

# CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES FOR REMOTE WORK

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**Abstract** The world has witnessed a historic shift in the labor market in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While some companies used to offer the possibility of working from home as an advantage, now it has become the norm for most companies. By 2025, it is estimated that 70% of the workforce will work remotely at least five days a month. Although 2020 can be considered the year of remote working, this is just the beginning because we see that the trend continues in 2022. Even in new circumstances such as Health Crisis, all variations of the distance jobs and hybrid working models were not just the outcomes of the global business conspiracy but true working model tools which have been developed since evolutionary decades of information technologies. The methods used in the paper are literature review, data analysis, descriptive statistics and comparative method. The results presented in the paper showed that remote workers will become the new norm in the business world.

**Keywords::**

remote  
work,  
Covid-19  
impact,  
future  
business,  
hybrid  
working  
model,  
social  
adaption.

## 1 Introduction

Professional training and education are undergoing radical change (Deretic et al., 2019; Gladović et al., 2020). In economic theory, it is estimated that the transition period is largely underway, in which there is a transition to the fourth scientific and technological revolution (Ilić, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history (Kabiljo et al., 2020; Vidas-Bubanja et al., 2020). Recently the world has confronted with new form of adaptivity which can be freely called „continual uncertainty“: enterprises, freelancers, customers even the great capital, all of these business figures have suffered structural changes in the current present – trying to keep as much as possible their position safe and adaptive in new circumstances. The aim of this paper is tracking gradually chronological competitiveness of the remote work in business area from the publications in different decades of modern business where it can be seen how the praxis trends were shaped by the changes in society and by its life styles at the moment. The paper consists of four chapters. The perspective of the remote work during decades is shown in chapter one. Second chapter contains reliable sources such as surveys, analytics which were taken before, during and after the global adaption in the current crisis. Statistics on remote work brings the parameters in chapter three. Concluding remarks are given in the last chapter.

### 1.1 Perspective of the Remote Work during Decades: 1980s, 1990s and 2000s

Even in 1983, there is remote work definition which is still usable for general and contemporary description for this work form (Olson, 1983): „Remote work refers to organizational work that is performed outside of the normal organizational confines of space and time. The term remote working refers to the substitution of communications capabilities for travel to a central work location. Office automation technology permits many office workers to be potential remote workers in that their work can be performed remotely with computer and communications support.“

Or the next decade coming definition from 1998 (Westfall, 1998) where the meaning is less abstractive and more appropriate to nowadays massive use of computer science: „Increased competition has forced companies to become more productive and cost – effective. New technologies are making old productions hyper expiring

the ability to meet customer service requirements has become critical to retain a market share. These changes require a workforce that is flexible, adaptable and resourceful.“

Continually, as the time has pass but not without evolving and spreading the practice of easy overcoming daily life and business routines the 2000 – 2010 decade authors (Mulki et al., 2009) has detected the attitude from both companies and customers towards remote work and what brings that faster, changeable and more accessible business interconnection: „Employees report liabilities to working remotely, the most serious being workplace isolation and a sense that opportunities for advancement are more limited. Companies attempting to manage remote employees cite a loss of organizational synergy, increased concern about data security and a loss of management control over remote employees.”

## **1.2 Perspective of the Remote Work in period 2010-2019**

Next level of remote work possibilities between 2010 and 2019 period actually presents one entire perspective (together with the 1980s/1990s/2000s decades) which has evaluated and marked the beneficial results beyond the business field in 2011 (Nickson & Siddons, 2012): “The potential benefits for both the remote worker and the sponsoring organization stem from flexibility and cost-effectiveness. Examples include:

- Fitting in family commitments with work,
- Elimination of wasted commuting time,
- Reduction in expensive office space,
- Improved work/life balance,
- Flexible working time,
- Improved geographical coverage.“

Furthermore, the same author claims in his statement that remote work is not just spatial and dimensional working form difference, but also managerial challenge in the meaning of how to put responsibilities, working delegations, coordination, staff communication and productivity performance on the better level of productivity than it has been set in non – remote work environment.

According to Coffey & Wolf, (2018): „ Realizing these benefits cannot be taken for granted; the sponsoring organization will have to provide both the operational and organizational support needed to make them deliverable. In addition, both office- and home-based staff will need to have the right skill set in addition to the specialist skills needed to do their job. In other words, it is unreasonable to take a person out of their office desk and drop them into a cupboard under the stairs with a computer and a mobile phone and expect things to carry on as before. It may work, but it will be surprising if it does. For remote working to pay off there needs to be an investment in training and infrastructure to support it.”

The main approach of the remote work in this pre-Health Crisis period actually was to make the interaction much easier, to diminish costs effects, and to keep in touch with the new technological forms of massive use. What happened in the last years of self-developing remote work period – in 2018, 2019? What kind of statements or scientific publications could give predictive developments and/or stabile working innovations which were at that time the technological efforts for better productivity - a self-proof of the society's lifestyle manner? Was the remote work elaborated enough by experts at the end of 2010-2020 decade - to face with the possible unexpected market outcomes and unformed safety/health systems around the world?

The main challenge for remote work in 2018 the source pointed out as investing in virtual teams as sort of high performance of every modern organization (Coffey & Wolf, 2018): “The promise of extending high-performance organizations by investing in virtual teams of remote workers is bright. Today's array of social and data sharing technologies makes it easy to share data. However, management is even more critical in these environments. Crafting concise, clear goals and expectations and using many technologies to transmit them is key. Coaching more often and in shorter bursts gives remote workers the feedback they need to stay on course. Remote workers also are social creatures and management needs to ensure they are heard, can work out interpersonal issues, and feel part of the larger organization to ensure success.”

It seems that in 2019 the remote work phenomenon has already divided the varieties and forms of distant works (Konobevtsev et al., 2019): “Remote employment is a form of employment in which the employee and the employer are in geographical distance, located outside an office space while they are interacting with each other via information and communication technologies. In today's world, working remotely is as easy as being an employee of the company (being the staff of the organization) even if that means not being its full-time employees, performing specific tasks or realizing certain projects. In the first case, it is correct to call such employment remote, in the second Internet self-employment or Internet freelancing. Between these there are significant differences between types of remote work.” So the last two years before pre-Health Crisis period don't tell much more about any prediction for upcoming massive approach of the remote work but these publication statements are telling more that remote praxis has matured enough to develop delicate and compound systems which once could be used as new adaptive work tool in the near future.

### **1.3 Perspective of the Remote Work during the Health Crisis Years 2020-2022**

Firstly, Health Crisis appeared in more concrete way as global threat called “Covid-19 pandemic” officially at the beginning of the 2020, but after causal disclosure with far more serious consequences such as economic shocks, chained health systems disaster and generally total social collapse, the publications and reliable analytics sources introduced more suitable and comprehensive term instead of “Covid-19 pandemic” now is the term “Health Crisis” more used. But still, the second term found its appropriate use as an “non-economic parameter” which make an impact on so many life parameters such as “ hiring, sentiments around remote work, and plans moving forward.” (Ozimek, 2020a)

The Upwork Future Workforce Report noted two data surveys before the Health Crisis in 2019 (November) and the second one was made in the middle of the Health Crisis in 2020 (April). The source was made on the surveys which included 1,500 hiring managers and executives, VPs, and managers - in purpose to see the the decision results of the ones who have impact on creating remote work business area. Concretely, the aims of the surveys are testifying and comparing before and after

decisions making of the CEOs towards remote work and how that has affected and catch their managing. The results are telling that (Ozimek, 2020a):

1. Remote work has risen rapidly as a result of the pandemic, with more than half of the American workforce currently working from home.
2. 56% of hiring managers feel that the shift to remote work has gone better than expected, while only one in ten feel it has gone worse than expected.
3. The greatest perceived benefits of remote work include a lack of commute, fewer unnecessary meetings, and reduced distractions at the office, all of which were shared by 40% of respondents or more.
4. The single biggest drawback, in contrast, is technological issues, a problem that is likely a result of the rapid and unplanned shift and one that would be mitigated over time.
5. One third of hiring managers found that productivity had increased as a result of remote work, a greater share than found productivity decreased.
6. As a result of their experiences during COVID-19, 61.9% of hiring managers say their workforce will be more remote going forward.
7. The expected growth rate of full-time remote work over the next five years has doubled, from 30% to 65%.

In 2021 analytic approach to the COVID-19 impacts on life style has somehow remodeled the term “remote”: with the reality of sudden life distance, remote work has immediately become “the work from home” as the sum of all values for “displaced” working features - thanks to the global slogan against Covid-19 “stay at home” which has given new path for the working forms: (Galanti et al., 2021): “The COVID-19 pandemic made working from home (WFH) the new way of working. This study investigates the impact that family-work conflict, social isolation, distracting environment, job autonomy, and self-leadership have on employees’ productivity, work engagement, and stress experienced when WFH during the pandemic. Methods: This cross-sectional study analyzed data collected through an online questionnaire completed by 209 employees WFH during the pandemic. The assumptions were tested using hierarchical linear regression. Results: Employees’ family work conflict and social isolation were negatively related, while self-leadership and autonomy were positively related, to WFH productivity and WFH engagement. Family-work conflict and social isolation were negatively related to WFH stress, which was not affected by autonomy and self-leadership. Conclusion: Individual-

and work-related aspects both hinder and facilitate WFH during the COVID-19 outbreak.”

According to some recent surveys about remote work, shaping the term for the distance job or not, the main assumption about remote work is that employees become more and more the charge ones in these new conditions. A survey from GitLab (Oldham, 2022) gave a solid confirmation for current work life reality with the statistics which says that: „1 in 3 respondents would quit their job if remote working was no longer an option, and 52% would consider leaving their co-located company for a remote role. 80% said they would recommend remote working to a friend, and 82% claimed that remote work is the way of the future. „Furthermore, the source is making a conclusion from these surveys which is familiar to consumers and employees even in daily life: „Remote work is much more than a pandemic-exclusive phenomenon. It’s here to stay. “(Oldham, 2022)

In Remote Work Report 2021 done by GitLab (2021), employees of the leading companies that practice the most modern forms of remote work, have expressed their opinion about the distance job perspective in the nearest future (as much as the current predictions allows to observe our environmental as the stabile one).

The same source by GitLab (2021), show us the presence of the remote work as a preference for working model among employees who are planning to use remote work options still after the intensive crisis period.

GitLab (2021) also showed the fact that ability and willingness for remote work has broken out the business areas where the remote work was primarily developed itself, which may give the conclusion that the best of the remote work expansion is yet to come.

## **2 Statistics on remote work**

Understanding how best to serve remote and hybrid employees is essential not only for their individual success, but also for the overall success of the work organization. Remote work is no longer an opportunity given by some companies, but a necessary way for people around the world to work (Quantumworkplace, 2021). The percentage of workers worldwide who work full time from home is expected to

double in 2022 as productivity rose during the coronavirus pandemic. In the survey of Enterprise Technology Research (ETR) in September 2020 have participated about 1,200 directors from around the world in various industries. Company executives have also expressed increased optimism about the outlook for business in 2021, as they see a 2.1% increase in the technology budget, compared to a 4.1% drop this year due to the blockade caused by the pandemic. The study states that IT decision-makers expect permanent remote work to double to 34.4% of their companies' workforce in 2021, compared to 16.4% before the coronavirus outbreak, as a result of positive productivity trends. According to surveyed directors, about 72% of the total global workforce of their companies currently works remotely (Chavez-Dreyfuss, 2020). Owl Labs (2020) in collaboration with Global Workplace Analytics (GWA) surveyed 2,025 full-time workers in the U.S. between the ages of 21 and 65 in companies with 10 or more employees. Data from this survey were collected in the period June-July 2020. The Owl Labs survey showed the following:

- Long-distance employees save an average of 40 minutes a day on the way to work;
- From 2020, employees meet by video call 50% more than before COVID-19;
- During COVID-19, close to 70% of full-time workers work from home;
- After COVID-19, 92% of respondents expect to work from home at least 1 day a week, and 80% expect to work at least 3 days from home per week;
- 23% of respondents would receive a 10% salary reduction to work permanently from home;
- People save an average of close to \$ 500 per month while at home during COVID-19. The result is savings of close to \$ 6,000 a year;
- Only 20-25% of companies pay part of the cost of equipment and furniture for the home office;
- 81% of respondents believe that their employer will continue to support remote work after COVID-19;
- 59% of respondents said they were more likely to choose an employer who offers remote work than those who do not.



Figures show that remote workers are more productive in many cases, but not in all situations. Upwork Manager Survey Report on the Future of Remote working found that 22.5% of managers surveyed said productivity had decreased, compared with 32.2% of employment managers who said productivity had risen since their employees started working from home 2020. Employee performance increased by 22% when employees were able to work from home, according to research conducted at Stanford University in the United States. Mercer, a consulting firm for human resources and workplace benefits, surveyed 800 employers. In the survey, 94% of these employers stated that labor productivity is the same or higher than when employees started working from home (Apollo Technical, 2022). PwC (2021) surveyed 133 executives and 1,200 office workers in November and December 2020:

- Remote working has been a huge success for both employees and employers. The change in positive attitudes towards remote working is obvious: 83% of employers now say the transition to remote working has been successful for their company;
- Employees want to return to the office slower than employers expect. By July 2021, about 75% of executives predict that at least half of office employees will work in the office;
- There is no consensus on the optimal balance of working days at home in relation to the office. More than half of employees (55%) would prefer to be away for at least three days a week when pandemic concerns subside;
- The least experienced workers need the office the most. Respondents with the least professional experience (0-5 years) more often want to be in the office. Thirty percent of them prefer to be away no more than one day a week compared to only 20% of all respondents.

According to the same PwC (2021) survey, managers and employees are separated on the issue of the desired schedule of remote working for the work week when the pandemic recedes. More than half of employees (55%) say they would like to be away at least three days a week - little has changed compared to 58% who said the same in June. In contrast, when asked what they think about remote work in their company, 43% of executives prefer limited schedules or want to return to the office in full as soon as possible, while only 24% expect many or all office employees to work on distance for a significant amount of your time.

### 3 Key statistical parameters

Remote working has been on the rise for the past few years, but in 2020, with the sudden outbreak of a global pandemic, even companies that did not believe in the power of remote working had no choice but to join the trend. The key statistical parameters on remote working in 2022 are (Steward, 2022):

- 16% of companies in the world are 100% in remote mode;
- 44% of companies do not allow remote work;
- Better work-life balance is the main reason why people choose to work remotely and 77% of remote workers say they are more productive when working from home;
- The average annual income of remote workers is \$ 4,000 higher than the income of other workers;
- 85% of managers believe that teams with remote workers will become the new norm in the business world;
- 74% of workers say that being able to work remotely would reduce the likelihood of leaving the company;
- The three biggest challenges associated with remote working are exclusion after work (22%), loneliness (19%) and communication / cooperation (17%).

Statistical parameters of remote working for 2021 show that remote working and productivity of remote work have completely changed during the year. The following section presents some of the most important statistics on homework, on hybrid work statistics (a combination of office work and home work) and what they mean for security and the labor market (Jones, 2022):

- At the end of 2021, 32% of all employees worked remotely. The pandemic has significantly accelerated the growth of remote work. People want to work from home. The opportunity to work from home is not only a release, but it is often more productive. If Gartner (Goasduff, 2021) is right, about 1/3 of all employees will work from home, at least in part, very quickly. And that number is likely to increase;

- Working from home saves employees about an hour each day. Employees can save time when working remotely because they do not have to travel to work. The average commute, especially in the United States, can be significant (Ozimek, 2020b);
- About 65% of remote workers never want to return to the office. Many remote workers are not interested in returning to the office; in fact, they will resign if required to do so. Employers will have to find more flexible options if they want to keep this type of worker (Pelta, 2021);
- About 84% of workers prefer to work from home. Since most workers prefer to work from home, employers will find that the best workers will only be available remotely (Buffer, 2021).

## **5 Conclusion**

Obviously, the business is not anymore just a productive field of the life where the best standards are tested by the best solutions, because the environmental is the one that has evolved from dictating – only area to the 1 field of continual responsive feedback with many micro-changes which can sublime in unexpected threats. Saving the trade competitiveness means to save the ability of both individual and organizational elements to respond on time. Organizational design which doesn't consist from transformative hybrid working models is not a capacity but captivity. Managerial duties and challenges have increased unbearably not just in before-and-after comparison but in the way of new conscience of leadership challenges. Top positions are always to stay for sure, but somehow the new “soft skill” for leadership is to manage the delegation between the work skills and the working preference of the employees in very delicate way. The job market has found its oasis for individual commodity and working space sovereignty, but organization has to improve its mechanism with the solution for distance job problems, such as: boundaries with reality, not feeling connected with the main working source, motivation in household atmosphere, decreasing responsibility in long distance working, asociality etc. Being able to respond to crisis – it gave to an individual new features, but not any trends or crisis can show to society how to overcome the basic human needs which must stay preserved.

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