

Work Working Remotely on the Rise, Study Says

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Increasing numbers of Moscow's "office plankton" are swimming out to sea and working remotely. That's the trend pointed to by recruiting agencies and recent research. Meanwhile, legislation being considered in the State Duma would officially recognize remote work for the first time.

According to new research by Superjob.ru, 32 percent of Russian employers use the labor of specialists working outside their offices. Twenty-two percent of them hire these workers as full staff members, whereas 10 percent use outsourcing services.

"There is definitely a trend, especially in Moscow," toward working remotely, said Larisa Chuguyevskaya, PR and advertising manager at Penny Lane Personnel. In particular, the high price of office space and the notorious traffic in the capital encourage this approach, she said.

Renting Class A office space in the central business district costs \$750 to \$1,250 per square

meter per year, according to a Q3 report by real estate consultant GVA Sawyer.

"Employers need to economize not on salaries but on office space," Chuguyevskaya said.

In addition, the benefits package for a remote worker typically includes only part of the options offered to office workers, Penny Lane said. Besides saving a company money, remote workers also tend to ease the work of the HR department, since they are more motivated and do not require programs to adapt them to the workplace, it added.

"The popularity of distance work ... and the rise of demand for outsourcing services are gaining momentum, and this topic will be one of the most fashionable on the Russian labor market in 2013," Dmitry Viktorov, head of the IT recruiting department at Penny Lane Personnel, said by e-mail.

Realty and telecommunications companies with a large numbers of sales managers are seeking to move part of their employees to remote work, he said.

Nonetheless, "remote work is far from a mass phenomenon," the Superjob results noted. Most often, employers turn to the practice to motivate and keep current workers or to satisfy unfulfilled hiring needs by contracting specialists in other regions, it said. IT, sales and finances and accounting were the most common areas for which remote workers are being hired, the study found.

IT company Yandex already has about 1,000 remote workers, and this number is growing, The Moscow Times reported in October.

Meanwhile, employees are ready to embrace the trend. According to a survey of 1,456 Russians in various cities by the MASMI Research Group, 67 percent are prepared to change professions to work outside the office via the internet, Vedomosti reported this month. Seven percent said that remote work doesn't suit them because they need communication with colleagues.

The legislation under consideration would for the first time explicitly regulate remote work and proposes allowing such workers to conclude labor contracts with electronic signatures. Nonetheless, the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, which initiated the bill, said it lacks necessary details on working hours or office location for remote workers and won't increase the popularity of such work, The Moscow Times reported in October. Currently, not all of the labor code's general standards, such as those on working hours and office location, can be applied to work outside of the office.

A study by consulting company Vanson Bourne previously predicted that a third of Russian employees will labor outside the office by 2020.

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