

## ANALYSIS OF THE PROFESSIONAL ADAPTATION OF EMPLOYEES EMPLOYED UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF A DISTANCED WORKFORCE

O.Ya. Emel'yanova<sup>1</sup>, V.S. Samsonov<sup>2</sup>, I.V. Shershen'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education Voronezh State Pedagogical University, Voronezh, Russia,

e-mail: [olga-emel@rambler.ru](mailto:olga-emel@rambler.ru)

<sup>2</sup> Candidate of Economic Sciences, Associate Professor, Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education The Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Voronezh branch, Voronezh, Russia,

e-mail: [sys1311@mail.ru](mailto:sys1311@mail.ru)

<sup>3</sup> Candidate of Economic Sciences, Associate Professor, Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education The Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Voronezh branch, Voronezh, Russia,

e-mail: [inga\\_shershen@mail.ru](mailto:inga_shershen@mail.ru)

Received: 11.11.2019

Revised: 08.12.2019

Accepted: 12.12.2019

### Abstract:

The spread of distance activity in Russia contributes to the gradual transformation of the nature of labor relations, as it modifies the management processes in general, as well as makes adjustments to the social sphere of life of employees and employers. The study of professional adaptation of workers employed under the conditions of a distanced workforce makes it possible to reveal the peculiarities of perception of remote work by the participants to this process and to outline the circle of disadaptation problems for further development of measures to improve the organization of work and mechanisms of management of the remote team.

**Keywords:** professional adaptation, distance activity, freelance, labor market, remote work, distanced workforce, employment, labor relations.

The research was carried out with the financial support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR) within the framework of the RFBR research project No. 19-010-00392

© 2019 by Advance Scientific Research. This is an open-access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22159/jcr.06.03.15>

### Introduction

Over the past two decades, the global labour market has undergone significant changes. The traditional employment model (fulltime work), based on the concept of the need for "universal labor" and defining the role of employers in respect of employees as guarantors of income, stability and security in the labor market, is sufficiently protected by the norms of labor legislation and is considered a standard SER-model (Standard Employment Relations model).

Under the influence of flexibilization factors, this model is transformed into non-SER-model, which is characterized by flexible schedules, forms of organization, coordination and control of work, conditions of employment and remuneration of employees.

Remote work (or work under the conditions of a distanced workforce) is becoming more and more widespread when an employee is employed by the organization, but performs work remotely (at home, in cafes, co-working centers, etc.) at a convenient time, or carries out orders as an independent contractor under free employment conditions.

Undoubtedly, the popularity of such non-standard forms of employment was promoted by the development of communication and payment technologies, the growth of the intellectual component of labor, the disparity in the remuneration of professionals of the same level in the economically developed countries and countries of the third world, as well as global trends in the formation of value orientations of generations Y and Z (life by the principle) (life on the principle of "here and now", the emphasis on consumption and pleasure, communication through social networks, etc.). The "man of the organization" is perceived by intellectual youth as an archaic phenomenon, conservatively holding on to the limitations of standard labor organization procedures, time limits and office walls, as opposed to a freelancer who promotes professional freedom and independence. Here it should be noted that such variability of forms of work is not available for all

professions and, as a rule, includes professions related to intellectual work, including research work, developments in the IT-sphere, creativity, trade and finance.

An employee employed as a distanced workforce is deprived of the opportunity to naturally integrate into the organization's workforce, adopt the rules of the existing corporate culture and gradually go through the path of professional adaptation. Remote working conditions are a priori associated with high risks of conflicts of interest, mismatch of approaches in the performance of work, etc., due to the minimization or lack of personal contacts with colleagues. A high degree of independence and relative autonomy in the control of the labor process require the employee to have formed personal qualities: self-organization, responsibility, discipline and willpower. Diagnostics and analysis of the professional adaptation of the employees employed under the conditions of the distanced workforce allows to specify to what extent the employees are satisfied with this form of organization of their work, what factors and conditions are disadaptive for them, what advantages are the most valuable and significant, contributing to adaptation.

### Research

In order to analyze the peculiarities of professional adaptation of remote employees, a survey was conducted among 112 people working in various organizations with remote business processes, employing and/or cooperating with geographically independent employees. This sample of respondents was formed from among the students of master's degree programs, additional professional education and financial literacy courses in the Voronezh branch of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration and Voronezh State University.

The gender breakdown of the remote worker sample is as follows: 76 women and 36 men.

The age structure of the sample of respondents is graphically presented in Fig. 1.

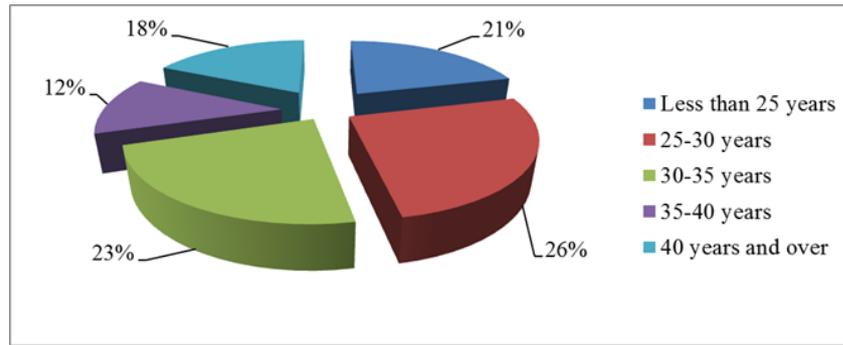


Fig. 1. Age structure of remote workers

It can be noted that 82% of remote workers are under 40 years of age, thus confirming the current trend of preference for telecommuting by young people.

The professional profile of the role of remote employees is as follows:

- 29 people - marketing and PR specialists, web designers;
- 23 people - system administrators, accompanying the sites of commercial organizations of the store and providing technical support;
- 18 people - accountants, whose competence includes accounting and reporting to the tax authorities, Pension Fund, etc.;
- 19 people - product distributors, buyers in Internet showrooms, as well as those making purchases in studios, fur factories and outlets;
- 17 people - copywriters;
- 6 people - photographers and processors of audio, video and photo content.

All remote workers were asked questions to clarify the peculiarities of their work. 27% (30 people) work according to the "pure" freelance model, i.e. accept orders from a limited number of regular clients, agree to work with new clients based on their

reputation. They are not employed on a permanent basis. The remaining 73% (82 people) include freelancers-part-time employees, i.e. regular employees of organizations offering services in the labor market for the purpose of obtaining additional income; regular employees working in flexible working conditions; owners of their own business (profile one, but one of the respondents is the owner of a beauty salon and stylist, who also opened an Internet commission shop with access to the international market).

All remote employees, without exception, have business relations built on trust. Legal disputes and disagreements with customers, judging by the answers, did not arise. All respondents are engaged in several remote projects simultaneously.

When analyzing the answers, the following values were obtained (Fig.2): only 17% are quite satisfied; 38% are more satisfied than not; 11% of respondents are dissatisfied and 17% are completely dissatisfied. 17% found it difficult to rate, which probably indicates confusion on the issue and implies that the answer "could have been better".

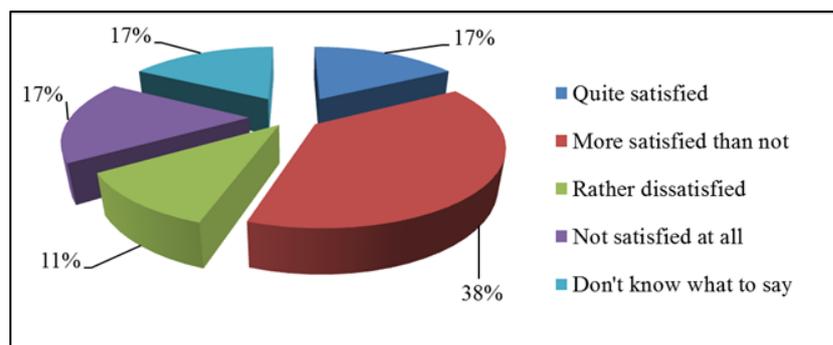


Fig. 2. Assessment of satisfaction of remote employees with the income received

Thus, 55% of employees believe that working remotely is financially positive, while the rest of them are currently reflecting on the lack of income. It should be noted that some of the respondents operate in markets that are subject to seasonality, wave-like dynamics of purchasing power,

changes in the exchange rate, political and economic situation in the country and abroad.

Whether remote workers receive additional remuneration for their work, except for the agreed remuneration, is noted in diagram in Fig. 3:

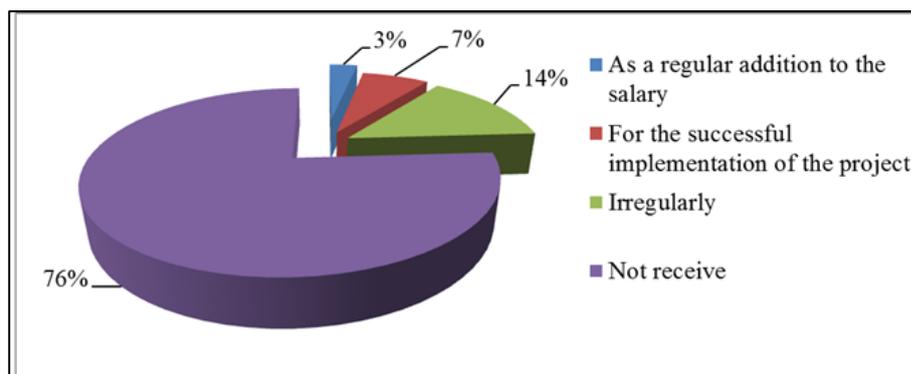


Fig.3. Distribution of answers to the question on remote worker's bonuses

Not always the bonus is given in the form of money, so, sometimes in the form of a bonus to the buyers get presents - items from the collections with which the work is carried out (the gift is discussed in advance). Thus, the issue of financial incentives is one of the most painful for remote workers, as only 3% of respondents noted the

regularity of payments in addition to the nominal salary, ensuring stability and uniformity of income. Answering the question: "How fully do you use your professional skills in remote work? the results worth noting have been obtained (Fig. 4):

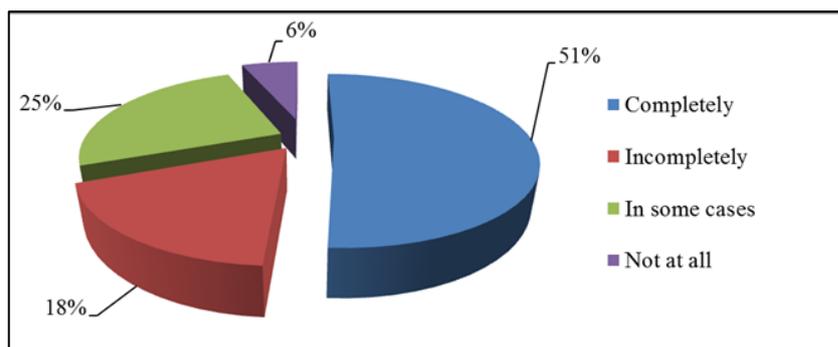


Fig.4. Analysis of the degree of implementation of professional skills in remote work

51% of the surveyed specialists fully implement their professional skills. "Not at all" was answered by 6% of respondents, who by professional skills meant those that were formed in the process of fundamental education and are in demand at the main job. Among buyers, Internet administrators and copywriters there are people for whom the occupation of trade and writing custom-made articles and student works has a tinge of forced earnings. They have no professional education, and they study Internet commerce intuitively, as well as

seeking support from colleagues from virtual communities. For Russia, the Internet business is relatively young, so the niches are not yet fully formed or settled.

In order to clarify the aspects of interaction between the manager and the remote employee, a question was asked about the transparency of the criteria for assessing the quality of work: "Do you know the criteria by which the manager evaluates the results of your work? (Fig.5

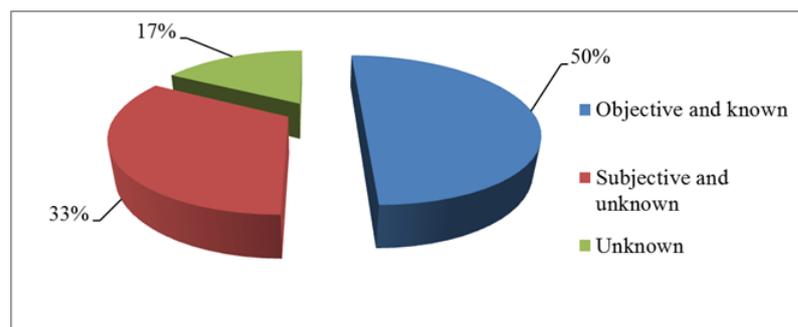


Fig.5. Analysis of the level of awareness of remote workers of the criteria of assessment by their managers-customers

Views on the extent to which remote employees feel aware of the criteria for evaluating their performance by customers who play a leading role in remote business processes have been divided in half. Half of the respondents believe that the criteria are objective and well-known, the other half stick to the statement that they are not known, and 33% of them added subjectivity of the management to this. It can be assumed that

such answers are determined by the remote nature, values of independence and freedom of choice of remote work. In order to determine the extent to which members of a distanced workforce are satisfied with the organization of work, a similar question was asked (Fig. 6):

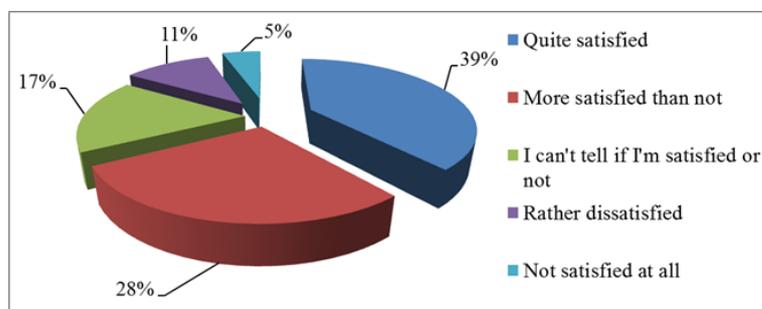


Fig. 6. Analysis of the degree of satisfaction of remote employees with the organization of their work

More than a half of respondents are "quite satisfied" and "more satisfied than not". 5 % are "completely dissatisfied" and 11 % are "rather dissatisfied", but this was the case in particular with projects implemented remotely. 17% could not decide on the answers. Indeed, the experience of remote interaction with different companies can be very diverse. The analysis of "open" and non-quantifiable questions revealed such problems of professional adaptation as lack of communication with colleagues. Some employees only know each other in absentia (skype, what's up and viber) or are unfamiliar with each other at all. Social isolation is perceived differently by respondents, so the male audience, represented mainly by IT professionals, noted this condition as an advantage. Women prefer to maintain face-to-face, regular communication with their team and supervisor where possible. For them, it is important to take part in events to maintain corporate culture (festivals, events, etc.). The need to go beyond business relationships within the distributed team towards friendly relations is noted by the majority of respondents, motivating this approach by the benefits of sharing professional experience, information about innovations in the industry and new professional niches, etc.

Motivation of the team represented by remote employees is difficult because some effective tools, such as competition, recognition, promotion, etc., are difficult to apply in these conditions.

The organization of working hours is also one of the key challenges in professional adaptation to remote work. For the majority of respondents, it is typical to work in a state of "time pressure", taking an order and not dealing with it for some time at all, but closer to the deadline to fulfill it urgently. The

main motivating factor in such circumstances is the stress caused by the fear of non-performance of work, or performance of improper quality, with the violation of the time schedule, etc. Some respondents noted with regret that while working in the office earlier, it was possible to plan tasks evenly over time, and there was no such state of tension as in the conditions of flexible self-control.

An important problem in the professional adaptation of remote employees engaged in a single project is the competent organization of their coordination by the manager. In this respect, it is necessary to develop communication mechanisms and plans (meetings, round tables, etc.) at the pre-project stage in order not to create a situation of inconsistent actions, duplication of work, distorted perception of tasks, etc.

68% of respondents mentioned difficulties in organizing a home office as an obstacle to professional adaptation. In particular, relatives of remote employees with income lower than the average salary in the Voronezh region (i.e. less than 32 thousand rubles) tend to take work in flexible working conditions not seriously, and sometimes even negatively. Opponents of remote activities appeal to the position that the payment for remote labor is underestimated and in the conditions of office work from 9 to 17 hours the salary will be higher. Respondents also noted that the close social environment tends to ignore the importance and priority of the work being done, believing that since the time frame is flexible enough, the work can be done later.

One of the discussion qualitative features of distance activity, which is considered to be one of the obvious drawbacks of remote work, is the uncertainty in the positive life prospects of "free birds" (Fig. 7).

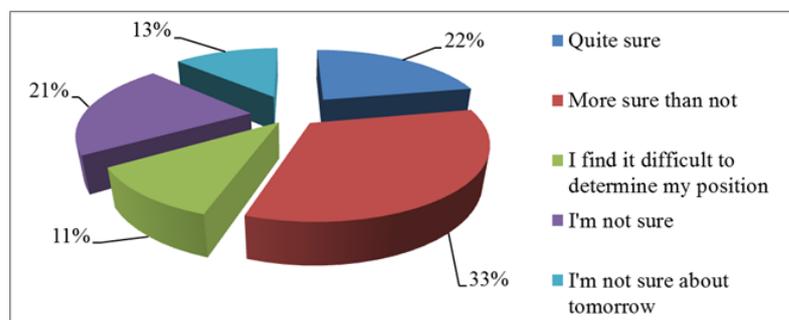


Fig. 7. Analysis of the presence of a sense of confidence in the future with remote employees.

Indeed, the analysis of answers to questions about the future did not show a flurry of optimism among respondents: 14 people are not at all sure about the favorable forecast for the

future, 24 people answered "probably not sure", 12 people did not find an answer (which is already evidence of uncertainty).

Of the 112 respondents, only 37 noticed that they were "more sure than not" and 25 were "quite sure". All 100% of respondents plan to continue their professional careers in remote conditions, which indicates a subjective perception of the superiority of this form of labor in comparison with the volume and severity of the identified adaptation problems.

#### Conclusion

In general, the study of aspects of psychological adaptation of remote employees in the conditions of a distanced workforce has demonstrated the commercial attractiveness of the mechanism of remote work for the employer. In the conditions of active development of the Internet space by business structures the timely capture of professional niches is a guarantee of success in the near future. Remote work in many spheres of activity is simply impossible to do without. Employees are also not going to give up the prospects and advantages of remote work and even free employment. Interest in work, independence, professional self-respect and additional income in the process of increasing their own expertise are attractive qualities that give confidence in the rightness of choosing a remote job. However, the conditions of remote work have caused a number of specific problems in the professional adaptation of employees. Employers should pay attention to the improvement of labor organization and management mechanisms of distanced workforce (remote team).

#### References:

1. Gebrial' V.N. Social aspects of the phenomenon of distance work as a new type of labor relations // Gosudarstvennoe upravlenie. Elektronnyy vestnik (Public Administration. Electronic bulletin). 2008. No. 17. URL: <http://www.evro-vector.narod.ru/freelance.htm>
2. Emel'yanova O.Ya., Samsonov V.S., Shershen' I.V. Distance activity as an actual form of employment of employees in the global labor market // Region: sistemy, ekonomika, upravlenie (Region: Systems, Economics, Management). - 2019. -No.2. -P. 35-41.
3. Emel'yanova O.Ya., Samsonov V.S., Shershen' I.V. Formation of a new economic model based on free employment - gig-economy //Innovatsionnye dominanty sotsial'no-trudovoy sfery: ekonomika i upravlenie, - mater. mezhdunar. nauch. konf (Innovative Dominants of the Social and Labor Sphere: Economics and Management, - International Scientific Conference). - Voronezh: VGU, 2019. - P. 79-85.
4. Emel'yanova O.Ya., Shershen' I.V. Adaptation of young specialists in corporate social partnership programs // Strategiya i taktika razvitiya proizvodstvenno-khozyaystvennykh sistem, - mater. mezhdunar. nauch. konf. (Strategy and Tactics of Development of Production and Economic Systems, - materials of international scientific conference) - Gomel', Belarus': GGTU im. P.O. Sukhogo. 2016. P. 278-280.
5. Samsonov V.S., Shershen' I.V. Study of motivating factors in the professional self-determination of young professionals // Adaptatsionnye mekhanizmy i praktiki v transformiruyushchikhsya obshchestvakh. - mater. tret'ey mezhdunar. nauch.- prakt. konf. (Adaptation Mechanisms and Practices in Transformative Societies - materials of international scientific conference). - Voronezh: VGPU, 2015. - P. 94-102.
6. Arasteh, M.T., Pouragha, B., Norouzinia, R. Studying the conformity of self-assessment results of higher education lecturers with the assessment by others (2018) International Journal of Pharmaceutical Research, 10 (3), pp. 269-276 .
7. Karle Pravin P, Dhawale Shashikant C. "Manilkara zapota (L.) Royen Fruit Peel: A Phytochemical and Pharmacological Review." *Systematic Reviews in Pharmacy* 10.1 (2019), 11-14. Print. [doi:0.5530/srp.2019.1.2](https://doi.org/10.5530/srp.2019.1.2)
8. Kharchenko V.S. Value preferences as a basis for freelance lifestyle formation // Gumanitarnye, sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie i obshchestvennye nauki (Humanities, Socio-Economic and Social Sciences). 2013. No. 1. P. 120-124.
9. Khusyainov T. M. Identity of self-employed workers // Vestnik Nizhegorodskogo universiteta im. N.I. Lobachevskogo. Seriya: Sotsial'nye nauki (Bulletin of Nizhny Novgorod Lobachevsky University. Series: Social Sciences), 2017, No. 1 (45), p. 127-131.
10. Chikunov A. Gig-economy: how robots, freelancers and the Internet change the concept of "work", 2017. URL: <http://www.forbes.ru/tehnologii/335049-gig-ekonomika-kak-roboty-frilansery-i-internet-menyayut-ponyatie-raboty>