THE CHALLENGES OF ADOPTING TEAM BUILDING AND SOFT SKILL TRAININGS FOR HUNGARIAN PROFESSIONAL MILLENNIALS WORKING IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, MARKETING, FINANCE, SALES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the current research is to explore the most important consequences of ignoring the cultural gap between Hungary and the West at work, and find the reason why soft-skill and team-building trainings, organised for professional millennials, often fail. My research may as well seek to motivate English teachers and trainers to explore new ways to address the core needs of the mentioned Hungarian target group. These core requirements will be highlighted in my thesis and supported by the result of the research.

Key words: multicultural misunderstanding, culture gap, cross-cultural communication, collectivism, individualism, business, Eastern culture vs and Western culture, Central European education, bad soft-skill trainings, bad team buildings, failed trainings, bad trainings, bridging culture gap, improve trainings, sync training to culture,
INTRODUCTION

The present research consists of three chapters. First, an introduction and a brief summary of the traditional Hungarian educational system is presented, followed by the description of the current condition of foreign language education for employment purposes, supply and demand for soft-skill and teambuilding trainings at work. In the second part, the research question, built around the topic of multicultural miscommunication in the office, intends to explore the pitfalls of company trainings in the Hungarian business environment, raise awareness of the importance of the nuances in multicultural communication, and promotes the idea to implement innovation and flexibility in corporate language trainings. 41 Hungarian professionals were subject to this qualitative research, members have been permanent employees of 7 multinational companies for at least one year, located in Budapest. In the final chapter, the conclusion of the research summarises the causes of the current breakdown, and seeks innovative ways to update and streamline the current types of trainings.

‘Cultural software’ (Hofstede, 2010) of the Hungarian mind, the core topic in my research, is presented through this work only to raise awareness and get people think about the fact, that not much actual effort has been done to adapt trainings to local needs in Hungary (Szilágyi, 2018). This research serves the purpose of raising cultural awareness.

When outlining my thesis, I elaborated the following research questions:

- What are the major causes of the culture gap between Hungarian and Western work environment?
- To what extent can cultural clashes hinder the trainings for the target group?
- What possible solutions could be found to bridge the culture gap between Hungarian and Western culture at work, i.e. what practical steps can be implemented to adjust our trainings to local needs?
1.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUNGARIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING UP TO THE PRESENT

Following the removal of the ‘Iron Curtain’, multinational companies started to outsource their activities to Hungary, generating heavy demand for professional trainings in English. For this reason, the challenge to implement Western style training programs for Hungarian employees has been an issue ever since the early 90’s. (Cservenyák, 2016) On the one hand, Hungarian employers and employees had little time and chance to get accustomed to the new cultural environment at work. On the other hand, the demand for English speaking professionals had to be addressed immediately. As a result, enormous efforts were made to fill the language gap between Hungarian employees and foreign management; business language teaching and training became the new black.

Having witnessed multicultural miscommunication issues at local branches of foreign firms in Budapest since the 90’s, one may find that conducting trainings using professional English as a foreign language is a hard mission that requires way more than the classical language teaching ‘armoury’. What can be concluded is that even until the present day, US American style trainings have not always been properly ‘synced’ to the Hungarian mind, therefore, they can only achieve half a victory, at best (Balogh, 2017)

Today, at multinational companies, team buildings and soft skill trainings have become a very common form of employee motivation. However, communication breakdown, inefficiency, inconsistency in the decision making, and the lack of shared goals are but a few of the most frequently mentioned causes of losing Hungarian employee motivation. So, why do many communication trainings fail? (Bártfai-Jablonszky, 2018) In an attempt to seek answers to this question, Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede and Michael Minkov’s work, the ‘Software of the Mind’ (Geert Hofstede, 2010) was used to provide a more nuanced perspective on the topic of cross-cultural communication in business and its implications. Moreover, attempts were made
to find theoretical and practical ways to facilitate the syncing of training activities to the Hungarian culture.

### 1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Probably the most difficult thing is to try and predict the human mind. It is literally impossible; individuals differ in as many ways as possible, just like their fingerprints. In many instances, it would still be glorious to have an idea about the individuals’ possible reactions, and not just by and large. The official primary purpose (author’s remark) of any work-related training ever is to impart knowledge, the sole prerequisite of which, is to know the audience, their values, expectations and motivations. Given the unique Hungarian situation; Eastern European, challenged mindset, a language, which is extremely difficult for foreigners (Chislett, 2016), and a national culture as challenging and unpredictable as the language. The mission is well known; to find common ground between Hungarian and Western culture, for, among other reasons, a more successful cooperation on the whole. Geert Hofstede’s notable Cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede, 2019) was the choice, as it is sufficient to use in this research to present my hypothesis. His measures are completely suitable to spot cross cultural incidents.

Hofstede chose this quotation from *Twelve Angry Men* to start his book, ‘*The Software of the Mind*’ (Geert Hofstede, 2010, p. p3) for a good reason. Blood is thicker than water; how we function in social interactions can draw an accurate picture of our education, cultural background, individual preferences and personality traits. It is also possible to reveal one’s national cultural traits.

11th juror: (rising) “I beg pardon, in discussing…”

10th juror: (interrupting and mimicking) “I beg pardon. What are you so goddamn polite about?”

11th juror: (looking straight at the 10th juror) “For the same reason you are not. It’s the way I was brought up.” (Geert Hofstede, 2010, p. p3)
Geert Hofstede defines culture as the common software of the members of the community, a common heritage, that is deeply imprinted in the members’ genes. We learn our culture, but the way ‘we are’, is defined by the synergy of our personality, human nature AND our culture, as it is depicted in the Three levels of Uniqueness in Mental Programming

According to Hofstede’s Onion Model of Culture (Hofstede G., 2019) we have symbols, heroes and rituals, which are obvious and can be directly perceived. Our values, our deepest sense, the ‘core coordinators’ of our being, or as we are ‘wired’ remains unperceivable for outsiders. Culture can change fast, but core values remain; “change sweeps the surface but deeper layers remain stable.” (Geert Hofstede, 2010, p. 26)

In Hofstede’s interpretation, culture is layered to levels: nation, region, gender, generation, social class and organization are the levels that influence people. (Geert Hofstede, 2010,p.45)

National value system should be considered as given fact, just like geographical location. We can conclude, that the expectations we face in all walks of life, e.g. work performance or social interactions are tangible. What makes the picture more nuanced is whereas our identity, along with our national institutions are explicit, values, and their complex relations to our identity are implicit. Hence the challenge to clarify accurate parameters of a certain cultural identity. (Geert Hofstede 2019 p. 22)

National cultures are hard to define, owing to the lack of proper ‘benchmark’ system. Categories, such as gender, education, nationality, ruling principles will not make it possible to find one black and white answer regarding a ‘proper’ national culture.

If we mean to ‘measure’ the cultural index of a given country, Hofstede’s Model of national culture is available as the etalon for research. It distinguishes national cultures based on Power Distance Index, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance Index, Long Term Orientation versus Short Term Orientation and Indulgence versus Restraint. (Hofstede G., 2019)

Value differences between national cultures can be measured. In order to explore this gap, and find solutions to improve the quality of cross-culture communication at work, it is crucial to find facts about the members of the given cultures, that is, to what extent and for what reason these members actually diverge with regards to the values of PDI, IVC, MVF, UAI, LTO, and IVR. (Hofstede G., 2019)
Mintzberg’s whose organisation structure theory (Mintzberg, 1993), according to Hofstede, can relate to one’s own national culture categorisation. Accordingly, individuals from one certain cultural background tend support one particular configuration, as it is ‘more compatible’ with their own mindset. (Geert Hofstede, 2010, p. 313)

Generally, patterns of company leadership, the partnership and management of corporations, diverge to a great extent among countries. Profit oriented approach is replaced by a more balanced, socially sensitive attitude.

The way culture influences motivators (Geert Hofstede, 2010, p. 229) reflect Hofstede’s Six Dimension Model of National Culture; the interpretation of work and its reward is perceived based on the local values, morals, beliefs and traditions of a culture. The result of a research can only be considered representative, if the researcher was born and raised in the same environment. (Mintzberg, 1993)

Obviously, there cannot be a one size fit all method as for trainings. We can broaden our outlook, however. Taking a break from our routine can be stimulating and inspiring too.

Some cultures value work itself over interpersonal processes, others claim that only crisis and revolution can bring change to work morals. When we learn about new management ideas, innovation, pro-activeness, agility strong communicational skills and team spirit, ideally, the first step should be to try and fully understand the culture from which the previous descriptive adjectives originate. (Mintzberg, 1993)

Organizational culture has become a trendy topic, originating from the 1960’s USA (Mintzberg, 1980) Among national cultures, we find substantial differences regarding values. Another fact, according to Hofstede, is that national values make a great impact on the organizational culture of a country, meaning, organizational culture is divided by geographical location, too. (Mintzberg, 1980) Objective conditions of organisations associated with particular cultural profiles point to the things one has to change in order to modify the organisation’s culture. (That is, effective training can be carried out, if needed.)

It’s crucial to mention the personality based individual perceptions to organisation cultures; alienation, workaholism, ambition, machismo, orderliness and authoritarianism, considered typical of Western environment. Organisations have a unique culture, as they are made up of individuals, each with their own set of individual perceptions. As a result, a company’s
culture will be defined primarily by its employees with their ‘mental wiring’, secondarily by its prevailing national culture, partly depending on geographical location. (Mintzberg, 1993) Changes in the system can only be implemented, if a power holder closely cooperates with an independent expert. (Mintzberg 1993) Goals of each event must be clear, and the outcome of the event should resonate with the given work environment. Interpersonal relationships may as well have to be defined carefully, or renegotiated, depending on the nature of the event. Free flow of information, the active participation of fully dedicated staff and an expert HR would be prerequisite to implement positive change. One must agree that regular self, person to person and person to group evaluation is unavoidable, too. It is essential that the whole organisation should function as an ‘organic unit’.

Intended versus unintended intercultural conflict is another crucial point to consider for multicultural cooperation. As Hofstede (Hofstede G. , 2019) points it out, wars are intended, but intercultural clashes are unintended conflicts, typically arising during intercultural encounters. Language differences may contribute to cultural misinterpretations; it’s questionable if one can be bicultural without being bilingual. Without knowing the language and its nuances, one is an outsider, and it would be ignorant to risk conveying the wrong message. Humour is extremely sensitive, e.g. it won’t come across in a different language ever so often, so, careful background check is a must if we mean to avoid this pitfall. Intercultural negotiations demand insight into the cultural values of the parties, presuppose proper language and communication, organisation and mediation skills. In case a high-power distance country is involved, ‘corporate diplomats, or liaison persons’ should be assigned. Competitive advantages of different cultural profiles in international competition are summarised in 11.1 table (Hofstede, 2010 p.405), each layer has a ‘complementary’ advantage.

As for coordinating multinationals, Hofstede suggests that “Structure should follow culture” (Hofstede 2010 p.406) Questions start with ‘Which’ Where? and ‘How’? e.g. whether to go by type of business or along geographic lines. The diversity in structural solutions is considered optimal. (Hofstede 2010 p406)

By now, our world has become a global village. Awareness, mutual respect, and high tolerance of ambiguity are needed for being able to get by in another culture. (Hofstede, 2010 p.427)
As cultural evolution is all around us (Hofstede 2010p.447) and for evolution to succeed, we need ‘etalon’ for efficient organizations, a benchmarking system, a ‘near perfect method’ as it is called by Hofstede. Also, it’s necessary to preserve some of the replications of these organizations. Successful companies function as moral circles. (Geert Hofstede, 2010, p. 456) They are created, bought and sold. Then new businesses are created. (IBM’s Ustream acquisition 2017) They will be mutations, some of which better adapted to current pressures. Landscape is being governed by nations and organisations. Understanding the tribal roots of our social instincts and the dynamic properties of cultural evolution should lead to a better understanding or failure of organisations.” (Schein, 2004, old.: 194)

1.3 DEFINITIONS

Following the review, the definitions of team building, soft-skill training, and target group for the current research will be clarified.

TEAM BUILDING:

‘A collective term for various types of activities used to enhance social relations and define roles within teams, often involving collaborative tasks. It is distinct from team training, which is designed by a combine of business managers, learning and development/OD (Internal or external) and an HR Business Partner (if the role exists) to improve the efficiency, rather than interpersonal relations.’ (wikipedia, dátum nélk.) In Hungary, team-building is typically an organized event at workplaces, aiming at strengthening group cohesion. Participants set common goals and thrive to achieve it, by this, getting members more dedicated to their team. The most typical examples of activities are treasure hunting, solving tasks, such as a crime story, or solving a mystery. It should take a day or two, often Saturday and Sunday and attendance is compulsory. The language of this activity can be both Hungarian or English. In the present research the latter is examined.

SOFT SKILL TRAINING:

By this, we mean skills, such as presentation, communication, negotiation, problem solving, crisis management and more. These trainings can last anything between half a day and 2 days, in English language. The aim is to improve the quality and efficiency of communication within
the organisation. ’In recent years the term soft skills is being increasingly used to refer to EQ or Emotional Quotient based training and development.’ (Morrison, 2014)

In the present research, both team building activities and soft skill-trainings may be referred to as ‘trainings’, since the difference of content between them is irrelevant to the aim of the research.

PARTICIPANTS:

Hungarian professionals from both genders, from the fields of information technology, marketing, finance, sales and human resources, the average age is 33. Later referred to as ‘target group’ ‘generation Y’, or ‘trainees’.

1.4 A BRIEF HISTORY AND KEY FEATURES OF THE HUNGARIAN WAY OF TEACHING AND TRAINING IN BUSINESS.

In order to get a more nuanced picture of the demand for business English trainings in Hungarian, our national cultural background, traditions, values and beliefs must be taken into consideration.

In this chapter I introduce some the peculiarities and background of the Hungarian reality and uniqueness of business English teaching and training, as well as give a non-exhaustive description of the prevailing educational values of the last 3 decades.

Teaching English as a foreign language in Europe has made its impact on both learners and educators. For the last three decades, prevailing pedagogical principles and methodology have undergone a 180 reversal; what we find is that a learner based, community minded, encouraging, soft approach has been taken recently. (jgykp.hu, 2019) It is in fact a sharp contrast to the Prussian way that dominated education in the previous regime, in general. For almost fifty years, Russian was compulsory as a foreign language, yet, based on research, an insignificant number of the population speaks any foreign language at all. (Bodnár, 2018) Obviously, the presentation of Russian as a foreign language at school was fully theoretical, involving a lot of memorisation, frontal explanations and a lot of grammar rules to swot. This methodology was typical of the so called ‘perfect socialist’ idea of education in Hungary. Our culture bears collectivist features, such as unconditional respect for our superiors, tenacious,
silent work, and accepting unquestionable authority. It is not ‘coded in our genes’ to think independently, say whatever we think, or give honest feedback to our peers’ actions.

It is still the legacy of our previous generations, that thwarts the adaptation to cultural challenges. Meeting the requirements of the new system has been especially difficult for ‘generation X’ in Hungary, ever since globalisation started. Not only did we have little to do with critical thinking, experiential learning, authentic materials, and project work but also the issue of lacking foreign language skills made thing complicated. The mere idea that culture gap actually exists, and efforts to bridge this gap should undoubtedly be taken (Hyman, 2019), appears to be a question of secondary importance for the majority of top managers here in Hungary. As for the owners and leaders of multinational companies overseas or in Western Europe, who directly contacts Hungarian branches on a daily basis, either in person or virtually, the issue of cross-cultural communication clashes is certainly off the table; foreign top management do agree to support language training for foreign employees, and they tend to conclude, that in case attending a language class for staff necessarily solves the problem of the culture gap.

What makes the issue of cross-cultural clashes between Hungarian staff and foreign management more nuanced, is the fact, that almost two-thirds of the population lack English as a foreign language (hvg.hu, 2017), what’s more, they lack any other foreign language skills. Based on my experiences, even in case an employee in a top position has proper foreign language skills, they will typically feel that their English is ‘not just there yet’.

Comparatively low self-esteem can be considered is a core Hungarian feature, and one of the frequent causes of low performance. Last but not least, a fact that should encourage teachers: by today, 37% of the population (25-66) speak a foreign language at any level. (hvg.hu, 2017)

The shortage of employees with reasonable command of English has resulted in heavy demand for both general and business English training in Hungary from the early 1990’s on. This was an incredibly lucrative business to open an English language school; demand seriously overwhelmed supply. English teachers of all educational background – often former Russian teachers- were assigned to prepare students from level A1 to B2 overnight, in crash courses. (humanspectrum, 2019)

Multinational companies, especially after the EU succession, state institutions and offices needed not only English language, but high-level cross-cultural communication trainings as well, to facilitate the daily operation local branches. Consequentially, demand for excellent
has been a tremendous need for trainers and teachers of English for business and general purposes right from 1990, due to the growing demand.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 RESEARCH GOALS

Following the research background, a short examination of the research objectives will be introduced, along with the questions I was searching answers to. My research goal is to narrow culture gap, and that may require a new approach for addressing multicultural communication breakdown at work regarding trainings. Getting a deep insight into the feature cultural dimensions, and being able to conduct more specific, tailor made trainings were major goals. More adequate knowledge on planning, organising, monitoring, and evaluating trainings are also motivating factors. The long- term objective of this research is to improve the quality of current training practices and raise trainers’ awareness of handling the ‘Hungarian mind’. It should be crucial to raise motivation to develop methods which facilitate Hungarian participants’ learning outcome.

At a significant number of multinational companies, like Liferay, IBM, logmein, there is enormous demand for soft skill trainings and team buildings in English these days. More specifically, trainings which cover the fields of leadership, international communication, negotiation techniques, presentation skills (mostly presenting visual data), telephoning, interviewing, and typically team building trainings are competitive. These firms will hire young talent, e.g, employees aged between 20 and 35, the age group, labelled as ‘Millennials’. These young professionals, although share some of the social values, attitudes, traditions and beliefs of that of the former generation, possess the key to succeed; being ‘digital natives, they are’ wired in a smarter way in terms of global cooperation’. (Prensky, 2001) Consequentially, the method which trainers use when working with this group, should focus more on the expectation of the generation Y.
According to the hypothesis, the failure of English language teaching and training regarding both business and general courses can be attributed to two major causes; Hungarian people do not have sufficient command of English. Even if they do, they will often lack self-confidence and refuse to take part in activities that require initiative and/or improvisation. At the same time, the most popular trainings in Hungary these days do not address the ‘cultural software’ (Hofstede, 2010) of the Hungarian mind, proper adjustment has not been made to make the trainings **culturally** compatible for our local expectations.

When outlining my thesis, I elaborated the following **research questions**:

- What are the major causes of the culture gap between Hungarian and Western work environment?
- To what extent can cultural clashes hinder the trainings for the target group?
- What possible solutions could be found to bridge the culture gap between Hungarian and Western culture at work, i.e. what practical steps can be implemented to adjust our trainings to local needs?

2.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND BACKGROUND

In my thesis, qualitative research is conducted; 12 likert scale questions and 3 open ended questions are formulated. Likert scale appeared to be suitable, as it is developed to measure attitudes and opinions by looking into the cognitive and affective components of attitudes. My target group is employed in the fields of Information Technology, Marketing, Sales, Human Resources and Finance. 41 individuals sent back the research questionnaire, from various multinational companies, located in Budapest. When I establishing questionnaire, my aim was to prove the presence of the typical Hungarian national cultural features at work. Out of Hofstede’s six layers of culture (Hofstede insights), I chose PDI, IDV, UAI, LTO, and IND as bottom line to reveal the extent, to which typical Hungarian attitudes, traditions, values and beliefs diverge from the commonly accepted Western context.
2. 3 RESEARCH STEPS

As my target group has daily work contact with professionals from a wide range of Western countries, their personal experiences and views may overwrite theory. Another major step was to establish the type of the research. Focussing on human elements of social sciences in order to gain broad insight, qualitative research was implemented. (wikipedia, dátum nélk.) Individual attitude and culturally imprinted personality traits were to be examined in the Hungarian environment. (McLaud, 2008) When I establishing questionnaire, my aim was to prove the dominance of the typical Hungarian national cultural features at work.

2.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Notation:

**Group**: the researched target group, millennial professionals from IT, Marketing, Finance, Sales and HR

**Training**: Teambuilding and soft-skill trainings in English, see definition at the introduction

My research to prove, that trainings in Hungary will not necessarily meet the desired expectations, owing to unaddressed multicultural clashes, was conducted with 12 likert scale questions and three open ended questions. Forty- one individuals of my target group were tested, from seven multinational companies.

**Question 1** links to Hofstede’s **Individualism versus Collectivism** dimension; almost a third of the participants clearly expressed the collectivist view, by admitting that they will not take initiative during roleplay, as it can be seen on the graph below. „Collectivism, represents a preference for a tightly-knit framework in society in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular ingroup to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. A society’s position on this dimension is reflected in whether people’s self-image is defined in terms of “I” or “we.” ’ (Hofstede G. , 2019) Having to carry out a role-play activity, which tends to have key importance during training sessions, is admittedly stressful for 34,1% of the group, exactly because our society prefers to use ’We’, therefore, a solo in front of the whole team may easily fall. The chart depicts response to the first question.
Question 2 in full: ‘To be honest, I don’t find my work team that important, we just work together. Consequentially, I don’t see much point in having teambuilding sessions regularly, but they are kind of OK, at least we are somewhere else and having fun. Though that won’t actually strengthen this team.’ was formed to reveal that for Hungarians, the idea of working in a team is widely interpreted; almost half of the group agrees to say that teamwork is unimportant. Yet, they will say the opposite in their superiors’ presence, this way. At well known companies, as the chart below suggests, one can find, that giving honest feedback to managers is not the norm. It is suggested from the result, that 17,9% supports the idea that ‘teamwork is useless’, which may support Hungarians’ well-known pessimistic attitude (hrportal, 2011)
Question 3: No matter how many crisis management or communication trainings we have, I find it literally impossible to get on with some of my colleagues. In my opinion, these people with issues will be just the same after any kind of trainings (soft skill or team building), therefore the whole thing makes no sense. The main point being, that either team building or soft skill trainings, aim at changing a major part of our character. This is an objective that requires personal, one on one consultation and at least three years’ private sessions, the success of which is still uncertain. Consequentially, it would take a private therapy for 2-3 years for all the members of the team, supported by the company. This could be the way to change people to fit their work roles better, but it is neither cost effective, nor viable for a whole team at work. With this question, one can see below an almost 30% strong agreement to the statement that ‘these trainings are worthless’.
No matter how many crisis management or communication trainings we have, I find it literally impossible to ...erefore the whole thing makes no sense.

41 válasz

1. **Figure 3**

**Question 4:** *What might bother me at times is that I really can’t build relevant skills on the communication trainings; these soft skill trainings are completely irrelevant in my case.*

From the chart below, one can conclude, that as much as 51% of the group opines that the trainings are irrelevant for a relatively large number of individuals. The root of this problem could be the fact, that training programmes are designed and implemented without taking the individual needs of the employees into consideration from the very outset. Generally speaking, it has never been the core motivation of American or Western European giants to build in-depth, multi-level strategies in order to address the cultural preferences of employees at middle or lower managerial level and downwards, from a distant location of outsourcing, e.g. Hungary. Consequently, the one ‘size fit all’ training patterns are accessible, centralised and managed from headquarters, and the result can be seen below:
Question 5: The answer to this question leads to the logical outcome of the previous question; once it has been clear, that standardised, panel trainings are the only choice for people, it does not bide well to refuse to participate. Other than that, it is congruous with human nature that attention tends to wander, especially under work-related stress. Based on the answer from 65% of the group, employees would not attend these trainings if they were not compulsory, or at least highly recommended by management.

‘What I’ve observed is at each soft skill training or teambuilding session, I end up thinking about what I should actually be doing if I didn’t have to attend the event’
Question 6: As long as my boss expects me to take part in any soft skill training, I ‘ll do it, even if I don’t like it. 73% of the participants agrees that the simply act as they are supposed to, when they attend trainings. This is the finding that reflects collectivist values in this work environment most apparently; what the community expects, overwrites individual interests and preferences. In order to maintain their position, employees are expected to sacrifice their personal interests for that of the companies’. In most cases, staff are conform to this attitude.
As long as my boss expects me to take part in any soft skill training, I’ll do it, even if I don’t like it.

1. **Figure 6**

**Question 7:** I often find that the soft skill trainings, especially for presentations, negotiations or time management do not add much to my skills, because they are not properly customised, but a ‘one size fit all’. Not my size.

The answers to this question support the argument that was made to the previous question; 70% agrees that the current structure of the trainings is not useful. The difference at this point is that employees explicitly admit that they do not find the current type of trainings efficient. There is one firm concern that this extremely objective feedback can raise, that is, that ‘it just does not fit’ in itself will not suffice; what tends to make the situation nuanced and sensitive regarding the given target group and training type, is the lack of constructive feedback. Based on my professional experience, a large number of trainees will typically be unable to clarify their preferred alternatives of training types.
I often find that the soft skill trainings, especially for presentations, negotiations or time management do not … but a ‘one size fit all’. Not my size.

1. **Figure 7**

**Question 8 I tend to get uncertain in an unusual situation. When we get a roleplay, I just see what the others are doing; how they are behaving, etc, and I try to act similarly.**

With 52% of the participants agreeing to it, it can be concluded, that along with collectivist values, the target group shows low tolerance for ambiguity, according to Hofstede’s Six Dimensions of Culture (Hofstede G., 2019). As it was referred to in the first chapter, Hungarians are brought up and educated according to the principles of more the Prussian education system than the liberal way. Public elementary, secondary, and higher education, and the process, structure and content of teaching, the process of entry tests, bear a more hierarchical, traditional feature that dates back to the past century. Undeniably, Hungarians still have to follow this path if they mean to complete their education. To a certain extent, it should be the impact of the mentioned Prussian educational principles that people refuse to take the initiative at roleplays, keep conformity and do not indulge in innovation and creativity.
Question 9: In my opinion, a communication training won’t change anyone’s behaviour on a long term; things will be the same in a week.

63% of the participants finds this statement agreeable. Although it has recently been proved, that mentality and character can practically change, and they do change when the individual experiences a new situation. However, for a whole department of employees, who are definitely not experiencing anything very new, and given the motivation level that is revealed at question eight, it is, to say the least, doubtful, just as the chart below suggests, that a training should bring significant change.
Question 10:

In fact, my division would be way more successfully if things worked differently, I know what is wrong. Hungarian people are widely reputable for their pessimism, and this research supports the statement. As much as 70% of the group has the solution—theoretically. They also claim to have an idea about the way to achieve success, however, this idea is highly unlikely to be communicated to anyone. This statement takes us back to Hofstede’s Dimensions of Culture: indulgence versus restraint: „Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms.” (Hofstede G., 2019) Based on the answers of over 50% of the people, as result suggests below, to restrain initiatives is more frequent pattern, than coming up with a new idea.
In fact, my division would be way more successfully if things worked differently, I know what is wrong.

Question 11: *I have very good ideas as for how this division could work better, but it’s no use making an effort for improvement; it’s just not worth it*

What can be gathered from the result is that over 50% of the target group is admittedly motivated to think about ways to improve work, but people are intrinsically not driven to contribute to common achievements. In our Central Eastern European culture, if someone makes a mistake, they lose their face. Hence the fact; hardly anyone—especially a high ranking senior—would ever want to be ridiculed, looked down on, and talked about, all of which may easily happen, shall there be a single mistake. At the same time, however, most people seem to have a strong inspiration to share their own ideas regarding success at workplace, provided, the other party, to whom the whole business may concern, are not at present, at least physically. Simplifying it, one can say, people are not straightforward in general when they criticise something.
Question 12: *For me, it’s essential to be employed by a reputable company, for this purpose, I’m willing to tolerate a bit more.*

Here, 58% approves that the reputation of the company they work for is more important than any other issues. What can be interpreted from this information is partly the presence of collectivist values to some extent among target group members. “Collectivism is a cultural value that is characterized by emphasis on cohesiveness among individuals and prioritization of the group over self.” (wikipedia, dátum nélk.) (Szabó, 2013) Another possible explanation for this result could relate to the importance of the individual’s career decisions; in case one is determined to run their own, successful enterprise once in the not so near future, they have no other option than having to spend preferably a year or more at reputable company. It is for the references.
Question 13

I can’t imagine creating a public advertisement of my own venture, I need some more years and a different environment.

As it can be seen on the graph below that over 50% of the participant admit that they would be unable to thrive independently, they need backing from their workplace, and essentially, they get on. The justification of this choice is frequently brought as in the statement; ‘Right now it’s not the time to move. Later, when things are easier…’ This may well be postponed; if someone has real ambitions, they promptly act. Still, the attitude that comes across after looking at this result is a unique response in Hungary when someone is urged to perform a duty; ‘C’mon, we still have lots of time left.’
OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

Question 14 Can you give an example of a successful/ horrible teambuilding or soft skill training? (presentation, crisis-, time management, negotiation techniques) Could you please, clarify number, age, gender, field, and position of participants?

ANSWERS

- I remember a successful Team building experience. It was with the University of Leicester we had three full days of team building off site at a hotel. The experience was great because the facilitator gave us time to become comfortable in the first tasks to chose our roles. Then I was required to become a leader in two activities and this made me realize that for the first time I can successfully lead a team and take initiative and charge in situations. We were given time to reflect on our roles as well. The participants
were all PhD students from different faculties and the aim was to get students ready for work life after graduation.

- Communication training yesterday with 4 participant (one woman and three man) around age of 30-40. All of them are my colleagues in the same position like myself. The trainer was quite good, but actually this was just a repeated version of our basic soft skill training from our red carpet training period. The company wants to improve more of these skills for all the members/workers. Related to some contracts with the other companies. So even if it was a quite boring being on the same training again the trainer tried to make this whole course more interesting for us. Actually was okay and it doesn't hurt to make some effort for improving these skills.

- Succesull: Assertive Communication training with a well prepared trainer, participants: 6, ages between 26-40, gender: 50-50%, all IT related professional

- Horrible: Basic Communication training, participants: 5, ages between 22-38, gender: 50-50%, all IT related professional,

- For example: negotiation skill development training with people working in different function, negotiating about irrelevant, fictive topics. It was not relaistic and I felt very uncomfortable.

- All of the teambuildings which I have attended were successful. One of the bests was a music quiz and a cooking school. Number of participantsd approx.: 30, ages: from 25 to 50, gender: mixed. Position: Assistant, engineer, sales rep.; management

- Soft skill training is not useful it it is too general (without any practical part) Team building: at my previous workplace the aim of these events was always to get drank, some of the members cheated on their partner with other colleagues etc. I prefer to have a lunch or dinner even to drink a few glasses of wine but I do not think on team event we have to be too close to each other.

horrible teambuilding: whole company, 30 people, age bw 30-50, male and female, all positions from MD, manager team, audiologists and receptions. It was promised to have a 1 day off work and take a ship tour from Bp to Visegrad and back, have a lunch at Visegrád. Everybody just wanted to have a break in the middle of a very busy and complicated business year, chitchat with all the collageues they can’t meet day by day or week by week since they work in 8 different locations. But it didnt happened this way.
For managers workshop on presentation techniques

I attended a supervisory skills training with 10 participants, mixed age and gender, and various positions. It was held for two days, and was really successful.

- We went rafting 10 yrs ago. 30 of us, mixed, got cold. Worked as a supplier for a firm.

- 4 years ago, xmas party, we went out together for a dinner. It was nice, but it didn't bring us closer.
- We had treasure hunting, last year, all the sales dpt, it was good.

- We went on a wellness trip for a weekend, it was great.
- Played roleplay the whole saturday last week. 50 of us. Very bad.

- We go for Xmas dinner every year. It is very fancy, 20 of us. people in their 30's, management team.

A night in Balaton, 31 of us, sales team. Quite ok.

- We went paintballing, but it was too stressful, I also got injured.

I normally skipped them, never attended any.

- With 10 of us, we went to a dinner on a cruise ship. It was very nice. All from IT dept.
- We had an awful occasion in MOM; a Hollywood theme party, 10 leaders from my company, 5men, 5 women, mostly from technical dept. We had to clown around, masqued as stars
- We have a usually long and boring teambuilding once a year at Balaton. My age, managers, aroung 10-15 of us.
- Successful - stress management training: in small groups of cca. 10 people, mixed age from approx. 25 to 45, female-male together, same staff level
- Horrible or at least bad - "kind of leader teambuilding": all the leaders of different levels together in a group of cca. 20 people of completely mixed age approx. from 25 to 50, female-male together

It was organized for 15 people from corporate settings, mainly managers around 40. It was about negotiation skills. It was horrible, with PPT slides and rather boring trainers.
5 years ago we went to a walking tour in June. 7 IT people, quite average, and makes no sense.
We went on a boat trip in March on the Danube. 8 other staff, all from marketing and ad. dept.
It was cold, rainy and we were hungry.
We went to play paintball and it really hurted when I got shot:( (other sales staff)
we went out on a dinner and took a boat trip. It was fine, but I could have skipped it.
We went out on a dinner at Christmas, the whole department, nothing special.
We went camping by the lake, fishing and boating. Totally hated it.
We had a night out in BP, nice, but I’m not into it
We had a locked room escape program.
We were at Balaton last year, me and 24 staffers. Had a great time, but away from my family for 2 days.
We had a great time in Eger 2 yrs ago with the team, 20 of us, IT people.
We organised a training to entertain disabled children
I’m fine with all the trainings

2.5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Logically, people who are integrated, professional, have more than three successful years at the company, are satisfied. Those, whose tolerance level is lower and less enthusiastic are the majority. They typically have two kinds of reply; depending on their own personality, if they are outgoing and sociable, they will ‘kind of’ enjoy it. If they are reserved (those, who gave negative response are all reserved), they will dislike any such activity.
From the management’s point of view, it would be worth testing staff on commitment; if people do not appreciate this, it should not be forced to attend trainings.

Question 15 In your opinion, what made this training successful/ horrible?
I think the facilitators and the planning of the activities. All activities after further reflection had a logical reasoning not just for fun.
-Why it was successful: Interesting, well prepared, well educated trainer
-Why the other was horrible: too basic, far away from our working environment
the irrelevant, fictive topics because I strongly believe the base of a negotiation is the preparation - I think I can negotiate well if I am well prepared in the topic. I couldnt not focus on the techniques because of the irrelevant topics.

It was successful because everybody enjoied the program, it was funny, we worked in little groups. Concerning the cooking school: we learned to cook too, and we ate a nice food at the end of the program.

1. The trainer was not familiar with the topic, the way it works in real life 2. People got too open after drinking

they are just horrible!

I learned good technics how to be more effective

There was a long table we were sitting around. We could not hear everybody, just the person sitting next to, that is why we were divided into small groups. We could change seats but many of the colleagues left the party a bit earlier than expected, so not everybody could talk to every member of the party. German teachers or Russian teachers could not talk to English natives, even if we switched to English, they were "closed out".

Instead of having a fun day and enjoy the trip itself, seeing the Danube while shipping, they were crazy tasks to fill out about the company, business questions, all questions that were important to the MD who wanted the company to fulfill her task for an international business review instead of her. And in case somebody didn't give the right answer she wanted to hear, then the next Monday, that employee was called for a „talk“, a personal „report“ by his/her superior to give an explanation about his/her opinion and learn the right answer. 

Lifelike situations

We had many group excercises, and really gave us useful knowledge.

Not much planning

It was ok, but nothing special. Totally average, for a lot of money

It was quite good. I like my colleagues.

The money invested was enough to buy a nice experience.

Boring training, average trainer

I like my immediate staffers, places are awesome.

It was good, really nothing special. Like all the other occasions

It was just not my kind of thing. I had no option though.

I can't function in a team.

nice food, nice people.

No concept, fake thing
Boring, cliche, very predictable.

GOOD stress management training: an experienced motivating trainer, half day short, good exercises, privacy(!) BAD "kind of leader teambulding": different levels of leaders together, forgettable trainers, not effective exercises but conflict creating discussions, "classified" follow-up with consequences...

Too much presentation, too little practical stuff
boring

Some tasks to carry out could have worked well.

I like neither shooting, nor my colleagues

It was sooo boring
totally a drag
I just don't care
It's not for me.
I'm not motivated by this, but no one asked.

Time away from family

It's a very good team anyway, still this trip was excellent; location, programs, food, drink, everything

it was rewarding, humane, excellent
It was just good.

2.5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Another important aspect is the character of the trainer. Probably, even more important, than the training itself; if the trainer is talented, charismatic and committed, it can completely turn things round; people are willing to get rid of their negative stereotypes. It is obviously less of a cost effective solution, needless to say.

One firm conclusion: a soft skill training, or a team building will not in itself soften a single skill or build a team. There are three essential pillars to success: a planned program, the dedicated employees, and the talented, knowledgable trainer.
Question 16 If you have any good ideas for better efficiency regarding soft skill trainings or team buildings, please, share it

Obviously training design and activities that are not just fun but serve a purpose are a must. I find that a lot of time too many activities occur in a training that by the end of the session I can't remember what we did. I feel less is more and time for reflection is undervalued. This area is not my specialty, so for now I just observe these trainings and participate in them. There are some...

Sometimes I feel the trainers are speaking only about basic intelligence and not more. For me it would be important to learn real and effective techniques and not feel like a 10 years old child during participating the training.

My suggestion would be making this team building programs regularly, not just once per year

1. Soft skill: more practice
2. adventurous games, cooking something not (not only) related to drinking

sport, volunteering, customized one on one training.

In my opinion, the successful team building is based on friendly communication, without any stress or fear of bad behaviour eg. some colleagues drinking too much, saying something funny in an impolite way, so we need to avoid causing conflicts. We planned to go on Dutch, but finally it was not completely clear who paid for their own drinks and who did not. I think, team buildings should be fun and useful in a sense to be able to improve communication, help colleagues get to know each other, especially for the new comers.

Get to Know your people! Pay attention to them! Aim should be to motivate people since it will pay off in profit for the company.

Using varied workforms, different approaches

Needs analysis is key, knowing the expectations of your audience is the most important.

Shorter, more practical things.

I'd create experience. Maybe something creative

There shouldn't be too many. Why don't they give us money instead?

More events like this, pls

something special for us, not too long, a nice experience.

Maybe something interesting should happen.

I would rather pay more to staff
People should be asked what they want to do at these activities.
I'm not concerned. They are a waste of time.
I don't believe in it.
If goals are set, people are asked, embarrassment can be avoided.
I personally need a lot more verbal practice. I don't like working in a team, I'd prefer individual teaching/training.
Preliminary survey and/or needs analysis on the existing skills, possibilities and openness of colleagues. Deliberate, well founded trainer selection.
I would organize it for max. 10 persons at the same time. No presentation, cooperative techniques instead.
there should be some input
First, training is only for a few people, the rest of us should get this bonus through a different channel. Added, there was no point in having this trip. Something should make sense; a mission maybe
Just leave me alone. I'm happier without the firm.
I wouldn't bother those who don't want it, instead, compensate them differently.
I don't care about it, why the hassle?? Give us holiday instead
If I could just stay at home!
I'd rather be with my family
I'm more interested in hard skills
I'm ok with it
I need more freetime spent at home pls!
nope
anything that supports a vulnerable, disadvantaged community
nothing

2.5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Without lengthy, thorough need analysis and careful planning, there is no success.
To conclude what many people will not admit openly: socialising outside, that is, travelling for the weekend with staff is a bad idea; alcohol consumption and to be away from the family can destroy more than anything. To sum up, let’s not take away much free time from staff. Shorter, better grounded programs would be more popular. None of these trainings should be made compulsory, especially not if the trainee has higher qualification in the field than the trainer.
CHAPTER 3

3.1 CONCLUSION

As the findings support, targetgroup features a lot of typically Hungarian values, such as being overcritical, but not constructive. People express their opinion more directly than face to face. It can be taken as a fact, that half of the group can not tolerate ambiguity, do not feel comfortable with initiating things, and people particularly dislikes role plays which have no common ground with their profession. What is also revealed, is the fact, that not everybody is suitable for training. This attitude has nuances; there were some who would flatly refuse participation if they could, exactly three individuals out of forty-one. Others have a neutral approach, which is also not ideal; these trainings have important roles and management expects result. Demotivated, or disinterested participants should be provided a different kind of perk, as the current situation is somewhat counter-productive. Many of the participants made a point, which beautifully reflects the Hungarian thinking: ’Why bother me? Can I just be with my family and you all, have lots of fun’ – Over 10 people expressed disappointment for having to spend long hours, even days with colleagues, away from home. Deep inside, it should be assumed that a much larger number of the people in our country agrees with it, however, depending on their motivations, aims and strength, will not admit it, it is not to be shared, even as part of a survey. In our country, the presence of multicultural companies dates back only thirty years. So, all the trendy phrases, mission statements, meetings, briefings, conf-calls, negotiations self-evaluations with the HR, best practices, every bit of this modern, competitive era might be attractive and easily adaptable for the first sight, but the intrinsic values of this culture is a world apart from ours, so, it should be acceptable if Hungarian employees do not give up their own identity completely. Gradually, Hungarians have been growing up to the task; in the last decades, we have learnt a lot about foreign business cultures, but also about ourselves. It is fair to say that individuals should do their best to integrate in a foreign culture, but mutual acceptance, understanding and respect is key.
3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

IDEAS TO SYNC TRAININGS TO THE HUNGARIAN MIND

In this chapter, I share the most frequently mentioned constructive ideas of the target group to find solutions to conduct successful trainings.

According to one of the most reputable human resources opinion leaders’, what the ideal training can offer is no less than ‘taking us into pieces and putting us together again (Szabó, 2013)’, e.g., help in self actualisation, introduces people how to act, work, exist, represent themselves professionally in another working culture. By this way, the transformation to be open minded and able to incorporate new values should be considered successful.

To manage self-actualisation, trainers may need to implement the following steps in their sessions:

• Only after a thorough need analysis, conducted exclusively or partly by the trainer shall employees attend trainings. Let us note, that there are three important factors; people, culture and the training material. Most important, surely, are the people. Regardless of culture, individuals have different strengths and weaknesses, so, a well-designed training involves personalised structure. National culture should be taken as the second most important factor for planning, which has significance when training material is developed (tone of a negotiation, meeting, presentation) Thirdly, the main expectations from the workplace, the job requirements are to be fulfilled. To achieve long term goals, to retain dedicated, talented staff, it always pays off to adapt learning material to the trainees’ skills, knowledge and talent. As research supported, Hungary has more collectivist than individualist elements, does not value uncertainty, independent and/or critical thinking, people do not take the initiative. For this reason, it is sensible to omit or to change some typical activities; such as brain storming, any roleplay, any activity where one person speaks in front of the others, preferably in the first 20 minutes.

• the core idea for the training should always be 100% work relevant and practical, in addition, it should feature something they have not known until now.
• This way, the trainer is fully updated on tasks. It should be acceptable, that some staff will not intend to join the training, and it should be fully understood and accepted. This requires a more complex budget planning, but waste coverage can be prevented.

• **The actual needs and interest of the target group** must be addressed, not a panel activity-based session. This requires time and effort to prepare an in depth need analysis. All the activities have to correspond with the needs of the trainees.

• The whole process, from planning to follow up should be transparent, logical, justifiable and easy to backtrack.

• Let it be any kind of soft skill or team-building training, the trainer should make a great effort to coordinate the activity with exactly the type of activities that the participants do, or expected to do at work. It is necessary to build a long-term strategy for the participants; depending on the job, they should be advised on resources for content, know how.

• The less is more; at most, ten people can take part in a training at a time.

• Most importantly, measurable, **tangible output** should be presented by the end of the session; e.g. ‘presenting visual data’, closing the financial year, or another important event that is absolutely relevant for the company. It should be arranged with trainees; they should also fully approve the plan.

• A training should be in correlation with the other set of trainings. It would be profitable to organise a whole series of trainings, obviously with corresponding learning outcome. This way, in addition to providing more relevant content, and the trainer would have the opportunity to learn more about the company’s structure, operation and other relations.

• The trainer, highly committed and respectful to the profession and to the partners, should spend a considerable amount of time before the actual trainings start, to have the chance to map up the environment and get inspired to do their best.

• **Every successful training in English is built on a real time, on the job experience,** so, efforts must be made to simulate life-like situations.
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THESIS RESEARCH
CHALLENGES OF TEAMBUILDING AND SOFT SKILL TRAININGS FOR MILLENNIAL PROFESSIONALS IN MARKETING, SALES, IT AND FINANCE

Definitions: TEAM BUILDING:
An organized event at workplaces, aiming at strengthening group cohesion. Participants set common goals and thrive to achieve it, by this, getting members more dedicated to their team. The most typical examples of activities are treasure hunting, solving tasks, such as a crime story, or solving a mystery. It should take a day or two, often Saturday and Sunday and attendance is compulsory. The language of this activity is Hungarian.

SOFTWARE TRAINING:
By this, we mean skills, such as presentation, communication, negotiation, problem solving, crisis-, time management and more. These trainings can last anything between half a day and 2 days, in Hungarian language. The aim is to improve the quality and efficiency of communication within the organisation.

GENDER: M- F

POSITION:

AGE:

WHEN DID YOU START WORKING FOR YOUR COMPANY?

1. I feel embarrassed if I have to carry out a task in a communication training alone. I really can’t stand it

1 STRONGLY AGREE

7 STRONGLY DISAGREE
2. To be honest, I don’t find my work team that important, we just work together. Consequentially, I don’t see much point in having teambuilding sessions regularly, but they are kind of OK, at least we are somewhere else and having fun. Though that won’t actually strengthen this team.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 7 STRONGLY DISAGREE

3 No matter how many crisis management or communication trainings we have, I find it literally impossible to get on with some of my colleagues. In my opinion, these people with issues will be just the same after any kind of trainings (soft skill or team building), therefore the whole thing makes no sense.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 7 STRONGLY DISAGREE

4 What might bother me at times is that I really can’t build relevant skills on the communication trainings; these soft skill trainings are completely irrelevant in my case.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 7 STRONGLY DISAGREE

5 What I’ve observed is at each soft skill training or teambuilding session, I end up thinking about what I should actually be doing if I didn’t have to attend the event.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 7 STRONGLY DISAGREE

6 As long as my boss expects me to take part in any soft skill training, I ’ll do it, even if I don’t like it.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 7 STRONGLY DISAGREE

7 I often find that the soft skill trainings, especially for presentations, negotiations or time management do not add much to my skills, because they are not properly customised, but a ‘one size fit all’. Not my size.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 7 STRONGLY DISAGREE
8 I tend to get uncertain in an unusual situation. When we get a roleplay, I just see what the others are doing; how they are behaving, etc, and I try to act similarly.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 7 STRONGLY DISAGREE

9 In my opinion, a communication training won’t change anyone’s behaviour on a long term; things will be the same in a week.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 7 STRONGLY DISAGREE

10 In fact, my division would be way more successfully if things worked differently, I know what is wrong.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 7 STRONGLY DISAGREE

11 I have very good ideas as for how this division could work better, but it’s no use making an effort for improvement; it’s just not worth it

1 STRONGLY AGREE 7 STRONGLY DISAGREE

12 For me, it’s essential to be employed by a reputable company, for this purpose, I’m willing to tolerate a bit more.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 7 STRONGLY DISAGREE

13. I can’t imagine creating a public advertisement of my own venture, I need some more years and a different environment.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 7 STRONGLY DISAGREE
Can you give an example of a successful/ horrible teambuilding or soft skill training? (presentation, crisis-, time management, negotiation techniques) Could you please, clarify number, age, gender, field, and position of participants?

In your opinion, what made this training successful/ horrible?

How could the quality of the trainings be improved? Any other options?