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Digital Communications in Personnel Management as a Modern Means of Information Exchange in Distance Work Conditions

Abstract. In the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic and martial law in Ukraine, many employers and employees were forced to transfer to distance work, and managers were forced to change approaches to personnel management. The lack of contact communication changes the usual methods in personnel management. The analysis of the concepts and principles of distance work organization given by scientists made it possible to form and reveal the advantages and disadvantages of such work, which must be taken into account during personnel management under the conditions of the transition to a distance form. A significant number of publications does not provide a complete understanding of how to build mutual relations in the team, how to improve communication relations in the conditions of changing factors of the external environment of the field of activity and the transfer of personnel to a distance work format. It was found that during remote work, the effectiveness of personnel management directly depends on the organization of communication processes. The article examines the forms of digital communication and gives examples of their tools that can be used to achieve the set goals and objectives. Not all employees have time to quickly adapt and work with existing tools, but new ones appear on the communications market. When building mechanisms for the formation and use of communications in conditions of remoteness, it is necessary to develop a unified model that will combine all forms of communication. Taking into account the identified shortcomings, basic practical recommendations were given to managers regarding the use of digital communication tools to achieve effective personnel management in distance work conditions. Digital communication tools will help to manage and complete tasks,

assess the quality of task performance, control information exchange, and act according to planned steps in distance work conditions.

Keywords: personnel management, distance work, digital communications, digital communication tools

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1. Introduction

Personnel management is a complex system of actions, methods, mechanisms, the task of which is the effective use of personnel potential to achieve the set goal. Personnel management is directly related to the establishment of communication relations both within the enterprise and with external contactors. The main task of communication relationships is to ensure understanding and correct perception of the transmitted information. The COVID-19 pandemic and the state of war in Ukraine have made adjustments to the established process of the organization's internal and external relations. A significant part of the staff, in some cases the entire team, is forced to work in the "online" mode. Building communication relationships at a distance requires the use of a special, individual approach, which forms an effective mechanism for managing the organization's system as a whole. There appears a need for studying the problems of personnel management and communication relationships in the conditions of distance work.

2. Analysis of Research and Publications

Such scientists as Krushelnytska O.V., Melnychuk D.P. (Krushelnytska & Melnychuk, 2005), Shubalyi O.M. and others (Shubalyi et al., 2018) give an idea of the main concepts related to personnel management, introduce management methods and tools. They consider communications in personnel management in the classical sense, which is defined as an algorithm for transferring information from one person to another in the form of verbal or written tasks, movements, and gestures. Despite the large number of issues covered concerning the organization of information exchange, the direction of improving communication relationships in the conditions of changes in the factors of the external environment of the activity sphere and the transfer of personnel to a distance work format remains insufficiently investigated.

The analysis of the factors of the external and internal environment that affect the mechanism of personnel management was carried out by such scientists as Kolomina O.B. (Kolomina, 2015, p. 56–61) and Kosmyna Yu.M. (Kosmyna, 2013,

p. 67–73). They systematized the factors of the external and internal environment, which alone or in combination with each other influence the personnel behavior management, which made it possible to highlight and analyze the priorities in greater depth. Among the priority factors are technological and innovative development and working conditions, because the process of development, improvement of technology, innovations, changes in working conditions and places of work lead to the problems in work and ineffectiveness of the personnel management process. The authors tend to think in terms of training and professional improvement in new working conditions, which will certainly lead to increased employee motivation.

Jack Nilles, known worldwide as one of the leading experts in remote work, introduces the concept of remote work and an effective remote work program in his book „Managing Telework: Strategies for Managing the Virtual Workforce” in 1998. He introduces such concept as „remote work”, „distance work” or „telework”. The author provides comprehensive information on effective methods of managing people who work remotely, legal issues related to remote workers and the use of the right technologies. As Nilles explains, the key to a successful virtual workforce is to make the best use of these opportunities through proper planning and management style development (Nilles, 1998). It is worth noting that the term „telework” is somewhat inaccurate since the root „tele” means „remote, at a distance”, is associated with television, accordingly, „telework” is work on television. At the same time, the given concept of „remote work” also does not fully reflect the meaning of this concept because work outside the office has definite varieties.

Evan De Filippis and others explore the impact of COVID-19 on employee digital communication patterns. The article presents the advantages and disadvantages of digital communication for employers and employees based on the analysis of studies of events in the conditions of lockdowns in Europe and the countries of the Middle East. The examples and analyses of digital relationships between employees to achieve work efficiency are given. They also give advisory opinion to help coping with problems during distance work, namely: increasing the total volume of online meetings and electronic communication by mail; reducing the duration of meetings; an increase in the duration of the working day due to an increase of rest and recuperation time. It is explained how the main communication relationships in the organization change during remote work (De Filippis et al., 2022, p. 1–11).

Vyshnovetska S.V. shows that in theory and practice, different approaches to the interpretation of remote work as one of the forms of non-standard employment of employees are being formed. The concepts of «distance work», «remote work», «home work», «telework» are analyzed. She emphasizes the difference

between remote (telecommuting) work and that performed at home, identifies the problems of legal regulation of remote work of employees and insists on proper legal regulation of labor activity in the distance work format (Vyshnovetska, 2015, p. 1–11).

However, the use of digital communications and the combination of their tools in personnel management in the conditions of distance work require further research and clarification, which determined the choice of the article topic.

3. The Purpose of the Article

It is the purpose of the present paper to identify the problems of distance work, review the forms and means of digital communications and formulate recommendations for improving the personnel management process in conditions of remote work.

4. Presentation of the Main Material

An important role in effective personnel management is played by a well-established process of information interaction in the team — communication relationships. However, communication relationships appear to be a complex system consisting of the following elements:

- ▶ the person who generates ideas or collects information and transmits it;
- ▶ information to be transmitted;
- ▶ means of information transmission;
- ▶ the person to whom the information is transferred.

Special attention should be paid to the means of information transmission, the choice of which directly depends on changes in external factors of the environment in the sphere of activity and forms of employment of the employee. Distance work is one of the atypical forms of employment that has already become widespread in almost all areas of activity.

Distance work means “a form of labor organization in which the work is performed by the employee outside the workplace or territory of the owner or the body authorized by him, in any place by the employee’s choice and using information and communication technologies. Now the employee independently determines the workplace and is responsible for ensuring safe and harmless working

conditions there, allocates working time at his own discretion, may not follow the rules of internal labor regulations. By agreement between the employee and the employer, the performance of remote work can be combined with the performance of work by the employee at the workplace in the premises or on the territory of the employer” (Pro dystantsiinu robotu, 2021).

Having analyzed the concepts in the organization of distance work, it is possible to say that along with the advantages this type of employment has brought a number of new complications, an increase in the direct influence of conditions outside the working area on performance: place of residence, presence of family members who stay in a limited area, adaptation of home gadgets to work needs, changing the employment schedule. This situation gives rise to new challenges, which both the employee and the manager must cope with: to adapt to new conditions, adjust the work regime, support and increase labor productivity. The advantages and disadvantages of this type of employment are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Advantages and disadvantages of distance work

Advantages	Disadvantages
Independent distribution of working time	Absence of external control, increasing role of self-control
Saving time and money on the way to the office	Lack of communication with colleagues
The ability to work anywhere upon availability of Internet connection	Physiological problems (reduction of physical load, constant use of a computer, gadgets)
Expanding the geography of employees	Absence of the usual working environment
Expanded job selection	Loss of division between work and personal space
The possibility of involving the disabled, women with children, students and pensioners	Technical problems (absent or unstable Internet, incorrect operation of the operating system or other programs, viruses, etc.)
Absence of premises rent	Difficulty in understanding the tasks set
No costs for organizational technical means	
Stability in the labor market	

Source: Supplemented by: Hrebeniuk & Martseniuk (2021, pp. 136–141)

The advantages and disadvantages presented in the table affect significantly the mechanisms of the labor team formation, the use of labor resources, the development of labor potential especially when managing personnel remotely. The effectiveness of personnel management directly depends on the effectiveness of communication processes in the organization of work.

Communication is the process of exchanging information between employees using words, letters, symbols and gestures. This is a necessary element in the

activity of the organization, which affects the timeliness of receiving information, the speed of assigned tasks performance, supports mutual relations in the team. Taking into account the changes in external and internal environmental factors that affect the mechanism of relationships in the team, along with oral and written forms of information transmission, a new form — electronic — is becoming more widely used. The electronic form of information transmission is the transmission of information (text and video messages, files, etc.) in the «online» mode. The electronic (digital communication) form is complex and extraordinary in technology, but effective and modern.

Well-thought-out and coordinated digital communication relationships reduce time spent on solving any issue, bring results achievement closer, prevent conflicts and misunderstandings and so improve the management process. The team with well-established communication links demonstrates quick adaptation to changes in the field of employee activity.

Analysis of the results of the surveys conducted by Deloitte and the International Labor Organization (Povernennia do roboty v novykh umovakh, 2021; ILO Monitor on the world of work, 2022) provides an opportunity to review the traditional concept of communication relationships in the team and the employee's use of digital communication tools that process, form, and store data, which allows for corrections distance personnel management methods.

Modern information transfer tools make it possible to work in a variety of conditions and transform information into an understandable form. Let's highlight the main effective forms of digital communication and give examples of information transfer tools in Figure 1.

Communication relationships in the team are multifaceted. As we can see from scheme 1, they involve various electronic forms of information transmission, which in turn can be implemented with the help of web services, mobile applications, web platforms for downloading, storing and processing information.

The lack of regular communication significantly affects the effectiveness of remote personnel management. Not all employees have time to familiarize themselves with and learn to work with existing tools and new ones appear on the communications market. When building mechanisms for the formation, use and development of labor resources in conditions of remoteness of the company, enterprises are in need for a general model that will combine all forms of information transmission. In turn, for the effectiveness of digital communication forms, it is necessary to focus on the tool that will be convenient and with an understandable interface for employees as well as on the possibility of a simple merger with the information system. Which exactly digital communication tool to choose should be researched in practice; it should be tested depending on

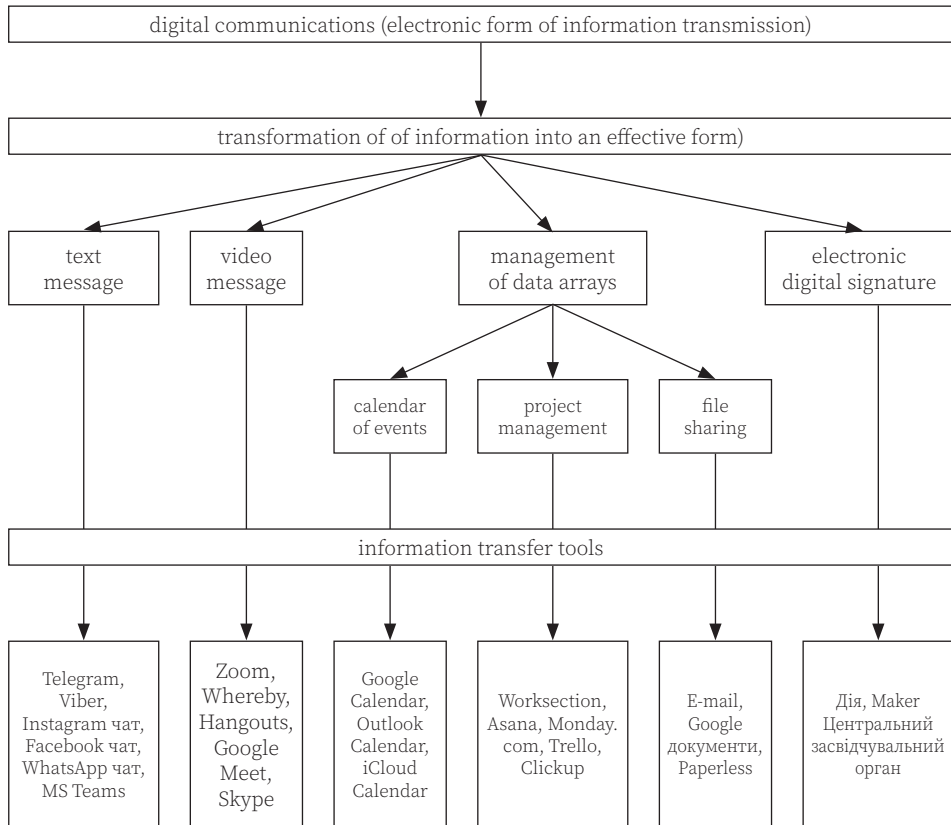


Figure 1. Information transfer during distance work
Source: Developed by the authors

the type of activity and the tasks set. Specialists who can form communication relations at a professional level and combine them into a single network must be involved when choosing digital communications and introducing them into the organizational system of the enterprise.

The manager is largely responsible for establishing relationships in order to achieve effective personnel management in distance work conditions. The manager's task is to create conditions under which each employee will be focused on his task, but at the same time they will all adhere to a common goal. The following recommendations can be made for the implementation of digital tools that greatly simplify the establishment of long-distance relationships.

The organization of corporate communication should be conducted in one convenient messenger that can be installed on all communication devices. The same principle should be followed when organizing the exchange of documents.

It is possible to divide the staff into groups and subgroups depending on the type of activity.

Video communication should be used when you need to hold a daily scheduled meeting and simply discuss business points. It is better to hold planned meetings according to a planned schedule, which will give an opportunity for the employee to plan his working hours. Video conferences should be conducted with the cameras turned on, which will allow the staff to feel the realism of the meeting in the office.

In the conditions of remote organization of work, the most difficult thing is to manage the time of employees (time management). Use of an online calendar, in which it is possible to display events, tasks, changes, replacements, etc. This application will help to combine ideas, tasks and work processes into one simple and understandable graphic picture. The event calendar will reduce time spent on production processes. To it, employees can make their corrections, monitor performance, mark the completion of tasks, etc., conveniently schedule meetings, conduct joint projects.

Electronic digital signature (EDS) simplifies and speeds up document flow and the procedure for concluding contracts and providing electronic banking services. The implementation of just such an element in management in a remote format is the key to the formation of the organization's information culture.

Based on the above, it can be argued that the effectiveness of personnel management in conditions of remoteness directly depends on the use of digital communications. This is the key to successful and modern management and building effective relationships of the workforce. Digital communications make it possible to establish relationships regardless of time and space boundaries, to save resources when transmitting information and sending it to the addressee, to respond faster and perform assigned tasks, to perform several tasks at the same time, to involve several employees when performing assigned tasks.

5. Conclusions

Digital communications are becoming indispensable in modern life since distance work has become the main type of employment in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic and martial law in Ukraine. Both in oral or written forms as well as in the electronic form of information transmission there are disadvantages and difficulties, but the growing need speaks of the desire of enterprises to develop and be modern. The need for making changes to the construction of a distance personnel management mechanism has become an urgent demand of today for

enterprises in Ukraine. Taking into account the fact that the exchange of information is increasingly moving to the “online” environment, it can be stated that the appropriate use of forms of digital communication will help to adapt personnel management to new realities, increase its effectiveness and productivity in the conditions of distance work. In the future, there arises a need to develop a communication mechanism for personnel management.

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Komunikacja cyfrowa w zarządzaniu personelem jako nowoczesny sposób wymiany informacji w warunkach pracy zdalnej

Streszczenie. W warunkach pandemii COVID-19 i stanu wojennego na Ukrainie wielu pracodawców i pracowników musiało przejść na pracę zdalną. Wobec braku bezpośredniego kontaktu menedżerowie zostali zmuszeni do zmiany metod zarządzania personelem. Analiza przedstawionych przez naukowców koncepcji i zasad organizacji pracy zdalnej pozwoliła na sformułowanie i ujawnienie zalet i wad takiej pracy, które muszą być brane pod uwagę przy zarządzaniu pracownikami. Znaczna liczba publikacji nie daje pełnego zrozumienia, jak budować wzajemne relacje w zespole i jak je poprawiać w sytuacji zmieniającego się otoczenia zewnętrznego i przenoszenia personelu do pracy zdalnej. Stwierdzono, że podczas pracy zdalnej efektywność zarządzania personelem zależy bezpośrednio od organizacji procesów komunikacyjnych. W artykule przeanalizowano formy komunikacji cyfrowej i podano przykłady narzędzi, które można wykorzystać do osiągnięcia wyznaczonych celów. Nie wszyscy pracownicy mają czas na szybką adaptację i pracę z istniejącymi narzędziami, a na rynku komunikacyjnym wciąż pojawiają się nowe. Budując mechanizmy tworzenia i wykorzystywania komunikacji w warunkach oddalenia, konieczne jest wypracowanie jednolitego modelu, który połączy wszystkie formy komunikacji. Menedżerom udzielono podstawowych zaleceń praktycznych dotyczących wykorzystania cyfrowych narzędzi komunikacji do efektywnego zarządzania personelem w warunkach pracy zdalnej, uwzględniając ich słabe strony. Cyfrowe narzędzia komunikacji mogą pomóc zarządzać zadaniami i je realizować, oceniać jakość wykonania zadań, kontrolować wymianę informacji i działać zgodnie z zaplanowanymi krokami w warunkach pracy zdalnej.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie personelem, praca zdalna, komunikacja cyfrowa, narzędzia komunikacji cyfrowej