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## Psychological aspects of manager (leader) and subordinate communication = Psychologiczne aspekty komunikacji między przełożonym (liderem) a podwładnym

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

**Vladas Tumulavičius, Igor Trofimovs**

## **Psychological aspects of manager (leader) and subordinate communication**

### **Psychologiczne aspekty komunikacji między przełożonym (liderem) a podwładnym**

#### **Summary:**

The article undertakes the problems of the behaviour and prognose in the mutual manager understanding. It is based on investigations of the range of different fields: sociology , management, psychology. This interdisciplinary approach is typical for the social sciences, especially for the theory of social communication. Authors show the role of the essence of the subconscious predictable of the superior's behaviour and subordinate, what they explain on examples of different situations. They give the pattern of different versions of expectations and they come to the conclusion about necessity of investigations of psychological aspects of manager communication during training of staff in the managements.

#### **Streszczenie:**

Artykuł podejmuje problematykę zachowań i prognozowania wzajemnego zrozumienia w komunikacji menadżerskiej. Opiera się na dociekaniach z zakresu różnych dziedzin: socjologii, zarządzania, psychologii.

To interdyscyplinarne podejście jest typowe dla nauk społecznych, m.in. dla teorii komunikacji społecznej. Autorzy wskazują na istotę podświadomego przewidywania zachowań przełożonego i podwładnego, co wyjaśniają na przykładach różnych sytuacji. Podają schemat różnych wersji przewidywań i dochodzą do wniosku o konieczności badań psychologicznych aspektów komunikacji menadżerskiej podczas szkolenia personelu w zakresie zarządzania.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zarządzanie, komunikacja, decydowanie, lider, menadżer, subordynacja

**Key words:** management, communication, decision, leader, manager, subordinate.

#### **Annotation**

For the time being automatic systems with modern techniques and latest technologies are being implemented in the organizational practice, for instance, road traffic, banking procedures, automatic voting at parliament sessions, and during elections, transmission and processing of information for different purposes, etc. Modern electronic computing machines allow creating of mathemati-

cal models of management processes and programs for prediction of tendencies in the field of globalization and strengthening of safety of the European Union (EU) and NATO<sup>1</sup>. However, tasks of management organization automatization can be solved only with the help of well-organized various social and economic structures that cannot computerize the disorder, and take well-grounded managerial decisions without human participation.

This article addresses issues in relation to the manager (leader) and work relation peculiarities.

### **Introduction**

Management – it is a comprehensive study of technical, organizational and social aspects and practical application of the theory of general management principles that are applicable to any organization system: organization aims and objectives for ensuring of particular measures for their realization, distributing of objectives on several types for distribution of work to different departments in order to coordinate organizational work of various departments and to improve the formal hierarchy of the organization, to optimise decision-making and information-exchange processes in order to form efficient management style, adequate activity motivation, and social responsibility<sup>2</sup>.

Adequate activity motivation, social responsibility, efficient management style cannot be formed in case the manager and the subordinate do not communicate when dealing with different administrative issues. In business communication, the manager (leader) – subordinate communication can be described as a subject of labour relations and management of objects of public organization that entails the necessity to perform management functions as well as to ensure the feedback<sup>3</sup>.

The manager (leader) and the subordinate differ in some peculiar aspects that witness the specifics of business communication psychology. Exactly this highlights the role of nature and uneven distribution of responsibility and initiative, participation in this process, dependence on each other. The opinion of the manager (leader) defines the form and type of activities for subordinates to be carried out depending on particular functional responsibilities. In this case persons do not interact in normal “speak” – “listen” form, this is the decision for the management. These particular communicative functions are in the basis for the analysis of this particular subject as a type of independent business communication.

In order to ensure the management is efficient, the manager (leader) possesses deep knowledge on his/her subordinates and due to this reason the

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<sup>1</sup> A. Makštutis, *Strateginis planavimas globalizacijos sąlygomis*, Vilnius 2006, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> A. James, F. Stoner, R. Edward Freeman, Daniel R. Gilbert, Jr, *Vadyba*. – Kaunas 1999, p. 619-647.

<sup>3</sup> Idem.

business communication and perception is of great importance for the administration. The management process of labour relations between the subject and the object as well as perception of each other is not unambiguous. Every manager (leader) understands how important it is to use working approach to the adjustment. Nevertheless, the business communication peculiarities are often ignored.

Interpersonal perception between the players is the knowledge on how they ensure mutual understanding and communication. This aspect of management relations includes a number of partner behaviour prediction and understanding mechanisms.

**The problem** here lays in the fact that future managers (leaders) must orient themselves in the constantly changing environment with their subordinates and pay particular attention to the political strategy of the organization and creation of more efficient use of the human resources of the organization.

**Aim** – is to study the relation between a manager and a subordinate in order to establish psychological legal factors.

**Objectives:**

1. To carry out analysis of the environment of interaction between the manager and the subordinate.
2. To evaluate aspects of communication between the manager and the subordinate.
3. To present conclusions for the improvement of the communication relations process between the manager and the subordinate.

**The research methods applied:** observation, comparison, conversation, analysis and synthesis, and summarization.

**Literature** and other sources used – the authors of published works, normative acts, regulatory legal acts of the countries, and others.

## **1. Partnership Relations, Behaviour Prediction in the Manager-Subordinate Relationship**

*„... A commander shall be brave, but not a tear-away, fast, but does not hurry to act, active, but not careless, strong, but not stubborn, smart, but not pushing, pleasant, but not a temporizer, proud, but not vauntful...”*

A. Suvorov

Behaviour of partners and constructive manager in the manager-subordinate relationships is very dynamic what makes it very difficult to predict. There exist vivid phrases that forecast some of its elements in the reality, which, in its turn, will continue attacking, in the future. Minimal changes in the situation or partner status (his/her mood, attention, etc.) affecting the relation-

ship between them will project separate and different scenarios. Thus, the prediction process is very important for the feedback, its informative and adequate dynamics. Thus, the reality not only wrecks the forecast, but also directs its development through permanent feedback. Materials on personal forecasts begin to develop on the basis of personal experience that is made of various abilities and skills, knowledge, and direct personal experience (including the events existing in the form of forecasts).

The forecasting is done in two ways: consciously and unconsciously. The management of activities, as a rule, is conscious and based on forecasts of operative development of the situation, as well as measures directed at particular results, stages. But, unfortunately, the relations of manager (leader) – subordinate are very often projected unconsciously. The manager (leader) is rarely conscious of what he/she had predicted at the particular moment. Usually, he/she comes to a conclusion on what exactly the subordinate will do in that particular situation. Though, he/she has chosen to consciously observe the key moments in the forecast development and to understand the reason for the opinion that the partner would act in a particular manner. The ways of realizing forecasts are to be taught to the managers during training sessions, business games, etc.

The unconscious forecast, as it was already mentioned above, is made in different situations that can be both positive and negative (fear). In general, the positive expectations and fear respectively represent the positive and negative situation model (See figure 1):

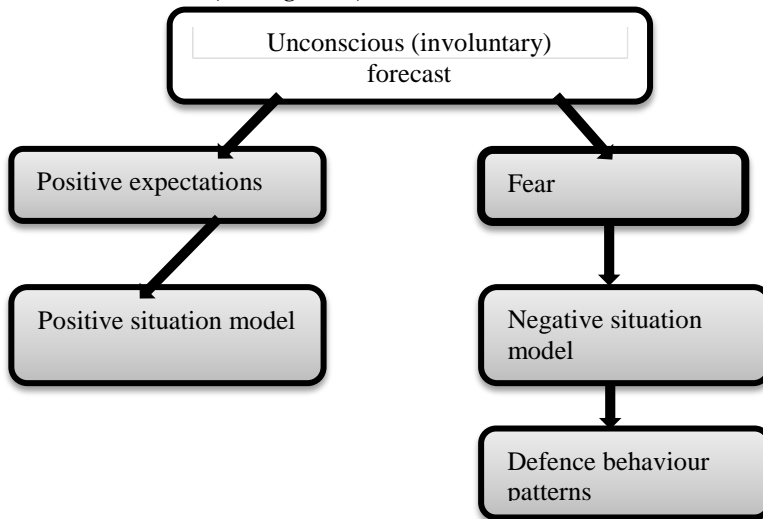


Fig. 1. Unconscious forecast model

Let us consider one of typical situations of manager (leader) – subordinate relations: the manager (leader), after having analysed the organisation aims and objectives, as well as situations causing particular activities, has made man-

agerial decisions. Implementation of this particular decision and selection of the subordinate is made. The manager (leader), taking into account the experience and positive personal qualities, hopes that the subordinate will understand all in the given order. Yet the manager (leader) is afraid that the offered basic task, even if understood correctly, will not be carried out as there are different factors existing (such as subordinates carrying out other tasks). The manager (leader) expects that the subordinates will willingly work in a creative manner and realize his/her tasks. But the manager is afraid that, basing on his/her experience, the subordinates may not understand the task correctly, that, in general, can delay its realization, i.e., the subordinates have decided to carry out the task considerably later, or even have forgotten about it completely. When determining the time for task completion, the manager (leader) expects that it will be finished during the set period of time despite different unexpected situations or unfavourable conditions that, however, were preliminary examined and taken into consideration. At the same time the manager (leader) shall not disregard the forecast of any unexpected conditions. It is based on the fact that a situation will move on in a particular direction, but extreme situations can occur as well.

All these possibilities of an effective forecast made by the manager (leader) can be presented in a “compact” way. In reality, the manager (leader) assumes two basic possibilities:

- The management decision will be successfully realized;
- The managerial decision will not be successfully realized.

These forecasts can be presented in a schematic way (see table 1):

Table 1

Manager (leader)	
Hopes that	Is afraid that
Situation	
Forecast without unexpected events	Unexpected situations may occur, notably, accidents
Subordinates	
Understand (assume) the task correctly	Deviate from the task
Understand what and how should be done	Do not understand the manager (leader)
Realize the task, show reasonable initiative	The task will be performed in a passive way or not till the end. Unnecessary things are done
Managerial decision	
The task will be completed within the deadline	The task will be completed partially or not completed altogether

The left column shows the partner behaviour model in a positive situation, the right one – in a negative situation. They are as if reflecting each other: “When I want something I expect it but with fear that it may not happen”. But the human attention and awareness degree are mixed models. Which one of these models is predominating and, the most important, how a person understands how to implement in the real life one or another model, this depends on the subject’s disposition, previous experience and other individual characteristics. The experience shows that reality is rarely coinciding with the forecast; very often our expectations are not fully met.

The real process of task execution and obtaining of results, most probably, will not be able to stay only in the positive or the negative model. That will never happen; some positive manager (leader) models most probably will not lead to the result if the situation with a positive model in reality will correspond to more important events. For instance, even if a subordinate does not like the order, due to the discipline and organization, he/she can fulfil everything the management has decided of, and the aim will be achieved.

Together with overlapping of negative reality model, the person will experience only feeling of satisfaction. Real pleasure is quite possible, if implemented in a positive model, possibility of which was quite low (in our case, the risk of the manager (leader), or in case the results were better than expected.

But in some aspects the situation can completely coincide with the negative model. Possibilities presented not only for expectations, every one of which is undesirable since can cause problems in the organization and, consequently, possibility of tension. When increasing the attention of the manager (leader), he/she becomes more aware of everything showing the reality and negative models could coincide. He/she is subconsciously ready to protect him/herself. This is done with the help of the existing behaviour models that can also play a negative role. This can be, for instance, an attempt to place responsibility onto others, thus trying to hide or to “dress up” the negative result that distorts the information in the management field. The manager (leader) is afraid to face a difficult situation; he/she does not know how to avoid it as he/she does not project on him/herself particular conditions. He/she is ready to face trouble, but does not know when to expect it and cannot prepare his/her defence in advance, does not feel him/herself in safety, feels tension.

The manager accumulates fear of possible failure (negative forecast model) that can lead to a situation when secondary events or phenomena can grow in his/her mind causing the appearance of negative symptoms, like a snowball, which, in its turn, leads to panic, and then to surrender, i.e., the manager (leader) refuses to take any actions aimed at the completion of the aim.

It is clear that this reaction does not show the professionalism of the manager. It is preliminary and unjustified. Even if the person dealing with external factors is self-governed and calm, the inner tension is still affecting him/her in a negative way (paralyzed thinking impedes with concentration,

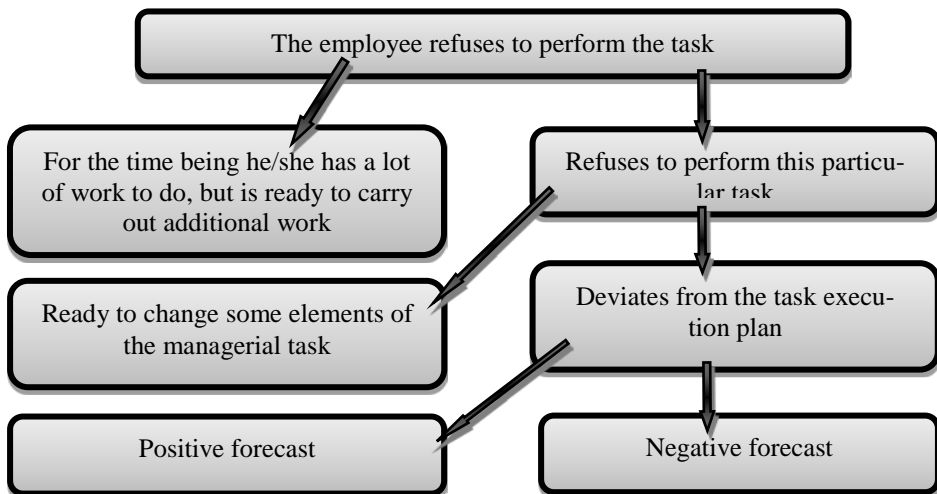
etc.). Then, the means of individual protection, psychological mechanisms are activated; furthermore, these conditions have also played a negative role – effect of distorted managerial information, which prevents manager from constructive participation in solving problematic situations.

Besides that, alongside with defence mechanisms in relation to the situation, it is possible to take part or be completely distanced. There exists a number of behavioural defence models and merging with inclusion – a kind of an “explosion”. Depending on the cultural level, individual personality peculiarities, ability of self-control, the “explosion” can be visible or concealed, directed to the inside (towards oneself) or to the communication partners. For example, subordinates are trying to find out in detail what measures are to be taken to satisfy the managerial decision taken by the manager (leader); it is possible to see their readiness to recoil from the task execution plan. Nevertheless such a conclusion can lead to completely incomprehensible reaction of partners. This, in its turn, can lead to a conflict and readiness of the subordinate personnel to digress from the work execution plan. In such a situation there are unnecessary oppositions between the manager (leader) and the subordinate, the managerial activities are disorganized, the subordinate’s interest in this activity is decreasing, as well as the confidence in the manager is lost and mutual understanding is absent. In this way the mechanism described in the negative forecast is “implemented”, what is a serious obstacle for correct understanding of hierarchical partners.

In order to avoid such situations, managers have to possess particular skills and abilities. The key to understanding any model is forecasting of a negative result or element as a new alternative, including both positive and negative prognostic meanings, but on another level (see fig. 2). The negative forecast in this case can be regarded as a new alternative.

Let us examine a case when an employee refuses to perform a task as an example.

Fig. 2. Cases when the employee refuses to carry out the task.





If this process takes the route of the scenario presented, then communication between partners can lead to mutual understanding and in future it is possible to prepare solutions for more detailed management.

Together with the development of the professionalism of the manager (leader), both forecast models are changing. A positive example is the addition of new elements and their components that have already been satisfactory for the management; that is why they have moved to the negative forecast models. This means that the manager is increasing requirements to him/herself and the subordinates. As the result, the positive model is constantly improving. For confirmation, the manager is not only unafraid to take and realize complex managerial decisions, but, even on the contrary, consciously or unconsciously is aiming at these types of activity.

For the professional skill level, the manager (leader) has to be reliable, with the ability to present calm resistance to forthcoming troubles. Management of negative reaction to individual manifestations in this model will be more exact.

In early actions of a person it is even less possible to observe the existence of groundless, inexplicable consolidation of different reactions. In other words, the manager (leader), when acquiring more experience, reacts less frequently and intensely in a form of "explosion", thus the negative influence on the behaviour model is decreased. At the same time, if there are positive changes observable in the reaction of a person to a negative forecast, it is obvious that he/she should not hold leadership responsibilities, especially in relation to responsible decisions.

Prediction of subordinate actions and situations with forecasts of manager (leader) activities is shown in the table 2. He/she will do everything that depends on him/her in order to increase the subordinate's interest in the task offered. The stage of the preliminary information gathering shows why such a decision has been made, conditions that helped or made him/her take it. Taking into account the tasks, the manager is planning to use psychological influence (persuasion), besides that, he/she addresses the experience, reputation and other positive qualities of the subordinate. Finally, he intends to explain in more detail the order of training and feedback in order to take control of all the necessary measures for task implementation, ensuring of support and help in case of any difficulties. In other words, the manager (leader) intends to do everything in the way as to realize all the managerial decisions.

At the same time the manager (leader) does not exclude the possibility that not all of it can be achieved. It is completely possible that due to some reason he/she can motivate the subordinates sufficiently and make them interested in completing the task. Subordination cannot be a sufficiently solid basis for managerial decision-making, and the manager will be forced to apply direct pressure that cannot promote initiative in task realization. Due to some reason, the manager (leader) will not be able to ensure all the necessary

material and technical means and ensure enough of methodical and practical help.

Table 2

Manager (leader) (depending on their actions)	
expects (hopes) an assumption that:	
He/she will not be able to persuade the subordinate	Subordinates will have a convincing enough basis for this decision
He/she will try to offer motivation in order to provide basis for action	He/she will be forced to use direct pressure on subordinates
He/she will explain in detail the order of task realization and will be understood correctly	During the conversation it is possible to forget the exact order of activity implementation or understand the essence in a wrong way
He/she will ensure all the necessary conditions for the task completion	There can be conditions when they are not provided with all the necessary means
He/she will guarantee help to the subordinates and support in difficult conditions	He/she will not be able to ensure adequate support of subordinates
Conclusions	
In order the subordinates would carry out the tasks to be completed, they need to show initiative and creativity	They will be forced to make pressure on the subordinates for compulsory completion of tasks

This means that the management is carrying out some of its duties in a formal manner. In this case its calm approach to personal imperfections and mistakes is sort of determined in advance. In such conditions a person can easily analyze the situation, take well-grounded managerial decisions.

In general, as the result, the situation seems to be paradoxical at the first glance: if the manager (leader) shows too responsible approach to the realization of managerial decisions, it can have negative impact on the result. But management does not lead to increased efficiency in the case of the other extreme, either – when the manager will not stay indifferent to the result. Most probably the most efficient way in this case would be to strike the happy medium, i.e., the manager (leader), when working for the obtaining of his/her aims, shall evaluate sensibly and calmly any unfavourable fact.

## 2. Adoption of Mutual Understanding in Communication between Manager (Leader) and Subordinate

*„...generous, but not wasteful, insistently invoked in work, not evoking anger, unvain, imposing, but not rude...“*

Confucius

So far we have regarded only one forecast – the manager (leader). The forecast of the tasks and situations of a subordinate are presented in the table 3, the forecast of the subordinate actions – in the table 4. Fulfilment of the forecast for the manager (leader) as well as the subordinate: coincidence with the positive reality model will be regarded as a norm and even a partially negative model can only evoke emotions and usual defence reaction.

Table 3

Subordinate	
Waits (expects),	Is afraid that
Management	
Will explain the whole situation in detail that is basis for taking of managerial decisions	Will categorically require completion of tasks without providing any explanations
Will give order in relation to responsibilities related to professional interests	Will not take into account his/her interests not connected with the functionality of work
Detailed and easy-to-understand explanation of appointment procedures	The explained task understood
Material and technical as well as other means are required for the task realization	By any means or not, but they will ensure fulfilment of the task
Ensure the necessary support	Not enough of help
The whole situation	
Ensure stable rhythm, it will be possible to predict activities	Activities can be unpredictable, and changes can take place, there can be exceptional circumstances

When comparing the models, it can be seen that the projection schemes of the manager and the subordinate are very similar and identical in details. But their behaviour and reaction to them may be considerably different. With management decisions, the position of the manager (leader) can be justified, but with the subordinate – measures, for instance, in the field of the manager (leader), manifestation of self-interest. It is necessary to ensure subordinates with measures necessary for the completion of tasks. For a manager (leader)

who has spent a lot of effort to obtain their point of view, it is an achievement. Any unexpected circumstances can be substantial grounds for the subordinates for refusal to continue execution of the particular task.

Disputable behaviour in the situation is a characteristic trait of any of the participants of the cooperation process, but it is characterised by different causes and by different positions of both of them.

The manager (leader) expects that the subordinates will precisely perform the set task, but he/she acknowledges that particular managerial decisions are not fulfilled. The employee also hopes that the manager (leader) that tries to do something in his favour will not do it at any cost.

Table 4

Employee (for his/her actions)	
expects (hopes),	possible time (fear) that
He/she will evaluate the possibilities of the management in decision-making and understanding	Justification of the management decisions will not be satisfactory for him/her
Study of the task realization	Is not able to understand how the task should be completed
Will show reasonable initiative and creativity	Will try to deviate from the task execution plan, or it will be completed formally
Basically,	
To justify the manager trust and to complete the task till the end and before the deadline	In the course of the task realization, due to different circumstances, deviation from some of the requirements and procedures can take place

It can be stated that the situation of the two communication partners is assessed from the following position:

- a) to protect other types of activities to the benefit of his/her own position;
- b) to evaluate their activities for the interest of a private partner (despite his/her personal interests);

This mutual understanding between the partners shall come to one of the following two conditions:

- o it corresponds to the situation assessment (as well as the personal assessment of each partner);
- o in case of different opinions – the partners shall try to understand each other.

Level of assessment parallelism (discrepancy) depends on the number of coinciding interests of partners in their common activities. Besides that, the interaction of the manager (leader) and the subordinate may not coincide with the assessment and roles of different partners, level of responsibility for various ac-

tivities (needed to achieve the goal). That is why it is especially important to know and be able to take into account the opinion of the partner. As it is shown by experience, it is impossible to understand (not speaking about changing) the beliefs of other people by just relying on one's intuition or reflexes. This does not mean that his/her personal prediction is made in vain. On the contrary – they should be compared, especially with the aim to determine one's one and the other. Thus, the manager (leader) should have clear vision of his/her forecasts.

Personnel management in practice may lead to a typical situation when the manager (leader) increases the disciplinary influence with the help of authoritarian management style and leadership in order to develop positive attitude of the subordinate to the responsibilities, and functions, to sharpen his sense of responsibility. At that time he/she was working in traditional style, promoting main functions and responsibilities that have appeared in a manager being able to answer for his/her decisions and influence his/her subordinates. But this management style very often does not guarantee success, as the result of what splitting into quiet workers and opposition within the team takes place. In addition, if the manager (leader) maintains strong communicative style in communication with his/her subordinates, then the desirable result often is not only unachievable, but the restoration turns out to be impossible.

Having lost one's own self-belief, the subordinate becomes dependant and shows lesser creativity and initiative. Exit from such a situation can be found at particular conditions:

- the management should change the communication style with the subordinates;
- it should reconsider dramatically its forecasts and expectations, including state and peculiarities of the employee's character;
- it should legally and systematically ensure the development of subordinates in order to assess correctly the behaviour, attitude towards their own responsibilities when completing valid requirements of the management.

## Conclusions

*„My genius lies in that I quickly understand limitations of any situation as well as ensure all the reserves needed to overcome these shortcomings“.*

Napoleon on himself

It is possible to make a quite simple, but very important conclusion: If we want to influence another person (via increasing particular requirements), it is necessary to begin not with certain means or methods, but with him/herself.

A manager (leader) in relations with subordinates must take into account relation between behavioural forecasts and motives. The dominant motive is

fear of failure what, in its turn, creates safety considerations. The secondary reason is that their motives and actions, as a rule, are particular, sometimes purely accidental. But all of them have significant impact on the human behaviour. Thus, the ability to understand the partner forecast, and through it the strange behaviour and motives is an important condition for understanding the manager (leader) – subordinate relationship.

The manager (leader) and the subordinate understand each other – it is not only the ability to understand correctly the oral information and expressive movements (correct treatment of the speaker's aims – oral understanding of the information), in situation and conditions when the partner is adequately perceiving social expectations, it is worth predicting his/her activities. Mutual understanding between the manager (leader) and the subordinate is not only the ability to evaluate correctly the oral information and expressive movements (correct treatment of the speaker's aims – oral understanding of the information), situation and conditions when they work, they treat adequately social expectations and can predict their activities.

Communication of employees with each other and with the manager (leader), as a rule, is based in a quite stable opinion on abilities, skills and interests of each other. Everyone is playing his/her role as well as influences the functional fulfilment of obligations and expects particular actions, characteristics and behaviour from his/her colleagues. Everyone also believes that colleagues know little about their qualities and abilities. Communication is used to understand the relationship on the basis of experience, and this can have significant influence on efficiency and results of the team. All these factors should be carefully examined by the management. Mutual understanding between the manager (leader) and the subordinate is closely related to the forecast of partner behaviour. Conscious approach to their positive and negative assessment as well as willingness to understand and see expectations of the partner is necessary for efficient management and business communication.

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