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OFFICE MANAGEMENT AND CRISIS PRACTICES DURING WARTIME: ORGANIZATIONAL, COMMUNICATIVE, AND DIGITAL ASPECTS

This article explores the transformation of office management practices in the context of wartime Ukraine, highlighting its strategic role in supporting organizational resilience, communication, and operational continuity. Drawing on a review of contemporary academic literature and practice-oriented sources, the study identifies key adaptation strategies employed by organizations in response to crisis conditions. These include the transition to hybrid work models, the expanded role of office managers and HR teams, increased digitalization, the adoption of adaptive and situational management approaches, and the prioritization of employee safety and psychological well-being. The article argues that office management has evolved into a critical domain of crisis governance, requiring a multidimensional approach that integrates organizational, communicative, and digital competencies. The Ukrainian experience offers valuable insights for rethinking office governance in fragile and volatile environments globally.

Keywords: office management, wartime adaptation, hybrid work, digital infrastructure, organizational resilience, situational leadership, business continuity
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ОФІС-МЕНЕДЖМЕНТ І АНТИКРИЗОВІ ПРАКТИКИ У ЧАСІ ВІЙНИ: ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙНІ, КОМУНІКАЦІЙНІ ТА ЦИФРОВІ АСПЕКТИ

У статті досліджується трансформація практик офіс-менеджменту в умовах воєнного часу в Україні, з акцентом на його стратегічну роль у підтримці

організаційної стійкості, комунікації та безперервності операційних процесів. Спираючись на аналіз сучасної наукової літератури та практико-орієнтованих джерел, у дослідженні виокремлено ключові стратегії адаптації, які використовуються організаціями у відповідь на кризові обставини. Серед них — перехід до гібридних моделей роботи, розширення ролі офіс-менеджерів та HR-команд, активна цифровізація, впровадження адаптивного й ситуативного управління, а також пріоритетна увага до безпеки працівників і психологічної підтримки. У статті стверджується, що офіс-менеджмент перетворився на критично важливу сферу кризового управління, яка потребує багатовимірного підходу, що поєднує організаційні, комунікаційні та цифрові компетентності. Український досвід пропонує цінні інсайти для переосмислення офісного управління у нестабільних і вразливих контекстах у всьому світі.

Ключові слова: офіс-менеджмент, адаптація у воєнний час, гібридна робота, цифрова інфраструктура, організаційна стійкість, ситуативне лідерство, безперервність бізнесу

The Problem Statement

The full-scale war initiated by the Russian Federation against Ukraine has generated unprecedented and sustained disruptions in the operational environments of organizations, bringing new urgency to the analysis of office management practices under crisis conditions. Traditional approaches to managing office operations-centered on administrative routine, predictable infrastructure, and stable communication flows-have proven inadequate in the face of warfare-related risks such as infrastructure collapse, forced relocations, and physical insecurity. This has revealed a critical need to reconceptualize the functions of office management and to integrate crisis-resilient strategies into everyday administrative practices.

Under wartime conditions, office spaces often acquire new meanings and functions. Rather than serving solely as administrative hubs, they are reconfigured as "points of resilience and safety," outfitted with autonomous power systems, backup communication tools, and stockpiles of essential resources. This transformation reflects the emergence of office management as a domain that must coordinate not only workflow continuity but also basic conditions of employee security and operational viability.

The challenges faced by office managers are multidimensional. Organizationally, they must ensure the continuity of business operations despite damage to infrastructure and risks to human life. This entails the implementation of business continuity plans, logistical coordination for personnel relocation, and the establishment of adaptive internal processes. Communicatively, the task becomes one of sustaining cohesion, trust, and emotional stability within distributed or traumatized teams. Digitally, organizations have become increasingly reliant on secure, flexible technological infrastructures to support remote and hybrid work environments-placing new technical demands on office administrators.

These overlapping challenges redefine office management as a strategic, crisis-responsive function. The office manager emerges not only as an administrative executor but also as a key actor in organizational resilience - responsible for coordinating adaptive systems, managing uncertainty, and preserving productivity and culture amid volatile conditions. The lack of conceptual and practical integration between office management and crisis response frameworks constitutes a critical gap in the current management literature - one that becomes especially visible in wartime contexts such as Ukraine. Addressing this gap is essential for understanding how organizations can remain functional, humane, and strategically agile during extended periods of crisis.

Review of Recent Research and Publications

Recent literature demonstrates a growing interest in the transformation of office management practices in response to crisis conditions, particularly within the context of wartime Ukraine. Several key publications explore the adaptation of administrative systems, personnel coordination, and digital infrastructure in the face of ongoing military threats.

For instance, the work by Kravchuk (2023) examines the reorganization of office spaces during martial law and highlights the emerging role of office managers as coordinators of logistical, psychological, and informational resilience in crisis settings. Similarly, Kryvoshlyk & Vdovichenko (2023) analyze personnel management during wartime and emphasize the critical importance of flexible administrative leadership and empathetic support for employees under stress.

Hurma.work (2022) presents a practical analysis of the "Office Manager 2.0" concept, arguing that hybrid and remote formats have catalyzed the evolution of administrative functions toward more strategic, technology-driven, and crisis-responsive roles. This is further supported by discussions in the pharmaceutical and economic management literature on the theoretical foundations and tactical applications of anti-crisis governance strategies (Pharmaceutical Encyclopedia, 2022).

Other studies emphasize the reputational dimension of office management. In particular, Korzhenko (2023) explores crisis communication and brand trust maintenance during wartime, demonstrating the intertwining of reputational management and administrative function.

Recent studies on office and crisis management in wartime Ukraine provide both empirical insights and theoretical advancements essential for understanding organizational adaptation under extreme stress.

Business Crisis Management in Wartime Opatska et al. (2023) conduct one of the most comprehensive qualitative studies in this domain. Based on interviews with Ukrainian business leaders across various industries, they identify war as a "cosmology episode"—a highly uncertain event with no predetermined endpoint. The findings emphasize emergent, adaptive crisis management capabilities, improvisational leadership, and ad-hoc resilience measures. Moreover, organizations began integrating structured anticipatory practices and crafting renewal narratives to support internal communication and maintain morale.

Organizational Adaptation and CSR Sytch and Rider (2024) explore the transformation of Ukrainian firms, highlighting how the war turned corporate social responsibility (CSR) from a voluntary policy into an existential necessity. Their case studies such as BetterMe providing free access to wellness products for amputees demonstrate how innovation driven by societal needs can have strategic impact and bolster organizational legitimacy.

Responsible Business Conduct and Human Rights The UNDP report "Responsible Business Conduct During War in Ukraine" (2023) outlines four operational scenarios for businesses from active hostilities to returning to recaptured territories. It points to growing human rights risks, especially regarding employee safety, labor rights erosion, and the need for corporate policies that reconcile crisis management with responsible conduct.

Crisis Communication and Mental Health Recent research in communicative crisis management (2022–2024) places emphasis on the psychological impact of war on employees. Chornodid et al. (2022) assess personnel management under martial law, while a 2024 study uses strategic matrix modeling to highlight the necessity of proactive crisis communication systems to mitigate mental stress.

Structural Shifts in Economic Geography Adding breadth from economic journalism, Reuters reports from May 2024 reflect a westward shift of businesses and workforce migration, highlighting how adaptability drives both relocation logistics and digital transition within the office context amazoniainvestiga.info reuters.com . Complementarily, a survey by

the American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine (2024) indicates that while most businesses (85%) remain operational, key challenges include staff mobilization (81%), safety (75%), mental health (50%), and infrastructure outages (50%).

Overall, the reviewed literature reveals that Ukrainian office management has undergone a structural transformation in the face of full-scale war, marked by increased demands for digital adaptability, crisis coordination, and ethical decision-making under uncertainty.

Main Material

Office management in times of crisis is not limited to organizing physical workspace; it involves the strategic coordination of personnel, communication, and operational processes to ensure business resilience. A review of recent scholarly articles and training manuals reveals several key dimensions of this domain.
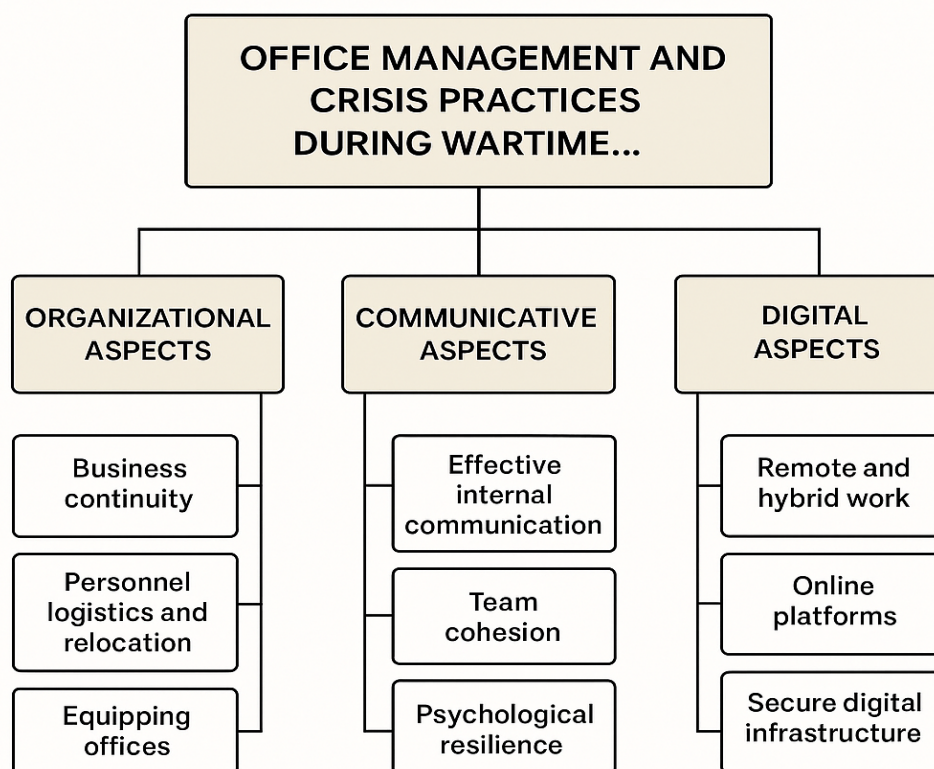
Figure 1. Decomposition of the descriptive study Office Management And Crisis Practices During War: Organizational, Communicational And Digital Aspects *(graphic image created using chatGTP-4.o)*

Core Approaches to Office Management in Crisis: socio-technical approach, automation and digitalization, spatial organization of the office.

The office is viewed as a system in which not only technological tools but also social interactions, atmosphere, leadership, and group dynamics play a vital role. In crisis conditions, organizational flexibility, the ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances, and sustaining employee motivation become especially critical.

The application of digital tools, cloud technologies, messaging platforms, and mobile applications significantly enhances office efficiency particularly under conditions of remote work or mobility restrictions caused by crisis. However, overly formalized or automated processes may negatively impact employee flexibility and creativity.

Reconfiguring the use of office space through coworking arrangements, reception area redesign, or "green office" initiatives can improve workplace effectiveness and help adapt to new crisis-related demands such as social distancing or resource conservation.

Effective crisis management requires the development of contingency plans, risk assessments, clear role distribution within teams, scenario-specific protocols, and mechanisms for rapid communication. Regular testing of these plans and staff training in emergency response are essential.

Human Resource Management. In times of crisis, it is crucial to avoid large-scale layoffs, as such actions can erode trust and loyalty among remaining staff. Recommended measures include financial diagnostics, identification of key personnel, optimization of compensation systems, and the implementation of organizational changes that help preserve team integrity.

Leadership and Communication. Leaders are expected not only to engage in crisis planning but also to promote transparent and open communication, involve employees in decision-making processes, and provide psychological support. Leadership plays a vital role in maintaining morale, building trust, and ensuring a shared sense of direction during turbulent periods.

Strategic Reframing of the Office Manager's Role. In the context of wartime or prolonged crisis, the role of the office manager evolves from administrative coordinator to strategic enabler of organizational resilience. This transformation implies a shift in responsibilities, expectations, and competencies. Beyond maintaining order and logistics, office managers are now expected to coordinate cross-functional responses, support hybrid work ecosystems, ensure access to digital resources, and serve as intermediaries between top leadership and frontline staff.

This expanded role requires enhanced skills in situational awareness, emotional intelligence, digital literacy, and risk communication. The ability to operate under uncertainty, facilitate safe and inclusive workspaces, and ensure continuity of internal processes makes the office manager a key actor in resilience governance.

Digital Infrastructure and Security Preparedness. With increased reliance on cloud-based platforms and decentralized workflows, the digital dimension of office management becomes inseparable from overall crisis preparedness. Data protection, cybersecurity protocols, and access to backup communication systems (e.g., satellite internet, encrypted messaging) become essential to the uninterrupted functioning of the office. Office managers must also coordinate digital literacy training and the implementation of user-friendly systems that support productivity without overwhelming staff during emotionally and cognitively demanding periods.

Psychosocial Considerations in Office Management. Another critical dimension that emerges from recent research is the psychosocial well-being of employees. As the workplace becomes a space not only of labor but also of refuge and community, office management must adopt trauma-informed practices. This includes providing flexible work arrangements, facilitating access to mental health support, and fostering a psychologically safe environment. Crisis conditions often exacerbate workplace inequalities and personal vulnerabilities, placing further importance on inclusive leadership and equitable resource distribution.

Communicative Dimensions of Office Management: The Role of Feedback in Crisis Resilience. In wartime settings, communication within organizations is not merely a technical process—it becomes a foundational element of institutional trust, psychological stability, and strategic coherence. Office management plays a central role in facilitating internal communication processes that sustain the organizational fabric during uncertainty and threat.

One of the most critical components of communication in crisis conditions is bidirectional feedback. Unlike top-down instructions, which may dominate in emergency

responses, resilient organizations increasingly prioritize horizontal and upward communication flows to ensure responsiveness, adaptability, and staff engagement.

Why Feedback Matters in Crisis Contexts?

Regular feedback channels help office managers and HR teams assess employee morale, emotional fatigue, and material needs (e.g., safety, equipment, relocation assistance). In rapidly changing conditions, feedback serves as an early-warning system for psychological burnout, logistical bottlenecks, or miscommunication.

When employees see that their voices are heard and their concerns addressed, it builds trust in management and reinforces a sense of mutual responsibility. Transparent response to feedback (e.g., by adjusting procedures, recognizing overwork, or modifying schedules) signals ethical leadership and respect for human dignity. In hybrid and remote work settings, feedback loops help identify technical issues, workflow inefficiencies, and misalignments in expectations. Tools such as anonymous surveys, pulse check-ins, regular retrospectives, and open office hours with management are increasingly used to maintain alignment across dispersed teams. Crisis communication must remain flexible. Feedback allows managers to adjust their tone, content, and channels of communication depending on the context e.g., whether the team is experiencing active shelling, internet outages, or exhaustion from prolonged tension. Office Manager as a Feedback Facilitator. The office manager becomes a key communication bridge between operational leadership and the staff. This role involves: creating safe and accessible channels for feedback (digital platforms, suggestion boxes, informal check-ins); aggregating, analyzing, and relaying critical insights to decision-makers; coordinating responses that close the feedback loop and show that employee input translates into meaningful action.
By embedding feedback into the organizational culture, wartime office management transforms communication from a reactive necessity into a proactive resilience strategy. It fosters emotional security, operational alignment, and collective problem-solving, all of which are indispensable for navigating long-term crises.

The digitalization of office management, already accelerated by the global pandemic, has become indispensable during wartime. In Ukraine, the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation not only disrupted physical infrastructures but also forced organizations to rapidly transition to digital solutions as a condition for survival, continuity, and coordination. The office manager, in this context, becomes a digital mediator ensuring that tools, protocols, and platforms support resilience rather than create new vulnerabilities.

Digital Infrastructure as a Critical Asset. The shift to remote and hybrid work models has placed new demands on secure, flexible, and redundant digital infrastructure. This includes: cloud-based document management systems (e.g., Google Workspace, Microsoft 365); video conferencing and collaboration tools (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Slack); project management platforms (e.g., Trello, Asana, Jira); encrypted communication channels to protect sensitive organizational information; backup systems and Starlink terminals to ensure connectivity during blackouts and air raids.

Office managers are responsible for both technical deployment and digital literacy support across staff to ensure that tools are effectively used under extreme conditions.

Automation and Workflow Optimization. Crisis conditions demand lean and efficient operations. Office managers increasingly rely on automation for routine tasks such as scheduling, procurement, reporting, and HR coordination freeing up time for higher-level crisis response and employee support. However, over-automation can risk dehumanizing workplace interactions and reducing adaptability. Effective office management requires a balance between digital efficiency and human-centric flexibility.

Cybersecurity and Digital Risk Management. The wartime context has amplified the importance of cyber hygiene, particularly in environments with increased risks of cyberattacks and data breaches. Office managers must coordinate: regular cybersecurity trainings; role-based access control; use of virtual private networks (VPNs); clear protocols for digital crisis scenarios (e.g., loss of connectivity, phishing attacks).

Security-oriented digital management is not only a technical function but a component of institutional trust and strategic continuity.

Digital Communication and Culture. Digital platforms are not just operational tools they are also spaces where organizational culture, team cohesion, and psychological resilience are maintained. Office managers play a key role in creating digital rituals (e.g., morning check-ins, virtual coffee breaks); maintaining visibility and connection among dispersed staff; using digital storytelling (newsletters, shared dashboards, internal campaigns) to reinforce shared goals and progress.

In this sense, digital tools serve not only as infrastructure but also as a medium of collective belonging crucial in times of geographic dispersion and psychological stress.

Conclusion

The full-scale war in Ukraine has redefined the landscape of office management, revealing its strategic role in ensuring organizational continuity, adaptability, and resilience. Far beyond its traditional administrative functions, office management today serves as a cross-cutting mechanism that links infrastructure, people, and processes in crisis-sensitive environments.

This theoretical exploration has demonstrated that effective office management under wartime conditions must integrate organizational, communicative, and digital dimensions. It requires a reimagining of the office space as a hub of both productivity and psychological security; the office manager as a resilience actor; and digital infrastructure as a backbone of operational stability.

Crisis conditions accelerate transformation - wartime has become a catalyst for profound organizational change, pushing office management toward more flexible, hybrid, and tech-driven models.

Office management has strategic value - the role of office managers expands to include logistical coordination, team cohesion, psychological support, and crisis communication.

Digitalization must be human-centered - technological tools enhance resilience, but their success depends on maintaining creativity, motivation, and mental well-being among staff.

Effective decision-making requires context sensitivity, open communication, and participatory leadership rooted in trust and shared responsibility. Based on the synthesis of recent Ukrainian and international studies, several institutional practices can be identified as central to resilient office management in wartime: establishing and regularly updating crisis communication protocols, providing modular workspaces that can quickly adapt to security or mobility requirements, ensuring redundancy in technical infrastructure and logistics, promoting horizontal communication structures and employee participation in crisis response, embedding ethical leadership practices that center transparency, fairness, and compassion. These practices emphasize the interdependence of physical safety, psychological resilience, operational continuity, and trust-based governance within the office ecosystem.

The Ukrainian case provides a powerful example of how organizations can adapt office management practices in extreme circumstances without losing their human-centered values. These findings invite further interdisciplinary research into office governance as a dimension of crisis management particularly in fragile contexts, post-conflict recovery, and global resilience policy.

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