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## **Transitioning towards Work from Home**

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### **Abstract**

This paper analyzes the transition from the traditional way of office work to work from home influenced by the pandemic. The analysis starts by laying out the general scene. It further shifts its focus on this phenomenon in the translation industry. Digital nomadism and work from home are a relatively new cultural phenomenon. They are a social variation that is upheld by the rapid development of telecommunication services and promoted by the rapid technological and social changes worldwide. Its promotion, however, has been boosted for more than two years now by the pandemic. It forced businesses to look for and find out new ways of work and performance in order to secure their survival amid a global crisis. Affected by the lockdowns across the globe, companies were concerned if they were going to make it through the crisis. Translation industry was also affected. Many analyses and polls dealing with the pandemic effect on businesses have been producing results from their research where workforce expresses their opinion in favour of the new way of work i.e. work from home, which makes it possible to balance work and private life. This paper may serve the purpose of furthering the analysis of the pandemic's impact on other social elements.

**Keywords:** work from home; digital nomads; digital nomadism; traditional work office; pandemic.

### **1. Introduction**

In this paper we will analyze the impact of the pandemic on the transition from the traditional way of office work to work from home. Of course, working from home doesn't have to be taken literally. Workers may choose another facility to convert into their private office for the performance of work duties, or occasionally change their work location. This paper builds on our previous paper on a similar topic, ie. *Digital Nomads (Donev, Pop Zarijeva, Kostova, Iliev, 2021) [1]*.

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## 2. Companies and their Challenges in the Pandemic

As companies were impacted by the pandemic, a direct decline in the global economy was imminent as countries one by one introduced restrictions on non-essential travel. It seems that the pandemic has only served to accelerate this trend of working from home. This led to further reduced functionality of national economies in all countries. Working conditions were becoming unfavorable in almost all economic sectors. Faced with the challenge to continue their business operations, and at the same time respond to restriction of movement of their workers, a large part of the economic entities switched to working from home, that is, dispersing the workforce outside the business centers. Many companies already had an elaborate infrastructure and practice for the online functioning of their core business, so they used this advantage to more easily make the transition to a way of working from home or in a home office. However, the challenges were not small for those who were not used to the new way of working. This meant that workers had to learn new skills, master new tools and electronic aids to perform their work duties. And all of this had to take place in as short a period of time as possible so that economies would not suffer additional burdens which were already large. Additional difficulties were those cases where family members had to share their home so that everyone could improvise a work or study desk for themselves. „*Small businesses employ almost 50% of American workers. Yet, our results underscore the financial fragility of many small businesses, and how deeply affected they are by the current crisis. In our sample, which is skewed toward the retail sector, we found that 43% of businesses were temporarily closed and that employment had fallen by 40%. This represents a shock to America's small firms that has little parallel since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Our results suggest that many of these firms had little cash on hand toward the beginning of the pandemic, which means that they will either have to dramatically cut expenses, take on additional debt, or declare bankruptcy. This highlights the ways in which the immediacy of new funding might impact medium term outcomes*“ [2].

The previous quote supports the view that the crisis had a great impact on the business sector in a short period of time, especially on small businesses. *Before the COVID-19 pandemic, at most 5% of Americans worked from home for more than three days per week, whereas it is estimated that, by April 2020, as many as 37% of Americans were working from home (WFH) full-time. Thus, in a matter of weeks, the pandemic caused about one-third of US workers to shift to WFH and nearly every American that was able to work from home did so. Many technology companies, such as Twitter, Facebook, Square, Box, Slack and Quora, have taken this shift one step further by announcing longer term and, in some cases permanent, remote work policies that will enable at least some employees to work remotely, even after the pandemic. More generally, COVID-19 has accelerated the shift away from traditional office work, such that even firms that do not keep full-time remote work policies in place after the pandemic has ended are unlikely to fully return to their pre- COVID-19 work arrangements.*” [3]

## 3. The Impact of the Pandemic on the Translation Industry

The translation industry has also felt the impact of the pandemic. „*The French professional association SFT (Société française des traducteurs) carried out a survey from mid-June to mid-July 2020. It revealed that 57% of the 526 participants believed that the crisis would have a negative impact on their work. Of this 57%, 48%*

*anticipated having to take on a side job, 23% were considering retraining, 15% were thinking of temporarily suspending their work and 7% were thinking of quitting permanently. “[4] However, these numbers speak about what the respondents expected and the impact of the pandemic on them not only on a professional but also on a mental level. Since the study was conducted somewhere at the beginning of the crisis and the respondents did not know in which direction it would move, it is logical that they were uncertain about their future and feared that they would have to change their profession and adapt to the new situation. Also, the authors further state that the study was done on a small percentage of French translators. In order to be able to obtain a result that would be more representative, they recommend the implementation of a more extensive examination, and even at an international level, so that these findings can be confirmed or refuted. In August 2020, the research institute CSA conducted a global survey of freelance translators. According to this research “From the 1,174 responses across 97 countries, the survey found the same trends emerging throughout the translating community: lower income, fewer job opportunities and a decline in workload, but very few requests for lower rates. Moreover, 65% of respondents believed that COVID-19 had changed the market temporarily, 25% that it had changed it permanently and 10% that it had not changed it at all.*

*The survey also shows that in some sectors demand for translation services is on the rise, whilst in other areas it is declining.[4] According to this survey, the majority of translators believe that the pandemic did not have a major impact on their profession because they were able to perform their work largely from home.*

#### **4. Going away from the Traditional way of Performing Work**

From this it can be concluded that in a very short period the pandemic has influenced, or in other words, accelerated the move away from traditional office work, in favor of working from home, remotely, or also known as full-time correspondence work. According to [5] the pandemic has changed the way work is done. The work-from-home lifestyle is already becoming the norm in the US, suggesting that a hybrid model would give the workforce the best of both worlds.

*When separated into groups, it becomes staggeringly clear that all workers are in overwhelming support of being able to work from home. Some might assume that older members of the workforce became so used to being in-office during their many years of service that these employees would want to return as soon as possible, but the opposite is actually true [6]. According to a study by the Texas A&M School of Public Health, telecommuting during a crisis does not reduce worker productivity. „Almost all of the study's employees were right back up to the same level of output as they were doing before Hurricane Harvey. This is a huge message right now for employers because we're having national debates about whether or not employees should be able to work remotely or in a hybrid schedule “[7].*

From our analysis, we can come to the conclusion that the pandemic really had a big impact on changing the way the workplace is understood in the traditional sense. Namely, the workforce tends to perceive working from home as a new norm. Some business advisors even recommend that when trying to attract new workers in job advertisements, it is an added advantage that companies offer the flexibility for workers to choose to work from home.

## 5. Conclusion

The general conclusion is that the impact of the pandemic on the transition from the traditional way of office work towards work from home in the translation industry can be observed from two aspects: from the aspect of the volume of work, and from the aspect of adapting to the new way of working. There is no doubt that the volume of work has decreased in all economic spheres, including translators. Although, we should mention that translators who have done medical translations report a high volume of work. As for the adaptation of the way of working from home, some professions need major adjustments, but translators do not need major changes due to the specificity of the profession, which was largely done from home even before the pandemic. It must be pointed out that the greatest adjustments for translators are needed in the direction of mastering new electronic tools such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom and the like.

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