

PLACEMENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT IN THE CURRENT REMOTE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

Current global pandemic changes imposed a new decisional process that drags the reshaping of the professional judgment in the current environment. This reshape is an effect of the pandemic and it is highly correlated to the adaptability of the companies to the new technological path.

The continuity of the activity at an organizational level has as base the rethinking of the structure of the professional judgment within remote work conditions.

This paper aims to highlight the change of the professional judgment in the new format by explaining the influence and generating factors and, more accurate, the benefits and the drawbacks of the remote work.

Keywords: *professional judgment, pandemic, remote work, global changes, decisions.*

1. Introduction

Professional judgment has been in our field of research for over 10 years. This indissoluble concept regarding the activity at the organizational level has undergone changes on perception and on the entire process of formation and substantiation of this type of judgment.

Below we will present results of our past research in the professional judgment definition area.

Based on the research conducted so far, we have outlined several definitions of the professional judgment starting from the basic notions and then continuing at a particular level.

All the definitions regarding the professional judgment used in the qualitative and quantitative research we have conducted so far represent accepted general notions that have proven authenticity and carry the label that they are valid.

These definitions are:

- „the construction „professional judgment” indicates a cognitive demarche based on factors that support the creation of a correct decisional structure”¹;
- „the professional judgment is a set of logical judgments linked together in order to obtain concluded results for the activity carried taking into consideration certain circumstances, knowledge, evidences, methods, criteria and proper regulation;

- the professional judgment is the mechanism that forms an opinion and decision making taking into consideration the interaction between the accumulated experience in the domain, the assimilated knowledge;

- the professional judgment is a process that intervenes when the domain’s legislation does not cover all the situations encountered in the activity carried and as a cognitive process that takes into consideration ethical codes, knowledge, circumstances but also by the employee’s behavioral structures.”²

In conducting qualitative and quantitative research on aspects of working in remote conditions we found the following results:

- remote work had already been implemented for some time in large companies and in companies that did not require a specific work infrastructure and it ensured higher productivity under these conditions;
- remote work has been seen by employees as beneficial especially during the pandemic period, giving an idea of security and protection;
- there has been cooperation between both state institutions and the private sector on the development and speed of the logistics needed to carry out the activity;
- remote work can be seen as a proof of adaptation to the global environment- economical, financial, and even social;
- remote work led to the extension or modifications in the employees' work tasks to keep the

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¹ Ștefan-Duicu Viorica, M., & Ștefan-Duicu, A. (2014), *Professional judgment of the financial analyst in the context of normative and positive theories of accounting directed by the economic resilience*, From Person to Society, 1003.

² Ștefan-Duicu, V.M., & Ștefan-Duicu, A. (2018), *Professional Exo-Judgment Perception—A Quantitative Research Based on an Innovative Conceptual Structure*, Global Economic Observer, 6(2), pp. 17-25.

job if working remotely was not possible.

2. Placement of the professional judgment in the actual remote working conditions

Currently, a fact that interests us in this situation is the current pandemic status.

According to the definitions offered by the dictionary, pandemic means:

„an outbreak of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area (such as multiple countries or continents) and typically affects a significant proportion of the population: a pandemic outbreak of a disease a global pandemic or an outbreak or product of sudden rapid spread, growth, or development.”³

The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is a contemporary example of a pandemic, representing a worldwide spread of a new disease.

At an official level, The World Health Organization (WHO) is the institution responsible for declaring and announcing a globally extended pandemic. This organization monitors the outbreaks of a disease and evaluates situations created with the help of health experts and specialists in various fields.⁴

All countries have been affected by the pandemic through different implications such as:

- the health system has been overwhelmed by the medical crisis and also by the insufficient and unprepared staff in this specific situation;
- the fact that the virus is highly contagious and develops multiple variants quickly has blocked economic activity and activities in optimal conditions;
- the education system was also affected by the pandemic, fact that required the adaptation to the new environment via implementing online learning tools and policies.

„Public authorities must ensure, at the same time, a real competition on the markets and the suppliance of public services, such as education, health etc., for a proper functioning of the economy”.⁵

It was necessary to reengineer all work processes for each sector of activity. Digitalization and the use of technology are key elements of business continuity in all domains.

The pandemic status has imposed changes at all levels in companies and has led to work processes being conducted under conditions that comply with the

recommendations of the relevant authorities, at the level of the health system and in other areas.

There has been the need to modify the tasks and workload, to increase awareness of the pandemic situation. The professional judgment of the employees has shown greater attention to detail and has required continuous collaboration between colleagues and beyond. The transition period between working under normal conditions and the type of work mentioned above has consisted in the employee adaptation to all aspects regarding the global changes that have been predetermined. This adaptation followed both the integration of the personal and family plan in the work in remote conditions and the implementation of modern technologies that would allow the company's activity to take place in any location and context.

As a first reaction, many companies have restricted their activity but later they have returned to the market with solutions that ensured the continuity of its activity and keep employees in their jobs. Managers' professional judgment took unpredictable trajectories in the early days when uncertainty was high in the global economic and financial landscape. The pandemic was the main cause that both imposed and extended home-based remote work and extended the periods to indefinitely. The fact that companies have found a solution for working at home versus working in the office has led to support for the health system in the first place.

„Remote work, also called distance working, telework, teleworking, working from home (WFH), mobile work, remote job, and work from anywhere (WFA)⁶ is an employment arrangement in which employees do not commute to a central place of work, such as an office building, warehouse, or retail store. It is facilitated by technology such as collaborative software, local area networks, virtual private networks, conference calling, videotelephony, internet access, cloud computing, voice over IP (VoIP), mobile telecommunications technology. It can be efficient and useful for companies since it allows workers to communicate over long distances, saving significant amounts of travel time and cost. Common software used for remote work are Zoom, Cisco Webex, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Slack, and WhatsApp.”⁷

³ Dictionary by Merriam Webster, an An Encyclopædia Britannica Company, available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pandemic#examples>.

⁴ Healthdirect Australia - the national virtual public health information service, available at: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/what-is-a-pandemic>.

⁵ Stoica, E.C., & Sudacevschi, M. (2019), *Economic policies instruments used by developed and emerging states in the conjuncture of our days*, Challenges of the Knowledge Society, p. 1109.

⁶ What is telework?, United States Office of Personnel Management, available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Office_of_Personnel_Management

⁷ Wikipedia - the free encyclopedia, available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remote_work

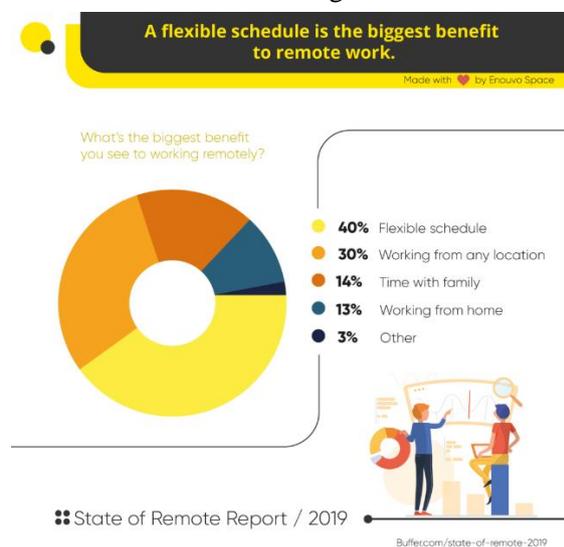
2.1. Potential benefits and drawbacks of the remote working

This type of work has led to distinct types of potential benefits and drawbacks.

From the category of **potential benefits**, we name:

- the reduction of costs for companies to conduct their activity in the previous conditions because teleworking does not require an actual space to be provided to the employee or to control the work climate, electricity costs, building maintenance, etc.
- it has been pointed out that the environmental aspect is an important one because remote working has led to a reduction in traffic and to lower emissions of pollutants and general pollution;
- the improvement of workers` quality of life by reducing the time spent in traffic and organizing the remaining activities;
- a highlighted advantage of remote work is that it creates a climate that encourages family life by ensuring a significant physical presence of people at home;
- schedule flexibility allows the employee to plan and decide when to complete the tasks;
- remote work is already considered an employee privilege in some companies.

Figure 1. Potential benefits of the remote working



Source: Report by Buffer State of Remote Work⁸

The **general drawbacks** of remote work are:

- establishing logistics that cover 100% of the means of conducting the work in favorable conditions
- the lack of face-to-face interaction can lead to miscommunication and feedback often provided by personalized communication through gestures, voice, tone, facial expressions, and body posture;⁹
- the existence of employee's work-life balance concerns, the increase of efficiency related to the new working conditions, the need to adapt to new technologies and tools, maintaining work control and also the existence of home office constraints;
 - distractions in remote work environment such as members of the family or neighbors;
 - the occurrence of tensions between those who work from home and those who still work from the offices;
 - the constant need of training for employees both in technology and how to work in new conditions and logistics;
 - the exposure of companies to IT breaches and data theft;
 - the pressure of working from home to show worth for the employees;
 - continuous use of laptops, phones and tablets can lead to burnout and health issues among employees;
 - during the adaptation process „people cannot solve problems perfectly, costless and instantaneously.”¹⁰
 - employee's behaviors and attitudes change in remote working conditions because a different degree of autonomy is taken into consideration and the employee's experiences a greater focus on personal growth opportunities.

This fact goes both ways - it can increase the employee's work productivity or distract them from the main responsibilities they have because of the independence, freedom provided or the flexibility of schedule. „However, studies also show that autonomy must be balanced with high levels of discipline if a healthy work/leisure balance is to be maintained.”¹¹

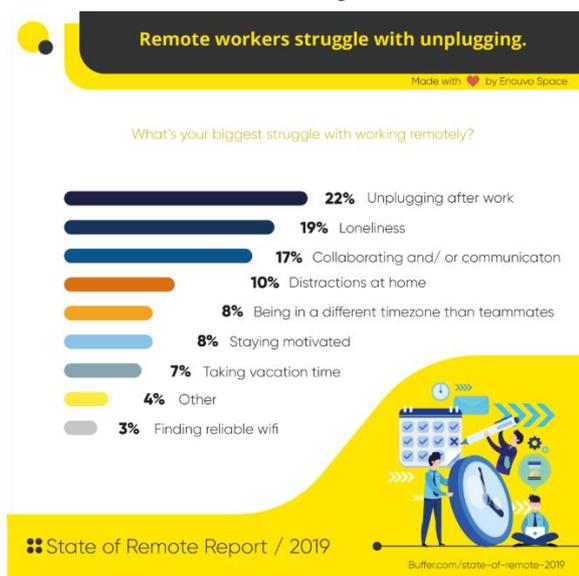
⁸ Report by Buffer State of Remote Work – „How remote workers from around the world feel about remote work, the benefits and struggles that come along with it, and what it's like to be a remote worker in 2019”, available at: <https://buffer.com/state-of-remote-work/2019>.

⁹ Daft, Richard L.; Lengel, Robert H. (1986), *Organizational information requirements, media richness and structural design*, Management Science. 32 (5), pp. 554–571. doi:10.1287/mnsc.32.5.554. JSTOR 2631846.

¹⁰ M. Z. (2009), *Information economics, instrument of analysis in new microeconomics*, Lex ET Scientia International Journal (LESIJ), 16(2), pp. 362.

¹¹ Cook, Dave (March 12, 2020), *The freedom trap: digital nomads and the use of disciplining practices to manage work/leisure boundaries*, Information Technology & Tourism. 22 (3), pp. 355–390. doi:10.1007/s40558-020-00172-4.

Figure 2. General drawbacks of the remote working



Source: Report by Buffer State of Remote Work¹²

2.2. The professional judgment during the remote working

The part that interests us the most and that we want to emphasize in this paper is that professional judgment also undergoes different changes.

If so far we were used to a fast-decision-making process at the workplace, now we had to adapt this process through the tools made available by the employer. It has been observed that the speed of decision making has decreased because the employees are withheld in group meetings, leading to longer times to be needed in this process.

This is a consequence of adaptation to the new technological path, and beyond.

The professional judgment has been affected by the lack of traditional face-to-face communication and has been, at least at the beginning of the pandemic, hampered by the adaptation time and flexibility of each employee in manifesting communication and decision making in the new work conditions.¹³

Each employee and each manager had to get used to the new working climate and adapt to the new processes. Because the main goal is to ensure the continuity of the company's business at a general level and to maintain the workplace in normal parameters or with increased efficiency at an individual level all efforts have been directed towards this aspect.

Discussions no longer took place face-to-face at the office, meetings migrated online and therefore each employee had to push their limits and develop online communication skills.

The clarity of the professional judgment consisted in a comprehensive approach on all the factors influencing the company's activity and the adaptation to the new conditions imposed by the remote work.

Managers, seen as „supporters of innovation find the principles and the conventions of any kind, in a way not only to adapt better to the reality, but also to anticipate developments."¹⁴

There has been a need for a separation between work and personal life and a need to establish a schedule to accomplish tasks in optimal conditions. Managers and stakeholders initially suspected that employees were not using the time allocated to their work in the best of their ability, but over time this suspicion disappeared as verifications occurred in the performance of tasks, activity reports or other types of reporting imposed into each company.

The remote work process has been developed against the current pandemic, but it will continue in companies even after the danger of contagion has disappeared.

3. Conclusions

Companies have adapted its activities and remote working schedule and have achieved various advantages and will continue to maintain certain remote working periods in accordance with internal policies.

¹² Report by Buffer State of Remote Work – „How remote workers from around the world feel about remote work, the benefits and struggles that come along with it, and what it's like to be a remote worker in 2019", available at: <https://buffer.com/state-of-remote-work/2019>.

¹³ Akkirman, A.; Harris, D.L. (June 2005), *Organizational communication satisfaction in the virtual workplace*, *Journal of Management Development*, 24 (5), pp. 397-409. doi:10.1108/02621710510598427.

¹⁴ Cristea, V.G. (2015), *The necessity to introduce the accounting rules and fair value in the conceptual framework*, *Procedia economics and finance*, 26, p. 515.

Figure 3. Remote working in images



Source: photos published on unsplash.com¹⁵

Professional judgment is based on a well-defined framework. During the transition to remote work the fact that every member of the company, whether employee or manager, had established job tasks and draft documents needed to conduct the work, led to an intrinsic decision-making process.

Initially, the difficulty arose from the concerns of transposing all the means of working from the office at home. All these elements shaped the professional judgement both through behavioral factors that influenced remote work and the employee themselves, as well as environmental factors. These environmental factors have transformed the professional judgement in

remote work environment from an uncommon issue into a paradigm of the present time.

The professional judgment has seen variations in the way of being applied in areas where it initially seemed harder to work from home. Managers often decided to expand or change employees' duties and tasks in these situations.

Figure 4. Are you suited to be a remote worker?



Source: Picture used on Research by TalentLMS¹⁶

In fact, looking at the whole situation, there has been a beneficial extension of professional training through the emergence of new remote working environment and processes.

Remote work will become a viable choice for companies from now on, as all the logistical and technical bases are already in place, given the historical precedent that has been set.

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¹⁵ Tribute to photographers: Helena Lopes (photo 1.), Clark Tibbs (photo 2.), Manny Pantoja (photo 3.), Nelly Antoniadou (photo 4.); Andreas Klassen (photo 5.), Charles Deluvio (photo 6.), Chris Montgomery (photo 7).

¹⁶ Picture from Research by TalentLMS, available at: <https://www.talentlms.com/blog/remote-work-statistics-survey-2019/>.

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