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MANAGERS' ACTIVITY IN SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE CONTEXT OF BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYEES – RESEARCH RESULTS

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Purpose: The objective of this article is to diagnose which social media functions managers use to build relationships with their team members, employees of the organization where they work, and employees of other organizations.
Design/methodology/approach: Secondary sources (publications, scientific articles, reports, and websites) as well as primary sources (own research) were used to prepare the article. Survey research was conducted in 2023 as part of a project on leadership behavior in crisis situations among 198 managers from all over Poland, representing various industries and companies of different sizes.
Findings: The literature review indicates a research gap related to the small number of publications and studies on the use of social media by managers in professional relationships. Available research reports further highlight the low activity of Polish managers on social media compared to the activity of Western managers. The results of the study presented in this article also indicate a small percentage of managers who actively use social media. Their activity is mainly directed towards the employees of the organization where they are employed, and to a lesser extent towards the employees of their own team and employees of other organizations.
Practical implications: The survey results indicate a need for corrective action. Once the underlying causes of managers' low social media activity have been identified, educational initiatives - such as training sessions or workshops - should be implemented, and mentoring or benchmarking should also be considered.
Research limitations/implications: Based on the presented research, it is difficult to give reasons for the lack of activity on social media by a significant proportion of respondents. However, this is a contribution to conducting more in-depth research, especially since there are not many publications in this area. The survey questionnaire did not include a question about the age of the respondents. Perhaps this variable could help to explain the situation. The younger Generation Z has grown up with social media, while older generations are skeptical about this form of communication.
Originality/value: The article has cognitive value. It provides a basis for educational activities aimed at management staff. In addition, the results of the study can serve as a reference point for further research aimed at identifying how Polish managers use social media in professional relationships.
Keywords: social media, manager, professional relations.
Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

In the context of the rapid development of modern technology, in addition to building interpersonal relationships face to face, relationships formed in cyberspace have become popular. Social media play an important role here. Literature and research reports, indicate that more willingly and frequently this method of communication is used by employees than managers. Paweł Korzyński (2018) points to a research gap related to the small number of publications and studies on the use of social media by managers in professional relationships. It should be emphasized that expectations from employees, but also from customers, regarding the presence of managers in social media are high (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2020). Thus, for example, customers indicate that the activity of an organization's managers in social media increases its credibility and strengthens its brand image (Mazur, 2020; Giz, 2025). The benefits of a manager's presence in social media can be listed much more (Jędrych, 2015, pp. 121-127), hence it seems reasonable to conduct research in the indicated area.

With the above situation in mind, it was decided to conduct a survey among 198 managers from all over Poland, representing various industries and company sizes. A proprietary survey questionnaire was used for this purpose, which included a question about how managers use social media in the context of building relationships with employees. The survey refrained from identifying the types of social media used by a manager in professional interactions, as it was considered that information on this subject can be obtained from secondary materials, including studies or reports posted on the Internet, as well as publications on the subject. By design, it can be assumed that the majority of respondents use the social media statistically most often indicated as popular among Internet users. In this case, it is LinkedIn and X (former Twitter) (Social CEO 2023 Report; Korzyński, 2018). It is worth noting that a particular social media platform will be more readily used depending on the country in which the statistics are conducted (Korzyński, 2018). Facebook in professional relationships is not as popular as one might expect. Some emphasize that the essence of social media, is not the technical side on which social media is obviously supported, but from the point of view of communication, the functions and processes implemented by social media are more important (Wojciechowska, 2023).

Thus, the purpose of the research undertaken is to diagnose what functions of social media a manager uses in building relationships with employees of his team, employees from the organization where the manager is employed and with employees of another organization. For the preparation of the article, secondary sources were used (compact publications, scientific articles, reports and websites) as well as primary sources (own research).

2. The relational nature of social media - a review of the literature

Social media have become part of our lives, fundamentally changing communication and collaboration. They are of widespread interest, both from users and researchers. The main problem, at least from the scientific side, is the definitional arrangements of social media. Difficulties are posed by the dynamics accompanying the development of new communication channels and "the frequent interchangeable use not only in popular discourse, but also in the literature, of several terms closely related to social media" (Wojciechowska, 2023, p. 53). It is also the English-language terminology accompanying social media that is not always translated properly (Wojciechowska, 2023, p. 68).

A review of the definitions of social media in domestic and foreign literature, allows us to note two trends in their formulation (Kapoor et al., 2018; Aichne et al., 2019; Wojciechowska, 2023, pp. 67-73; Wawrowski, 2024, pp. 15-21). Some authors, emphasize the technical aspect, including internet connections and technical devices that make social media possible (e.g. Kaplan, Haenlein, 2010). Others emphasize the social dimension of social media platforms, which allows for two-way communication, relationship building, cooperation and sharing. As an exemplary definition from the second area, one can quote P. Korzyński "Online social platforms (a.k.a. social media, digital age tools, social technologies) can be defined as enabling the construction of social networks and communication in these networks based on virtual (digital) reality (2018, p. 15)".

The relational dimension of social media is also emphasized in their classifications. Dominik Kaznowski lists social media focused on building and maintaining relationships as the category of social media most widely adopted, and cites social networking sites and virtual worlds as examples. Of course, in the classification of D. Kaznowski, there are also other categories that, even if indirectly, serve to build relationships. These are: social media focused on communication and discussion (forums, instant messaging, chat rooms); social media focused on current information and relating to news (microblogs, alert services (citizen notifications) livestream or livecast); social media for the publication (presentation) of opinions and views (e.g. blogs, wikis or citizen journalism sites) (Kaznowski, 2010). D. Kaznowski considers one of the most important functions of social media to be building and maintaining relationships.

Also prominent in P. Korzyński's classification is the social media function of initiating and sustaining relationships. Among the typically relational social media platforms, P. Korzyński includes Facebook, Google+ and VK. Others such as LinkedIn, XING, Viadeo, You Tube Instagram, Twitter, Weibo, corporate Wikis constitute another type of social platforms (microblogging social platforms, graphic and video social platforms, professional social platforms, open content platforms) (2010, p. 67). He uses the following categories to characterize the aforementioned social platforms: self-presentation, information-seeking and

interaction. In interactions, he emphasizes as a form of activity participating in discussions, sending and accepting invitations, liking, linking to a person in the content of tweets (@mentions), sending messages via an additional application, watching user profiles, subscribing to watch a particular user's channel.

There are many more classifications of social media in the literature (e.g. Safko and Brake 2009; Kaplan, Haenlein, 2010; Miotk, 2017, pp. 28-42). This is due to the difficulty of adopting unambiguous and disjointed criteria as a basis for classification (Kaznowski, 2010; Woźniak, 2017, p. 319; Korzyński, 2018, p. 67). The reasons for this can be traced to the dynamic development of social media and the emergence of more and more new social media platforms, and the consequent obsolescence of existing classifications. In addition, the multifunctionality of social media platforms makes it difficult to place a given platform in only one category.

The emergence of social media in the online space in the 1990s (Popiołek, 2015, p. 61) has led to its growing popularity. The social media platforms Facebook and YouTube have long been the most popular. Their reach in 2024 was 83.7% and 82.3% of Internet users in Poland, respectively (Social Media in Poland 2025 Report; DataReportal "Digital 2025: Poland"). From a manager's perspective, LinkedIn and X social media platforms appear to be important as a platform for professional communication. According to data from DataReportal's "Digital 2025: Poland" LinkedIn and X are successively recording user growth in Poland (in 2025 LinkedIn had 8.2 million users, or 21.4% of the Polish population, and social platform X was popular among 5.33 million users, or 13.9% of the Polish population).

The benefits of social media functions are noted mainly in marketing and advertising (Kowalska, 2015; Stopczyńska, 2015; Magdalena Gręboszet al., 2016; Aichne et al., 2021; Łukasik, 2022). In human resource management, the possibilities of social media are also appreciated (Jędrych, 2015; Looy, 2016, pp. 173-186), but they are presented more often from the perspective of the employee rather than the manager.

Survey results posted on industry websites report high expectations from customers and employees about a manager's visibility and activity on social media. "According to Sproutsocial's research: 81% of us believe that if something important happens in business, the company's CEO should communicate about it; for 22% of Generation Y people, CEOs' presence on social media is an incentive to apply to the organization; 69% of employees expect their bosses to be active on social media" (Ofmański, 2025). The activity of managers in social media affects, among other things, the company's image, its financial performance, building trust, attracting talent, and increasing employee engagement, as confirmed by statistics and survey data (Neal, 2024). The effectiveness of social media in a manager's work can be spoken of only if the manager actively manages his online account. Polish managers, like foreign ones, are eager to use LinkedIn (97% of managers using social media say they use LinkedIn) (Drapała et al., 2019). Unlike their foreign counterparts, however, Polish managers are not using social media to its full potential. 67 CEOs of Poland's 100 largest listed companies have profiles on LinkedIn, but only 6% post on LinkedIn regularly - once a week or more on average (Giz, 2025).

3. Survey methodology and characteristics of the survey sample

The results presented in this article are part of a study on leadership behavior in crisis situations, carried out as part of a research grant entitled "Leadership and Communication with Stakeholders in the Changing Conditions of Organizational Operations" (UGB No. 853/2023). Respondents' answers to a question about a manager's professional activity in social media made it possible to determine how managers use this relatively new communication channel. The purpose of the study undertaken is to identify the social media activity of managers towards members of their team, employees from the organization where the manager is employed and employees from other organizations. The study was conducted in September 2023 by an external research firm, using a diagnostic survey method with the Computer Assisted Web Interview (CAWI) technique and a proprietary survey questionnaire. 198 managers representing various companies participated in the survey. The selection of companies for the survey was stratified randomly and included companies from 16 provinces in Poland.

Respondents participating in the survey included business owners (60 people), board members (35 people), senior managers (21 people), middle managers (50 people) and line managers (32 people). The majority of respondents were represented by men (109) while women numbered 89. Respondents represented in equal groups (66 respondents): small enterprises, with 10 to 49 people; medium-sized enterprises, with 50 to 249 people; and large enterprises with more than 250 people (66 respondents). Equal groups (66 each) were from the following industries: trade, manufacturing and services. The form of company ownership was also taken into account. A partnership was represented by 133 people, while a corporation was represented by 65 people. Companies with predominantly or exclusively Polish capital (166) and predominantly or exclusively foreign capital (32) took part in the survey.

Calculations were carried out using the PS IMAGO PRO 6.0 statistical program.

4. Survey results

Professional relationships are a multifaceted phenomenon, and therefore difficult to describe and study. Their quality and quantity are determined by a wide variety of factors, such as the size of the organization (small, medium or large enterprises), the type of organization (e.g., virtual, hybrid or traditional organization), the participants (employees, superiors, external stakeholders). Looking at professional relations in a holistic way, it should be noted that they are affected by the external environment (everything outside the organization's boundaries that can affect it) and internal environment (conditions and forces acting inside the organization)

(Griffin, 2004, p. 75; Moczydłowska et al., 2017, p. 20). However, within the framework of the external and internal environment, one can find a number of elements that specifically (each individually and in interconnection) affect labor relations (Wiechoczek, 2009, p. 21). The study included a question addressing how managers build relationships with their teams that is, with employees in the department they lead, with employees of the organization where they work, and with employees from other organizations. The managers' social media activity was taken into account (Table 1).

Table 1.
Distribution of managers' responses in terms of activities regularly undertaken on social media in relation to different stakeholder groups (employees) - summary table

No.	Type of activity of the manager in social media		Being proactive towards your team	Activity towards employees of the organization where I am employed/employed	Activity towards employees from other organizations
1.	Invite employees	N	74	57	38
		%	37%	29%	19%
2.	I accept invitations from others	N	63	80	53
		%	32%	40%	27%
3.	I write posts, blogs	N	32	51	46
		%	16%	26%	23%
4.	I comment on other people's posts, blogs, Wiki pages, post links	N	54	58	42
		%	27%	29%	21%
5.	I take part in group discussions	N	47	64	50
		%	24%	32%	25%
6.	I follow the service profiles	N	47	74	49
		%	24%	37%	25%
7.	I am actively building a network of connections/ contacts	N	57	74	56
		%	29%	37%	28%
8.	I share my professional knowledge, for example, through videos or posts published on the Internet	N	45	63	40
		%	23%	32%	20%
9.	I get information on users	N	45	76	55
		%	23%	38%	28%
10.	I am posting information about the company where I am employed/employed	N	45	66	46
		%	23%	33%	23%
11.	Other	N	16	17	10
		%	8%	9%	5%

Source: own research.

Professional relationships are a multifaceted phenomenon, and therefore difficult to describe and study. Their quality and quantity are determined by a wide variety of factors, such as the size of the organization (small, medium or large enterprises), the type of organization (e.g., virtual, hybrid or traditional organization), the participants (employees, superiors, external stakeholders).

From the responses of respondents, it can be seen that managers are far more likely to initiate contact on social media, with employees from their own team (37%) and employees from their own organization (29%) than with employees from other organizations (19%). The responses are for those who indicated that they reach out to social media activity involving sending invitations. A similar trend appears in the case of managers' acceptance of social media invitations. However, this is dominated more by managers' activity towards employees in the organization (40%) than towards their own team (32%). To a lesser extent, respondents accept an invitation sent by employees of other organizations (27%) (Tab. 2).

Table 2.
Initiating social media contact (managers' responses)

No.	Type of activity of the manager in social media		Being proactive towards your team	Activity towards employees of the organization where I am employed/employed	Activity towards employees from other organizations
1.	Invite employees	N	74	57	38
		%	37%	29%	19%
2.	I accept invitations from others	N	63	80	53
		%	32%	40%	27%
3.	I am actively building a network of connections/ contacts	N	57	74	56
		%	29%	37%	28%

Source: own research.

Comparing the results in Table 2, related to the manager's own activity of establishing relationships (the category of inviting employees) with his more passive behavior of accepting the invitation of others, it should be noted that there is a clear percentage difference in the manager's activity towards employees of the organization where the respondent is employed (inviting employees (29%) and accepting the invitation of others (40%)), in favor of accepting invitations. A similar situation can also be observed in the case of the manager's activity towards employees from other organizations (inviting employees (19%) and accepting invitations from others (27%)). However, the difference between the two is not as pronounced as in the previously discussed results. The situation is a little different in the case of a manager's activity towards his team. Slightly higher percentages accompany the manager's activity of inviting employees from the team (37%) than accepting invitations of employees from the team (32%).

Considering all the managers who took part in the survey, it should be noted that their social media activity in the two categories discussed (inviting employees and accepting invitations) does not look impressive. The results, in the case of activity of managers in relation to employees from their team, oscillate around 1/3 of all respondents, both in terms of inviting and accepting invitations. The results of social media activity of managers towards employees from the organization where they are employed are ambiguous. It appears quite high in accepting invitations (40%) and lower in sending them (29%). This may indicate low activity of managers in social media. In the context of inclusive leadership, which even emphasizes the

ability to network (especially outside the organization), such low results suggest a significant need for corrective measures (e.g. education, mentoring, benchmarking). In proceeding, it is of course necessary to identify the reasons why managers' active presence in social media is low.

The next results and their proportions are arranged in a similar way to the above results. Respondents' declarations about active networking with other employees of the organization where the manager is employed are slightly higher (37%) than in the other cases (activity towards his team (29%) and activity towards employees of other organizations (28%)). However, these are still not high activities.

In the questionnaire of the survey were taken into account social media activities that require more commitment from the manager, because they are related to, among other things, partial exposure, regularity in maintaining one's own account, building an image of oneself but also of the company the manager represents (Tab. 3).

Table 3.
Active participation of managers in social media

No.	Type of activity of the manager in social media		Being proactive towards your team	Activity towards employees of the organization where I am employed/ employed	Activity towards employees from other organizations
1.	I write posts, blogs	N	32	51	46
		%	16%	26%	23%
2.	I comment on other people's posts, blogs, Wiki pages, post links	N	54	58	42
		%	27%	29%	21%
3.	I take part in group discussions	N	47	64	50
		%	24%	32%	25%

Source: own research.

Looking at the results in Table 3, it can be seen that only one activity, participation in group discussions with employees of the organization where the manager is employed, shows the highest values. Therefore, it can be concluded that one-third of respondents declare this type of communication. In the case of other activities of managers, both towards their own team, towards employees from the organization where the manager is employed and towards employees from other organizations, the results rank below one-third of the total of those taking part in the survey.

Writing posts/blogs, commenting on other people's posts/blogs/Wiki pages, posting links for employees from the organization where the manager is employed, and participating with them in group discussions are the domain of respondents' activities. Fewer managers manifest these activities to their own team and employees from other organizations.

There are relationships on social media platforms that do not require direct interaction, such as watching someone on Twitter, commenting on LinkedIn and liking someone on Facebook (Korzyński, 2018, p. 80). What this kind of activity looks like for managers is presented in Table 4.

Table 4.
Obtaining information from social media about employees (managers' responses)

No.	Type of activity of the manager in social media		Being proactive towards your team	Activity towards employees of the organization where I am employed/ employed	Activity towards employees from other organizations
1.	I follow the service profiles	N	47	74	49
		%	24%	37%	25%
2.	I get information on users	N	45	76	55
		%	23%	38%	28%

Source: own research.

As an observer on social media, the manager is not more active than when networking (inviting employees or accepting their invitations), actively networking or writing posts/blogs, commenting on others' posts/blogs/wikis, posting links and participating in group discussions. He most often seeks information about employees within the organization (38%), but outside his own team (23%). Less often, he looks for information about employees from other organizations (28%). The results of observations of job profiles are arranged in a very similar way (Tab. 4).

Managers who have an active social media profile attract attention and gain trust (Mazur, 2020), and shape audience opinions.

Table 5.
Sharing information and knowledge on social media (managers' responses)

No.	Type of activity of the manager in social media		Being proactive towards your team	Activity towards employees of the organization where I am employed/ employed	Activity towards employees from other organizations
1.	I share my professional knowledge, for example, through videos or posts published on the Internet	N	45	63	40
		%	23%	32%	20%
2.	I am posting information about the company where I am employed/employed	N	45	66	46
		%	23%	33%	23%

Source: own research.

The surveyed managers share their knowledge on social media and provide information about the company where they are employed equally to employees of their team, employees of the organization where they are employed and employees from other organizations. In this case, the survey results differ little.

5. Conclusions

Based on respondents' answers, it should be concluded that managers are more likely to accept invitations than to initiate social media contact, indicating that they present a more passive than active attitude in this regard. Definitely, managers are more likely to initiate contact in social media, with employees from their own team and employees from their own organization, than with employees from other organizations. Respondents' declarations as to active networking with other employees of the organization where the manager is employed are slightly higher than in other cases. The activity of managers manifested in writing posts or blogs, commenting on them or participating in group discussions is also more intense towards employees from the organization where the managers are employed. So is observing work profiles and obtaining information about users. In contrast, there is no significant difference in the results for managers' active social media presence (e.g., participation in discussions) versus a more passive presence (e.g., observing company profiles). The results of the survey generally testify to the low activity of managers in social media.

The survey questionnaire did not include a question about the age of respondents. Perhaps this variable could help explain. Young generation Z has grown up with social media, while older generations are skeptical of this form of media and communication.

It is also worth looking for other reasons causing the reluctance of some managers to use social media in their professional relationships, such as fear of violating confidentiality of information, lack of time, unfamiliarity with the functioning of social media.

A certain distortion in the analysis of the results may be that not all groups in the metric categories were equal.

6. Summary

The need for greater use of social media in business has been signaled for many years (e.g. Jędrych, 2015, pp. 128-131). This communication channel is not fully appreciated, especially by managers. Unfortunately, not much has changed in this regard. Statistics show low activity of managers in social media. They usually refer to the type of social channel chosen by managers and their activity on the social account (whether publications appear and how often). There is still a lack of in-depth research on how leaders use social media within an organization. Additionally, the results included in industry reports, most often focus on CEOs, while little consideration is given to middle and lower level managers. The survey results included in this article show a small percentage of managers actively using social media. Their activity mainly manifests itself to employees of the organization where they are

employed, while to a lesser extent to employees of their own team and employees of other organizations. They are more willing to accept invitations than to initiate contact themselves. In the context of inclusive or network leadership, which even emphasizes the ability to network (especially outside the organization), the low scores suggest a significant need for corrective measures (e.g., education, mentoring, benchmarking). When proceeding, of course, it is necessary to identify the reasons why the active presence of managers in social media is low. It is difficult to figure out why some respondents did not choose to be active in social media. However, this is a reason to do more in-depth research, especially since there is not much published in this area.

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