Chapter 6
Rethinking the Role of the Company's Office and the Ways Employees Communicate: A Trend Accelerated by the Pandemic

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Abstract The objective of this chapter is to analyze the practice of remote work during the pandemic in the world and in Ukraine and to develop proposals on the company's office design and employees' communication methods and instruments at the conditions of quarantine limitations and after them. The recommendations for the employees' communication ways and human resource management priorities are developed.

Keywords Company's office role · Employees' communication · Remote work · Ukraine · COVID-19

1 Introduction

Over the last years, all businesses, even in the fastest growing areas, have been the most sensitive to the crisis, which has, in fact, become a logical consequence of the coronavirus pandemic. The vast majority of business organizations find themselves in a situation of significant financial stagnation, both due to environmental factors (introduction of measures by governments to close borders, reduce export-import and logistics operations, periodic temporary ban on the activities of enterprises in various areas of business) and due to top management and management mistakes made by top and HR management organizations.

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In the realities of quarantine restrictions, business owners and business management are faced with the task not only business processes optimization, but primarily to develop a new strategy for managing people and implementing elements of postcrisis management system, which is directly related to complex management decisions in conditions of uncertainty, ambiguity, limited financial resources, and risk. In this aspect, rethinking the role of the top, middle, and front office of the company directly affects the ways, methods, and channels of employees' communication, the proper allocation of resources over time, as well as effective management of remote teams. In fact, this approach can be characterized as proactive crisis management, which allows for flexible planning of activities with a focus on certain starting points of recovery.

Strategic guidelines or current trends in rethinking the role of the company's top office in reengineering key business processes and establishing effective communication between employees should be, first, the health, safety, and well-being of employees during COVID-19, and second, social, psychological, and moral responsibility of organizations, responsibility of line managers, assessment of reputational status, performance of duties by employees outside of work, which can be achieved through the organization of flexible work and effective management of remote teams.

Before the pandemic, the common idea was that offices are critically important for the cooperation between employees, organizational culture, and performance. Some surveys argued that remote work is less productive, because people cooperate less by distance technologies. But the new reality is that, for example, in April, 2020, 62% of employed Americans worked at home compared with about 25% a few years ago (Boland et al., 2020). The same situation with remote work all over the world. The survey conducted by Gartner Inc. in March 2020 (Gartner, 2020), found that almost 25% of respondents among 317 financial managers would transfer at least 20% of their employees to a permanent separate work format. In the European Union, the share of employees who worked permanently or periodically remotely in 2020 has doubled compared to 2006 and amounted to 21%. This indicates a general trend of increasing the use of flexible work schedules. The influence of the COVID-19 crisis on this trend is confirmed by the fact that this increase in the share of remote work occurred by 4% in the first 14 years and by 6% only in the period from 2019 to 2020 (Eurostat, 2021). At the same time, there is an uneven distribution of the share of remote work between European countries. In some countries (Bulgaria, Romania), this share is less than 3%, in others (Luxembourg, the Netherlands) more than 40%. More than 30% of employed people worked remotely in 2020 in Finland, Denmark, Belgium, and Ireland. In Malta, France, and Austria, the figure ranges between 25 and 29.4%. The reasons for such decisions are the understanding of CFOs the need for tight cost management in the company, and the desire to support employees (avoid layoffs) and minimize the negative impact on the enterprises' activities in times of COVID crisis.

During the last decade, researchers tried to find new models of office design and employees cooperation models, combining as physical office design, so digital technologies and instruments for productive work. The COVID-19 quarantine restrictions made this task the most actual and accelerated researches in this area.

The aim of this article is to analyze the practice of remote work pushed by the pandemic in the world and in Ukraine, and to develop proposals on the company's office design and employees' communication.

2   Employees' Communication Changes at the Remote Work

Researchers identified that information technologies were widely used during the last years for improving collaboration between employees. Messaging, enterprise social media, such as Slack and Microsoft Teams, and virtual-meeting software, such as Zoom, GoToMeeting, and WebEx, allow companies to save time and costs on travelling and physical presence at meetings. From one point of view, modern informational technologies (IT) support better interaction and cooperation in organizations. From another point, there is evidence that IT has produced less interaction between employees. For example, the employee may choose when to answer or to send an email, open a browser window, post on Slack or Teams, or make a call. At the same time, it was found that face-to-face interactions dropped by roughly 70% after the firms transitioned to open offices, while electronic interactions increased to compensate (The Truth About Open Office, 2019).

The studying of the digital technologies for collaboration before COVID-19 found that remote work significantly restricts collaboration by digital channels. McKinsey's study of a major technology company from 2008 to 2012 found that remote workers communicated nearly 80% less about their assignments than collocated team members did; in 17% of projects they did not communicate at all (The Truth About Open Offices, 2019). Having this research results, it is the task to develop such approaches to cooperation using informational technologies that will be effective during the quarantine limitations and after it. Taking into account that the recent study of a 700-person corporate headquarters evidence that 82% of employees would like to work from home even after quarantine limitations (Reimagining the Urban Office, 2020) the task is very actual.

According to McKinsey research (Boland et al., 2020), 41% of respondents said that they are more productive at remote work during the quarantine, than they worked in an office, and 28% respondents said that they have the same productivity. The study showed that employee productivity also depends on the balance between work and personal life, compliance with which determines the level of human happiness. The probability of possible remote work, in consultation with management and without loss of family life, directly affects the level of happiness of the employee and increases his productivity.

Very valuable is Microsoft's experience of remote work before the pandemic: in 2018 their Netherlands subsidiary renovated office, which was closed for 10 weeks. As a result, 800 employees became remote workers (Sherman, 2020). Microsoft's analytics gathered lessons from this experiment, which is actual for more than 50,000 of their employees during the pandemic. The main findings are the following. Firstly, employees reported feeling more disconnected without possibility

day-to-day meet physically, as they name it, the "water cooler or coffee machine" effect. Secondly, 42% of Dutch employees reported that they were satisfied by the possibility to plan their work and meetings flexible. It was found that after-hours activity increased by 21%, at the same time people's total workweek remained constant. It means that people changed their schedule, for example, spent more time with family and children and made the last work in the evening. In order to prevent "always-on culture," the rules were set about the response time and "delayed delivery" emailing used. Thirdly, it was witnessed a 10% increase in collaboration in a form of team meetings and one to one collaboration with managers.

Microsoft researchers analyzed the Global Labor Trends Index 2021, which surveys more than 30,000 people in 31 countries, analyzes trillions of productivity and labor indicators in Microsoft 365 and LinkedIn, and the views of experts who have studied collaboration, social capital, and space design for decades at work. The authors of the study identified seven main trends caused or triggered by the pandemic that will shape the future of the hybrid world of work after quarantine (The Next Great Disruption, 2021): (1) extreme flexibility and mixed work—factors that will determine the workplace after the pandemic. As a result, a new important goal for managers will be to provide employees with flexibility to work where and when they want to work, and to provide them with the tools they need to productive work; (2) constant lack of regular live communication between managers and their employees, which leads to a feeling of detachment of the latter from the office work; (3) high-digital intensity of working hours and days, a flurry of unstructured and partly unplanned communications led to the exhaustion of workers and their loss of balance between life and work; (4) the looming growing risks of work for Generation Z, a demographic group of workers aged 18 to 25, who are the first generation to have a completely remote work environment from the start of employment and who, according to the report, are most affected by loneliness and participation concerns in online meetings and the need to offer their own new ideas; (5) narrowing the workforce through a sense of isolation in the workplace, as in the personal life caused by the pandemic, threatens innovation in the company; (6) the true authenticity that workers have brought to the corporate culture of companies during the pandemic years will contribute to their future productivity and well-being. In this difficult year, colleagues relied on each other in a new way, whereupon relations at work have become more humane; and (7) expanding the talent market through remote work formats. During the pandemic, the number of vacancy announcements with possible part-time work in LinkedIn has grown more than five times and they are still in demand. This trend increases access to employment opportunities for all segments of the world's population. An analysis of LinkedIn's economic chart shows that women, Generation Z, and those without a degree are more likely to apply for remote vacancies.

Taken together, these trends indicate a change in the traditional view of the format of collaboration, a change in the mental model of employees and the acceptance of global extraordinary flexibility by company executives. Also, it is the obvious need for business leaders to change their operating model for a successful transition to hybrid work.

Another Microsoft research about their employees' remote work during spring, 2020, allows to make some conclusions and recommendations about effective distance work organization (Spataro, 2020). The first fact was that weekly meeting time increased by 10%. On average there were three additional meetings per week per employee. Nearly 70% of employees from all functional areas were involved in increased number of meetings. Secondly, the number of short meetings (up to 30 min) increased by 22%, while long meetings (more than 1 h) decreased by 11%. As Microsoft's managers argue, the common trend before pandemic in their company was to hold longer meetings. Therefore, the shift from long to short meetings is a positive result during remote work.

If take into account the remote work experience of Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman, the number and the duration of meetings increased dramatically during March–June, 2020. If usually, the average number of department meetings was one-two during a month, up to 2 h; during the quarantine limitations, the meetings in Microsoft Office 365 Teams were held every week or every 2 weeks from 2 to 3 hours. Partly, this increase in number of department meetings may be explained by the new tasks, which had to be done in consequence of the quarantine limitations. But mostly this increase in meetings was coursed by the new distance mode of work and new problems with organization of remote work. Only half a year later, beginning from Autumn, 2020, the number of department meetings returned to the previous frequency, as before the pandemic.

The further Microsoft remote work analysis founded that the number of one-to-one person meetings increased by 18% and team meetings grew by 10%. And half of these new meetings were recurring. As respondents answered, one-on-one meetings replaced their physical meetings in the office. Finally, it was 72% increase in instant messages sent during the remote work in March, 2020, comparing with the average number of messages during January and February, 2020. Managers sent 115% more instant messages during March 2020; individual employees said that their instant messages increased more than by 50%.

Changes in communication methods affect both their quantity and quality. On the one hand, the number of discussions and meetings usually increases, which overloads employees both physically and emotionally. On the other hand, such communications become more focused on the purpose of discussion, add more energy to issues, lead to transformation, and strengthen organizational culture (Hilberath et al., 2020).

3   Corporate Office Role During the Pandemic

According to McKinsey survey, gathered responses from 283 C-suite leaders from different industries across the world, most companies are planning to change their office policy during the next 3 to 9 months (Bernauer et al., 2021). At the conditions of uncertainty, which is a result of Covid-19 quarantine limitations, 68% of respondents answered that cost management is one of the three most important priorities

for corporate centers, growth 63%, digital capabilities 47%, and only 28% reorganization. Planning cost reductions, 21% of respondents predict reductions in facilities, 19% in human resources management, 18% in strategy, and 17% in IT.

The role of corporate center is changed during and after the quarantine limitations. Answering the question "Which role will the corporate center play in changing ways of working?" 56% of respondents answered that it will be the driver of change for the rest of the organization; 34%—it has to develop the role model for the rest of the organization (Table 6.1).

Executives expect that the corporate center will be leading in strategy setting for the organization (82%) and financial steering of the organization (66%)—Table 6.2.

One of the main effects of quarantine limitations during the Covid-19 pandemic on the organization of the office work is a shift to remote work. As a result, 71% of respondents considered that the corporate centers are the frontrunners regarding the reduction of travel, allowing certain staff to work from home full-time or part-time, i.e., more than 2 days per week (60–68%); establishment of online training. The main challenges in sustaining work from home are the next: technical infrastructure, collaboration, coaching and performance management, burnout (52–61%).

As an aggressive response to cost management requirements as one of the three most important priorities for corporate centers, it is planned a more radical optimization of office space during and post COVID-19 limitations. It is planned to reconfigure, how office space is used and increase space per employee to allow for social distancing in the short run (up to 68% of respondents). In the long run, it is wanted to terminate existing leases early and then shift towards fewer and lower-cost locations (Table 6.3).

Strategically oriented companies try to retain staff in order to remain competitive after the restrictions expire. Instead of laying off workers, the priority of such

Table 6.1 Answers to the question "Which role will the corporate center play in changing ways of working?"

Role	Respondents, %
Driver of change for the rest of organization	56
Role model for the rest of organization	34
Follow the changes in the rest of organization	4
No specific role	6

Source: Bernauer (et al. (2021, p. 5)

Table 6.2 Answers to the question "Which activities do you see the corporate center leading?"

Activities	Respondents, %
Strategy setting for organization	82
Financial steering of organization	66
Running back-office operations in select functions	31
Running back-office operations in all functions	15

Source: Bernauer et al. (2021, p. 6)

Table 6.3 Answers to the question "What are the top steps to optimize office space?"

Actions	Respondents, %
Reconfigure how office space is used	68
Implement flexible desk arrangements, related office policies	54
Increase space per employee to allow for social distancing	51
Renegotiate existing lease terms	51
Terminate existing leases early	30
Allow leases to expire naturally	35
Modify footprint (fewer, lower-cost locations)	55

Source: Bernauer et al. (2021, p. 7)

companies is to retain employees. During the pandemic, companies are introducing various new approaches to personnel management. Companies invest in remote work opportunities, providing employees with conditions for productive work from home.

Company management offers flexible approaches to the organization of remote work, paying special attention to surveys and responding to requests from employees for tools and ways to implement work tasks. One of the key tasks of corporate offices now is to invest in the company's digital infrastructure, smart workspaces, and cybersecurity tools (Hilberath et al., 2020; Seturidze & Topuria, 2021). As remote work is a definite trend in organizational design, which will only intensify over time, the task of the office is not only to ensure the stable operation of companies today, but also to create conditions for further improvement of hybrid activities. According to Hilberath et al. (2020), the implementation of such tasks requires the transformation of the existing work model and the support of a new one. One area of such support is aimed at reviewing the purpose with strengthening the culture and leadership in the organization. Another task is review and organizational redesign with a focus on rapid and adaptive response to the needs of employees and customers. It is important to constantly receive feedback on the experience of employees, creating conditions for best practices of group cooperation. Digital infrastructure also needs to be developed to support the transformation of the hybrid work model.

4   Remote Work in Ukraine

4.1   Legislation About Remote Work in Ukraine

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work in Ukraine was not very popular and did not widely used. But since March, 12, 2020, situation changed dramatically, when employees were transferred to remote work in all industries, where it was possible. At the beginning of the year 2021, Ukrainian legislation on remote and home-based work has updated to the new conditions of COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding quarantine limitations. New legislative rules introduced to the Labour

code of Ukraine in February, 2021, provided two options for formalizing labor relations for employees who wanted to work outside the office:

1. Home-based work: work at home is associated with work at the place of residence. The home-based workplace means a clear fixation of the physical workplace, the necessary equipment, and other conditions that ensure the workflow. The workplace at home cannot be changed without the consent of the parties, except as provided by the contract. Typically, workers with the right skills are hired to work from home or trained by the employer. The working hours of the home-based employee must correspond to the working hours of the organization—the employer.
2. Remote work: with this mode of operation, the employee independently determines where his workplace will be located outside the employer, takes responsibility for safe working conditions, and compliance with labor laws. It is possible to combine remote work with work at the employer's premises. Unlike the home-based work, remote work provides for the use of information and communication technologies. Remote work should not involve the use of hazardous materials or technologies (Pavlynska, 2021).

4.2   Remote Work During Quarantine in Ukraine

In May 2020, KPMG, one of the Big Four accounting organizations in the world, conducted a survey of Ukrainian companies on the transformation of their HR strategy in response to the pandemic situation (KPMG Ukraine, 2020). More than 50 companies from various industries took part in the study. More than 50% of the participants are companies with more than 250 employees. The surveyed companies represented the following fields of activity: consumer goods (19%), information technology (17%), retail (15%), financial sector (10%), agribusiness (6%), consulting (6%), infrastructure (6%), non-profit organizations (6%), service industry (6%), industry (4%), transport (4%), and telecommunications (2%).

The study found that 96% of surveyed companies in Ukraine transferred their employees to remote work due to quarantine restrictions. Half of the surveyed companies managed to transfer more than 75% of employees to remote work (Fig. 6.1). For employees, whose work does not allow them to work remotely, almost a third of the surveyed companies (29%) use shift schedules. 31% of companies offer employees paid annual leave, and 25% of companies provide employees with unpaid leave. Companies also transfer employees to a reduced working day (15%) or a reduced working week (10%), and provide additional paid leave (6%).

About a third of companies (29%) have already laid off or are about to lay off employees, the remaining 71% of companies intend to retain staff. As of May 2020, almost half of the respondents have already reduced their salaries by an average of 20–30% during quarantine. In the following months, 35% of employers were going to reduce wages, while 65% planned to keep the current level of wages.
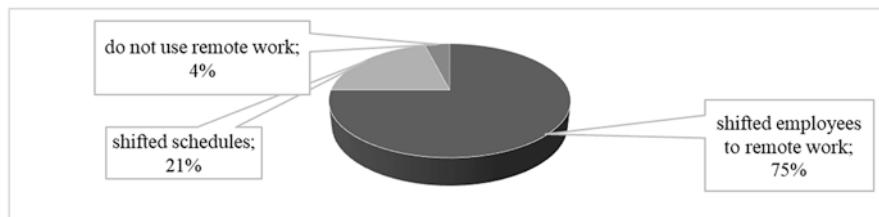
Source: (KPMG Ukraine, 2020, p. 7)

Fig. 6.1 Percentage of employees transferred to remote work in Ukraine in 2020. (Source: KPMG Ukraine (2020, p. 7))

In order to reduce costs, a third of companies decreased employee training programs, and about 5% of respondents canceled supplements to compensate for lunch and travel to work.

At the same time, companies are increasing their costs to help employees in a pandemic situation. Among the costliest measures resorted to by companies are providing employees with personal protective equipment (65% of companies mentioned), paying for a taxi (43%), and paying for the delivery of necessary equipment from the office (15%). Some companies (12%) pay for consultations with a psychologist and telemedicine.

Despite the crisis due to uncertainty, 61% of companies have not yet planned to revise the HR strategy. But companies are adapting their business processes. 46% of the surveyed companies suspended the hiring of staff, whereas 33% temporarily suspended the training process.

However, still companies are trying to transform these processes into a remote format. Almost half (44%) transfer face-to-face interviews online. 43% partially transferred training to an online format or postponed it to a later date. 44% of respondents planned to return to the previous model of work and noted that all measures are only temporary. But some of the company's current practices are seen as a permanent option in further work: distance work (80%), online hiring (27%), and online training (52%).

Despite the above challenges and risks for the company's top office, Ukrainian workers feel happier from the beginning of quarantine. According to a survey conducted by the sociological group "Rating" on January 14–16, 2021, 29% of the population consider themselves very happy, while at the beginning of quarantine in March, 2020, there were only 19%, rather happy 50%, not very happy 17%, and only 2% were completely unhappy (Ekonomichna pravda, 2020). Thus, the number of those who consider themselves more or less happy is almost 80%. The survey was conducted among 1600 respondents aged 18 and older. Error of representativeness of the study with a confidence level of 0.95: not more than 2.4%. Survey method: CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing). Based on a random sample of mobile phone numbers.

Quarantine affected the changes at the office real estate for rent in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine. The small companies began to move to remote areas of the city, and

large began to transfer employees from rented premises to their own real estate. According to Ukrainian Trade Guild (UTG) estimates, the weighted average vacancy rate in Kyiv's business centers reached 12.8% in early June, 2020, comparing with 9% at the beginning of the year (Shramko, 2021). The same statistics are in other countries: in the United States vacancy rates across the office sector increased to an average of 15% in the second quarter of 2020. The jump from 9% in the first quarter of the year is primarily due to the impact of the coronavirus (Statista, 2021).

4.3   Remote Work During the War in Ukraine

Since February 24, when the Russian invasion of Ukraine began, more than 12 million refugees have fled their homes. Of these, 5.5 million went abroad, seven million went to the safer western regions of Ukraine. At the same time, thousands of people returned to Ukraine, when their homes became safer. Table 6.4 gives information about number of Ukrainian citizens, which went to neighboring countries in Europe. Figure 6.2 illustrates how Ukrainian refugees shared among countries. More than 53% went to Poland, 14.2% went to Romania. Also, a lot of people went to other European countries, especially to Germany, Spain, Italy, and others (Table 6.5; Fig. 6.3).

Table 6.4 Refugee influx from Ukraine in neighboring countries at April, 8, 2022

Location country	Population, people
Poland	2,564,994
Romania	678,081
Hungary	413,888
Republic of Moldova	406,611
Russian Federation	389,845
Slovakia	310,989
Belarus	19,096

Source: Refugees Fleeing Ukraine [(since 24 February 2022), 2022]
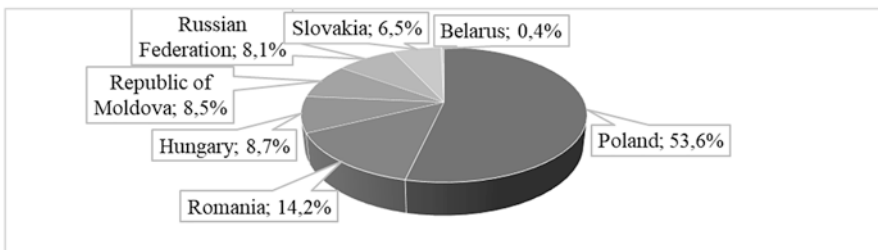
Source: (Refugees Fleeing Ukraine (since 24 February 2022), 2022)

Fig. 6.2 Share of people, who went from Ukraine in neighboring countries. (Source: Refugees Fleeing Ukraine [(since 24 February 2022), 2022])

Table 6.5 Number and share of people, who went from Ukraine to other than neighboring countries which have received more than 10,000 Ukrainian refugees

Country	Germany	Czechia	Bulgaria	Italy	Turkey	France	Lithuania	Austria	Estonia
Number of people	310,000	300,000	152,340	88,593	58,000	45,000	43,800	42,000	39,500
Share, %	22.3	21.5	10.9	6.4	4.2	3.2	3.1	2.8	2.8

Country	Israel	Portugal	Sweden	Spain	Switzerland	Denmark	Netherlands	Latvia
Number of people	35,000	28,243	27,954	25,000	24,837	24,000	21,000	20,000
Share, %	2.5	2.0	2.0	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.4

| Country	Ireland	Finland	Greece	Croatia	United Kingdom	Norway	Slovenia	Belgium
Number of people	16,891	16,000	16,700	15,000	12,000	11,000	10,000	10,000
Share, %	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.1	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.7

Source: Ukrainian Refugee Crisis (2022)
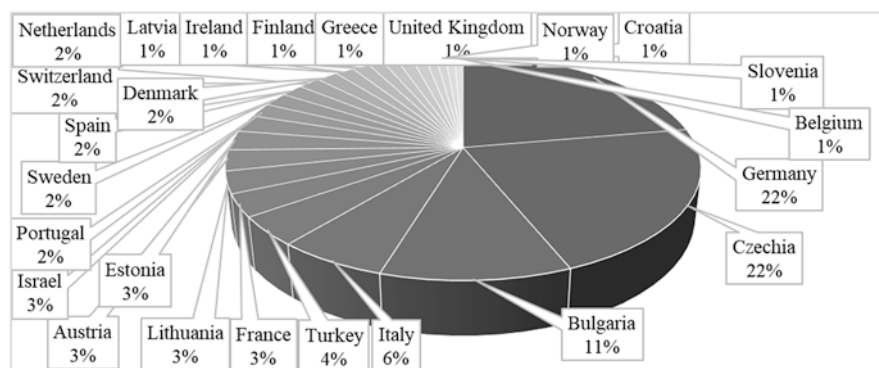
Source: (Ukrainian Refugee Crisis, 2022)

Fig. 6.3 Share of people, who went from Ukraine to other than neighboring countries which have received more than 10,000 Ukrainian refugees. (Source: Ukrainian Refugee Crisis (2022))

During the survey, which was conducted by the Razumkov Centre's sociological service at the border crossing points in Ukraine's Zakarpatia region (Uzhgorod, Malyi Bereznyi and Chop (Tisa), 101 citizens of Ukraine aged 16 and older who were leaving Ukraine on foot or by road due to hostilities were interviewed from 15 March through 1 April 2022, the portrait of Ukrainian refugees was conducted (Ukrainian refugees: Attitudes and assessments, 2022). The majority of refugees (83%) are women. 37% of refugees are aged 30–39, 26% are aged 40–49 years old, 19% are aged from 16 to 29 years old. So, 90% of respondents older than 16 years are at the working age. 76% of respondents have higher or incomplete higher education, 18% secondary special education, and 6% general secondary education.
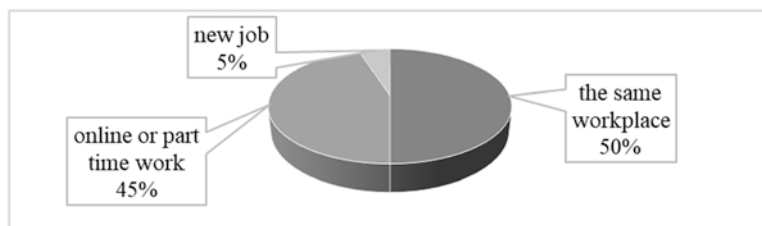
Source: (Eighth national poll: Ukraine in the conditions of war, 2022).

Fig. 6.4 Changes in employment during the war in Ukraine. (Source: Eighth national poll: Ukraine in the conditions of war (2022))

Among the respondents, 26% are highly qualified specialists, 20% are entrepreneurs, and 17% are skilled workers. These people may work in a distance mode from abroad or look for the new job.

The national Ukrainian poll about living conditions and spirits of people during the war was conducted at April, 6, 2022. The survey was conducted among the population of Ukraine aged 18 and older in all regions, except the temporarily occupied territories of Crimea and Donbas. The survey covered 1200 respondents, the sample is representative in terms of age and gender. Survey method: CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews). According to the poll (Eighth national poll: Ukraine in the conditions of war, 2022), if 68% of respondents were employed before the war, at April, 6 58% had work (46% in March), among them 50% had the same workplace, 45% worked online or part time, and 5% have got new job (Fig. 6.4).

There are 65% unemployed from the East of Ukraine, 45 from the central part, 38 from the South, and 28 from the West. These data correspond to the geography of the war activities and evacuation of the people: the most internally displaced persons or those, who went abroad, were from the East of the country (46%). As a result, if it is impossible for them to work in a distance mode, they have to find a new job.

Most often, asylum is sought in the west of Ukraine, in particular, in Lviv and the region. Specialists of the portal grc.ua said that vacancies in western Ukraine account for 31% of all current job offers in Ukraine. Almost half of them are in Lviv and Lviv region—16%. Ternopil, Transcarpathian, and Volyn regions are next in terms of the number of current vacancies. Most of the current vacancies are opened in sales—15% of all current offers. The second in demand are specialists at transport and logistics and working personnel, 12% each, respectively. The third most popular field is medicine and pharmaceuticals—11% of all current vacancies (Lisiuchenko, 2022).

The most employees, who worked in a distance mode before the war due to COVID-19 limitations, continue remote work regardless of location. There are specialists like teachers, university instructors, IT specialists, many office employees, and others. As a result, the trend to remote work after the COVID-19 pandemic increased in Ukraine due to the war.

5   Advantages and Disadvantages of Remote Work

The pandemic has been the starting point for understanding and recognizing, that an office presence does not affect the smooth running of a business. Digital technologies and platforms have made it possible to maintain the productivity of remote work, made such work from home effective in the long run. Such findings will in the near future increase companies' attention to the use of tools and opportunities for teleworking, as well as the revision of cautionary expectations from "work from home."

The benefits for business from remote work are associated with increased opportunities to attract potential candidates for the position, because companies can consider the format of remote work applicants from around the world (Gagnidze, 2018), not only local employees. Also, there is no risk of reduced productivity due to congestion at the workplace and meeting place with partners or clients. Economic benefits (cost reductions) due to the growing savings of companies in renting office space and the lack of need to pay the costs associated with working from home. The benefits for employees from remote work are connected with flexible work schedule, which allows combining household chores to get a better balance of time between work, hobbies, meetings with family and friends, reduction of stress due to the lack of need to be in traffic jams on the way from work to scheduled meetings, the ability of remote workers to work from anywhere with an Internet connection and an available computer.

At the same time, there are some tasks for companies associated with remote work. The first is performance management, which in recent years has been widely used to measure goals and key outcomes using a number of techniques, including goal management. Such approaches allow the manager to set measurable goals for employees. The second one is cooperation, as a key factor in business success. Remote work needs to include tools for the collaboration of employees in companies. Such tools allow coordinating the work of the team and maintaining a sense of belonging to the organization. The next task is taking into account differences in time zones issue warnings to managers regarding the hiring of workers from other countries, which will require coordination and adaptation of the schedule of meetings with them due to significant gaps in the hours of activity in a particular country. Also, the important issue is security, especially cyber security which raises the issue of investing in secure software to protect the company's corporate data, even with dangerous contacts of remote employees.

Among the problems of remote work for employees the greatest threat is the presence of factors that distract from work (social networks, children and adults, family members, friends) and reduce productivity, especially workers with little experience of remote work. First, it is due to the inability of two adults living in a small apartment to find space for simultaneous work, especially during web conferencing and so on. Second, if kindergartens or schools do not work, or there are elderly people in the apartment or house, who need attention and care, it is difficult for the employee to comply with his KPIs. Third, overload the Internet during

business hours. Fourth, the growing concern about the virus infecting employees or their parents and the associated panic, stress and reluctance to return to the office. Fifth, the loss of a sense of time, as it is not necessary to spend it, for example, on the way to the office, and it should be remembered that during this time many employees will have responsibilities outside of work that are additional to those they usually have during the working day. Sixth, there are thoughts that the company will not be interested in further cooperation and the risks of non-payment of wages and so on. Seventh, the transformation of payment, settlement, and credit behavior of employees, as a result of the transition to non-cash payment and fears associated with the loss of funds (Dubyna et al., 2021).

The next is operational shutdown, which is complicated by the presence of a significant number of projects that accumulated under the condition of insufficient time management. The problem can be associated with the slow workload and longer adaptation to new work of remote workers, in particular, due to the lack of experienced employees in the environment. Also, can be mentioned the growing loneliness and fear of being left unnoticed due to remote work, also in terms of living alone and being separated from other people.

It is important for managers to use the best practices for remote work. These are such practices as management by SMART goals, daily working communication, and use of cloud technologies. Management by SMART goals allows to clearly track the progress of remote teams according to the established KPIs, especially if the practice of setting team and individual goals is the norm in the company. Daily working communication can be increased by establishing fixed meetings with the team which should be mandatory for high-performance teams. Coaching is an efficient managers' tool for training their teams in remote communication and building their own roles in the team. A good practice is celebrating the success of the team as the formation and strengthening of the corporate culture of the company. The use of cloud technologies allows realizing remote connections and ensuring the preservation of corporate attributes and security systems of the company.

The best practices of remote work for the company's employees include testing new job opportunities, using different places to work, eliminate in advance possible work disruptions. Testing new job opportunities should use different approaches to mastering yourself in new conditions. For such experiments to study their own productive work, employees can evaluate different places to work (home, coffee shop, co-working centers, etc.), other working hours (morning or day), use of musical accompaniment or not, mode of work with or without breaks. Different techniques can also be effective (for example, Pomadorro technique—25 min of work and 5 min of rest). According to research by the Wall Street Journal (Shellenbarger Sue, 2012), for example, the use of a desk for work is not mandatory for 80% of young professionals, compared to the bed. The desire to eliminate in advance possible work disruptions that may be related to children, relatives, and friends or noise from neighbors by inventing effective ways to negotiate with them.

Virtual collaboration software for employees should be used as tools designed to facilitate teamwork. It allows increasing their productivity and efficiency, providing communication, conferencing, and coordination. The leading suppliers for each of

the functions are indicated in parentheses. Among virtual collaboration, software tools are communication tools, such as e-mail, messaging applications (Slack, Skype, and others), conferencing tools that allow two or more people to communicate with each other on a single screen using online platforms or cloud platforms. At the same time, such tools allow you to share documents with the ability not only to view them by several team members but also to edit them. These are Zoom, Google Meet, WebEx etc. Coordination tools can be also used for document sharing (Dropbox, Google Drive), ERP (Hash Micro, Syiven), and project management systems (Trello, Task world).

In modern conditions, people with good digital skills combined with high-professional competence will be most in-demand in all areas. Demand for core workers and professionals will decline.

Analyzing the assessments of the leading media today, we can see that traditional jobs are really disappearing and this situation is objectively based on the development of digital and information and communication technologies. But from a technological point of view, there are still many opportunities. Over the years, digital innovations will transform almost all our usual areas of activity (Lekashvili & Bitsadze, 2021; Papachashvili et al., 2021), opening up exciting opportunities for people with the necessary skills. It emphasizes the importance of dual education. It means that people need not only traditional skills in their chosen field, such as sales, customer service, design, and accounting, but also technical skills relevant to this field. They don't have to be data processors or programmers, they just need to know how to use modern technology. For example, for traditional single-profile marketers who are accustomed to working with real-time focus groups, mail surveys, promotional materials, and print ads, employment prospects can be hazy. But dual professionals who are familiar with search engine optimization, social media campaigns, online advertising, and other digital services will have much more employment opportunities. The two-profile model can be applied to almost all professionals, including IT professionals who need more knowledge in their field and application. Such skills need to be constantly improved to advance the career ladder as even to save the job.

6   Conclusions

The pandemic quarantine limitations put the task for scientists and business to reimagine the role of the office and develop effective ways of communication between employees, teams and management.

The first year of remote work forced business to change their office design. The cost saving strategy is one of the first priorities for the companies' management, so business all over the world reduce office spaces, change office locations for cheaper ones. At the same time, the organization of office work is also rethinking: most companies combine remote and office work; therefore, the office space has to be reconfigured from individually- to team- co-working oriented.

A dramatic shift was made in the ways and tools of employees' cooperation during the remote work. First of all, the physical interactions in the office were replaced by increasing the number and time of e-mails and virtual meetings. After few months of remote work employees adopted for the new ways and tools of cooperation, and time for virtual interactions returns for the pre-pandemic situation.

Two main factors lead to increased remote work in recent times: social distancing due to the coronavirus pandemic, and formation of a new norm/habit—to perform most of the work in the format of "remote from the office," which becomes common after a long (year) remote mode.

Some companies have been able to maintain productive results in remote mode and are ready to increase the share of such new work experience in the future. But the question of the successful strategy of separate performance of work by employees remains difficult because such a new regime has its pitfalls.

Under conditions of forced restrictions, the role of top office and HR management of companies should be supplemented by obligations regarding social and moral and psychological responsibility and support of employees; strict adherence to the reputational status, as the corona crisis will pass over time, and the company's reputation will be difficult or almost impossible to restore; organizational and technical support of flexible work and effective management of remote teams, which will allow to remotely perform the duties of employees. The organization of work outside the office primarily designed to take all possible measures to protect employees from COVID-19, support the entire team in changing conditions, establish new ways of working, while maintaining the quality of business operations and business processes.

One of the main factors that will allow the company to operate at the conditions of distance or remote work of employees is constant communication with all participants of business processes, stakeholders, and business owners. At the same time, the risk of loss of sense of time by line managers in communication and control of tasks, performed by employees working remotely, may increase. On the other hand, the work of an employee outside the office allows not only to form his new competencies, but also to increase his stress resistance and can serve as a driver of the company's development. Because owning and using the same resources as competitors is not a prerequisite for success in today's business environment. That is why the use of those resources and opportunities that none of the competitors has, i.e., asymmetries, contributes to a sustainable competitive advantage. Thus, resource asymmetries in this case may be rare competitive resources (intangible assets, capabilities, new skills, organizational processes, knowledge, distinctive characteristics of the company's staff), which do not have other companies and which cannot be copied even with proper cost allocation (Sahaidak et al., 2021).

The war leaves its mark on the organization of the companies' work, where it is possible. If employees have evacuated to safe places and it is possible to organize work in a distance mode, companies use the remote work model. If it is not possible to organize work remotely, maximum attention should be paid to the organization of the safe work of employees. If the enterprise moves to safe areas of the country, it is necessary to organize both remote work and relocate employees with their families.

The listed changes related to the functioning of business in war conditions require new approaches both regarding the organization of work and concern for the physical safety and mental health of personnel.

To minimize all these risks, the company's office should take care to develop an appropriate policy for work outside the office, communication plan and reporting processes, both the physical health of employees and the work performed on time. This can be an agreed time for all employees working remotely to communicate online in a convenient resource (Zoom, Teams, and Skype). Video conferencing and corporate chat are useful for keeping up with the rhythm of regular one-on-one meetings and teams, maintaining constant contact and work environment. It is also advisable, if possible, to create internal resources that the company's office will have, in particular, to support communication (e.g., payment for home internet, technical support of equipment, training to develop soft skills, etc.) and health of workers (purchase of personal protective equipment, disinfectants, etc.).

The statistics about employees' productivity during remote work is not enough and it is contradictory: one survey gives evidence about employees' satisfaction by the distance work and their higher productivity. Other sources witness about high anxiety of employees and their desire to work at least a few days a week at the office.

Based on the above, the activities of modern enterprises should be based on such basic principles as: direct priority of employees of all levels and roles in the company's business processes, even outside the office; strengthening the role of communications and information (adaptability to the environment, speed and initiative in decision-making, acquisition of new skills), creativity (anticipation of future trends, creation of a new unique product, quality service). This in turn requires a revision of the old management structures and methods used in previous changes in the environment.

The formation of a modern mechanism for managing the company requires the use of such functions that have a multi-purpose content, namely: managing the implementation of enterprise development programs; quality management; resource management and cost management; improving the marketing management; personnel management and its social and psychological and emotional development; management of a complex of integrated marketing communications, etc.

It is not enough information about the productivity of remote work comparing with pre-pandemic times, which has to be the topic of future research. That is why there is an objective need to deepen the theoretical and methodological foundations and develop applied tools to increase the strategic flexibility of the top, middle, and front office of the company and assess the productivity of employees, including remote work.

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