setting its goals and how to achieve them. This is a universal activity that all organizations carry out, there are no two organizations that plan in the same way [Bendkowski 2010, p. 14].

Based on an understanding of the environment, managers must determine what the overall goal (mission) of the company is. The establishment of the company sets the organization's goals, assumptions, values and directions. The goals set are crucial for the further functioning of the organization. This is important in the company's management process [Griffin 2017, p. 211-226].

The scope of planning includes the following elements:

- managing the organization's goals – setting a direction, determining what the company is focusing on, and assessing progress made
- building strategies and strategic planning – developed by organization managers, define the company's goals

- making managerial decisions – often these are decisions that must be made efficiently in situations that are problematic for the organization
- management tools that support planning and decision making [Bendkowski 2010, p. 14].

Another important management function is organizing, i.e. deciding how to best group the organization's activities and resources. Management should take into account two types of key factors in the organization process. Firstly, the organization's goals and strategic plans to achieve the goal must be taken into account, and secondly, managers must take into account changes in the environment and forecasts for the future [Stoner et al. 2001, p. 306-308].

When constructing an organization, managers make decisions by following four steps:

1. divide the work into individual employees or assign them to teams
2. perform departmentalization, i.e. grouping of employees and tasks
3. establish hierarchical relationships (relations of service subordination) between individual positions
4. coordinate activities between positions [Ibid., p. 306-307].

Organizing, like planning, is a process that is constantly changing and requires a lot of commitment from managers. Achievement of goals is not possible without permanent commitment by members of the organization. The process of motivating, which aims to involve employees, consists in influencing people's behaviour, taking into account knowledge, which causes such and not a different behaviour of a given person. Motivating is not a simple task for managers, especially those who have large teams, because each person has individual motives of action that mobilize him to

achieve the set goal. The art. of effective motivation consists in their skilful and rational adaptation to the existing conditions and needs of the organization. It requires knowledge managers to influence people, taking into account the external and internal conditions of the organization [Kozłowski 2009, p. 20].

Managers have a range of tools at their disposal to motivate employees, the key is to skilfully adapt methods to a given person. Motivational tools can be divided according to how they interact with the employee. Three basic groups can be distinguished, i.e.

- coercion tools (e.g. orders, prohibitions, regulations)
- incentives (e.g. rewards, bonuses, promotions, flexible working hours)
- persuasion (e.g. consultations, negotiations, setting goals).

According to the research, the use of rewards rather than penalties has a positive effect on employees. Behaviours that have brought something positive will be repeated more often in the future, and those associated with negative memories will disappear [Listwan, 2010, p. 42-50].

The fourth management function is control. Thanks to this function, it is possible to check and verify the level of implementation of the planned goal and to make sure by managers that the actual activities are in line with the planned ones. Already in the planning process it is worth setting goals whose level of implementation will be measurable. In this step, measures of success and failure should be defined, which during and after the tasks will allow to assess its implementation [Stoner et al. 2001, p. 540-541].

Controlling in the organization can apply to any area. Two ways can be used to identify such areas: concentration on resources (e.g. financial,

material, human and information) and at a specific level (focused on one or several operating systems of the organization) [Griffin 2017, p. 658-665]. Without effective control, it is not possible to assess the achievement of the set goal. Therefore, control is crucial to the success of the organization.

The multitude of solutions proposed today by management, as well as the rapidly progressing globalization of the economy, as well as the revolution in the field of information technology and technique, mean that the management of the 21<sup>st</sup> century enterprise should be oriented towards the external environment of the enterprise. Globalization of management has become a reality, now not only large organizations but also medium-sized enterprises are interested in global organizations.

The phenomenon of globalization includes related factors such as: proximity, location and attitude. The concept of proximity changes its existing meaning, modern technology and the Internet enable people around the world to immediately share information, regardless of proximity. Secondly, part of globalization is the location of operations of a given enterprise in various markets while integrating them. The practice of separating operations of individual organizations into many countries is increasingly used [Barlett 1989]. Thirdly, globalization refers to a new, open attitude that concerns international governance. This attitude combines curiosity with the world and the desire to participate in the global economy [Stoner 2001 et al, p. 137-139].

Contemporary companies strive to build competitive and successful organizations, often face the dilemma of choosing a management concept that guarantees a strong market position.

The changes observed today in the global economy contribute to a new view on various aspects of the enterprise's functioning. The implementation of modern management concepts enables the prevention of threats or the use of unexpected opportunities. There are many different concepts of business management observed in business operations. The choice of one of them or a certain integrated orientation is usually determined by the ability of the company's management to predict the consequences of using selected solutions [Zimniewicz 2003, p. 130–170].

Modern management should enable the company to flexibly respond to the changing conditions in which it must operate, as well as high mobility and entrepreneurship in making risky decisions. This is dictated primarily by the need to ensure competitive advantage and achieve the goals set by the organizations.

The development of the organization, and above all the Internet, results in the possibility of doing work without leaving home. This opportunity is already being used by more and more companies that allow their employees to work remotely (telework). Remote work consists in performing professional duties outside the company headquarters, using electronic means of communication. The rules of employment in the form of remote work are regulated by the Labour Code. "Telework is the regular performance of work outside the workplace using electronic means of communication"[ Labour Code, October 16, 2007, art. 675].

One of the new challenges that managers face is management and control of employees in the remote work system. Very often the boundaries between work and household chores blur, which may be associated with a decrease in employee efficiency. Especially in the recent period of the COVID-19 pandemic, this form of work has become extremely popular and introduced on a massive scale by enterprises. This approach is hardly surprising, since stationary work in the office was impossible to perform in a pandemic. Threats associated with the spread of coronavirus put both entrepreneurs and employees in an unusual situation. The situation is changing dynamically in many companies.

### **1. Analysis of the effectiveness of remote work**

This article describes the results of the study, which aimed to verify the hypotheses regarding remote work.

*Hypothesis 1:* Under special conditions, remote work is one of the most popular forms of business management.

*Hypothesis 2:* The effectiveness of remote work depends on the employee and other factors independent of him.

The study was carried out in the period from April to May 2020 on a group of 50 people. The survey was conducted using the CAWI technique (*Computer-Assisted Web Interview*)<sup>1</sup> – to collect information in quantitative market research. The respondents included in the research group are employees of international corporations. Respondents were asked five questions about work from home during the particular period of the COVID-19 pandemic, which organizations and employees faced.

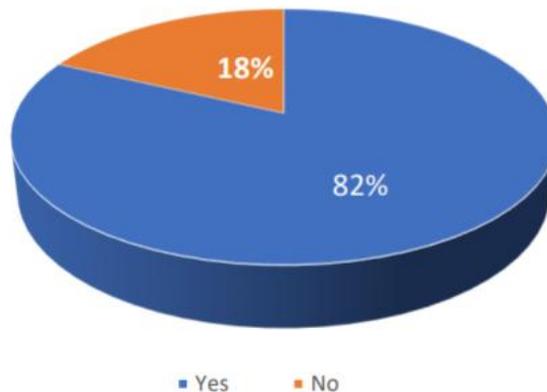
---

<sup>1</sup>CAWI - Computer-assisted web interviewing - is an Internet surveying technique of collecting information in quantitative market research, in which the respondent is asked to complete an electronic survey. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer-assisted\\_web\\_interviewing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer-assisted_web_interviewing)

Further part of the article will present the detailed results of the survey along with the conclusions.

The first question the respondents were asked concerned the verification of the working mode in the period from March to May 2020, it asked whether during this period employees worked remotely from at least a week to several weeks. It turns out that during the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland, as many as 82% of respondents worked remotely (Figure 1). The organizations took advantage of the opportunity to work from home on a large scale, offering their employees such an opportunity during a pandemic. Many organizations, especially international corporations, have previously used the possibilities of remote work, while the use of this form has not yet been carried out on such a large scale.

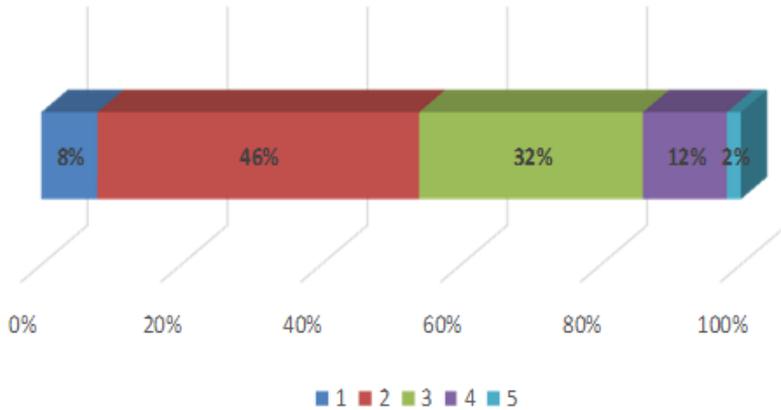
**Figure 1:** In the period March - May 2020, did you work remotely for at least one week to several weeks?



*Source: Own study*

In question 2, respondents were asked to rate the scale of the effectiveness of remote work in relation to work in a full-time program.

**Figure 2:** How do you assess the effectiveness of remote work in relation to stationary work (at the company's headquarters). Please mark the correct value on the rating scale, with 1 meaning - definitely worse, 5 – definitely more favourable.

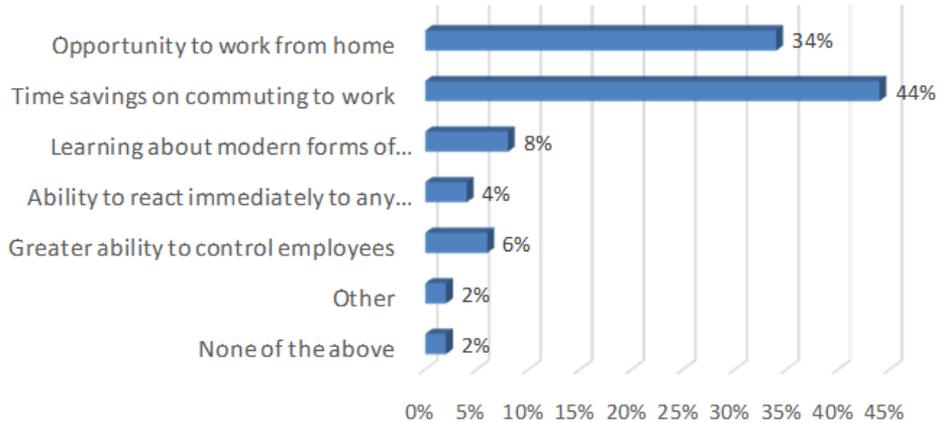


*Source: Own study*

Analysis of the respondents' answers to question 2 leads to the conclusion that the majority of them, because more than 50% (Top2Boxes) consider remote work as less effective than full-time work (at the company's headquarters). It is important to identify the reasons for this phenomenon, however, these factors should be determined in connection with other indicators determining the structure of the answer to question 2. These conditions will be analysed cumulatively, after receiving the answer to the next questions in the survey.

In the next question, the respondents were asked to select factors that in their opinion had a positive impact on the effectiveness of remote work.

**Figure 3:** Please select a factor that you think has a positive impact on the effectiveness of remote work

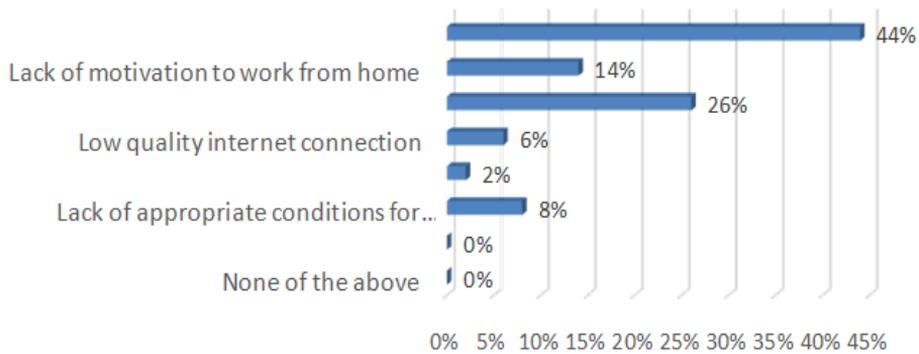


*Source: Own study*

The obtained answers, which are presented in Figure 3, indicate that the highest efficiency of remote work results in the respondents' assessment of the savings resulting from the time spent commuting, almost half of the respondents indicated this factor. The second, equally highly rated factor is the opportunity to work from home, which in itself allows you to be an effective employee. The remaining answers were rated quite low, which indicates that they did not have much significance for the respondents. Benefits resulting from learning about modern forms of communication, or the ability to react immediately or control employees did not matter much to the respondents. In the *Other* answer, which was marked only once, the opportunity to spend more time with the family was mentioned.

In the next question, the respondents answered the question about factors that negatively affect the effectiveness of remote work (Figure 4).

**Figure 4:** Please select a factor that you think negatively affects the efficiency of remote work



*Source: Own study*

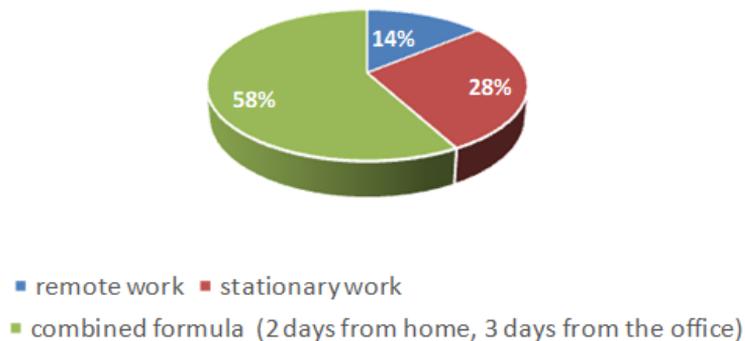
The main barrier resulting from remote work is, for the respondents, first of all the lack of direct contact with other people – as many as 44% of respondents marked this factor as key. It turns out that direct relationships in the world of new technologies and the transition to the “on the web” contact formula are still crucial. The presence of other family members also has a negative impact. Especially in the age of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closing of schools, shops and even forests – all family members spent time at home. It was not free time from standard duties – employees did their work and at the same time care of children, helping them in their learning. According to the survey, for 26% of respondents this was a negative factor.

Ack of internal motivation to work from home, which was indicated by 14% of respondents, may be associated with a lack of self-discipline, the atmosphere in the workplace often mobilizes to act and achieve goals jointly. Especially people who have problems with mobilization to work should limit the possibility of remote working. Other answers were marked by few respondents. Among the respondents, the problem of

hardware, good Internet connection and favourable conditions only negatively affected the efficiency of remote work.

In the last question, the respondents received a question about the most convenient form of work. As many as 58% of respondents would like to work in a combined formula of remote and office work. Only 28% would like to work only from the office and only 14% only from home (Figure 5).

**Figure 5:** If you had a choice between remote work and stationary work, would you choose work:



*Source: Own study*

The results of the respondents' answers to question 5, where the vast majority opted for the possibility of work and full-time work, suggest that this trend should be maintained and developed as far as possible in future business management concepts.

Since respondents indicated the lack of direct contact with other people as the main barrier of remote work, it is worth returning to the hierarchy of needs developed by Maslow. Human needs as a basic motivating factor are an important factor in influencing employees by organization

managers. According to Maslow, the hierarchy of needs is closely related to managing people and motivating them. The employer should enable employees to meet their basic needs. Satisfied lower needs allow employees to set bigger and more ambitious goals [Maslow 2016, p. 115-119]. The need to belong is associated with the organization's involvement, being a member of the team or contacts with colleagues. Meeting the needs of belonging, recognition and self-fulfilment is difficult to achieve when working remotely. Only direct relationships are able to allow employees to meet their motivation needs.

## **Conclusion**

During the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland, as many as 82% of respondents worked remotely, which confirms the first hypothesis. Remote work in special conditions is one of the most popular forms of business management. Over half of the respondents consider remote work less effective than full-time work. In the respondents' opinion, the highest efficiency of remote work results from the savings resulting from the time spent commuting – almost half of the respondents indicated this factor. The main barrier resulting from remote work for respondents is primarily the lack of direct contact with other people – as many as 44% of respondents have marked this factor as key. The described results are also a confirmation for the second hypothesis – the effectiveness of remote work depends on the employee and other factors independent of him. Direct contact with other people has a significant impact on the effectiveness of remote work. Other influencing factors are the presence of other family members who, being at the same time and in the same place as the employee, often hinder effective work.

It turns out that direct relationships in the world of new technologies and the transition to the “on the web” contact formula are still crucial, which is why combining remote work with full-time work seems to be the best solution and a way to change the model of the organization. As many as 58% of respondents would like to combine the opportunity to work at home with work in the office.

### **Bibliography**

1. Barlett Ch.A., Ghoshal S., *Managing Across Borders: The Transnational Solution*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston 1989.
2. Bendkowski J., *Practical management of organizations. Managerial competences*, Scientific Publisher of the Silesian University of Technology, Gliwice 2010.
3. Czainska K., *Discover management*, PWN Scientific Publishing House, Warszawa 2010.
4. Ford H., *My Life and Work*, Cornstalk Press, Sydney 1926.
5. Griffin R., *Fundamentals of organization management*, PWN Scientific Publishing House, Warszawa 2017.
6. Labour Code, October 16, 2007, art. 675.
7. Kozłowski W., *Employee motivation management*, CeDeWu, Warszawa 2009.
8. Listwan T., *Human resource management*, C.H. Beck, Warszawa 2010.
9. Maslow A., *Motivation and personality*, PWN Scientific Publishing House, Warszawa 2016.
10. Stoner J., Freeman R. E., Gilbert D. Jr., *Management*, Polish Economic Publishing House, Warszawa 2001.

11. Zimniewicz K., *Contemporary management concepts and methods*, Polish Economic Publishing House, Warszawa 2003.

### **Netography**

1. <https://www.gov.pl/web/koronawirus>
2. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer-assisted\\_web\\_interviewing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer-assisted_web_interviewing)