DOI: http://doi.org/10.31617/1.2026(166)11
UDC 005-047.22:331.5=111

STEMPLEWSKA Ludmila
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4465-8918
PhD (Economics), Assistant Professor
of the Department of Management
Faculty of Business and International Relations
Vistula University in Warsaw
Stokłosy, 3, Warszawa, 02-78, Poland
l.stemplewska@vistula.edu.pl

SELF-MANAGEMENT AS A KEY COMPETENCE OF EMPLOYEES IN THE LABOR MARKET

The essence and significance of working time self-management as a strategic professional competence for employees in a volatile and digitalized socio-economic environment (VUCA world) are substantiated. The relevance of the study is driven by the transformation of time management from a supplementary "soft skill" into a fundamental determinant of professional value and psychological resilience of human capital in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The hypothesis is proposed, according to which a high level of individual self-organization acts as a strategic buffer, which allows for minimizing "switching costs" by up to 40% and ensures the professional longevity of an employee in conditions of digital overload. To verify the hypothesis, a complex of scientific methods was applied: monographic analysis and bibliometric review were used to systematize the evolution of management paradigms; a systemic approach was used to analyze individual efficiency as a component of corporate success; the method of deduction was applied to evaluate time resources through the lens of opportunity cost; as well as descriptive modeling to develop a competency structure. The research results demonstrate that the modern self-management model integrates cognitive, functional, and social components. It was established that digital interruptions lead to a loss of 2–3 hours of productive time daily, while the implementation of "Deep Work" methods and the 60:40 rule is critical for neutralizing "virtual

СТЕМПЛЕВСЬКА Людмила
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4465-8918
д. н. е., асистент-професор кафедри
менеджменту факультету бізнесу
та міжнародних відношень
Університету Вістула у Варшаві
Stokłosy, 3, Варшава, 02-787, Польща
l.stemplewska@vistula.edu.pl

САМОМЕНЕДЖМЕНТ ЯК КЛЮЧОВА КОМПЕТЕНТНІСТЬ НА РИНКУ ПРАЦІ

Обґрунтовано сутність та значення самоменеджменту робочого часу як стратегічної професійної компетентності працівників у волатильному та цифровізованому соціально-економічному середовищі (VUCA-світ). Актуальність дослідження зумовлена трансформацією управління часом з допоміжної "м'якої навички" на базову детермінанту професійної цінності та психологічної стійкості людського капіталу в умовах Четвертої промислової революції. Внесено гіпотезу, згідно з якою високий рівень індивідуальної самоорганізації виступає стратегічним буфером, що дозволяє мінімізувати "витрати на перемикання" до 40% та забезпечує професійне довголіття працівника в умовах цифрового перевантаження. Для перевірки гіпотези застосовано комплекс наукових методів: монографічний аналіз та бібліометричний огляд для систематизації еволюції парадигм управління; системний підхід для аналізу індивідуальної ефективності як складника корпоративного успіху; метод дедукції для оцінки часових ресурсів через призму альтернативної вартості; а також дескриптивне моделювання для розробки структури компетентностей. Результати дослідження демонструють, що сучасна модель самоменеджменту інтегрує когнітивний, функціональний та соціальний компоненти. Встановлено, що цифрові переривання призводять до втрати 2–3 годин продуктивного часу щодня, а впровадження методів глибокої роботи та

presenteeism." It has been proved that effective self-management directly correlates with the level of engagement and a reduction in the risk of emotional burnout in remote and hybrid work environments.

Keywords: self-management, working time, labour market, key competences, efficiency, human capital, digital burnout.

правила 60:40 є критичним для нейтралізації "віртуального презентеїзму". Доведено, що ефективний самоменеджмент безпосередньо корелює з рівнем залученості та зниженням ризику емоційного вигорання в умовах дистанційної та гібридної праці.

Ключові слова: самоменеджмент, робочий час, ринок праці, ключові компетенції, ефективність, людський капітал, цифрове вигорання.

JEL Classification: J24, M12, M54.

Introduction

In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the total digitalization of economic relations, the nature of professional activity is undergoing fundamental changes. Contemporary organizations operate in a VUCA world (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity), which requires them not only to have high technological equipment but also to have an extremely flexible management system. Under such conditions, the primary resource for ensuring the competitiveness of an enterprise is no longer financial capital or material assets, but human capital, specifically the level of development of professional and self-management competencies of employees.

One of the most critical, yet often underestimated, resources in management is time. Time is a unique economic category; it is absolutely inelastic, non-renewable, and cannot be accumulated for future use. In a market economy, the efficiency of an enterprise is directly determined by the efficiency of its leaders and specialists. The quality of management today is not limited to strategic planning at the corporate level; it begins with the individual's ability to exercise effective self-leadership and manage their own working time.

The relevance of this study is driven by the growing gap between the increasing volume of information tasks and the limited temporal resources of employees. Professional burnout, decreased productivity, and loss of strategic focus are often consequences of poor self-management. Therefore, the transformation of time self-management from a "soft skill" into a core professional competence is a necessary condition for the sustainable development of modern organizations.

The intellectual roots of time management can be traced back to the early schools of scientific management. F. Taylor and H. Fayol were among the first to emphasize the rationalization of labour processes and the optimization of time costs. However, their approach was primarily "top-down," focusing on the external control of workers' time. In the second half of the 20th century, the focus shifted toward the internal resources of the individual. Peter Drucker (2007) argued that "knowledge workers" must, above all, be able to manage themselves.

A significant contribution to the development of practical tools was made by Seiwert (1998), whose "ALPEN" method became a standard. In the

Polish scientific tradition, Kieżun (1997) and Koźmiński (2013) provide a deep systemic analysis of management quality, while Olejniczak (2013) explores these issues in the context of institutional innovation.

Recent academic discourse emphasizes that in the post-pandemic landscape, self-management has become a critical factor for professional success and psychological well-being. Ahieieva and Plotnichenko (2023) highlight that self-management is no longer an optional skill but a fundamental driver of a manager's professional success in a competitive environment. The shift to remote models has further complicated this dynamic; Wang et al. (2020) demonstrate that effective remote working is deeply rooted in work design and the individual's ability to maintain autonomy.

Moreover, contemporary research links self-organization directly to mental health. Arnold and Sonnentag (2023) emphasize the role of recovery and the management of daily mood trajectories, noting that effective time use must include structured rest to maintain productivity. Morikawa et al. (2024) provide evidence that both individual and organizational self-management are significantly related to levels of work engagement and the prevention of burnout. Building on these theoretical foundations of labor market dynamics and automanagement (Stemplewska, 2023), this article aims to address existing gaps by synthesizing these modern perspectives into a functional framework for the contemporary employee.

The purpose of this study is to theoretically substantiate and develop a structural model of working time self-management as a fundamental professional competence, and to quantify its impact on the economic efficiency and psychological resilience (burnout prevention) of human capital in the contemporary digitalized labour market. This involves defining the essence of "automanagement," investigating its structural components, and establishing a theoretical link between individual time-management efficiency and the strategic resilience of an organization.

The research is based on the hypothesis that in a post-pandemic, digitalized economy, high levels of individual self-management act as a strategic buffer that not only reduces "switching costs" by up to 40% but also serves as a primary determinant of an employee's professional value, career longevity, and immunity to digital burnout.

To achieve the stated purpose, a qualitative research design based on a multi-methodological approach was employed. The study is grounded in the fundamental principles of management science, organizational psychology, and labour economics. The following specific scientific methods were utilized:

- monographic analysis and bibliometric review: to systematize existing theoretical approaches to time management, from the classical schools of Taylor and Fayol to modern paradigms of self-leadership;
- systemic approach: to examine self-management as an integral part of an organization's management system, where individual efficiency serves as a building block for corporate success;

• logical synthesis and deduction: to apply general economic laws (such as the law of diminishing returns and the principle of opportunity cost) to the individual's use of working time;

• comparative analysis: to evaluate the effectiveness of various time-management tools (e.g., the Eisenhower Matrix, Pareto Principle, and ALPEN method) in different professional contexts;

• descriptive modeling: used to develop conceptual frameworks (figures and tables) that illustrate the structure of competencies and the cycle of self-management.

The empirical basis of the study includes reports from international organizations (ILO, OECD), research data from the SGH Warsaw School of Economics, and current labour market statistics.

The research logic is structured as follows: identification of the paradigm shift from external control to "automanagement"; evaluation of the economic nature of time through opportunity costs; quantitative analysis of "time thieves" and switching costs in the digital environment; and finally, validation of self-management frameworks as tools for maintaining professional engagement and preventing burnout.

1. The essence of self-management

1.1. Self-management as a modern management paradigm

In classical management theory, the focus has traditionally been on the external regulation of labour – how an organization can optimize the time of its workforce through supervision, standardization, and hierarchy. However, the shift toward a knowledge-based economy has rendered these "top-down" methods insufficient. In a digital environment where remote work and flexible schedules are becoming the norm, the locus of control has shifted from the manager to the employee (*Table 1*).

Table 1

Structure of professional competencies
in the context of self-management

Competence component	Key characteristics	Self-management application
Cognitive (knowledge)	Theoretical understanding of management principles, labour economics, and professional specialization	Understanding the value of time as a non-renewable resource and the logic of strategic planning
Functional (skills)	Practical ability to apply methods, use technical tools, and solve organizational problems	Mastery of time-management tools: Eisenhower matrix, ALPEN method, digital planners, and software
Social (attitudes)	Ethical behavior, responsibility, communication skills, and the ability to work in a team	Self-discipline, emotional intelligence, resilience to stress, and the ability to set personal boundaries

Source: compiled by the author.

Self-management, or "automanagement," represents a higher stage of professional development where an individual consciously applies management functions – planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling – to their own activities (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1. The cycle of individual self-management in professional activity

Source: compiled by the author.

It is a process of self-regulation that involves setting clear professional goals, prioritizing tasks, and mobilizing personal resources to achieve these goals with minimal stress and maximum efficiency. In this context, self-management is not about "working harder," but about "working smarter" by aligning daily actions with long-term strategic objectives.

1.2. The economic nature of time as a critical resource

From an economic perspective, time is perhaps the most paradoxical resource. Unlike financial capital, which can be borrowed, or human resources, which can be expanded through hiring, time is absolutely inelastic. It flows at a constant rate regardless of demand. In the management of an enterprise, time should be viewed through the lens of opportunity cost – the value of the next best alternative foregone when a specific amount of time is spent on a low-priority task (*Table 2*).

Table 2

Analysis of "Time thieves" and their impact on individual productivity

Time thief category	Specific examples	Estimated daily time loss (%)
Communication interruptions	Unplanned phone calls, instant messaging notifications, social media	15–20
Inefficient meetings	Lack of a clear agenda, excessive duration, low relevance to current tasks	10–15
Procrastination	Delaying complex tasks, "doomscrolling," information overload	5–10
Disorganization	Searching for digital files, lack of a daily plan, poor workplace ergonomics	10

Source: compiled by the author based on empirical studies of workplace productivity.

The rational use of working time is a fundamental condition for an organization's competitive advantage (Roguszczak, 2010).

When employees lack self-management competencies, the organization suffers from "hidden losses":

• temporal losses: wasted on unproductive meetings, "time thieves," and poor communication;

• psychological losses: stress and burnout caused by the inability to manage workloads;

• strategic losses: failure to focus on innovative tasks due to being overwhelmed by operational routine.

Therefore, the integration of time-management techniques into the organizational culture is not just a human resources preference but a strategic necessity for maximizing the return on human capital investment.

2. Implementation of self-management tools & quantified labour market demands

2.1. Practical implementation of time-management frameworks

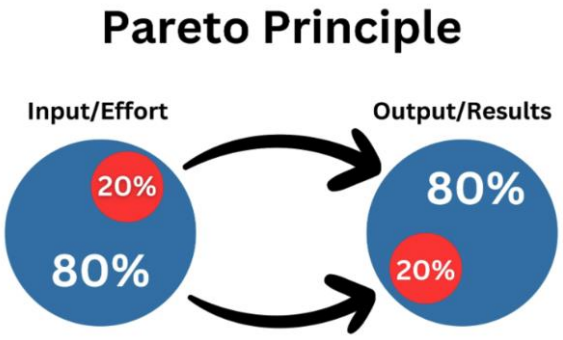

Figure. 2. The Pareto Principle in professional activity

Source: compiled by the author based on the Pareto Principle.

To translate self-management from a theoretical concept into a functional competence, several classic and modern frameworks are utilized. Their effectiveness is supported by empirical data regarding productivity gains.

The Pareto Principle (80/20 Rule) in professional activity (*Figure 2*).

The use of the Pareto Principle allows for a significant increase in individual efficiency by focusing on the 20% of tasks

that generate 80% of the results (Forsyth, 2003; Stoilov, 2012). In an organizational context, identifying this "critical minority" of tasks is vital. Quantitative analysis shows that employees who fail to apply this principle spend up to 50% of their working day on "low-value" tasks (emails, minor administrative duties) that contribute only 5–10% to their key performance indicators (KPIs). Effective self-management involves a deliberate shift of temporal resources toward high-impact activities.

The eisenhower matrix and time allocation standards.

High-performing managers and specialists are characterized by their ability to maximize time spent in Quadrant II (Important but Not Urgent – strategic planning, relationship building, professional development). Studies on executive efficiency suggest the following "ideal" time distribution for maximum productivity:

- Quadrant I (urgent/important): 20–25% (Crisis management);
- Quadrant II (not urgent/important): 65–80% (Strategic growth);
- Quadrant III & IV (unimportant): < 5% (Elimination of time-wasters).

In contrast, employees with low self-management competencies often spend over 50% of their time in Quadrant III, reacting to perceived urgencies that do not align with organizational goals (*Table 3*).

Table 3

Comparative analysis of time allocation and efficiency

Task category	Typical employee allocation (%)	High-performance standard (%)	Impact on organizational competitiveness
Crisis/urgent tasks	40–60	20	High stress, reactive management
Strategic development	10–15	60–70	Long-term innovation and growth
Administrative routine	20–30	10	Operational maintenance only

Source: compiled by the author based on management efficiency benchmarks.

The ALPEN method and the 60:40 rule.

For effective daily planning, the ALPEN method (Activities, Length, Period, Extra time, Notes) recommends the 60:40 rule: only 60% of working time should be strictly scheduled, leaving 20% for unforeseen activities and 20% for spontaneous/social interactions. Failure to include this 40% buffer leads to the "planning fallacy," where over-scheduled employees experience a 30% drop in quality of work due to constant deadline pressure.

2.2. The digital environment: quantifying interruptions and "switching costs"

A critical aspect of the contemporary labour market is the impact of digitalization on time self-management. Research by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2006) indicates that multitasking can reduce individual productivity by as much as 40%.

Furthermore, data from University of California, Irvine (Gloria Mark) demonstrates that:

• an average office worker is interrupted every 11 minutes;

• it takes approximately 23 minutes and 15 seconds to return to the original task with the same level of deep focus after an interruption.

For an employee who checks notifications 15–20 times a day, the cumulative "switching cost" can result in the loss of 2 to 3 hours of productive time daily. This highlights why "Digital self-management" is now a core sub-competence in modern job descriptions.

2.3. The polish context: competence gap and employer expectations

According to the report by SGH Warsaw School of Economics and the American Chamber of Commerce, over 75% of employers identify "organization of work and time management" as one of the most difficult competencies to find in graduates (SGH Warsaw School of Economics & American Chamber of Commerce in Poland, 2012). The gap between theoretical knowledge and practical self-management skills results in a "training tax" for companies, who must invest an average of 15–20% of a new hire's first-year salary into soft skills development and onboarding to reach acceptable levels of independent productivity.

3. Discussion: self-management in the era of remote and hybrid work

The transition to remote and hybrid work models, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has fundamentally redefined the requirements for self-management competencies. If in a traditional office environment, organizational structures provided external "temporal boundaries," in a remote setting, the responsibility for maintaining productivity shifts entirely to the individual.

Data from Global Workplace Analytics indicates that while remote work can increase productivity by up to 13–15% due to the elimination of commutes and office distractions, this gain is only realized by employees with high levels of self-management. Conversely, for employees with a "competence gap" in self-organization, remote work leads to a 20–25% increase in working hours without a corresponding increase in output – a phenomenon known as "virtual presenteeism."

Furthermore, the "always-on" culture facilitated by digital tools (Slack, Microsoft Teams, Zoom) has created a new challenge: digital fatigue. A study by Microsoft's Human Factors Lab showed that brainwave patterns associated with stress significantly increase after just two hours of back-to-back video meetings. Effective self-management in this context requires the ability to implement "Deep Work" blocks (as proposed by Cal Newport) – periods of at least 60–90 minutes of focused activity without digital interruptions (Newport, 2016). Organizations that fail to institutionalize these self-management practices see a 30% higher turnover rate among their high-potential employees due to burnout.

Conclusions

Structural model of self-management: It is substantiated that self-management of working time has evolved from a simple "soft skill" into a complex professional competence. The developed model integrates three essential components: cognitive (knowledge of planning logic), functional (mastery of tools like the Eisenhower Matrix and ALPEN method), and social (self-discipline and emotional resilience). This multidimensional approach is critical for maintaining productivity in a volatile VUCA environment.

economic impact and efficiency: The quantitative analysis confirms that poor self-management leads to significant "hidden losses." Specifically, digital interruptions and the resulting "switching costs" can waste up to 40% of an employee's productive capacity, equivalent to approximately 2–3 hours per day. Implementing the 60:40 rule and the Pareto principle (focusing on the 20% of high-impact tasks) acts as a primary driver for increasing the return on human capital investment.

Psychological resilience and burnout: The study establishes a direct link between self-organization and mental health. Effective self-management, including the use of "Deep Work" blocks and structured recovery trajectories, significantly reduces the risk of professional burnout and "virtual presenteeism" in remote and hybrid work models.

The research results fully confirm the advanced hypothesis: in the post-pandemic digital economy, high levels of individual self-management act as a strategic buffer. It not only mitigates the negative effects of digital overload but also serves as a primary determinant of an employee's professional value and career longevity.

Future studies should focus on the development of AI-driven analytical tools that assist in personalized time-planning while respecting the psychological boundaries of employees. Additionally, further exploration is needed regarding the adaptation of self-management frameworks within diverse cross-cultural and multi-generational labor environments.

REFERENCES / СПИСОК ВИКОРИСТАНИХ ДЖЕРЕЛ

Ahieieva, I., & Plotnichenko, S. (2023). Self-management is one of the factors of the professional success of a manager. *Scientific Messenger of LNU of Veterinary Medicine and Biotechnologies. Series Economical Sciences*, *24*(100), 54–58. https://doi.org/10.32718/nvlvet-e10009	Агєєва, І., & Плотніченко, С. (2023). Самоменеджмент – один з факторів професійного успіху менеджера. *Науковий вісник Львівського національного університету ветеринарної медицини та біотехнологій імені С. З. Ґжицького. Серія: Економічні науки*, *24*(100), 54–58. https://doi.org/10.32718/nvlvet-e10009

APA. (2006, March). *Multitasking: Switching costs.* https://www.apa.org/research/action/multitask

Arnold, M., & Sonnentag, S. (2023). Time matters: The role of recovery for daily mood trajectories at work. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *96*(4), 754–785. https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12445

Drucker, P. F. (2007). *Management Challenges for the 21st Century*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080942384

Forsyth, P. (2003). *Successful time management*. London: Kogan Page. https://archive.org/details/successfultimema0000fors_s4z2/page/n5/mode/2up

Kieżun, W. (1997). *Efficient organization management: An outline of theory and practice*. Warsaw: Warsaw School of Economics Publishing House. https://bc.gbpizs.gov.pl/dlibra/publication/9383/edition/9243	Kieżun, W. (1997). *Sprawne zarządzanie organizacją: zarys teorii i praktyki.* Warszawa: Szkoła Główna Handlowa, Oficyna Wydawnicza. https://bc.gbpizs.gov.pl/dlibra/publication/9383/edition/9243
Koźmiński, A. K. (2013). The contribution of management to economic growth in system transformation countries. *Organization and Management.*, *3*(156), 9–21. https://bibliotekanauki.pl/articles/ 704866.pdf	Koźmiński, A. K. (2013). Wkład zarządzania we wzrost gospodarczy w krajach transformacji systemowej. *Organizacja i Kierowanie*, *3*(156), 9–21. https://bibliotekanauki.pl/articles/704866.pdf
Morikawa, M., Martela, F., & Hakanen, J. J. (2024). Are employee self-management and organizational self-management related to work engagement or burnout? Evidence from two studies. *BRQ Business Research Quarterly*, *28*(2), 386–398. https://doi.org/10.1177/23409444241307734	
Newport, C. (2016). *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*. Grand Central Publishing. https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/titles/cal-newport/deep-work/9781455586691/	
Olejniczak, A. (2013). Effective Time Management – Selected Issues. *Marketing of Scientific and Research Institutions*, *7*(1), 17–32. https://europub.co.uk/articles/efektywne-zarzadzanie-czasem-wybrane-zagadnienia-A-70622	Olejniczak, A. (2013). Efektywne Zarządzanie czasem – wybrane zagadnienia. *Marketing Instytucji Naukowych i Badawczych*, *7*(1), 17–32. https://europub.co.uk/articles/efektywne-zarzadzanie-czasem-wybrane-zagadnienia-A-70622
Roguszczak, M. (2010). *Manager's Work Time Management*. Warszawa*:* Elipsa. https://elipsa.pl/pl/p/Zarzadzanie-czasem-pracy-menedzera-Michal-Roguszczak/502	Roguszczak, M. (2010). *Zarządzanie czasem pracy menedżera*. Warszawa: Elipsa. https://elipsa.pl/pl/p/Zarzadzanie-czasem-pracy-menedzera-Michal-Roguszczak/502
Seiwert, L. J. (1998). *Time Management. Be the Master of Your Own Time*. Warszawa: Placet. ISBN: 978-83-7488-101-2.	Seiwert, L. J. (1998). *Zarządzanie czasem. Bądź panem własnego czasu*. Warszawa: Placet. ISBN: 978-83-7488-101-2.
SGH Warsaw School of Economics & American Chamber of Commerce in Poland. (2012). Competencies and qualifications sought by employers among university graduates entering the labor market. *Research Report.* https://www.sgh.waw.pl/raporty-specjalne	SGH Warsaw School of Economics & American Chamber of Commerce in Poland. (2012). Kompetencje i kwalifikacje poszukiwane przez pracodawców wśród absolwentów szkół wyższych wchodzących na rynek pracy. *Research Report.* https://www.sgh.waw.pl/raporty-specjalne
Stemplewska, L. (2023). Human Capital Management through Fear. A Controversial Path to Short-Term Results. *Society and Politics*, *3*(76), 119–136. https://doi.org/10.34765/sp.0323.a07	Stemplewska, L. (2023). Zarządzanie kapitałem ludzkim przez strach. Kontrowersyjna droga do krótkotrwałych wyników. *Społeczeństwo i Polityka*, *3*(76), 119–136. https://doi.org/10.34765/sp.0323.a07
Stoilov, T. (2012*). Time management*. InTech. https://www.intechopen.com/books/time-management	
Wang, B., Liu, Y., Qian, J., & Parker, S. K. (2020). Achieving effective remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic: a work design perspective. *applied psychology*, *70*(1), 16–59. https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12290	

Conflict of interest. The author certify that she doesn't have financial or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript; the authors have no association with state bodies, any organizations or commercial entities having a financial interest in or financial conflict with the subject matter or research presented in the manuscript.

The authors received no direct funding for this study.

Stemplewska, L. (2026). Self-management as a key competence of employees in the labor market. *Scientia fructuosa, 2*(166), 182–191. http://doi.org/10.31617/1.2026(166)11

Received by the editorial office 12.02.2026.
Accepted for printing 16.03.2026.
Published online 10.04.2026.