

TIME MANAGEMENT AS A SOCIAL SKILL ESSENTIAL FOR ENHANCING THE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF CIVIL SERVANTS AND IMPROVING DECISION-MAKING EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

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Abstract. The article is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the problems of managerial decision-making and the impact of time management on the effectiveness of public administration in the face of modern challenges. The relevance of the study is due to the need to improve the quality of public administration in the face of economic instability, martial law and demographic changes in Ukraine. It is established that modern researchers consider managerial decision-making as an extremely broad and multifaceted issue, covering theoretical and methodological, behavioural, psychological, informational, technological, organizational and sociological aspects. Data are provided on the dynamics of the number of civil servant positions in Ukraine, which demonstrates a general tendency to decrease after a relative peak in early 2024. The key role of time management as a tool for optimizing managerial decisions is substantiated. Its content essence is determined as a combination of practices, skills and tools for rational planning and performance of professional and personal tasks. The evolution of time management from simple timekeeping techniques to a comprehensive, flexible and technologically integrated system that focuses on managing attention, energy and priorities in conditions of stress and information overload is traced. The social nature of the modern time management methodology is emphasized, which goes beyond purely work tasks, aiming to achieve both career heights and the personal well-being of the employee. A value-oriented approach to time planning allows taking into account the individual values and needs of civil servants. Reserves for increasing the efficiency of managerial decision-making in the public sphere are proposed, such as the implementation of flexible management methodologies characteristic of the project approach and the use of interdisciplinary self-organized teams. The importance of continuous communication and regular feedback with stakeholders for a quick response to needs and problems is emphasized. Key competencies and four consecutive blocks of the time management mechanism for civil servants have been identified (personal analysis, SMART planning, discipline, combating time wasters).

Keywords: social skills, public administration, civil service, time-management, managerial decision, decision-making, digitalization.

JEL Classification: D81, H83, J24

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Introduction. In the current conditions of the activities of civil servants in Ukraine, the issue of ensuring the effectiveness of their work requires detailed research, especially in the conditions of a prolonged state of war, in which aspects such as timely and rapid adoption of considered management decisions are of critical importance, and violation of the deadlines for the implementation of tasks, for example, in the context of ensuring national security, can turn into a disaster. In view of this, it is necessary to pay special attention to the issue of low efficiency of working time, which is an important aspect of reducing the productivity of employees of state institutions and structures. The issue of finding opportunities to ensure the effectiveness of management decision-making in the field of public management and administration is not a new research challenge, however, its relevance is growing, given the trends in the external environment in which Ukraine now finds itself. Civil servants need to timely identify and take into account in their professional activities factors that may have a negative impact on the quality and effectiveness of their management decision-making. The need to increase the level of managerial efficiency of public authorities is explained by the fact that their role in stabilizing economic processes, increasing public trust in state structures, reducing social tension, etc. is key in maintaining the state of internal security of the state. In view of this, it is becoming important to identify, clarify, and systematize those key problems that have a destructive impact on managerial decision-making in public authorities. An important scientific task today is to consider and specify popular approaches and practices for making managerial decisions and establish the possibilities of their use in the field of public management and administration. Such circumstances as excessive bureaucracy of managerial processes, insufficient level of analytical and information support for the process of developing managerial initiatives, the influence of political subjectivism, corruption risks, low level of competence of managerial personnel, weak interaction with the public, and limited resource capabilities of public authorities require close attention and the search for strategic and tactical means to minimize them. The factor of the influence of military risks on the process of making managerial decisions is also significant and must be taken into account by civil servants in their daily activities for the benefit of the state.

Literature review. Analysis of scientific publications has revealed that numerous challenges exist in ensuring the effectiveness of management decision-making in public authorities, both in peacetime and during wartime. Contemporary scholars are specifying the role of leaders in making management decisions (Kirian et al., 2022), investigating leadership as a factor in the effectiveness of public administration decision-making (Surzhyk, 2023), and examining tools for ensuring the effectiveness of management decisions under conditions of uncertainty (Kovalenko et al., 2024; Koshova et al., 2024; Nazarenko & Bezverkhniuk, 2023), risks (Maistrenko, 2021), and extreme conditions (Makhnachova, 2022). Researchers emphasize the importance of improving simulation models in management decision support systems (Loboda, 2023) and the aspect that making effective state management decisions is a component of state regulation in the sphere of civil protection within the context of security sector reform (Semenets-Orlova et al., 2023). At the same time, the specifics of management

decision-making in public administration require more substantive scientific research (Briushkova et al., 2020).

In conditions of uncertainty and risk, time management can serve as a tool for optimizing management decisions (Samoilenko, 2024). The expediency of using time management techniques in management processes has been substantiated by contemporary researchers of management science problems (Shpak et al., 2022). At the theoretical and methodological level, the possibilities of using time management to improve the professional activities of public servants have also found their place in contemporary specialized literature (Lutsenko & Ivashyna, 2021; Lashchenko et al., 2020; Zakusylo & Mesiura, 2021). In various contexts – from education to organizational management – contemporary scholars such as Kovalchuk (2025), Olkh (2022), Pestovska (2024), Ratushniak & Hirnyk (2024), Fedotova & Bocharova (2023), Shylnikova & Matushkina (2021), Yanitska et al. (2023) raise questions regarding the expediency and complexity of effective time management.

Aims. The purpose of the study is to establish the possibilities of using time management skills to improve the professional activities of civil servants and increase the efficiency of decision-making in public authorities.

Methodology. During the research, such scientific research methods as analysis and synthesis were used, which allowed for a comprehensive approach to determining the content essence of the concept of "time management", to identify the constituent elements of its essence at the applied level, such as: goals, principles, stages, competencies necessary for effective time management. Using the synthesis method, theoretical provisions were supplemented and conclusions were drawn regarding the existing relationships between time management and the effectiveness of the work of a public servant. The comparison method was used to compare different models of managerial decision-making and identify the possibilities of their application by civil servants; abstraction - to highlight the essential features and features of the process of managerial decision-making by representatives of public authorities; as well as concretization methods to study the evolution of approaches to managerial decision-making in the field of public management and administration. The methods of deduction and induction allowed for a scientific transition from theoretical provisions applied to time management to specific recommendations for the use of time management paradigms in the activities of civil servants in Ukraine, as well as to trace the impact of time management on the effectiveness of performing professional tasks of employees of state institutions. In addition, the method of analogy was applied, a systematic approach, historical and logical methods were used when formulating conclusions and formalizing the results of the study.

Results. In modern professional literature, in publications devoted to the study of the features of managerial decision-making, this issue appears extremely broad and multifaceted. It covers various aspects related to solving current problems of management and public management and administration - from psychological to technological, from individual to organizational. It is possible to distinguish such main thematic areas that are studied by domestic scientists as theoretical and methodological approaches to managerial decision-making, in particular, problems related to the

essence and isolation of classification features of managerial decisions; models of their adoption in various spheres of economic activity, quality and assessment of the effectiveness of managerial decisions. Behavioural and psychological aspects are also actively studied, such as cognitive biases, emotions and intuition, psychological aspects of leadership predisposition, etc. Informational and technological aspects determine the practical plane of making and implementing managerial decisions. Within the framework of the study of the role of information and digital technologies in the field of management and administration, special emphasis is placed on the role of information to ensure informed management decisions on decision support systems and the possibilities of using artificial intelligence. Organizational and sociological aspects are considered by scientists in the field of cultural features of the organization's functioning, establishing communication and interaction in the process of making management decisions, the likelihood of conflicts and risks of failure to implement decisions on time.

Fig. 1 demonstrates the number of civil servant positions in the pre-war and war periods, and also visualizes the trend line, which shows a stable and gradual decrease in the analysed indicator. Fig. 2 visualizes the actual number of civil servants in Ukraine.

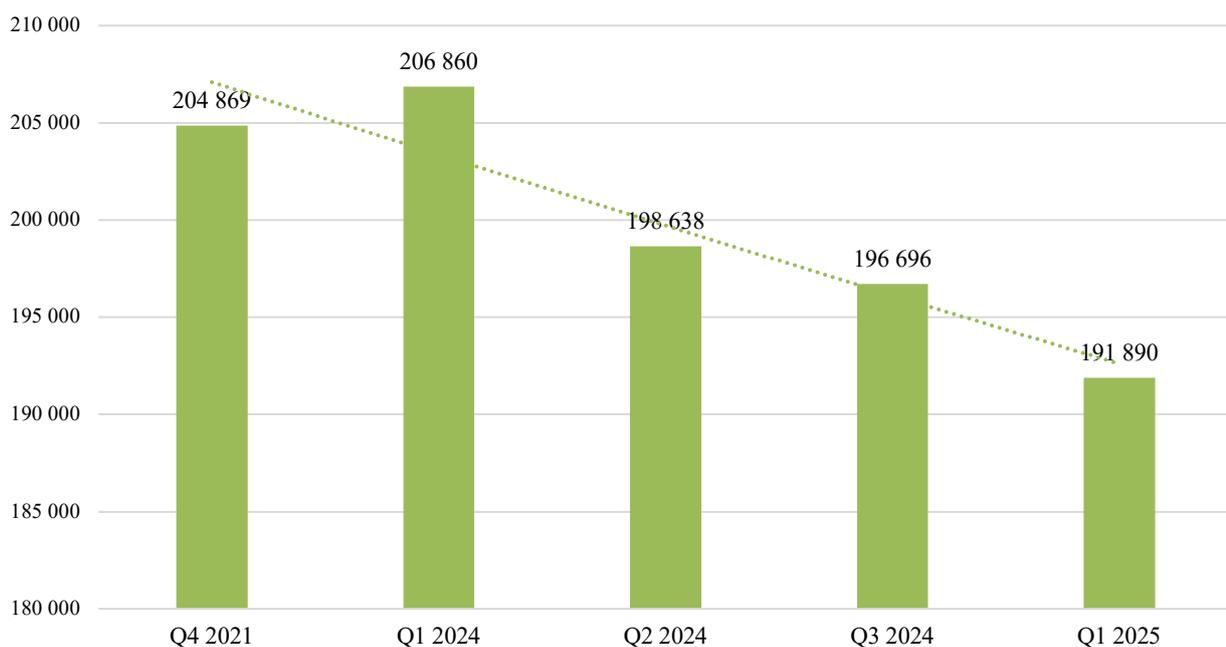


Figure 1. Number of civil servant positions in Ukraine

Source: compiled by the authors based on data <https://nads.gov.ua/test?v=66de8f59549ff>

According to the presented figure, there is a noticeable general trend towards a reduction in the number of civil servants in Ukraine. After a relative peak in the first quarter of 2024 (206,860 positions), the number of civil servant positions in Ukraine has been steadily decreasing.

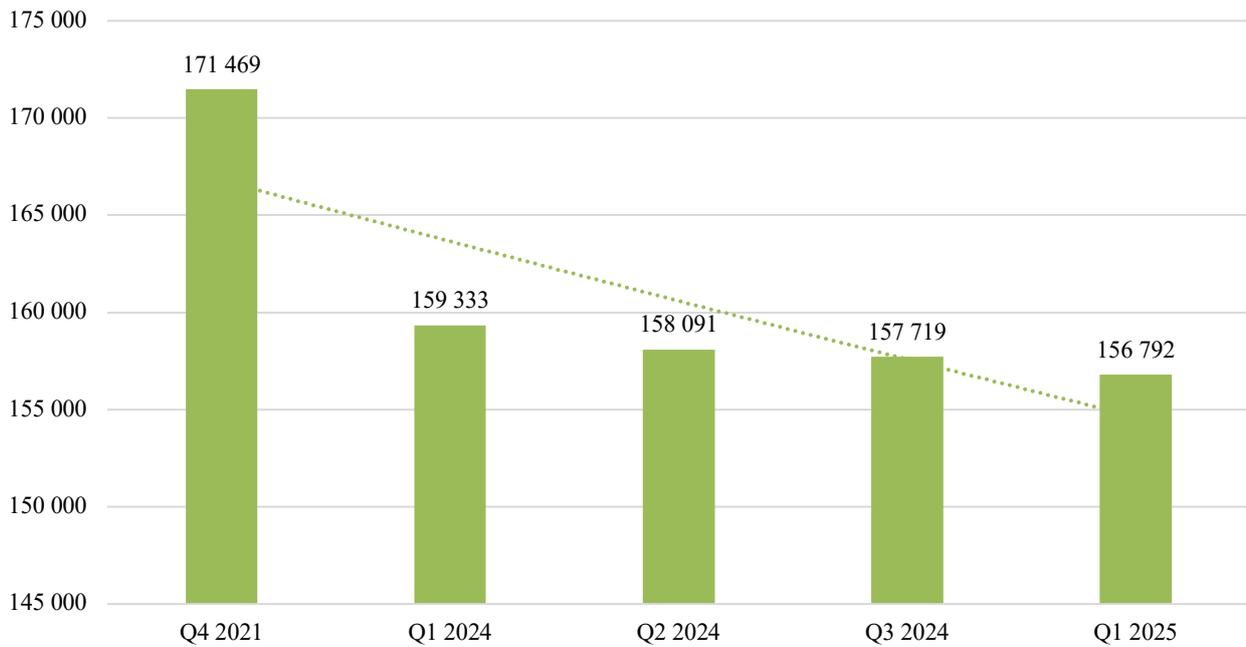


Figure 2. Actual number of civil servants in Ukraine

Source: compiled by the authors based on data <https://nads.gov.ua/test?v=66de8f59549ff>

Fig. 3 visualizes the general characteristics of management decisions in the public sphere.

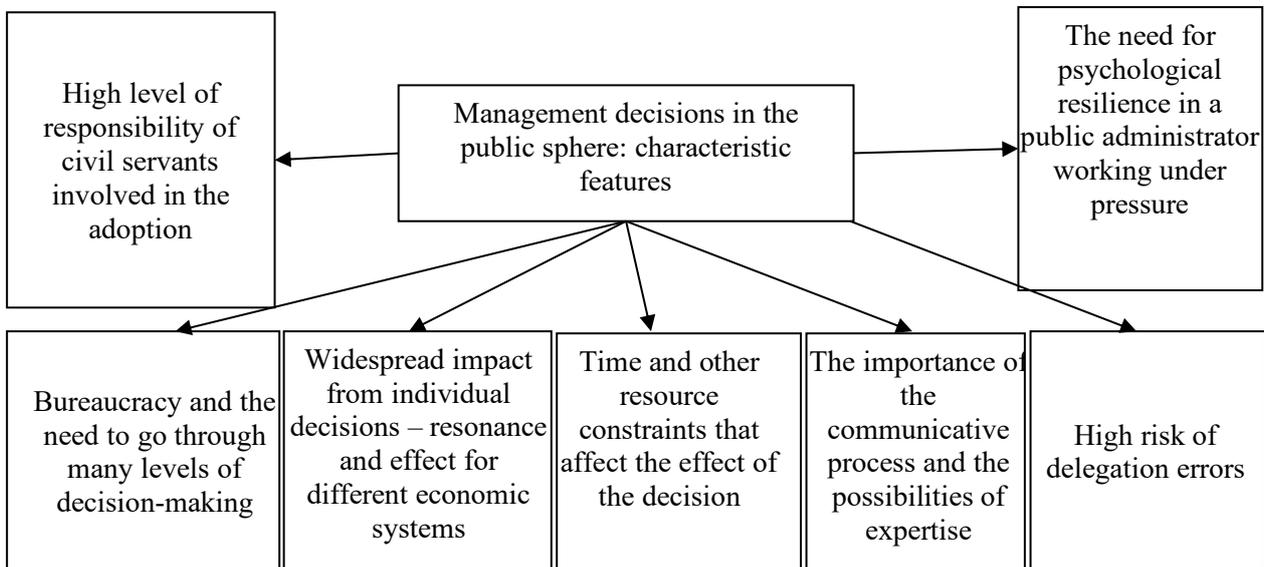


Figure 3. Characteristics of management decisions in the public sphere

Source: developed by the authors`

The definitions of the term “management decision” found in the scientific literature and the content analysis of sources of professional literature devoted to the problems of making management decisions in various spheres of economic and social life allow us to offer the results of a critical review of this scientific subfield. First of all, there is excessive abstractness and narrowness of the definition of the term under study, as well as artificial generalization, which is characteristic of the definitions cited

above. This is reflected in the fact that the definitions of the concept of “management decision” are so broad in their content that they cover any choice or alternative for the actions of a manager made within the framework of his professional activities in an organization or in public service, which makes these concepts not very informative. For example, such a formulation as “a management decision is a choice of an alternative” does not make it possible to understand whether a personal decision is being made or a decision that will affect not only one person, but in the case of the sphere of public management and administration, also large groups of people.

Many different factors influence the formation of management decisions of a state authority, in particular, the degree of risk, time resources, the level of support for the manager by the team, the personal qualities of the manager and the policy implemented in the organization (Koval, 2022). To improve professional activity and increase the efficiency of management decision-making in public authorities, it is advisable to consider the possibilities of using time management strategies and practices.

The fundamental foundations of the concept of time management are listed and visualized in Fig. 4.

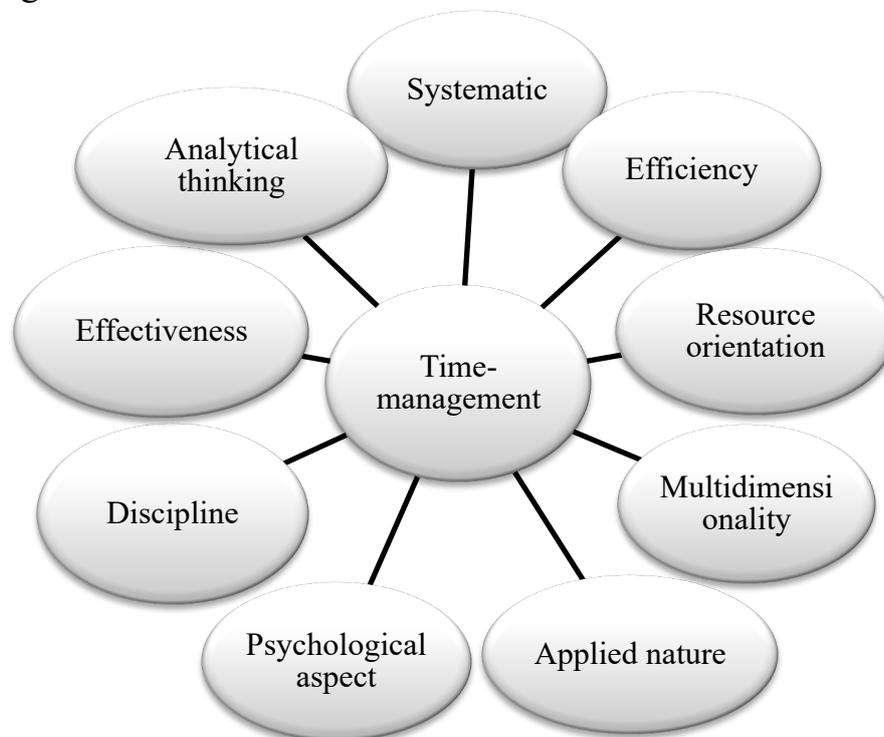


Figure 4. Basic terms for a contextual understanding of time management

Source: developed by the authors`

Thus, the content of time management is a combination of a set of practices, skills, tools, tactics, methods, systems for their joint use for the purpose of rational planning, distribution of time and performance of professional tasks during it, or achievement of personal life goals. In the modern digital world, time management is understood as a technology for planning work with a certain rating of tasks, setting deadlines for their performance and using digital systems and technologies for this purpose, which serve as organizers.

Fig. 5 demonstrates the course of the evolution of time management in the practical and scientific spheres and problems at the stages of its development.

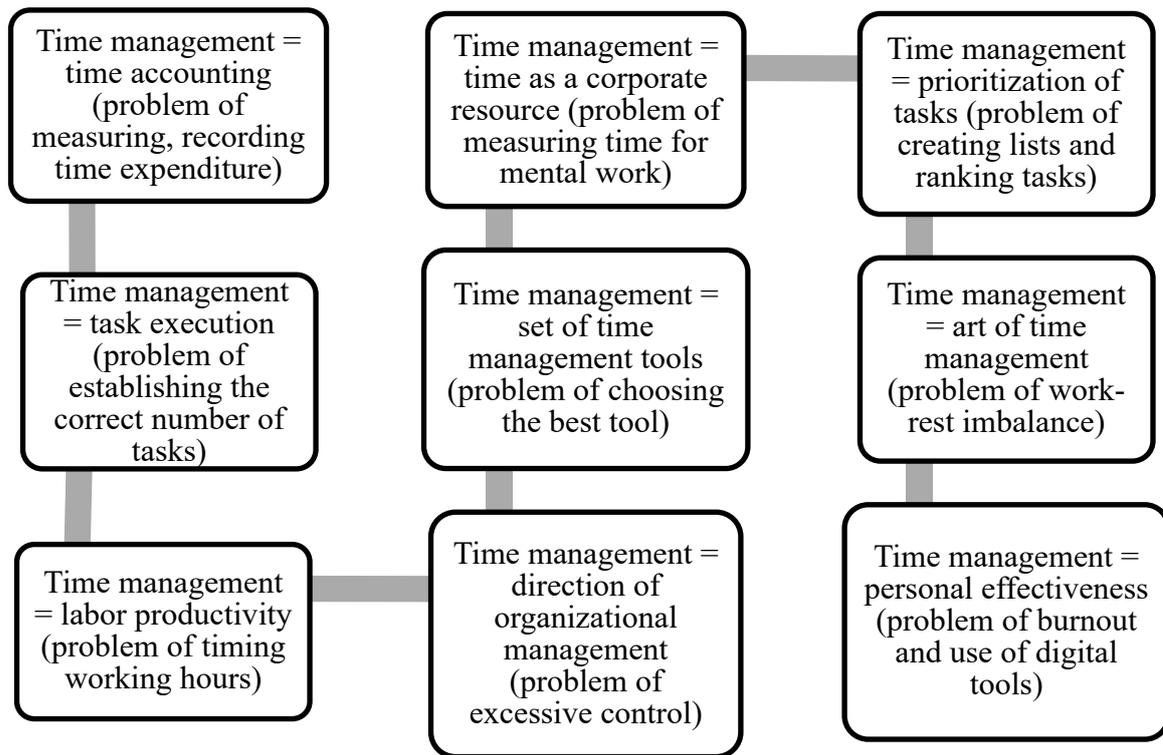


Figure 5. The process of evolution of time management in the practical and scientific spheres and problems at the stages of its development

Source: developed by the authors`

Fig. 6 systematizes the elements of the time management methodology, which form a comprehensive approach to the scientific basis of time management. Given the significant number of different directions of development of the time management methodology, we can conclude that its current state is significantly different from the fundamental stages of its development, which were limited to time accounting techniques. The modern time management methodology is a complex, flexible and technologically integrated system into the management mechanisms of organizations. Its characteristic feature is the shift in emphasis from the paradigms of rigid planning of time costs with accuracy to the minute, to methods of managing the attention, energy and priorities of employees who are in conditions of constant stress and information overload, and also experience changes in business processes in both traditional and digital space.

The methodology of modern time management is characterized by a tangible social character, and goes beyond the performance of purely work tasks, aiming to achieve both career heights and desired personal goals and well-being by the employee. This is facilitated by a value-oriented approach, in which time planning is carried out taking into account the professional and personal values and needs of the employee, which makes it possible to track and eliminate tasks that are irrelevant to him.

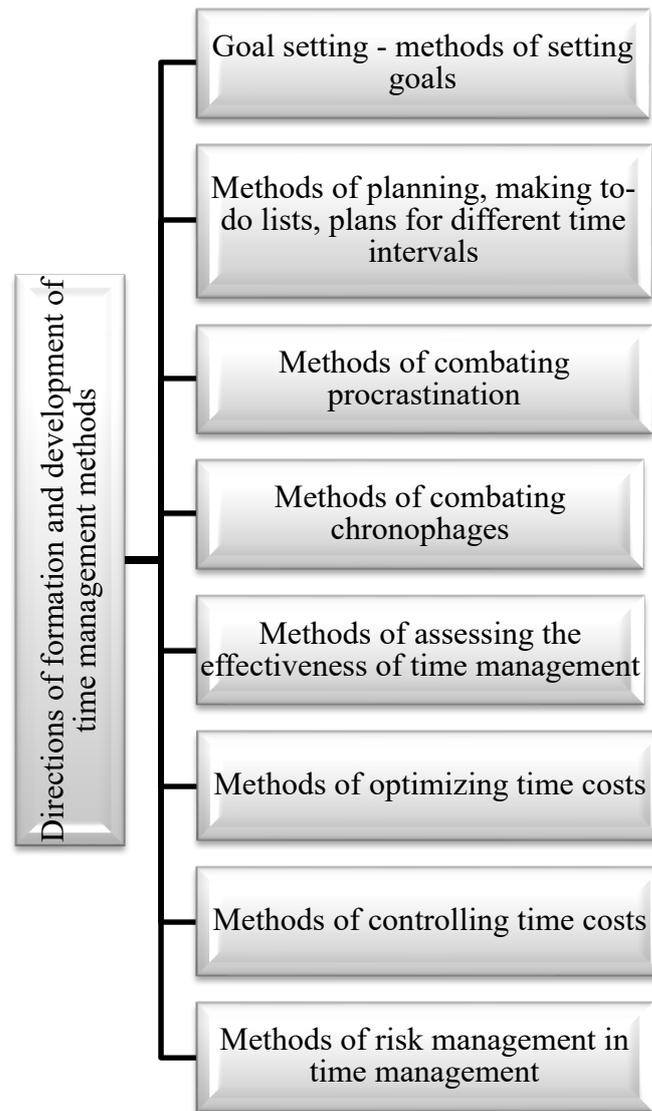


Figure 6. Elements of a time management methodology

Source: developed by the authors`

Discussion. Fig. 7 demonstrates the reserves for increasing the efficiency of managerial decision-making in the field of public management and administration. The use of flexible management methodologies, which are inherent in the project approach in management at the civil service level, will allow to increase the effectiveness of management decisions due to an interactive approach to their development. This approach assumes that instead of long and bureaucratized processes, short cycles of planning, implementation, evaluation and adjustment of the management decision are used. Such tactics make it possible to quickly adapt to the changing external environment and ensure the timeliness of making adjustments to the civil servant's action plan.

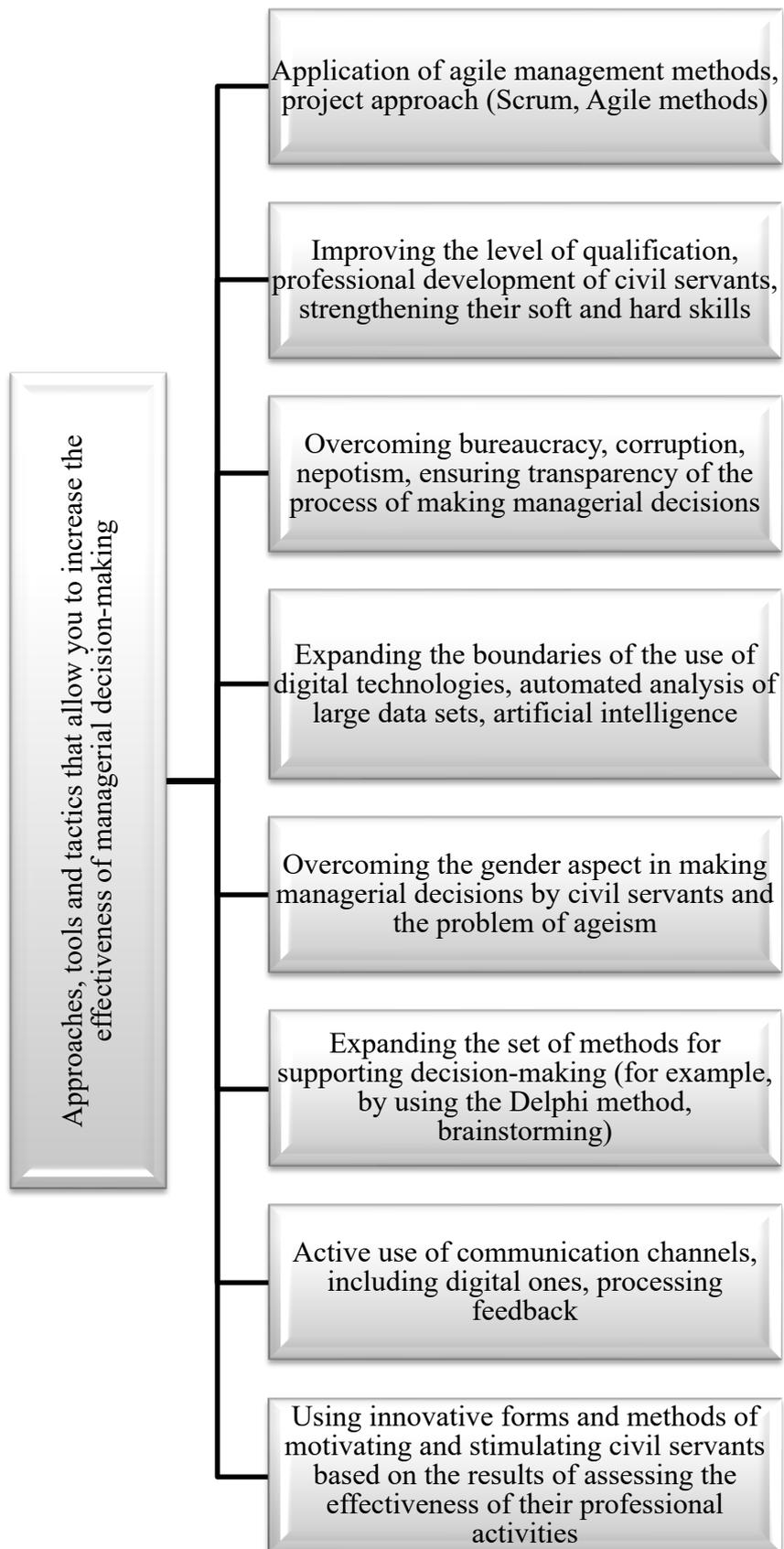


Figure 7. Reserves for increasing the efficiency of managerial decision-making in the field of public management and administration

Source: developed by the authors`

Project management methodologies are implemented using interdisciplinary teams, which meets the needs of using the decision tree and Delphi methods, which were proposed by us above. In particular, the creation of small self-organized teams, which, however, include specialists from different industries, different profiles, and in the case of the civil service - departments and areas of activity to work together to solve a specific problem, allows you to see all its aspects more broadly and predict the consequences of the decision for different industries and areas. This tactic encourages knowledge sharing and significantly increases the impact of the decision, while minimizing its risks.

A characteristic feature of project management is also constant interaction and continuous communication between all employees involved in the process of making and implementing a management decision. Regularly receiving feedback from stakeholders and the public allows civil servants to respond more quickly to the needs and problems that arise in the future, which could be the result of a decision made in the field of public management and administration.

The effectiveness of decision-making in the field of public management is critically important for the development of society and the state as a whole. In the face of modern challenges and existing restrictions, such as martial law, demographic changes and economic instability and social tension, public authorities need to introduce innovative methods and tools into their activities, including those that will help increase the level of efficiency of management decision-making. A significant part of such tools is implemented or closely related to the digital information space.

The importance of effective time management for the professional activities of public servants in Ukraine and the effective performance of their duties cannot be overestimated, especially in the context of constant professional challenges, economic and political reforms and growing requirements for the efficiency of the state apparatus, including using all the possibilities of digitalization. Effective time management is a guarantee for increasing both the personal productivity of each civil servant and a factor guaranteeing the effectiveness of the functioning of the entire system of public management and administration.

Fig. 8 demonstrates time management competencies that characterize the ability of a civil servant to effective time management.

The time management mechanism of a civil servant should include four main sequential blocks, namely: personal analysis, smart planning, discipline and combating time wasters. Each block involves the use of different time management tools and methods (Boryshkevych et al., 2020). The initiator of the formation and development of time management skills should be the public administration employee himself. In the absence of personal initiative, this process significantly loses its potential effectiveness.

Finding a time management strategy that is best suited to public service employees depends on their personality, ability to self-motivate and level of self-discipline. By applying some or all of the ten strategies proposed below, a civil servant will be able to manage his time more effectively.

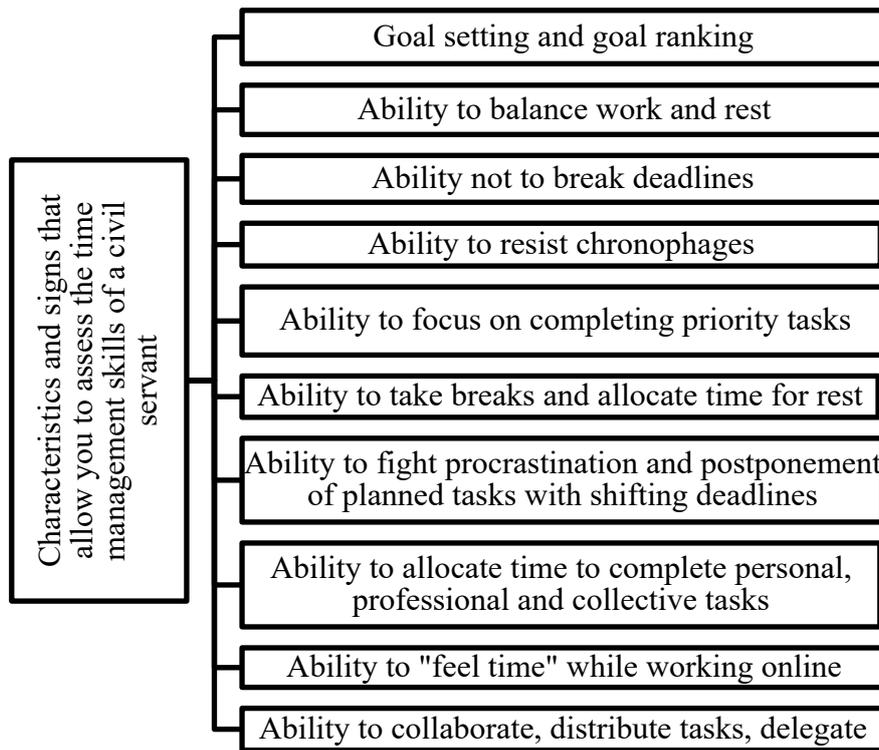


Figure 8. Time management competencies that characterize a civil servant's time management ability

Source: developed by the authors`

Fig. 9 summarizes the time management strategies recommended for public servants to improve their professional activities.



Figure 9. Time management strategies recommended for public servants to improve their professional performance

Source: developed by the authors`

Many people believe that the term “time management” is semantically incorrect. An employee cannot manage time; he manages the events in his life within the flow of time. An HR manager may wish he had more time, but he only gets 24 hours, 1440 minutes, or 86400 seconds each day for personal and professional tasks. How employees use this time depends on skills acquired through self-analysis, planning, evaluation, and self-control. Like finances, time is both a valuable and limited resource. It must be protected from overspending, used wisely, and budgeted for.

Conclusion. The conducted study of the use of time management as a tool for improving the professional activities of civil servants and increasing the efficiency of decision-making in public authorities made it possible to draw the following conclusions.

Time management is a critically important tool for improving professional activities and increasing the efficiency of managerial decision-making, especially in public authorities. Its content essence lies in rational planning, time allocation and task performance, which in the modern digital world involves the use of technologies and organizers.

Effective managerial decision-making in the field of public administration is the key to the development of society and the state. In the context of modern challenges, such as martial law and economic instability, the integration of innovative approaches, in particular flexible management methodologies and effective time management practices, is critically important for increasing both the personal productivity of civil servants and the overall effectiveness of the functioning of the public management and administration system. Time, as a valuable and limited resource, requires reasonable and rational use, which is achieved through self-analysis, planning, assessment and self-control of the activities of public authorities.

The study proposes the use of flexible project management methodologies in combination with an interactive approach to developing management decisions (short cycles of planning, implementation, assessment and adjustment of management processes), as well as an approach to working in interdisciplinary self-organized teams. Constant feedback from stakeholders and the public is important for timely response and minimizing the risks that civil servants encounter in the performance of their duties.

Prospects for further research are the development of individual programs for improving the skills of civil servants in the areas of time management and making managerial decisions.

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