

## **Contact systems and their monitoring: The case of foreign firms in the Czech Republic**

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### **Abstract**

Contact system is one of the basic conditions of successful functioning of each organization. The paper discusses the history of contact systems research with the heavy accent on the importance of the Swedish school and its most important studies. The paper then turns to presentation of the results of recent contact systems survey conducted among the foreign investors in the Czech Republic. The mentioned pilot study of contact systems is based on structured interviews with the representatives of selected foreign firms. The interviews aimed to reveal the patterns of contact systems with the suppliers and customers, with the providers of producer services, with the cooperating firms etc. It was also investigated which part of the firm's hierarchy is responsible for the communication with particular partners and if it is possible to discern between the programme, planning and orientation processes within the firm activities. Similarly, the interviews focused also on the importance of personal contacts. The results of the empirical survey and the interviews with the foreign investors tend to show a low level of embeddedness of the interviewed firms and generally indicate little will to cooperate with the Czech firms or even with other foreign firms. Generally, the Czech firms are more successful as providers of producer services, by the way of subcontracting, than as suppliers of materials. Regarding the contact active levels of the company, there is a marked shift of competences downward which brings the need of increasing personal contacts in the lower levels of company hierarchy.

**Key words:** contact systems, foreign investors, Czech Republic, embeddedness, personal contacts, cooperation

### **Introduction**

Information and its sufficiency is the basic condition of adapting the firm and its activities to the dynamic competitive environment. The information is considered to be a relevant production factor and successful restructuring requires the creation of reliable information and communication relations with other actors in the environment of the firm undergoing a restructuring process.

In the framework of structural and regional policy, the reintegration into the global economy is based on active formation of regional networks of development, cooperation and modernisation. The foreign investment and the ability of local actors to enable its embeddedness in the local cooperation networks play an important role within these tendencies. A strategic affiliation with a foreign partner may become one of the manners how to approach the restructuring process.

However, the creation of a regional network of cooperation with the participation of a foreign partner requires a quality communication and information system and institutional network enabling omnifaceted cooperation and the development of each organization involved. The unique combination of actors, contact patterns and communication context forms a contact system operating within a particular region.

Contact system is therefore one of the basic conditions of successful functioning of each organization. Thus, this article aims to reintroduce the issue of contact systems research and presents the results of a pilot study conducted in the Czech Republic. It deals with the history of the contact systems research and the most important works on this field in the first two sections. These sections present a theoretical framework of contact systems research and a subsequent analysis. The fourth section reveals the results of the contact systems pilot study conducted among selected foreign firms in the Czech Republic. Some interesting remarks are summarized, showing the nature of contact systems of foreign firms in a distorted milieu of post-communist entrepreneurial environment in the concluding section. Problems experienced when conducting the survey are also mentioned and some possible solutions, such as temporal alliances, are devised.

#### **The early stage of contact systems research and its pioneering works**

The article by B. Thorngren (1970), who pointed out that the exchange of information may consume considerable amount of resources and thus it stands for a very important economic activity, is generally recognised as the pioneering work in the field of contact systems research.

Thorngren (1970, p. 409) explains: “Combinations of actors, contact patterns, and contexts can be expected to appear with a certain regularity, that is to form contact systems.” Different patterns of contact systems are used in different contexts and the pattern of contact system can facilitate, or limit, the growth potential in different regions. Contact system can also act as a superstructure connecting together different organizations (e.g. commodity chain organization). He also notes the possible threat of polarization between the information rich agglomerations and areas with lesser opportunities for contacts.

Every business or company activity requires access to information. However, particular activities and their character differ in the demands for information, e.g. according to purpose, time horizon, etc. Ehlemark (1964, cit. in Thorngren, 1970, p. 413) discerns between programmed processes (related to routine tasks within the company such as material movement, repetitive easy tasks) and planned processes (related to changing the programmed processes). The third type of processes is, according to Ehlemark, the category of orientation processes, which control the planning processes according to the changes in the firm’s environment. It is important to note that each of these processes has totally different demands for its relations

with the environment and also different demands for the pattern of contact system, accessibility of partners or management mechanisms inside the company.

When examining the structure of contact systems Thorngren again discerned between three types – one for each process. Contact network of programmed processes was characterised by fast and short contacts, controlling the coordination of routine tasks. The contact network of planned processes comprised phone and personal contacts with persons in established relations about mostly familiar issues in the given context. The contact system of orientation processes had a more sophisticated and time-consuming contacts, therefore mainly personal meetings. These meetings require longer planning time, the time of contact is also longer (up to several hours) and the number of participants is usually more than three. The search for new ideas, combinations of people, technologies and markets takes place here.

Thorngren's study also suggests that the new communication technologies might bring the possibility of looser location for routine, i.e. programmed activities. Nevertheless, the planned and mainly orientation activities will remain dependent on personal contact and location in proximity to the important partners or within their good accessibility is still crucial.

Another important study in the field of contact systems proceeds from Gunnar Törnqvist (1970). He discerns between the direct and indirect transfer of information. For the direct contacts, the face-to-face meeting of actors is inevitable, whilst indirect contact can be processed via mail or communication technologies. In terms of quantity, the indirect contacts dominate the area of contact activities. In the subsequent work Törnqvist concentrated on personal contacts only, because these are more effective than other means of information exchange and may influence the location of economic activity (thus personal contacts as a location factor).

In addition, Törnqvist (1970) quotes the advantages of personal contacts and explains that the quantity and quality of personal contacts depends on the categories of job functions and levels within the firm's hierarchy. His following surveys then concentrated on:

1. identification of contact-intensive functions,
2. time spent in personal contacts,
3. pattern of information flows.

One of the key results is that the quantity of contacts correlates with the company's inner division into the productive and administrative unit, whilst personal contacts take place in the latter one. Even within the administrative unit, the differences between contact competences occur, and contact activity is dependent on particular job position. The vast majority of contacts is executed between the same levels of organizations and also mainly within one economic sector. The spatial point of view reveals important concentration tendency and it could have been concluded that the majority of contacts took place within the home city or its environment, or in the nearest big urban agglomeration (Törnqvist, 1970; Dostál, 1984, p. 22–23).

### **The development of contact system agenda and its selected works**

Later research by Lars-Olof Olander (1979) on office activities as activity systems suggests that the most important information exchange activities still require face-to-face contacts between partners, even though most information can be transmitted via modern communication technologies. Then he extends the research by considering time costs, planning time, number of actors and their spatial pattern.

Goddard (1973, cit. in Olander, 1979) examined the contact systems of companies in London and those who decentralised from London to other English regions. He then classified various groups of structural possibilities and restrictions which affect contact behaviour of organizations. They may be for instance: individual environmental images, administrative and other rule systems, individuals as indivisible time resources, transport system, environmental structure etc. Thus, in further research Olander suggests taking account not only the restrictions of a technical nature, but mentions also psychological and social barriers or preconditions of communication.

Within the Swedish school of contact systems, Hedberg (1970, cit. in Olander, 1979) measured the time costs of personal contacts and their functional and regional distribution in many organizations. Sahlberg (1970, cit. in Olander, 1979) published a study of functional and regional structure of contact work via the data from the Swedish intrastate airlines. In his further work, Sahlberg with Engström (Engström, Sahlberg, 1973) developed the methods of study of society as a contact system.

Later works are those of Kerstin Cederlund (1980), who examines contact systems of public administration institutions. She unites the concepts of time-geography (see Hägerstrand, 1969) into her research (which period of the day is the most contact intensive, how long does the contact last etc.). Primarily she investigated if the phone and personal contacts have the same pattern, which was testified. The key question then was, if there is a possible substitute for personal contact – another way of information exchange. The results of this survey question show that the personal contacts still remain irreplaceable in many functions and contexts (e.g. planning activities, research and development etc.) despite the hi-tech communication technology and its possibilities. Recent research of Cederlund concentrates on contact systems of Swedish university departments (see Cederlund, 1999).

### **Contact systems of foreign firms in the Czech Republic: a pilot study**

The research into contact systems of foreign investors in the Czech Republic is of radical importance because from the different types of contact systems we can infer the level of embeddedness of foreign firms in the local economy. This pilot study, however, does not aim to investigate the level of embeddedness as it is typical in many studies of econometric character (Dicken et al., 1995), i.e. through the

extent of export, the number of local suppliers and the percentage of locally supplied material etc. On the contrary, this study observes the relations of foreign firms within the local economy merely from the point of view of behavioural geography. The structured interview used in this survey endeavours to understand the behaviour of firms and the driving factors of this behaviour in the local economy.

The pilot study of contact systems is based on structured interviews with the representatives of fifteen selected foreign firms. The survey on contact systems serves as a contribution to a broader research of foreign investors and their perception of particular Czech regions. These foreign firms were selected from the database of foreign direct investors in the Czech Republic who were approached in the survey of perception of Czech micro-regions. The firms interviewed were all of a medium size, ranging across different regions, industries and entrepreneurial strategies. The interviews were conducted in the period June – August of 2005 and aimed to reveal the patterns of contact systems with the suppliers and customers, with the providers of producer services, with the cooperating firms etc. It was also investigated which part of the firm's hierarchy is responsible for the communication with particular partners and if it is possible to discern between the programme, planning and orientation processes within the firm activities. Similarly, the interviews focused also on the importance of personal contacts. The interviewed companies were selected as firms from Prague, another metropolitan region and non-metropolitan region within the Czech Republic and also across sectors of the national economy (services, advanced producer services and manufacturing industry). There was also a differentiation between firms which have their branches in the Czech Republic only and firms with branches in many more foreign countries.

The interviews were conducted according to the general rules of interviewing (Hermanns 2004) and were recorded and consequently transcribed. The transcribed interviews were analysed by means of qualitative methods – formulation of analytic categories, recoding, quantification and interpretation. In the case of contact systems part of the survey, the responses were summarised in a table by individual code for a number of firms in particular contact system. The split between the Czech and foreign firms, private entrepreneurs, small, medium or big-size firms and due to the proximity to surveyed firm was applied in the table. Next, the open ended questions were analysed by the content analysis (e.g. Meester, 2004) and the most remarking answers are cited in the respective parts of the article.

#### **Supplier-customer relations and their contact systems**

The assessment of supplier-customer relations of selected firms is not an easy task. There are big differences between particular locations, as well as differences across the sectors of economic activity. However, if we quantify the distribution of suppliers, it can be deduced that the most cited group of suppliers are big foreign firms, located abroad. Eight of ten selected firms state at least a few of foreign firms abroad as their main suppliers. Other categories of suppliers are more equally rep-

resented. However, the numbers of firms in these categories are very small. Somewhat higher numbers occur in the category of small Czech firms in the same district, big and medium firms in the district. Given this, it can be concluded that there is an imbalance between the Czech and foreign suppliers of foreign firms in the Czech Republic.

Equally, we can trace the distribution of customers from the frequency tables of individual categories. In this case the situation appears to be much more balanced. Higher percentage of customers of foreign firms in the Czech Republic are Czech firms, spread over the whole country, small percentage is formed also by the Czech firms abroad. Foreign firms are also equally distributed, however, in lesser numbers. Thus, it may be deduced that if we evaluate the situation on the basis of total numbers for all the interviewed firms, the tendency of “market penetration” strategy can be observed in the case of selected firms. That means the import of goods, materials and machine parts, which are, after minimum assembly or adjustment, sold for saturation of the Czech market.

It appears more transparent to create a typology of selected firms, classified according to the type of their contact systems in supplier-customer relations. We can discern three dominating types of firms, denominated as type “market penetration”, mixed type and “domesticated” firm within the group of interviewed firms. The basic characteristics of these types are stated in the table 1.

*Table 1:* Typology of firms according to their supplier-customer relations

Type	Suppliers	Customers	Number of interviewed firms	Note
<b>“market penetration”</b>	Parent company only or a few foreign companies	Czech firms all over the CR + firms with foreign interest in the CR	8	Czech firms may become the suppliers of some ancillary materials etc.
<b>“mixed type”</b>	Foreign firms in combination with local suppliers	Foreign firms in combination with local customers	5	Different combinations, usually there are always more Czech customers
<b>“domesticated”</b>	Local (Czech) suppliers	Local (Czech) customers	2	Mostly foreign management, but local supplier-customer relations

Source: structured interviews.

It is also interesting to investigate who is the employee responsible for communication with suppliers and customers and in which level of firm’s organizational hierarchy he/she works. In the communication with suppliers, the employees from the planning processes are mostly involved and more often also the highest managers, i.e. the orientation moment. The same groups of employees are responsible also for the communication with customers. A great difference can be seen in the

importance of personal contacts. Whilst when communicating with suppliers, the personal contact is necessary only in 31% of contacts, the communication with customers is led personally in nearly 75% of cases.

#### **Subcontracting of some services by foreign firms**

The outsourcing of some services becomes one of the most important recent trends in the company organisation. Particular services, which do not directly comprise the business line or are not required by the company headquarters on a daily basis, are provided by specialised firms in the form of subcontracting or out-sourcing. Therefore the topic of subcontracting some producer services was also a part of the interview and it was aimed to reveal on what extent the Czech firms are concerned when providing these services.

Advertising is mostly provided by the Czech firms directly in the same district (47%) or in the region, it is also frequent that the advertising is managed by the firm itself (27%). In the two thirds of cases the accounting function is performed within the firm itself or Czech firms from the same district are contracted. The legal advisory is also often provided by Czech firms within the same district (2/3 of cases) or by the company's own legal advisory department. Sales and purchases are also performed by the firm itself (1/3 of firms) or by a Czech firm from the nearest environment. Market research, if any, is managed by the firm itself or by a consulting Czech company in the district. Laboratory research was relevant only for a small number of the interviewed firms and in these cases it was done within the company or in collaboration with a research institute abroad. A similar situation appears when concerning the design, where, none the less, more local firms are contracted (20%). The human resources management is again controlled by most firms internally or they collaborate with a Czech personnel agency in the same region. The tasks in the area of technology and innovation are demanded only by a small number of foreign firms in the Czech Republic, three companies collaborate with a Czech firm in the same district and the rest of companies demand these tasks from foreign companies. When subcontracting the transportation services, the Czech firms from the same districts are contracted in 40% of cases. Catering, cleaning or security services are other examples of subcontracted services.

It is therefore evident that in the area of subcontracting the Czech companies are more successful as service providers than as suppliers of goods and materials. The evidence of the quality of human resources in the field of producer services can be traced for example in the high percentage of legal advisory services contracted among Czech companies, a relatively high number of subcontracted accounting services, similarly as in contracted market research companies, personnel agencies or distinguished design studios. This orientation on Czech companies can be a result of their specific knowledge of the local institutional and entrepreneurial environment. What may seem alarming is the low number of so far contracted progressive functions from the area of research and development, laboratory research or

services in technology and innovation. In these areas, the transfer of these functions from the local firm abroad or controlling of Czech production by foreign research and planning is still a prevailing tendency.

The communication with partner companies providing these services is again realised by the employees in middle and higher management (planning and orientation moment). The share of personal contacts when subcontracting the mentioned services is also high, it amounts to some 75%.

#### **Mutual cooperation of firms and an increase of the competitiveness in the local productive system**

The questions on cooperation of foreign firms in the entrepreneurial environment of the Czech Republic seem to be the most important issues of the structured interviews about contact systems of foreign firms in the Czech Republic. The necessity of cooperation networks creation for the increasing competitiveness of regions was already mentioned. The embeddedness of the foreign firms in the local economy of a hosting country can be measured by the amount of cooperation ties with the local firms. Intensive cooperation and the possibility of creating networks with firms of similar orientation is considered a driving factor of economic growth in the region (Lundqvist, Olander, 1999; Camagni, 1991a,b; Bagnasco, 1977; Becattini, 1978; Brusco, 1982). When interviewed, the spokesmen of foreign firms were asked if their company cooperated with other companies (mainly Czech ones) in the same region. The distinction of categories between the Czech and foreign firms and according to proximity to the selected foreign firm was retained as in the previous parts.

It can be inferred from the interviews that the tendency to cooperate between foreign and Czech firms and the tendency to create networks of cooperating firms or certain type of territorial productive system are, in fact, negligible. Firms cooperate mostly when establishing commercial alliances and similar associations within the district (8 cases) or within the region or the whole country. The second area where foreign and Czech firms incline to cooperate is the field of human resources management and education. Thus, it is testified that the qualified labour and human resources are one of the main factors attracting foreign investors and that these issues are given a high priority among the foreign firms. Other investigated areas (technology, innovation, design etc.) have significantly lower levels of mutual cooperation. The shift of the cooperation in technology and innovation in the direction to foreign firms abroad and refusing cooperation with Czech firms in the district or in the region is another alarming fact. It would seem that there is a certain risk of draining the R&D (and other progressive) functions from the Czech Republic abroad, to the parent company level.

The communication concerning these types of cooperation is without any doubt one of the most complex activities and for these contacts mainly the higher or highest management is responsible (orientation moment) and to a lesser extent also the



middle management, i.e. the employees from the planning moment. Nearly 60% of contacts require personal meeting of managers, while the routine processes of cooperation may be controlled with the assistance of communication technology.

The increase of competitiveness and pertinent agenda was subjected to independent analysis. The cooperation on these issues with the partners in the same district was admitted by seven firms. As far as other firms from the same economic sector (both in the district, in the region or from whole Czech Republic) are concerned only a small number of firms collaborated. Inspiration for innovation, uprising of products or services etc. is mainly gained from the customers – Czech firms in the district, region or whole Czech Republic, but more often, innovation is driven by the foreign parent company. One third of the interviewed firms also stated that they cooperate with universities or technological institutes in the district, region or Czech Republic. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the form of this cooperation does not respond to the original sense of the word (thus the corporate problem solving, application of academic research into the production etc.). The cooperation of foreign firms and universities seems to be inverted – the employees of foreign firms lecture on the universities, in the technical fields they are the tutors of some theses etc. In some cases the possibility of offering the job to talented students was also mentioned.

Communication in the field of strategic alliances, enhancing of competitiveness etc., is also the domain of the orientation moment in the firm and partially also of some selected employees from the planning moment (i.e. the middle management). Some 82% of contacts in this field is realised personally.

Detailed information about the percentage of personal contacts and the levels involved in particular contact systems are stated in appendix 1.

### **Contact systems of foreign firms – discussion**

In the supplier-customer relations, the “market penetration” type of firms prevails. This does not necessarily have to indicate an unfavourable situation for a local economy. This type of investment is certainly more desirable than investment motivated by low cost of resources, cheap labour or incorporating of Czech firms into transnational corporations only on the basis of assembly operations etc. without any ties to local economy (Pavlínek, 1998, p. 79).

Generally, the Czech firms are more successful as providers of producer services, by the way of subcontracting, than as suppliers of materials. The knowledge of local environment, communication styles, local institutions etc. seems to be an important factor utilized by foreign entrepreneurs in order to minimize the element of uncertainty in alien entrepreneurial environment.

The situation in the field of cooperation and mainly strategic cooperation appears to be totally specific. The majority of answers tends to the unwillingness to cooperate. The low level of willingness to cooperate can be explained by a hostile

competitive environment, mutual distrust of the firms, a low level of work ethics etc. Every other firm from the environment is considered to be a competitor – opinions as “we cannot talk about cooperation...whoever is a competitor”. If there is the will to cooperate, then mainly within the one’s own holding, i.e. to strengthen the relations within company and by vertical integration. A majority of firms act as a “solo player” and cooperate only with the parental company (opinions as “company does not want nor does not need cooperation, company is independent”). There is another accentuated feature of specific Czech entrepreneurial environment that can be traced in the responses of foreign entrepreneurs. Many firms, which generally reject cooperation, are disposed to cooperate with other firms (including competitors) in case of an advantageous offer which cannot be executed by the firm itself because of lack of resources, machinery or qualified workers. In these cases temporal alliances emerge that are dismissed right after the execution of given order – in these circumstances it means “rather than cooperate, I would say operate” or “sometimes we go against each other and sometimes we go together”. These temporal alliances are suggested also by the works of Asheim (2002) or Oinas (2002). The most important criterion is the profit, and value added, the measure is the satisfied customer. It is highly possible that similar interconnections may represent a future potential for the cooperation of a permanent nature.

In fact, the only area, where firms cooperate intensively, is the field of education and human resources. Conjoint training courses, language courses, examinations etc. are quite common. A higher level of cooperation is represented by a regional association of HR managers, though it seems to be rather isolated activity.

The issue of distinguishing between the programmed, planning and orientation processes within the firm has also revealed some interesting facts. Opposed to Ehlemark (1964, cit. in Thorngren, 1970), it is not possible to distinguish between these processes easily nowadays. Particular processes become interconnected and the importance of middle line and technostructure levels within the firm (terms by Mintzberg, 1983) are growing in importance. These levels are more often being delegated complex tasks that require only the final approval of top management. This shift of competences downward brings also the need of personal contacts in the lower levels of company hierarchy.

Wholly routine activities are processed by the programmed moment within the firm, which often does not interfere to the network of personal contacts. When dealing with suppliers, the personal contact is needful within the first steps of supply contracting and then its need decreases (only 31%). Concerning the customers, the orientation to customer and the fight for the customer in the competitive environment is explicit, and the share of personal contact rises to 75%. In case of extremely important customers these contacts are made by top managers personally.

Similar situation arises in the area of subcontracting of the services (75% of personal contacts). The need of personal contact is also higher when dealing the cooperation (60%) in the first stage and then phone contact or e-mail may be sufficient communication means. The modern communication technology is used in the form

of teleconferences. However, it is still true that the first contacts and establishment of business relations are (despite the technological changes) ensured personally.

The highest percentage of personal contacts remain in the area of strategic alliances building, higher levels of cooperation, enhancing of competitiveness etc. These issues are widely recognised as the most complex and requiring individual approach (82% of personal contacts).

The questions on frequency of contacts remained unanswered. Thus, survey showed that the frequency of particular contact varies dynamically – according to the current situation of firm, stage of product's life cycle or a project, according to varying conditions of supply etc. Most of the respondents were not able to respond these questions. Equally, it was not possible to examine the time costs, planning time, number of actors in individual contact systems and other facts, as they were surveyed in some classical studies of contact systems (Olander, 1979). However, contact systems studies widen the current socio-geographical research agenda and further research is being carried out on the time and spatial characteristics of selected contact systems within this agenda.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the interviews with the foreign investors tend to show a low level of embeddedness of the interviewed firms and generally indicate little will to cooperate with the Czech firms or even with other foreign firms. Similarly, Pavlínek (1998) pointed out that for example the case of VW/Skoda joint venture, which is often presented as an example of successful embedded foreign investor in local economy, is rather unusual and “other large investments in the Czech Republic do not show such a degree of local embeddedness.” (Pavlínek, 1998, p. 82). Equally, Pavlínek and Smith (1998) focused on criticism of some rather “optimistic” works on the effect of foreign direct investment (Amin, Thrift, 1995), and again quoted that foreign firms reach high levels of embeddedness in only a few cases.

The same conclusion can be drawn also from the analysis of the structured interviews in this pilot study. Czech firms are relatively successful as providers of specialised producer services. However, in general the majority of foreign firms are rather unwilling to cooperate with Czech partners, with a low level of embeddedness.

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## Appendix 1

The percentage of personal contacts and the levels involved in particular contact systems

Contact system	% of personal contacts	Levels of company mostly involved		
		Programme moment	Planning moment	Orientation moment
Suppliers	31%	x	xx	x
Customers	75%		xx	x
Subcontracted services	75%		xx	xx
Basic cooperation	60%		x	xx
Strategic cooperation	82%		x	xx

x level intermittently involved, xx level frequently involved

## Résumé

### **Kontaktní systémy a jejich sledování: Případová studie zahraničních firem v České republice**

Kontaktní systém je jednou ze základních podmínek fungování každé organizace. Článek se zabývá historií výzkumu kontaktních systémů a klade důraz na význam tzv. švédské školy a jejích nejdůležitějších prací. Poté se článek věnuje prezentaci výsledků nedávného šetření kontaktních systémů mezi zahraničními investory v České republice. Tato pilotní studie kontaktních systémů je založena na metodě strukturovaných rozhovorů se zástupci vybraných zahraničních firem. Rozhovory se snažily odhalit vzorce kontaktních systémů s dodavateli a odběrateli, s poskytovateli jednotlivých výrobních služeb, se spolupracujícími firmami apod. Bylo také zjišťováno, která část firemní hierarchie je zodpovědná za komunikaci s jednotlivými partnery a zda je možné rozlišit v rámci firem a jejich aktivit tzv. programové, plánovací a orientační procesy. Rozhovory se také zaměřovaly na důležitost osobních kontaktů. Výsledky empirického šetření a rozhovorů se zahraničními investory ukazují nízkou úroveň zakořenění dotazovaných firem a obecně poukazují na malou vůli spolupracovat s českými firmami nebo dokonce i s ostatními zahraničními firmami. Obecně platí, že české firmy jsou úspěšnější coby dodavatelé specializovaných služeb formou subkontraktování, než jako dodavatelé materiálu. Co se týče kontaktně aktivních úrovní organizace, můžeme pozorovat značný posun kompetencí dolů, tj. přenášení potřeby vzrůstajících osobních kontaktů na nižší úrovně firemní hierarchie.