



Case study no. 1

Title of Case study	Cognitive flexibility during the Covid-19 pandemic Management perspective.
Keywords (meta tag)	Digital communication, digital environment, pandemic, soft skills
Provided by	SSE Riga
Language	ENGLISH
Case study	<p>The Covid-19 pandemic has totally changed our perception about the way we work and study. People are spending more time in the virtual environment compared to the previous times. Zoom meetings, Teams conferences etc., is the new working environment. By one click a person can move from one task and the country to totally different task in other country. Also there is no physical traveling between the meetings that means that time to switch between the tasks is close to zero. At the same time those meeting often are conducted at home where there are many other issues that might need some attention and even action. The situations can be very different depending on the family status and living conditions of the person. From the managerial perspective the new situation also creates some significant challenges. It is harder to control the employees whether they work or not. The new control mechanisms need to be developed to ensure that the work is being conducted properly and the deadlines are met or not.</p> <p>The above-described circumstances demand a significant cognitive flexibility to cope with work related as well as personal tasks. All this is accompanied by additional stress emerging from the fact that we are working more in the virtual environment. Not everyone is having the same ability to switch between the tasks. Usually, younger generation is having shorter switching times but with age the cognitive flexibility decreases.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) How should the management of the company plan the tasks for employees to make sure that they manage to switch between the tasks and implement them properly?2) What efforts/actions can be suggested for the management to assess and develop the cognitive flexibility skills for the employees?3) How the cognitive flexibility aspects (related to the answers from previous question) should be taken into account when setting up task forces and teams for project implementation?
Reference Link (if any)	
Type of material	CASE STUDY

(Suggested answers on the next page)



Suggested answers

1. The tasks can be grouped according to the topic. So that the employees are working on different tasks but within the same topic. The meetings should be planned to have some more time to “switch” between the different issues covered in various meetings. The tasks that can be conducted flexibly at any time should not be assigned for some particular hours but rather the general deadline should be set. This would allow also to balance the private life and working tasks.
2. The assessment of the cognitive flexibility can be a sensitive yet very useful tool to improve the operations of the company. In general the management should conduct constant observations on the employees ability to switch between the tasks and reactions in various conditions e.g. short time to switch vs long time, differences in case the switching is between tasks or topics etc. Also some more advanced tools can be suggested to test the cognitive flexibility of the employees. There are various tests developed and available so the management should select the appropriate ones and implement them in the company. However this should be accompanied by sufficient explanation to the employees about the purpose of the assessment and use of the results.
3. Setting up the team has never been an easy task. No matter to what extent the team setup is developed according to the top down or bottom up approach. In case of top down (the team is set up by the management) it can be suggested to group people with different CF in one team. However this should be aligned with other competencies and skills and the balance should be found between the CF and other skills to ensure the productivity of the team.