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USING THE METHOD OF MULTI-CRITERIA DECISION MAKING TO DETERMINE THE COMPETENCY MODEL OF CRISIS MANAGER

JEL classification: M12, C10

Abstract

The article presents a model of crisis manager competencies. It was created in cooperation with the owners of small businesses. Based on brain writing the competencies required for a crisis manager were generated. Decision-making method AHP was used for competencies decomposition into two levels. On the first level three groups were placed. They are called managerial competence, interpersonal and technical. At the second level, these groups were further decomposed, e.g. on competencies like leadership, strategic thinking, time management, financial management, resilience, independence in solving problems, team work etc. The respondents performed quantitative pairwise comparisons by Saaty's method. Respondents evaluated competencies at both levels. After evaluating Saaty's matrices modified on the basis of comprehensive results of all respondents the competency model of crisis manager was created.

Key words: multi-criteria decision making, competency model

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's crises are varied both in material and phenomenal form. This fact is reflected in the variability of functions of a crisis manager. The factor unifying all crisis managers is the effort for an effective resolution to the crisis, whether that results in exiting the predicament, or termination of business altogether.

If a business has an employee with strong managerial experience he may be given to perform the function of a crisis manager. If this person feels unable to handle the situation themselves a consultancy firm or an external professional crisis manager can be brought onboard for assistance. On the other hand, businesses in acute phases of crisis do not usually have the resources to be able to afford an external consultant or a crisis manager.

The vulnerable position of small businesses and their endeavour to understand the threat from potential crises were an impulse for a research project one of the outputs of which is this paper.

The main of this article is to form a model of competencies for the position of a crisis manager. On the basis of a research made by the authors of the article it was found out that the model of competencies for the position of a crisis manager had not been created on the conditions of the Czech Republic yet.

This paper presents a model of competencies required of a crisis manager. It has been created in cooperation with small business owners based on 'brainwriting'. Using the decision-making method 'AHP', competencies have been broken down into two levels. The respondents of this research made quantitative paired comparisons using Saaty's method. The competency model of a crisis manager has been compiled using Saaty's matrices based on the comprehensive results of all participants.

2. THEORETICAL BASE FOR THE PRESENTED PROBLEMS

Theoretical concepts, which are considered in the paper will be explained.

2.1. Competence and Competency Models

Competencies are defined as a set of desirable characteristics, experience, knowledge, abilities, skills, motivation, attitudes and personal qualities for a given activity or position. It has therefore a wider significance than the term qualification, which is more focused on formal certification of the outputs of learning and education.

Competence can be monitored by various criteria. Hronfk (2006) lists those as social-psychological competence, problem solving competence, interpersonal, and self-management competence. Another view of the structure of competencies is based on the type of work and the skills necessary related to it. The resulting profile of specific positions is created as a combination of the following categories: managerial competencies (skills and abilities that contribute to excellent performance in the role of a manager, for example conflict resolution, strategic thinking, coaching and more), interpersonal skills (essential for effective communication and building positive relationships with others; empathy, negotiation, presentation skills, etc.) and technical competencies (technical skills related to the particular job such as programming abilities, data collection and analysis, budgeting and others). This profiling is used in this paper. Competency types can even be categorized by the different groups of employees for whom they are intended. As reported by Kovács (2009), competency models describe specific combinations of knowledge, skill and other characteristics needed for effective performance of the tasks involved in the running of an organization. These combinations are structured into different sized units. What competency model and what types of measurements of individual competencies is eventually selected depends on the intentions of each organization.

2.2. Competencies of Crisis Manager

A crisis manager must have strong self-motivational drive, the ability to anticipate and respond to changes dynamically. Assimilating into the role of a crisis manager assumes knowledge of the company and its surroundings, threats and opportunities, possibilities of and the resources at disposal for the rescue of the company, as well as professional and life experience in managing emergency situations (Frýbert et al., 1995). Monopolizing, not sharing or showing a lack of interest in gaining new knowledge may be proved in extreme situations as very dangerous (Lerbinger, 2012). A crisis manager must know methods and techniques especially in the field of strategic management, project management, change management, process management, time management, conflict management, performance improvement, organizational management, leadership, etc. (Fotr et al., 2006). In addition to continuous professional development, the knowledge beyond the scope of specialization is being seen as increasingly more important. This includes social skills, planning and decision-making abilities (Lalonde, 2004). A crisis manager must have generalization abilities and needs to learn to structure complex problems, use deduction and benefit from synergy effects (Holsti, 2009). Rational and intellectual skills of crisis manager must also include the management of emotional elements of human behavior (Lalonde and Roux-Dufort, 1982). This involves the ability to create an emotionally supportive environment, calm heated emotions and situations as well as control one's own negative feelings. A good crisis manager must be creative and have good communication skills (Fink, 2013). Truthfulness, consistency and trustworthiness are important values expected of a manager (Mitroff et al., 1989).

The outlined requirements correspond with the application of four points defined in the synthesis of requirements established by Miller (1987). These are strategy, leadership, ability to structure problems and knowledge of the environment. Mental resilience is also crucial to crisis manager's work (Gmelch, 1982). Margolis and Stoltz (2010) identified aids that managers can use to analyze critical events in order to move forward. These are the amount of control over events, the extent to which the course of events can be affected, the extent of actual damage and the duration of symptoms. Wooten and James (2008) point out the importance of human resources development for the creation of the capacity of the company to manage the activities of crisis management. In order to build a highly performing crisis team Hálek (2008) summarizes the abilities required of crisis manager as the ability to assemble the right team, then lead the team carefully, provide support, establish and follow the rules of team work and ensure the maintenance of high working standards while under pressure.

2.3. Competency Models in the Firms of the Czech Republic

A research focused on the use of the models of competencies in the firms in the Czech Republic was done in the year 2014. This research was realized by the firm Trexima and 292 respondents were addressed in. The main aim was to find out if the competency models were used in organizations and if yes, for which personnel activities and what contributions followed from using the competency models. According to the research 28% of organizations with more than 100 employees use the competency model. Next 41% of organizations use the competencies at description of the work positions. However, more than 1 third (34%) of human resource professionals don't know the conception of the competency model. The main barriers why the firms don't use the concept of competency model are (except for ignorance of it) mistrust in the functionality of competency model, fear of high stress and administration and of difficult implementation. Competency models are usually used for defining the requirements for the working position (95% organizations), for recruitment and selection of employees (95% organizations), for training and development of employees (89% organizations), for appraisal of employees (84% organizations).

To the main contributions of using the models of competencies belong the help in filling vacant positions (32% organizations), job designing (22% organizations) and determining the developing needs of employees (22% organizations).

The results of the research confirm that the benefits of competency model for better recruitment and selection of people and for their professional development is main according to the human resource professionals. 95% of human resource professionals who use competency models would recommend it to other firms in their field.

3. METHODOLOGY

Here are described the methods used in the research and the research process. The paper is based on the results of a research conducted in the fall of 2014. The research's respondents were business owners employing up to ten staff with an annual turnover of up to ten million CZK and operating in the Moravian-Silesian Region. The Chamber of Commerce was used in order to obtain trading information. The participants were then selected randomly. 250 respondents took part in the pilot survey. All participants indicated that their company had been facing a very serious problem but not quite life threatening to the existence of the business itself as yet. The aim of the research was to determine what competencies small business owners require of crisis managers and use the findings to create a model of small business crisis manager competencies.

3.1. Brainwriting

The 'brainwriting method' was preferred to 'brainstorming' for the identification of competencies. The basic version of brainwriting was used which means everyone working on their own. This method stems from findings of a research that suggests that more and better ideas are generated using Silent Tools rather than using more traditional brainstorming meetings which are open. There are several reasons why brainstorming is considered ineffective. Some members of the group remain creatively passive, while others produce ideas. Other members of the group are worried that their thoughts might evoke negative comments, which causes them to remain silent. The initial ideas produced during brainstorming sessions also tend to have a disproportionate influence on the rest of the debate. The participants instinctively assimilate those into their ideas as a good example or a definite potential solution to the problem (Heslin, 2009). Sharing ideas in groups thus ironically leads to group thinking instead of unique individual ideas. Brainwriting creates a more neutral environment and the results are various creative ideas.

3.2. Saaty's Method of Determining Weights

Saaty's method was used for the treatment of obtained information. In this method, all the pairs are compared and the evaluation criteria are stored in the so-called Saaty matrix $S = (s_{ij})$, where $i, j = 1, 2, \dots, k$. The elements of the matrix are interpreted as the estimates of the proportion of i -th weights (w_i) and the j -th (w_j) criteria (Saaty, 2008):

$$s_{ij} \approx \frac{w_i}{w_j}; \quad i, j = 1, 2, \dots, k. \quad (1)$$

$$s_{ij} \in \{1/9; 1/8; 1/7; 1/6; 1/5; 1/4; 1/3; 1/2; 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9\}$$

The comparison between criteria specifies the extent of the preference, which is expressed as a certain number of points from the selected scale. The comparison determines whether one criterion is preferred to another but also to what extent. Saaty recommends the use of the nine-point scale, the odd stages are described: one point means that the criteria are equally important, three points mean that the first criterion is moderately more important than the second one (experience and judgment slightly favor one activity over another), five points mean strong importance, seven points mean very strong importance up to nine points which means that the first criterion is absolutely (extremely) more important than the second criterion (Saaty, Vargas, 2012). Saaty's matrix S is a square matrix of $n \times n$ (number of criteria), for whose elements the relationship is valid:

$$s_{ij} = \frac{1}{s_{ji}}; i, j = 1, 2, \dots, k \quad (2)$$

Thus the matrix S is reciprocal. Before calculating the importance of criteria it is necessary to verify that the specified matrix of paired comparisons is consistent. A consistent matrix means e.g. the decision maker says a criterion x is equally important as another criterion y (so the comparison matrix will contain value of $a_{xy} = 1 = a_{yx}$), and the criterion y is absolutely more important than a criterion w ($a_{yw} = 9; a_{wy} = 1/9$); then the criterion x should also be absolutely more important than the criterion w ($a_{xw} = 9; a_{wx} = 1/9$).

Degree of consistency can be assessed in different ways, one of them is the consistency index defined as follows:

$$CI = \frac{(X_{max} - n)}{(n - 1)} \quad (3)$$

where X_{max} (λ_{max}) is the largest eigenvalue of the matrix S and k is the number of criteria. The matrix S is sufficiently consistent if the $CI < 0.1$ (Saaty, 2008).

Calculation of significance from Saaty's matrix can be done in several ways. The default (Saaty's) procedure is based on calculating the eigenvector matrix v defined by the following formula:

$$S \times v = X_{max} \times v \quad (4)$$

to estimate the weights w_i to meet the formula (1).

One of the simpler frequently used methods is the determination of weights using a weighted geometric average of decision matrix S rows. By normalizing these averages we get approximate importance of criteria w_i , by the following formula:

$$w_i = \frac{\left[\prod_{j=1}^k s_{ij} \right]^{1/k}}{\sum_{i=1}^k \left[\prod_{j=1}^k s_{ij} \right]^{1/k}} \quad i=1, \dots, k \quad (5)$$

3.3. Method of AHP

Saaty's method of significance determination is the basis for decision-making method AHP (analytic hierarchy process). The AHP method combines quantitative and qualitative approach to the evaluation of sub-options and the result is the quantification of individual decision variants, optimal solutions and sensitivity analysis. The hierarchical structure of the AHP process is a linear structure containing several levels each of which comprises several elements (Staňková, 2014).

3.4. Sampling and Data Collection

The competencies required for the position of a crisis manager were identified using brainwriting. This phase of the research was attended by 50 respondents. They did not have any theoretical knowledge of crisis management and such were not familiar with the requirements for skills, abilities and knowledge of crisis manager as outlined at the beginning of this paper. The respondents electronically submitted a summary of their ideas describing their views on crisis manager competencies. Relevance of each complaint was filtered in collaboration with top level executives and experts from human resources management. Opinions were aggregated into three groups: managerial, interpersonal and technical competencies. These groups are considered as the core of competencies, i.e. the first level.

A list of this aggregated summary was forwarded to all the participants (250) for further comment, additions or exclusions.

The second level of competencies and their descriptions were formulated on the basis of their comments with the support of the competencies database. For further processing most frequently identified competencies were selected.

4. RESULTS AND COMMENTS

In accordance with established research goal, i.e. the creation of competency model of a crisis manager, the results will be presented now.

4.1. What Competencies of Crisis Manager Are Required?

As already stated the core of competencies (the first level) was created on the base of small managers opinions. In order to use the method of AHP, the competencies were divided into three groups: managerial, interpersonal and technical.

The breakdown of those, using the method of AHP, is following: *Managerial* competencies: leadership, strategic thinking, focus on result, focus on human, time management, resilience, problem solving. *Interpersonal* competencies: sense of belonging, communication, team work, independence, focus on customer. *Technical* competencies: knowledge of methods, creative thinking, flexibility, human management, product management, finance management, planning, work organization (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Breakdown of Competencies Using the AHP Method

Source: own processing

The following part of the research was attended by 250 respondents. The respondents assessed groups of competencies at first and second level using Saaty's method to determine which competencies are the most valuable to ensure successful performance by crisis manager. The final matrices for the competence evaluation were created by median.

4.2. Paired Comparisons of the First Level of Competencies

The following text focuses on the results obtained from the modified Saaty's matrices. Graphical form is presented, too. Saaty's final matrix is presented on Table 1.

Table 1

The First Level of Competencies - Paired Comparisons

matrix S	managerial	interpersonal	technical	geomean	weight w	$\frac{S \times w}{w}$	$(S \times w)_i / w_i$
managerial	1	4	9	3.3019	70.09	2.1782	3.1078
interpersonal	1/4	1	6	1.1447	24.30	0.7551	3.1074
technical	1/9	1/6	1	0.2646	5.61	0.1745	3.1068
				4.7112	100.00	$X_{max} =$	3.1078
				RI =	0.580	CI =	0.0539
				N =	3	CR =	0.0930

Notes: CR = consistency ratio, RI – random index, N – number of criteria

w – Saaty’s weight vector – see (1), w_i – i-th element of vector w (weight of i-th criteria in %)

Source: own processing

It is evident that respondents highly appreciated managerial competencies (that contribute to outstanding performance in the role of manager), which reached the level of significance of 0.7 (70.09%). What is striking is the low evaluation of technical competencies (i.e. the skills related to specific job) with a weight of 0.056 (5.61%).

For better clarity the distribution of weights is captured graphically (Figure 2).

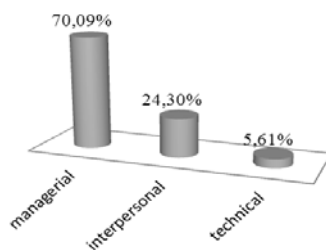


Figure 2 The First Level of Competencies - Paired Comparisons

Source: own processing

4.3. Paired Comparisons of the Second Level of Competencies

Competencies at the second level are captured in the following Saaty’s final matrices (Table 2, 3, 4) and figures (Figure 3, 4, 5).

4.3.1. Managerial Competencies

Table 2

The Second Level of Competencies - Paired Comparisons – Managerial Competencies

S	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	geomean	weight w	S × w	(S × w) _i /w _i
a	1	9	4	5	4	1/2	3	2.7124	28.11	2.3848	8.4843
b	1/9	1	1/9	1/5	1/4	1/8	1/8	0.1921	1.99	0.1486	7.4662
c	1/4	9	1	3	3	1	1/2	1.3920	14.42	1.0606	7.3529
d	1/5	5	1/3	1	1/2	1/5	1/5	0.4888	5.07	0.3752	7.4077
e	1/4	4	1/3	2	1	1/3	1/5	0.6410	6.64	0.4791	7.2126
f	2	8	1	5	3	1	1/3	1.8701	19.38	1.5933	8.2213
g	1/3	8	2	5	5	3	1	2.3535	24.39	1.9521	8.0038
								9.6498	100.00	X _{max} =	7.7355
a leadership				e time management				RI=	1.320	CI=	0.1226
b strategic thinking				f resilience				N=	7	CR=	0.0929
c focus on output				g problems solving							
d focus on human											

Source: own processing

The respondents were in agreement that a charismatic leader is essential at times of crisis, as well as their problem solving skills (Figure 3). At the same time the respondents were aware of the need for psychological resilience of a crisis manager. Strategic thinking, on the other hand, was rated very low. Apparently this is due to the fact that in times of crisis it is necessary to be able to make short-term decisions promptly. However, even at such times, it is dangerous to underestimate or ignore long-term strategic decisions. When creating a model based on the discussions with experts from management roles a higher ranking was given to this competence.

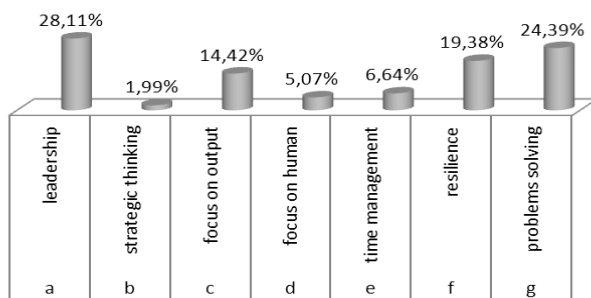


Figure 3 The Second Level of Competencies - Paired Comparisons Managerial Competence

Source: own processing

4.3.2. Interpersonal Competencies

Table 3

The Second Level of Competencies - Paired Comparisons – Interpersonal Competencies

S	a	b	c	d	e	geomean	weight w	$S \times w$	$(S \times w)_i/w_i$
a	1	1/7	1/6	1/7	4	0.4234	5.52	0.3074	5.5689
b	7	1	5	1	9	3.1598	41.20	2.2399	5.4368
c	6	1/5	1	1/2	6	1.2920	16.85	0.9257	5.4954
d	7	1	2	1	8	2.5695	33.50	1.7052	5.0899
e	1/4	1/9	1/6	1/8	1	0.2252	2.94	0.1589	5.4122
a sense of belonging d independence						7.6698	100.00	$X_{max} =$	5.4006
b communication			e focus on customer			$RI =$	1.120	$CI =$	0.1002
c team work						$N =$	5	$CR =$	0.0894

Source: own processing

In order to communicate one cannot be afraid to accept and take responsibility for independent decisions as pointed out by the respondents as one of the most important interpersonal skills (Figure 4). They also recognized that saving the company is not in the hands of individuals but in those of the whole team. A crisis manager must be able and willing to create a team of experts in order to rescue the company and utilize and support their abilities.

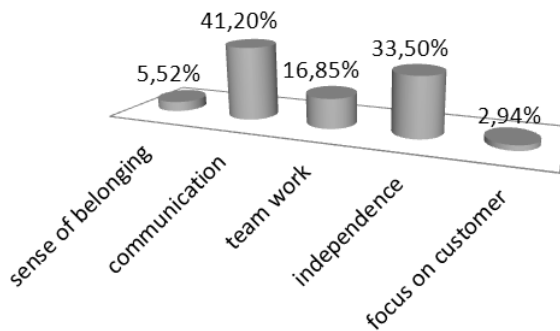


Figure 4 The Second Level of Competencies - Paired Comparisons Interpersonal Competence

Source: own processing

4.3.3. Technical Competencies

Table 4

The Second Level of Competencies - Paired Comparisons – Technical Competencies

S	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	geomean	weight w	$S \times w$	$(S \times w)_i/w_i$
a	1	3	2	1/2	3	1/9	5	1/7	0.9588	8.44	0.8484	10.0532
b	1/3	1	1/4	1/7	1/5	1/8	3	1/8	0.3206	2.82	0.2451	8.6855
c	1/2	4	1	1/4	1/2	1/5	4	1/2	0.7499	6.60	0.5592	8.4726
d	2	7	4	1	2	1/2	6	1	2.0692	18.21	1.4860	8.1597
e	1/3	5	2	1/2	1	1/2	5	1/2	1.0961	9.65	0.8526	8.8380
f	9	8	5	2	2	1	9	3	3.7473	32.98	2.9645	8.9885
g	1/5	1/3	1/4	1/6	1/5	1/9	1	1/7	0.2334	2.05	0.1771	8.6205
h	7	8	2	1	2	1/3	7	1	2.1866	19.25	1.7697	9.1956
a	focus on standards			e product management					11.3619	100.00	$X_{max} =$	8.8767
b	creative thinking			f finance management					$RI =$	1.410	$CI =$	0.1252
c	flexibility			g planning					$N =$	8	$CR =$	0.0888
d	human management			h work organization								

Source: own processing

Financial management is evidently the first one among technical competencies (Figure 5). The human factor, i.e. human management and organization of workloads is in the second place of importance. The little importance attributed to planning could have stemmed from the same reason as the evaluation of strategic thinking in the group of managerial competencies. The low evaluation of creative approach capabilities is surprising, however. It is as if the owners focused on responding to the situation and its development (flexibility) but not looking forward in order to creatively prevent such situation from happening.

On the back of further discussions with the respondents and experts in the field of management a higher ranking was subsequently awarded to flexibility and creative approach within the model.

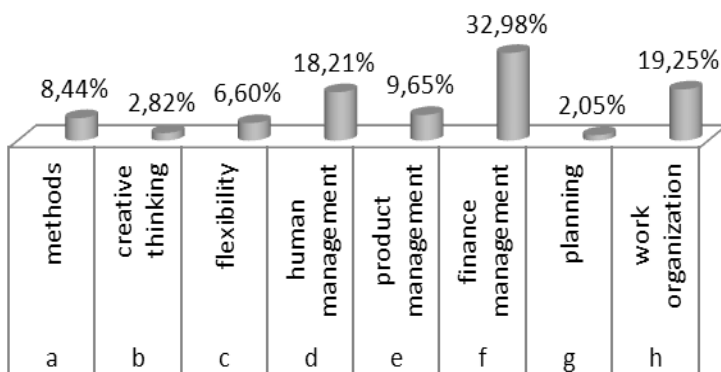


Figure 5 The Second Level of Competencies - Paired Comparisons Technical Competence

Source: own processing

5. COMPETENCY MODEL

The next step was to determine the degree of importance that individual competencies have for effective performance of crisis manager work. Ordinal scale was used. Grade one means a high marginal significance in order to achieve excellent performance level and grade four indicates that the competence is crucial for achieving excellent level of performance (see Appendix 1, column I - importance of skills and abilities).

The definition of the levels of individual skills has been followed. It means describing the properties of skills based on the level of personal development. Five levels (ordinal scale) have been determined for the purpose of this research. Level one characterizes a weak level of skill or ability, three - middle level, level five characterizes excellent value (see Appendix 1 Competence: Interpersonal – Teamwork - description of levels 1-5).

Also, there have been assigned target values to the individual skills. These indicate the expected characteristics of skills or abilities for the job position. Not always required the highest level.

The scale of the importance of skills, levels of skill and target values have been recommended on the basis of consultations with the respondents and experts in the field of crisis management (see Appendix 1, column T – target value).

The proposed model is shown in Appendix 1. Due to the extensiveness of the model here are just examples of observable behaviors for selected

competencies. There is also presented an example of description of the levels for the competence "Teamwork".

6. CONCLUSION

The research indicates that managers of small businesses still put relatively little emphasis on crisis planning (Mikušová, 2013). They do not consider it as a part of the strategic management. The presented crisis manager competency model is based on the survey's participants' actual requirements and emphasizes internal qualities of individuals as a result of their personal development. In addition to professional qualifications, the range of experience, knowledge, abilities, skills, attitudes and personality characteristics, must also be used in defining and assessing competence.

The forming of the models of competencies not only for the crisis managers but also for other work positions in an organization will help the small businessmen to improve the crisis readiness, to apply the holistic access to the controlling the human sources based on competencies and will ease work of the managers and will consolidate and promote the value of the firm.

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Appendix 1

Competence model for the position of a crisis manager – interpersonal competency (greatly abbreviated)

	Examples of observable behavior	T	I
Sense of belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understands and supports the values and culture of the organization and takes ownership for it familiar with the vision and strategy of the organization 	2	2
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> high standards of formulating ideas both in written and oral form actively listens to others comfortable in front of an audience able to initiate communication encourages others to communicate welcomes and develops opinions of others and their feedback 	4	3
Team work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> possesses natural charisma, emanates authority appreciates the progress of others and enjoys their success promotes cooperation as the preferred working style able to work in multicultural teams 	5	3
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> able to make decisions promptly and flexibly able to handle unexpected situations and estimate and apply own strengths seeks help if necessary able to obtain necessary data and resources able to judge personal risk and not afraid to take it if necessary 	5	4
Focus on customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wishes to satisfy customers and their basic needs is friendly and approachable good interaction and empathy skills towards customers anticipates and identifies the needs of customers 	2	1

Notes: T – Target value (1 – 5), I – Importance (1 – 4)

Source: own processing

Competency: Interpersonal - Teamwork - Description of Levels 1-5
(abbreviated)

1	The cooperation with him is very problematic. The willingness to work in a group towards the common aim is insignificant. He gives information only after request.
2	He works in a team when asked. He is more likely passive than active. He has low identification with the team's aim, he does only what is necessary.
3	He is more active than passive. He cooperates in a team and he is able to adapt to required behavior. He shares the information but he doesn't offer it actively. He respects the team's aims.
4	He actively cooperates in a team and he holds the positive role in the team. He shares and offers the information. He faces his activities to the team's aim. He takes into consideration the ideas and opinions of the others.
5	He holds the position of an unforced leader in a team, he has natural respect. He appreciates the progress of the others and enjoys their success. He supports the cooperation as a preferred working style. He is able to cooperate in multicultural teams.

Source: own processing