The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Salaries Going Up, Candidates Get Picky

By Olga Razumovskaya

March 31, 2011



Drivers are earning about $1,400 per month on average in Moscow, though Kremlin chauffeurs may get more. **Igor Tabakov**

Salaries across most sectors are projected to grow this year as the market recovers to pre-crisis levels and demand for job applicants is increasing, human resources specialists say, with IT specialists being especially sought after over the coming years.

As the country recovers from the 2009 slump and President Dmitry Medvedev pushes his modernization and innovation agenda before the presidential election next year, the demand for certain professions is growing and salaries are catching up.

Supported by continued output growth, labor market conditions improved noticeably last year, according to the World Bank's Russian Economic Report, released Wednesday.

"Real wages and incomes in the economy as a whole grew broadly in line with productivity, while dollar wages hit a record high," the report said.

"According to [the State Statistics Service], real disposable incomes and wages grew 4.1 and 4.2 percent in 2010, respectively. The average dollar wage in Russia increased to almost $700 a month in 2010 (up 17 percent relative from 2009), the highest level on record since the beginning of the market transition," the report said.

The World Bank study also indicated a greater-than-expected decline in unemployment in 2010, to 7.2 percent — down from 9.2 percent in 2009. The amount of people living below the poverty line shrank to 10 percent of the population in 2010, down from 12.7 percent the previous year.

This overall positive dynamic will prompt salaries to grow in 2011, as competition for qualified personnel heats up and the market returns to its pre-crisis state by year end.

As a result, almost all the industries that suffered during the crisis will restore their pre-crisis salaries, said Irina Kondratova, executive director at Kelly Services CIS, a human resources consulting company.

Salaries for most professions will grow by 12 percent to 15 percent this year compared with 2010, said Yury Virovets, president of HeadHunter, an Internet recruitment portal.

"It is a natural growth during high inflation but low productivity. If our productivity were at least at the level of Eastern Europe, the growth would be much more significant," he said.

While Virovets believes that the remainder of the year will see balanced recruiting for employers, who will be reflecting on what happened on the market over the past two years and considering future plans, others, like Kondratova, think job candidates will regain the upper hand in their dealings with potential employers.

"Given that economic stability persists, qualified specialists will regain the opportunity to pick the best [working] conditions from those offered. Consequently, talking to HR managers will take a lot more time in the work schedule of general directors," Kondratova said.

Human resources as a company function stands a good chance of becoming a crucial part of running a business this year, Kondratova told The Moscow Times.

Among the roles that are reaping the renewed prestige and the higher salaries on the market are information technology staff and accounting and finance specialists.

An average gross salary for a project manager in IT and telecommunications companies is 99,100 rubles ($3,477) a month, according to a study by HeadHunter, which looked into 75,917 vacancies and 87,779 resumes to determine the number.

This is topped only by financing and accounting specialists, traditionally considered among the best paid positions, who are getting 156,000 rubles ($5,474) a month on average, according to HeadHunter.

Competition for these positions remains high, with six candidates per one IT project manger position and 17.2 candidates for the position of the head of accounting and finance.

The situation, from the employer point of view, is more desperate for other job categories. Only three accountants compete for one open position in Moscow, while there are only 0.6 people applying for the average IT sales manager position.

Virovets expects software developers to be in demand this year, as IT companies gain more prominence in Russia with the help of Medvedev's innovation rhetoric.

"On any emerging market it's sales managers who are in demand; there is [also] a significant deficit of technical and engineering personnel, as a rule, due to production expansion," Kondratova said.

Recruiters' comments are in line with Medvedev's recent statements about Russian engineers who, he believes, should represent the future of the country.

"Engineers must be the heroes of TV shows, movies, and not in the satirical sense, but in the normal one. So that the youth understand that being an engineer is not only prestigious but also lucrative," Medvedev said at a meeting with technical students Tuesday.

Average Salaries for Moscow

Sector	Role	Gross, thousand rubles per month
IT	Project manager	99.1
	Consultant	68
	Sales manager	65.1
	Software engineer	64
Auditing / Finance	Chief financial officer	155.9
	Auditor	65
	Chief accountant	64.7
	Accountant	34.5
Sales / Marketing / PR	PR manager	62
	Marketing manager	56
	Sales representative (base)	51
	Sales manager (base)	43
Administrative	Personal assistant / executive assistant	49
	Driver	40
	Office manager	35
	Secretary	32
Investment / Banking	Investment banker	240
	Financial adviser	160
	Analyst	130
Legal	Partner	200
	Senior associate	140
	Lawyer	80
	Junior associate / paralegal	39

Source: HeadHunter

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