

REMOTE WORK – ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES ON THE EXAMPLE IN IT ORGANISATION

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ABSTRACT

With the development of the Internet, the possibilities of communication at a distance have grown, and the exchange of work results and information has become simpler. The topic of the research is of great importance, because worldwide remote work is no longer a trend of the new age, but a modern form of employment; it is an opportunity not to depend on location, saving employee's time and company's money; for some it is a flexible schedule possibility, and for others - the only way to get a job. The concept of remote work was introduced into Russian legislation in 2013, and amendments regulating this form of work relations were made. However, after six years, very few Russian employers have remote workers on their staff and carry out remote personnel management. Some employers do not even know that something like it is possible and what are the advantages they and workers can get from it. Therefore, at present the question of whether remote work is effective and what its advantages and disadvantages are is topical. The purpose of this study is to ascertain the advantages and disadvantages of remote work for the employee. The key questions of the research are as follows: what are the advantages and disadvantages of remote work, is the remote work effective, is there a connection between transferring a certain group of workers to remote work and economic and other indicators of the organization's activities, is there a connection between remote work and job satisfaction? Methods used in the study: a survey on job satisfaction before transition to remote work, a survey for employees on awareness of remote work, a survey for employees and managers about job satisfaction after the transition to remote work, a survey for employees about remote work after the transition to such form of work and a survey for managers about remote work after the transition, developed by the authors. The results of the study showed that remote work has more advantages than disadvantages for both the employer and the employee. There is connection between the transfer of a group of workers to remote work and the economic indicators of the organization. There is a relationship between remote work and job satisfaction.

Keywords: *remote work, job satisfaction*

INTRODUCTION

“A world without an office” is not the future, it is the present, and there is an opportunity to live like this [1]. The history of remote work in the world dates back to 1972, when the American scientist Nilles expressed the idea that it is not necessary to keep employees in the office since modern means of communication allow maintaining contact between employees at a distance. In 1979, the head of the Committee for Economic Development of the USA Schiff became interested in the works of Nilles. He continued the ideas of the scientist and it was Schiff who invented the new term “flexible workplace”. His article “Working from home can save gasoline” was published in *The Washington Post*, in which he pointed out the advantages that both the company and its employees and the country as a whole can benefit from the development of remote work. His article had great resonance and ended with the phrase “Why not try it?” [2]. Now remote work is an opportunity not to depend on location, saving the employee's time and company's money; for some it is the possibility of a flexible schedule, and

for others - the only way to get a job [3]. With the development of the internet, the possibilities of communication at a distance have grown, and the exchange of work results and information has become simpler. Also, remote work opens up new job opportunities for people with disabilities. Such an employee, working remotely, is in a comfortable environment for themselves, and the employer does not need to spend additional funds to equip a special workplace for the employment of such an employee. In the modern world, earning via internet is widespread - writing articles, advertising, the services of translators and designers. According to the statement of the founder of the company *The Virgin Group* Richard Branson, "technologies are developing so fast that in thirty years people, looking back, will wonder how offices could exist at all" [1]. Certainly, this hardly means that an office in its traditional sense will soon completely disappear. But it becomes obvious that most people will prefer remote work, the fact that it gives you the opportunity to choose when and where to work, to spend more time with your family, and to receive stable wages and professional growth. According to a study on remote work conducted in the European Union in 2005, it was found that in 27 countries of the European Economic Area about 7% of employees work partly remotely and only for one quarter of their working time, and 1.7% of workers work remotely almost all their work time. According to a study [4] in the United States, the number of remote workers from 2005 to 2011 increased by 73% or up to 3,000,000 people. And from 2005 to 2012, it increased by 79.7% or up to 3.3 million workers. According to a Reuters poll [5], about one in five workers in the world, especially in Latin America, the Middle East and Asia, worked partly remotely and almost 10% worked remotely on a permanent basis. Remote work had the least popularity in the following countries: Germany, France, Hungary, Sweden, Canada, Italy, where the number of remote workers was less than 10%. According to a study, the largest number of companies accepting remote jobs were in the USA - 55%, in Europe - 25%, in Asia - 15%, in Australia - 5%. And if you look at the age range, then 46% of remote employees are 28-35 years old, 28% are 24-28 years old, 23% are 35-46 years old, 3% are up to 24 years old. The study involved 11,383 people from 24 countries. According to this survey, more than half of respondents from Russia, Argentina and South Africa expressed their willingness to fully switch to remote work, if such an opportunity was provided, while respondents in Japan, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Canada and Australia were far from the perspective of working remotely. In Russia, the concept of "remote working" was included in the Labour Code in 2013 [6]. As of 2014, the share of remote workers in Russia was no more than 1% of the economically active population. Currently in Russia, 63% of employers do not have remote workers, 20% of employers have remote workers, 10% of employers have remote workers, but are outsourced, 7% of employers find it difficult to answer, and the most popular specialties with remote employees are in the field of information technology - 24%, sales - 18%, accounting and financial services - 10%, design - 9%. Employers in Russia in most cases relate towards the transfer of workers to remote form of work with caution [7]. It should also be noted that in Russia, remote workers are less protected by law, as proven by judicial practice [8]. Perhaps this is why remote work in Russia is less popular than in the USA and Europe [9]. For the employer, there are more advantages than disadvantages from remote working, in addition to saving on office expenses, the geography of the labour market is expanding to find candidates; the main advantages for employees are: saving time and money on the road, more free time for family, opportunity to find work in another city [10]. In Russia, the undoubted advantage for a remote worker is the ability to search for work in any city without having to move, since most of the vacancies are open in large cities, and there are cities in which there is practically no work [11]. In practice, companies successfully practicing remote work are as follows: IBM, Philips, Microsoft, ABBYY, Aetna, Stack Overflow, Virgin Group, Sun Microsystems, Zenger Folkman, Basecamp, PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited). In Russia, these are the companies: Svyaznoy, Sotmarket, QuattroLab, Megaplan, Resource, Business Profi, VimpelCom and others.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the advantages and disadvantages of remote work for the employee. The key questions of the research are as follows: what are the advantages and disadvantages of remote work, is remote work effective, is there a connection between transferring a certain group of workers to remote work and economic and other indicators of the organization's activities, is there a connection between remote work and job satisfaction? Methods used in the study: a survey on job satisfaction before the transition to remote work, a survey for employees on awareness of remote work, a survey for employees about job satisfaction after the transition to remote work, a survey for employees about remote work after the transition to such form of work, developed by the authors. Form of distribution of questionnaires - mailing (the questionnaires were conducted on the organization's intranet portal, the employee received corporate email links to the questionnaires), number of respondents - group (only IT specialists), coverage - entire (all IT specialists). The total number of respondents in the study was 73 people. Respondents had been transferred to remote work at the time of completion of the survey. Mathematical statistics: Pearson correlation coefficient, the study of differences - t-Test.

DATA ANALYSIS

Evaluation of survey results conducted prior to the transition to remote work showed that more than one-third of respondents were dissatisfied with the existing form and organization of work, the main problems preventing effective and efficient work were uneven workload during the working day, stress, excessive workload, current working conditions - problems that can be solved by transferring to remote work; besides the level of remuneration and working on an agreement, the respondents identified the main factors motivating them to work effectively: a comfortable atmosphere, work, and rest balance, flexible hours - factors that are peculiar to remote work. Respondents (64%) agreed with the following advantages that can be obtained by transferring to remote work: saving time and money on the road, the opportunity to get the desired balance between work and personal life, the ability to manage your time, a decrease in stress levels; most respondents noted the advantage of the possibility of moving, however, they did not consider such perspective for themselves.

Evaluation of the results of the employee survey conducted after the transition to remote work showed that 23% of respondents had problems with communication with the manager, as there appeared more free time, there was a need for more self-control, and the manager started paying less attention. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of respondents (74%) noted a decrease and a rather decrease in the level of stress after switching to remote work. Evaluation of the results of employer survey conducted after the transition of employees to remote work showed that 65% of respondents started or rather started having difficulty communicating with their subordinates. All respondents noted that the transition to remote work was justified or rather justified, and as a result, noted the advantages of remote work for employees and employers.

Is there a connection between the remote form of work and employee job satisfaction?

Table 1. The results of a two-sample t-Test with the same variances.

	Job satisfaction before transition to remote work	Job satisfaction after transition to remote work
Average	5,380952381	7,551020408
Dispersion	2,658986175	3,294217687
Observations	65	65
Combined dispersion	2,936178108	
Hypothetical mean value	0	
df	48	
t-statistics	-2,063534497	
P(T<=t) one-sided	0,022245864	
one-sided critical t value	1,677224196	
P(T<=t) two-sided	0,044491728	
two-sided critical t value	2,010634758	

Result analysis show that with 5% probability we can conclude that the results of both groups differ. The arithmetic mean result of job satisfaction after the transition to the remote work is 7.55, which is higher than job satisfaction before the transition, and given that the t-Test is negative = -2.063, we can speak about a statistically significant difference. The corresponding p-value is 0.044. Since the p-value is <0.05 (since 0.044 <0.05), it can be concluded that the differences between the studied groups are statistically significant, that is, there are statistically significant differences between job satisfaction in remote work and job satisfaction in work in the office.

Table 2. The results of the calculation of the Pearson correlation coefficient.

	Employee satisfaction before transition	Employee satisfaction after transition
Employee satisfaction before transition	1	
Employee satisfaction after transition	0,999162692	1

Pearson's correlation coefficient ($r = 0.99$), which is a very strong correlation. Thus, it can be concluded that with the remote form of work, satisfaction / motivation of employees has grown.

Is there a link between the transfer of a certain group of employees to remote work and the economic and other indicators of the organization?

Table 3. Results of the two-sample t-Test with the same variances.

	Office maintenance costs before transition (per month)	Office maintenance costs after transition (per month)
Average	299250	110500
Dispersion	285695583333,33	41273666667
Observations	7	7
Combined dispersion	163484625000,00	
Hypothetical mean value	0	
df	6	
t-statistics	0,660181728	
P(T<=t) one-sided	0,266823071	
one-sided critical t value	1,943180281	
P(T<=t) two-sided	0,049364614	
Average	2,446911851	

Result analysis show that with 5% probability we can conclude that the results of both groups differ.

Since the p-value is <0.05 (as $0.049 < 0.05$), it can be concluded that the differences between the studied groups are statistically significant, that is, there are statistically significant differences between the costs of maintaining office space before and after transition to remote work.

Table 4. Results of the calculation of the Pearson correlation coefficient.

	Office maintenance costs before transition (per month)	Office maintenance costs after transition (per month)
Office maintenance costs before transition (per month)	1	
Office maintenance costs after transition (per month)	0,999922208	1

Result analysis show that the Pearson correlation coefficient is ($r = 0.99$), which is a very strong correlation. From this we can conclude: the reduction of office maintenance costs depends on the employees transferring to the remote form of work, while the sales figures have not changed, that is, considering the reduction of expenses and the level of income at the same level, it can be concluded that the economic indicators of the organization have improved after the introduction of remote form of work for certain categories of employees.

CONCLUSION

The main advantages of remote work are: for the organization - reducing the costs of maintaining the office, wider geography for finding candidates; for employees - obtaining the desired balance between work and personal life, reducing time and material costs for the road, reducing emotional stress, the appearance of additional free time, the ability to consider work in another region without having to move. The disadvantages of remote work for the organization include a more complex mechanism for the selection of remote employees. The main disadvantage of remote work for an employee is that the remote worker in Russia is less protected by law than the others - special reasons for dismissal can be applied to them, while for employees working in the office such reasons do not apply, which indicates that remote work is less attractive to employees in terms of stability and security of their rights. Also, the disadvantages include bigger self-management for employees due to the reduction of their interaction with colleagues and the manager/employer. Remote work is effective with a properly developed communication process and well-coordinated interaction of managers and remote employees. In the example of the IT organization studied in this work, there is a connection between the transfer of a certain group of employees to the remote form of work and the organization's performance indicators, namely, office expenses have been significantly reduced, which has a positive effect on economic performance. A two-sample t-Test with the same variances and a correlation study also confirmed that there are statistically significant differences between economic indicators (reduction of costs for the maintenance of office space) before and after transition to remote work. According to a study conducted in the IT organization, there is a connection between remote work and employee satisfaction with working conditions. As a result of the survey, data on increased employee job satisfaction after transition to remote work were obtained; the majority also noted that the level of stress had decreased, which was also confirmed by a two-sample t-Test with the same variances and correlation study. The data obtained from literature studies showed that, unlike the United States and Europe, the number of remote employees in Russia is low, many employers are not even aware of this possibility. Employees in the Middle East and Asia, which is most likely connected with the cultural and socio-political characteristics of the society, in contrast to employees from Europe and the United States are more reserved towards the possibility of transition to remote work.

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