

Management

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**INCREASING THE EFFICIENCY OF CREATIVE PROJECT TEAMS
DURING PANDEMIC**

**ПІДВИЩЕННЯ ЕФЕКТИВНОСТІ КРЕАТИВНИХ ПРОЕКТНИХ
КОМАНД В УМОВАХ ПАНДЕМІЇ**

**ПОВЫШЕНИЕ ЭФФЕКТИВНОСТИ КРЕАТИВНЫХ ПРОЕКТНЫХ
КОМАНД В УСЛОВИЯХ ПАНДЕМИИ**

Summary. The article analyzes the problems that affect the work efficiency of creative teams. They are associated with demotivation and stress levels in the workplace due to external factors and pandemic. Managers spend a lot of time planning the work of such teams, providing teams with modern tools, etc., but this is not enough in a constantly changing environment. After all, there must be a common result when working in a team and all performers must be involved in the process. The efficiency of work will be low, if we do not take into account the individual needs in motivation of creative team members and their emotional condition, which is associated with the challenges of today and the specificities of project implementation. The authors included teams of architects, publicists, designers, media producers, employees of the Internet gaming industry, etc. among the creative teams.

The article also presents the results of research that confirms the impact of the pandemic on the work of creative teams.

The authors suggest solutions in the form of keys to motivation and developed recommendations of how to cope with six key stressors in creative teams.

Motivational measures include the following tools: the use of briefings, increasing the engagement, visualization of goals, freedom of decision and the definition of clear responsibilities of each team member.

The article also develops and presents a number of recommendations that reduce the negative effects of stress on creative teams. Namely, the organization of meaningful work, the formation of common values to keep the team spirit, the creation of a positive workspace, increasing the safety in the workplace, the promotion of personal development and the creation of a trustful environment. The proposed measures will allow to organize the work of the creative team as efficiently as possible and will help to make projects more effective.

Key words: *creative team, efficiency, motivation of creative teams, stress.*

Анотація. *В статті проаналізовано проблеми, які мають вплив на ефективну роботу креативних команд. Вони пов'язані з мотивацією та рівнем стресу на робочому місці через вплив на них зовнішніх факторів та пандемії. Менеджери приділяють багато часу для планування роботи таких команд, забезпечують команди сучасними інструментами тощо, але цього є не достатньо в умовах постійних змін. Адже в командній роботі має бути спільний результат і до процесу мають бути залучені всі виконавці. Ефективність роботи буде низькою, якщо не враховувати індивідуальні потреби в мотивації працівників креативних команд та їх емоційний стан, який пов'язаний з викликами сьогодення та особливостями впровадження проектів. До креативних команд автори*

віднесли команди архітекторів, піарників, дизайнерів, медівників, працівників сфери інтернет-ігор тощо.

У статті також представлено результати досліджень, які підтверджують вплив пандемії на роботу креативних команд.

Авторами запропоновано рішення у вигляді ключів до мотивації та розроблено рекомендації до шести ключових факторів стресу у креативних командах.

До мотиваційних заходів віднесено наступні інструменти: використання брифів, підвищення рівня залученості, візуалізація цілей, свобода рішень та визначення чіткого функціоналу кожного в команді.

Також у статті розроблено та представлено ряд рекомендацій, що зменшують негативні наслідки стресу у креативних команд. А саме, організація змістовної роботи, формування спільних цінностей для підтримки командного духу, створення позитивного робочого простору, формування безпеки на робочому місці, формування особистого розвитку та створення середовища довіри. Запропоновані заходи дозволяють організувати працю креативної команди максимально ефективно та допоможуть зробити проекти більш результативними.

Ключові слова: креативна команда, ефективність, мотивація креативних команд, стрес.

Анотація. В статье проанализированы проблемы, которые имеют влияние на эффективную работу креативных команд. Прежде всего они связаны с демотивацией членов команды, сложностью заданий и уровнем стресса на рабочем месте. Одна из причин - это влияния на них внешних факторов и пандемии. Менеджеры тратят много времени для планирования работы таких команд, обеспечивают команды современными инструментами и т.д., но этого недостаточно в условиях постоянных изменений. Ведь в командной работе должен быть общий

результат и в процесс должны быть вовлечены все исполнители. Эффективность работы будет низкой, если не учитывать индивидуальные потребности в мотивации креативных команд и их эмоциональное состояние, связанное с вызовами и особенностями внедрения проектов. Под креативными командами авторы имеют ввиду команды архитекторов, пиарщиков, дизайнеров, представителей медиа, работников сферы интернет игор и т.д.

В статье также представлены результаты исследований, подтверждающих влияние пандемии на работу креативных команд.

Авторами предложено решение в виде ключей к мотивации и разработанных рекомендаций к основным ключевым факторам стресса в креативных сферах.

Разработаны мотивационные инструменты: использование брифов, повышение уровня вовлеченности, визуализация целей, свобода решений и определения четкого функционала каждого в команде. Даны рекомендации. А также, разработан и представлен ряд рекомендаций, которые уменьшают негативные последствия стресса у креативных команд: организация содержательной работы, формирование общих целей, создание положительного рабочего пространства, формирование безопасности на рабочем месте, формирование личного развития и создания среды доверия.

Предложенные меры позволят организовать работу креативной команды максимально эффективно и помогут сделать проекты более результативными.

Ключевые слова: *креативная команда, эффективность, мотивация креативных команд, стресс.*

Problem formulation. *Willingness of team members to efficiently do their work is one of the key factors of successful project implementation,*

especially when we talk about creative teams, who work on creative, extraordinary tasks in projects.

Project managers can develop optimistic work schedules, plan time, provide team members with modern tools, but the result will be minimal without working on individual motivation of such specialists and without taking into account their emotional condition and other factors that can affect their work.

According to experts, an external environment is one of the key factors that influence creative teams motivation. Pandemic, that exists in our world now, causes significant changes in work with people, their motivation and stress level management.

Search for effective ways to improve work efficiency of team members, especially those in creative teams, keeps relevant for subject matter experts and project managers.

Creative teams include specialists who work in such projects as architecture, design, marketing, media, innovative industries, whose work requires extraordinary and atypical decisions.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Leading scientists and practitioners of the world Josh Bersin [1], who studies HR and talent acquisition. Dan Pink [2], in his studies, reveals new views on work motivation. Peterson T. M.[3], relies on the experience on successful companies and claims that the efficiency of work depends on external factors, and managers should develop their managerial skills. James Berry studies the motivation of creative teams, the influence of stress on their productivity [4]. Among Ukrainian scientists we can single out the works of Kapinos G. I., Larionova K.L. [4], Muha R.A. [5], Yastrzemski O. M. Bardadym O. I etc. According to leading experts and scientists in project management, motivation of employees is determined by the total influence of internal and external factors.

Main goal. Find the ways to increase work efficiency of team members in creative project teams during the pandemic and changes.

Presenting main material. While internal factors are formed by the employee himself depending on their values, education, mentality, qualifications, age, marital status; external, on the other hand, are something project managers have no influence on, but have to take into account while working with a team. They include factors that are created on the organization level, overall situation in the industry, country.

Today, one of the most significant factors of influence on the motivation level is worldwide pandemy. It significantly affected the motivators and changed their priority. This is especially true for workers in the creative industries and projects.

Before we dive into the study of this topic, let's define such concepts as a project, a creative team.

PMBOK defines the term Project as "a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique project service or result" [6].

Work in projects is characterized by high risks, a big amount of stress and limitations in realization parameters.

In creative teams the level of such factors are much higher, and if we add instability, lack of financial resources, ongoing changes and stress - the main tasks of team managers becomes to identify relevant motivators for your team and decrease the stress level caused by external factors.

Creative people possess original thinking, imagination, ability to generate new ideas. Very often to do creative work people need inspiration and a special environment. So, it is not a surprise that managing creative teams is challenging and requires a lot of effort, adn special approach. We analyzed the specificities of creative teams and factors that can influence work efficiency and defined core difficulties that can arise during the project: lack of motivation; arguments between team members: not met deadlines; different understanding of project tasks and goals; lack of productivity; no teamwork. All these difficulties are interconnected, with causal relationship. First, lack of motivation. When the

project is on its starting stages your team is usually highly motivated, but when the project tasks become a routine - a team of creative people can easily get bored and lose motivation. The loss of motivation can lead to lack of productivity, which can result in not met deadlines. When we talk about a team in its original meaning - it implies that all members work together like one organism. In order to prevent such difficulties during the project, PM needs to be aware of them and have a strategy on how to avoid them. Authors suggested solutions for creative teams work improvement (Tabl.1).

Table 1

Keys to Effective Creative Team

Detailed Brief	An essential part of any successful project is detailed brief. It has to be as detailed as possible, especially when working with creative teams who are getting involved in the process very easily.
Engagement	As fast as creative people get involved so fast they lose their motivation and interest. Workshops, brainstorming sessions, challenging tasks can help to keep your team on track and engaged. Creative people need their ideas to be heard. Listen to them, accept ideas and opinions. Creatives can notice and pay attention to details that most people may overlook.
Visualize Goals	When you describe something in words - your team can create their own picture of it in mind, and it can be different for each team member. So it is important to provide a visualized version of what you are going to describe. In addition it is more effective to give the general idea, big picture of the project and its goals, and then die into details, so every team member has the same idea of the final result. If the goal is formulated clearly and everyone keeps it in mind, then the result would meet the expectations.
Freedom Of Process	Creating - is a process. When working with creative people it is important to control if the team is on track for the needed results, but controlling the process can lead to disaster. Give the creatives the freedom of thought.
Defined Responsibilities	Every team member should be up to date about ongoing project activities, but everyone should have their own defined area of responsibilities and tasks.

Source: built by authors

But even these recommendations are not enough. In present realities values are reevaluated. Worldwide pandemic and external environment have made their own influence on project management activities and specificities.

Significant influence on creative teams work has worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. According to the research made by the economic development agency PPV Knowledge Networks – 72% of respondents believe creative industries to be more vulnerable to the pandemic consequences [7].

Among the respondents were representatives of such creative industries as architecture, design, media industry, publishing, game industry, advertising and more. Due to quarantine restrictions, 92.5% were unable to implement their projects and lost the opportunity to earn income [7].

So, it is not a surprise that in modern world realities burn-out is a common thing, especially during the pandemic.

According to the World Health Organization Burn-out is defined in ICD-11 as follows:

Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and reduced professional efficacy.

Companies, employers, PMs, HR managers all try to take measures to lower the stress level in their teams. For effective results and successful projects not only the team must be productive, but engaged and mentally stable.

Stressful environment, overtimes, conflicts, pressure, feeling of unsafety - all these factors can lead to burn-out. Employees need to be provided some guarantees, and security of their main values, especially under pandemic circumstances.

It may be health insurance, stable pay raise, feeling of importance, vacation time, ability to freely express needs and ideas. All these factors can

differ from team to team, so it's important to investigate what is that your team values most, what is what they need.

It can be discovered through team meetings, team building sessions, one-to-one meetings with employees.

The latest studies prove this. Glitz's last research , which included more than 7 million questions about employees' feedbacks, shows that burnout level is the highest of all times now.

Indicative is a study conducted by Recent Harvard in 2020. According to the university - 89% of employees claim that their work life is getting worse and only 11% don't feel that (Fig. 1)

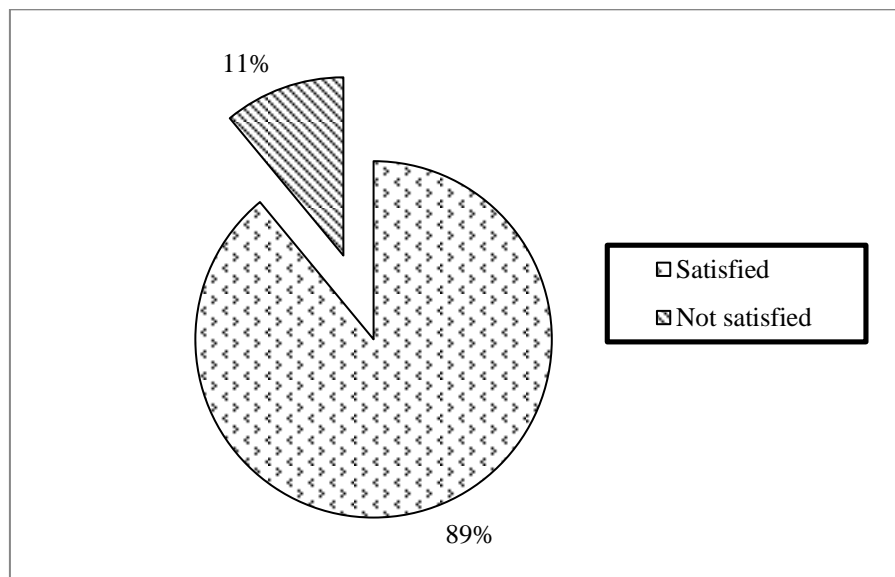


Fig. 1. Work-life satisfaction, % [8]

85% business people claimed that their well-being level is getting lower, showed that (Fig. 2) i 57% believe that pandemic is completely dominant in their work [8].

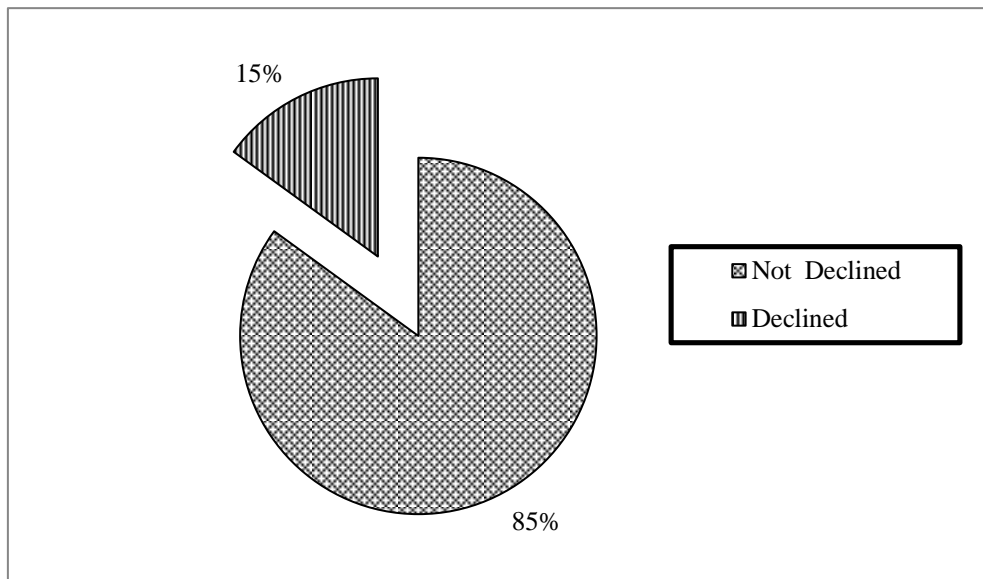


Fig. 2. Well-being Level, % [8]

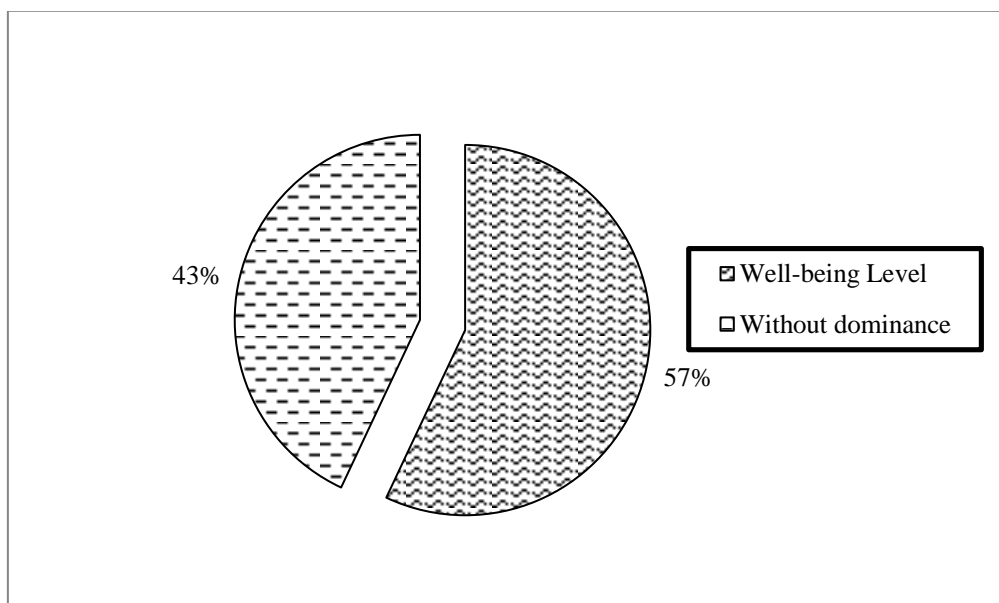


Fig. 3. Pandemic Domination in Work, % [8]

Such situation that is confirmed by researches is threatening and require special attention of scientists, management practitioners, psychologists and managers.

Josh Bersin defined six things that can help to avoid and prevent burn out in your team [9].

We analyzed these factors and transformed them into actions managers can take to minimize the stress level in creative teams (Tabl. 2).

Table 2

Solutions to the stressors of creative teams

Factors that can help minimize stress level in creative teams	Manager's actions
Meaningful Work	Define clear goals and objectives, so that each employee knows what they are working on. Follow the working schedule, avoid overtimes. Increase team cooperation, hold brainstorming meetings, workshops. Organize everything that may increase work productivity, provide you team with instruments, tools, quality documentation, task management systems.
Practiecal Management	Be a member of your team, show your responsibilities and daily tasks. Ask your team about their values, factors that influence their work, blockers. Take each opinion into account - people need to feel their significance. Creatives - are people who enjoy the process more that result and the better tha process is the better the result will be. So, main talk of a good manager of a creative team - is not disturb the process, let people create the way they want. You can set milestones to control of the team is staying on track towards the project goal.
Positive Work Environment	One good way to create positive environment is to be positive yourself. Show gratefulness to team members for the work done, encourage them, organize team building, provide bonuses to the best employees. Creative people need praise for their work. Employees who feel valued - have more inspiration for work.
Health, Security and Well-being	Provide your team with a comfortable workspace, even if they are working from home. Take care about sanitary and office cleaning. It will always increase the mood of your team if you organize some "Fruit Day", free massage or any other activity aimed to care about your team's wellbeing and health. Health insurance is a must have nowadays. You can also provide special deals for the families of your employees. It will be a great way to increase the security level and concentrate people on work.
Growth Ability	Emphasize your company goals and perspectives. Encourage personal and professional growth. One simple way is to organize "Knowledge sharing" events, where each team member can present on some specific topic. Encourage your team to increase their level of experience, organize training, courses, workshops, and knowledge assessments. The feeling of the future test and pay raise will be the best trigger to learn. Give them the ability to gain other skills and change their knowledge area within the company.
Trust in Management	Show your team they can rely on you, share your vision. Stay open about the project issues, difficulties, so that the team can trust you and your decisions. Help them to deal with difficult tasks, give your own recommendations.

Source: built by authors

Suggested by authors solutions (Table 1, Table 2) will help to improve work efficiency of creative teams and provide the work conditions that will make their work more productive and resultative in such a difficult time. In future it is important to take into account the external environment changes and managers should be ready to adapt to the challenges in creative industries and respond to team needs.

Conclusions. We can come to the conclusion that leadership style should always be adaptive to the team, project and environment. We should also accept change in the middle of the project if the chosen style effectiveness doesn't meet our requirements. While working with creative teams it is necessary to understand that "Collective mind" is more important than individual knowledge. The main task of a leader - is to be able to make one team of creative, often contradictory geniuses. In order to work effectively creative teams need: absolute freedom of process with absolute control of the results. to be heard and seen in order to stay motivated, to know exactly their area of responsibility, to see the big picture of the process first, and then dive into details. External factors have significant influence on project environment and team productivity. So, it is always critical to take these factors into account. In present pandemic realities it is even harder to keep the team stress level low, and productivity high. We believe that security, trust in management, ability to grow, meaningful work and a positive work environment can help to avoid burnouts and work stress.

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