

TELEWORKERS AND THEIR IDENTIFICATION WITH THE COMPANY

Małgorzata SCHULZ

College of Economic and Social Sciences, Warsaw University of Technology;
malgorzata.schulz@pw.edu.pl, ORCID: 0000-0003-3005-5769

Purpose: This article is devoted to the identification of teleworkers with the company.

Design/methodology/approach: The theoretical part of the article is mainly devoted to the essence of identification and the factors shaping it. The second issue addressed in the theoretical part is teleworking. Within this part, the definitions of this concept, its essence and an attempt to show it from the perspective of the employee and the employer were cited. The practical part, on the other hand, includes a description of the research carried out for this article. The subject of the research was teleworkers employed in the organisation "Orange Polska INC.", for whom their homes and flats are the office.

Findings: As a result of the research, the degree of identification was diagnosed and the most important factors that influence the perceived identification with the company were identified, while proving that they are the same as in the case of stationary employees.

Originality/value: The results of the consideration are useful for small and large companies. They might help them with the issue of strategic planning and increasing of motivation among employees.

Keywords: employee identification with the organisation, company identification, telework, teleworker, job satisfaction.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

The traditional employment model is based on an open-ended contract, but the development of the economy and competitiveness are forcing a search for factors that improve the profitability of companies. One of them is the cost of labour and, inter alia, this is why there has been a strong tendency to use atypical, more flexible and cheaper solutions on the labour market and to move away from the previous regulations based on the stability and security of employment. One atypical form of employment is teleworking. But the most important factor improving the profitability of companies is the people employed in it. Job satisfaction,

employees' sense of unity with the organisation, recommending it to others as a good place to work, promoting the company through the use of gadgets with its logo, participation in team-building events also allow the company to gain a competitive advantage and function better in its environment. Do teleworkers employed by 'Orange Polska INC.' feel identified with the company? and what factors influence this in the practice of the company surveyed.

2. Teleworking as one form of work provision

Teleworking is one of the newest forms of work provision, which owes its development to society's increasing access to modern ICT. It is a solution that is attractive to both employees and employers seeking flexibility in the labour market.

From the numerous definitions of teleworking that appear in the literature, one can quote, among others, the definition proposed by S. Ciupa (2007), 'teleworking is a new form of organising and performing work, in which the nature, place and time of work, the manner and conditions of its performance, order and organisation may be shaped through the use of advanced information and communication technologies.

Also at European Union level, a definition of teleworking has been developed and proposed by the European Commission. It reads as follows: "teleworking is a method of organising and performing work in which an employee works away from the employer's place of work for a significant part of his or her working time, delivering the results (output) of the work to the employer using information and data communication technologies, in particular the Internet" (Central Institute for Labour Protection).

It is clear from the above definitions of work that, thanks to the possibility of carrying out remote work, the place and time of work no longer plays an important role in many industries. Teleworking makes it possible for employees to carry out much of their work anywhere, at any time, and to send the results of their work very quickly via the network to any location.

Despite the fact that on the labour market one can currently find a large number of advertisements offering this form of employment, teleworking is still not a popular form of employment in Poland. According to Eurostat data, in 2019, only 4.6% of people aged 15-64 worked via telework. Such a low percentage of people employed in this form may be due, among other reasons, to the fact that employers are accustomed to the traditional way of managing a company, where an employee performs professional duties at the company's premises.

How does Poland compare to other countries in this respect? The percentage of employed people aged 15-64 in the European Union who usually work from home was in 2019. 5.4%. This figure was highest in the Netherlands and Finland (14.1%), followed by Luxembourg (11.6%), and lowest in Romania (0.8%) and Bulgaria (0.5%) (Ciupa, 2007).

A job free from the constraints of time and place is also a huge opportunity for women wishing to combine childcare with a professional life. It seems particularly attractive for young mothers, who are often faced with the choice of either raising a child or having a career.

Another occupational group that can effectively use modern ICT in their work and provide work in this way is people with disabilities. Thus, it is not only IT professionals who are considering teleworking as a profession. More and more industries are choosing to provide all or only part of their services via the Internet or multimedia devices, for example. Accounting, tax or legal advice, insurance or architectural services. These are just a few examples of professions where teleworking is possible.

Taking into account the results of the research so far, it can be concluded that teleworking as a form of employment generates some benefits for both the employee and the employer, but it is also not without some disadvantages. Below is a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking:

Advantages of teleworking for the employer:

- attracting highly qualified specialists in a particular field who are lacking in the local labour market, without them having to move to the locality where the company is based,
- the possibility of hiring workers from regions where labour costs are lower,
- avoiding expansion, reorganisation of the company in the event of an increase in employment,
- reduced expenditure on preparation and maintenance of the workplace,
- reduction in sick leave, as the employee often works from home,
- reducing staff costs by not paying overtime,
- reduction of running costs (heat and electricity consumption of employees due to off-site work),
- remuneration for the result of the work delivered and not for the time spent at work.

Advantages of teleworking for the employee:

- the possibility of reconciling domestic and professional responsibilities,
- the possibility of working for several employers at the same time,
- saving time and money by not having to commute,
- reduced stress, as the work is often carried out at home, which promotes a sense of security and a good working atmosphere,
- the absence of conflicts that arise in large groups working in the same place,
- people with disabilities do not have to overcome architectural barriers (Ježek, 2017).

Disadvantages of teleworking:

- a sense of isolation - teleworkers often feel that they are left to their own devices and that they lack support in situations that require consultation with their supervisor,
- weaker identification with the company - less sense of belonging to the company because the work is done off-site,

- management difficulties - the employer has limited ability to monitor the progress of employees, no direct face-to-face contact,
- a longer working day - teleworking can lead to a longer working day without remuneration, as the teleworker is often responsible for organising his or her own working time (Szluz, 2013),
- limited trust - employers may be reluctant to extend teleworking because they do not trust employees to perform tasks to their satisfaction and use their working time effectively (Information and Career Planning Centre in Warsaw, 2022).

Although at first the offer of teleworking is very advantageous and can be a good solution, like any other form of work it also has its drawbacks.

The biggest one - especially for the employer - may be the limited contact with the employee. Contact by text message, phone call or instant messaging cannot replace a so-called 'face-to-face' conversation. This problem also applies to the employee. Miscommunication or misunderstanding with the employer can result in mistakes in the work performed (Council of the European Union, 2014).

The teleworking form also has identical characteristics to the traditional employment relationship. These include: remuneration, personal performance, subordination (Nilles, 2003).

Teleworking can only be carried out with the employee's consent. Lack of consent cannot amount to termination, so the employer may propose but not impose such a form. Therefore, it is important to remember that teleworking is not a new type of employment, but just a form of work performance.

Although there is a widespread perception that teleworking is 'less valuable', the employee has the same privileges and responsibilities as one doing his or her job 'on-site' at the workplace.

3. Identification with the company and its role in management

In general, identification (Latin *idem* - same) means in the social sciences the identification of one person with another person or a group of persons; the term is also used to describe the process of an individual's identification with a function or social role (Radziewicz-Winnicki, 1977). In other words, it is the adoption of the values, beliefs of another person or group of people and accepting them as one's own. The concept of identification in contemporary social sciences is not always used in the same sense. Thus, it is not a clear concept; nevertheless, the usefulness of this term in making diagnoses and social analyses seems unquestionable (Reading, 1977).

The basis for identification is the strong emotional ties that bind the person identifying with someone else, while in the case of identification with a group, the important factor for fusion (consolidation) is the community of goals and principles of action.

One of the first sociologists to use the term identification was Ch.H. Cooley. He stated that there is a phenomenon that can be described as identification with a group, expressed by the use of the pronoun "we" or "us". Identification is greatly strengthened by the cooperation of the members within the group and the sense of separateness from the external world surrounding the group. Thus, the sociological approach pays particular attention to the fact that a member of a given group may, to one degree or another, identify with other members of the group and, in a certain way, also with the group as a whole (Cooley, 2012).

According to P. Sztompka (2007), the category of "we" is determined by three moral duties. "We" - are those whom we trust, towards whom we act loyally, whose affairs we care about in solidarity.

In sociological terms, identification is always seen in the member-group relationship.

The essence of identification as a psychological category is that, under certain circumstances, the characteristics of other people are assimilated and become elements of the character structure of the developing person.

The psychological approach to the problem of identification also deals with the identification of the individual with the group, which is conceptually closely related to the sociological approach. However, this approach talks about the individual's personal perception of the group. Emotions, individual feelings, personal relations with the member group are involved here. These issues are within the field of interest of social psychology.

An individual can relate to a group in both positive and negative ways. A positive relationship of the individual with the group is most often due to the fact that the individual has joined the group of his or her own free will. The group has proved attractive for a variety of reasons: e.g. instrumental - because it helps him/her to achieve his/her own goals; autotelic - because it satisfies the need for affiliation; axiological - because it confirms, strengthens him/her in the values he/she professes through contact with people professing similar values.

With attractive groups the individual identifies, solidifies, bestows trust and loyalty on them. A good indicator of such an attitude is the willingness to think and speak of the group as 'we' (Sztompka, 2007).

The term 'identification' is also used in management science and has two meanings: identification of the company and identification of the employees with the company. In the first sense, corporate identification is the set of all symbols, signs by which a company is recognised externally, which distinguish it from other companies on the market and which always evoke certain associations with it, which can be both positive and negative. Positive associations mean that when a company enjoys recognition and respect from society, it has a so-called "good brand", employees readily identify with it and the use of gadgets, corporate clothing bearing the company's logo does not bring them into disrepute.

In the second sense, the term 'identification' in management science is understood as a state in which the employee fully accepts the organisational culture, the climate and policies of the company, its strategy and goals, the procedures used in the company, as well as the purpose of his or her own job and its place and importance in the structure of the organisation. Identification makes the employee feel a part of the company in which he or she works, and is therefore dedicated and loyal to it (Alexander, 2008).

In the social sciences, attention is drawn to the fact that man is guided in his behaviour by a desire to satisfy his own needs. The more effective his actions are in this respect, the more willing he will be to return to them in the future (Jacewicz, Małkowska, 2020)

Each employee also has expectations regarding working conditions. These may include: working with professionals, a well-equipped workplace, job security, job satisfaction, tasks that arouse employee's commitment, professional training, working for a company with a good reputation, etc. If a company meets the expectations placed on it, "its subjective value increases in the eyes of employees, who respect it and see no reason to look around for another employer" (Alexander, 2008). The extent to which a company meets the expectations of its employees, the extent to which it allows them to develop themselves and achieve their own goals through the company's objectives, significantly influences employees' identification with the company. A transparent organisational culture, i.e. the company's unique values, rituals and cultural artefacts according to the theory of D. Ravasi and M. Schulz (2006), also contributes to an increase in employees' identification with the organisation.

An employee who identifies with a company is an employee for whom working for that particular company is a source of satisfaction and contentment. He or she is an employee who willingly comes to work, willingly commits his or her own time - not only during working hours, but also "after hours" or during days off. This is an employee who treats work as a natural part of life, is characterised by responsibility, self-control, a high level of professional ambition and, most importantly, a willingness to work of his or her own free will and not out of compulsion. The sense of personal satisfaction, closely linked to belonging to a company and functioning within its system, is a source of many positive effects for both parties (Nilles, 2003).

4. Identification with the company of teleworkers employed at "Orange Polska INC." Own research

The survey was conducted in the month of April 2022 on one of the largest mobile networks in Poland - "Orange Polska INC."

"Orange Polska S.A." is the leader on the Polish market of fixed telephony, Internet and data transmission. It is the largest provider of telecommunications services operating in all market segments. It currently has around 500 outlets and employs 10,452 people.

The aim of the research is to determine what degree of identification with the company - high, moderate or low - is presented by respondents employed in the form of teleworking. It is generally believed that teleworkers, due to limited direct contact with colleagues and superiors and the predominance of indirect communication, identify less with the company.

The research verified this thesis. How this situation presents itself in practice is shown by the results of the research carried out.

Main question: What is the degree of identification of teleworking employees with the company?

Hypothesis

It is assumed that the degree of identification of teleworkers with the company is low due to fewer opportunities to build social ties with co-workers.

Description of the research sample

The survey was conducted using a questionnaire constructed using the 'Google Forms' programme. It contained 17 closed-ended single-choice questions, 2 multiple-choice questions and a metric

Five questions were selected from the survey questions (which were treated as a reflection of the variable that was intended to be studied). These included the questions:

1. Question. Do you feel connected to your workplace and can refer to it as 'my business'?
2. Question. On how many percentages (on a scale of 1-100%) would you rate your attachment to the company?
 - high (100-81%),
 - medium (80-41%),
 - low (40% and less).
3. Question. Do you intend to change your workplace in the next six months?
4. Question. Do you recommend your company to family or friends as a good place of employment?
5. Question. Do you use the items offered by the company, gadgets containing its logo?
6. Question. Do you participate in integration events organised by the company?

The study¹ involved 117 employees of the company from different branches in Poland: 67 women and 50 men. They mostly had a university degree (44%) and secondary education (31%). They were aged:

¹ The survey was conducted by Aneta Józefowicz.

Table 1.*Age*

Age	Number of people	%
18-26	47	40,2
27-40	43	36,8
41-55	21	17,9
56-70	6	5,1
Total	117	100,0

Source: own elaboration.

The respondents are most often young people in the age group 18-26 (over 40%) and 27-40 (almost 37%). Employees aged 41-55 took part in the survey twice as seldom (around 18%) and those aged 56-70 the least often (only 5.1%).

In terms of place of residence, more than half of them (52.1%) live in medium-sized cities, followed by 34.2% in large cities. Respondents living in rural areas accounted for 13.7% of the total.

More than half of the respondents were employed as clerks (54.7%). The second largest group were specialists (40.2%). Those in a managerial position were the least numerous (5.1%).

In order to be able to determine on the basis of which work experience respondents were completing this survey, they were asked to indicate the length of time they had been in their current workplace as a teleworker.

Table 2.*Telework placement in current workplace*

Teleworking internship	Number of people	%
up to six months	23	19,7
over 6 months - 1 year	31	26,5
over 1 year - 2 years	26	22,2
over 2-3 years	26	22,2
over 3 years	11	9,4
Total	117	100,0

Source: own elaboration.

The largest group was made up of people with short work experience of up to one year (46.2%). One in five people have been working for 1 year -2 years, one in five people have also been working for more than 2-3 years. The group with the longest seniority (more than 3 years) in this company accounted for less than 10%. These results probably illustrate the current situation in the labour market, where the majority of employees are employed on short-term contracts.

For the vast majority of respondents (84.6%), the current company is the only place of work. The remainder also work for other employers (15.4%).

The information collected will be presented in the order in which the questions are posed in the survey.

What is the degree of identification of teleworkers?

Before determining the degree of identification of the employee with the company, information was collected on what respondents understood by the term.

Q. What, for you, best defines the term 'identification with the company'? (you had to choose up to 3 answers):

- for nearly 40 per cent of respondents, identification with the company means 'enjoying the work',
- for one in five respondents, 'loyalty to their employer' and 'pride in their work and their company',
- identification with the company for around 16% of employees means "tying their professional future to the company".

Do respondents feel connected to the company?

The question 'Do you feel connected to your workplace?'

- Yes, I can say that, that it is "my company" - 69 people - 59.0%.
- Difficult to say - 44 persons - 37.6%
- No - 4 persons - 3.4%².

The majority of employees surveyed (59%) feel connected to their workplace and can say "my company" about it. But a large percentage of people (40%) choose the option "difficult to say", probably related to their short seniority in this form of work and the difficulty of forming a clear opinion. Of the respondents, only 3% declare no ties to the company.

*How strong is the attachment of teleworkers to the organisation?***Table 3.**

Attachment of teleworkers to the organisation

Question 9: On a scale of 1-100%, how many percent would you rate your attachment to the organisation?	
Over 90%	High level of identification 82 persons - 70%
90-81%	
80-61%	Moderate degree of identification 27 persons - 23%
60-41%	
40-21%	Low level of identification 8 persons - 7%
Less than 20%	

Source: own elaboration.

Teleworkers declare a high attachment to the company. "High" is rated by 70% of respondents as being attached to the company. As "medium" about 30% of respondents. Low attachment to the organisation is declared by only 7% of employees.

² 117 people - 100%.

Is there a correlation between attachment to the organisation and length of tenure as a teleworker?

Table 4.

Employee attachment to the organisation by seniority

How long have you been teleworking?	How many percent would you rate your attachment to the organisation?				
	HIGH 81% and above	%	MODERATE 80-41%	LOW 40-0%	Total (100%)
Less than 1 month to six months	14	60,8%	6	3	23 (100%)
Over 6 months to one year	20	64,5%	8	3	31(100%)
Over one to two years	17	65,3%	7	2	26 (100%)
Over two years to three years	21	80,7%	5		26(100%)
Over three years	10	99,9%	1		11(100%)
Total	82 (70%)		27 (23%)	8 (7%)	117 (100%)

Source: own elaboration.

Such a relationship exists. As seniority increases, the percentage of people who declare a high attachment to the organisation increases. 61% of employees with up to six months' seniority describe their attachment to the company as high. On the other hand, as many as 99.9% of those with the longest seniority (over three years) do so.

It is therefore necessary to reject the thesis that **"The degree of identification is low in teleworkers"** because as many as three-quarters of respondents declare a high attachment to the company.

Do teleworkers want to stabilise in their current company?

Question. Do you intend to change your workplace in the next six months?

- yes, I will definitely look for another job - 33 people - 28.2%,
- I don't know, it depends on whether the company will change its attitude towards employees to a more positive - 23 people - 19.7%,
- no, I think this company is the right place for me - 61 people - 52.1%³.

In the short term (six months), more than half of the respondents do not intend to change their workplace. Approximately one third of the respondents have such an intention, and almost 20% make their decision contingent on their superiors changing their attitude towards employees to a more positive one.

Question. What do you think most influences your sense of 'belonging to the company'?

- length of seniority 48 people - 41.0%,
- good cooperation with supervisor 16 people - 13.7%,
- amount of salary 15 people - 12.8%,

³ 117 people - 100%.

- possibility of professional development 6 people - 5.1%,
- good cooperation with co-workers 11 people - 9.4%,
- possibility of stationary work 11 people - 9.4%,
- satisfaction with work 10 people - 8.5%.

For more than 40% of the respondents, the feeling of belonging to the company is most influenced by the length of seniority, for about 14% by good cooperation with the supervisor. Slightly less influential is the amount of salary (12.8%). As well as the possibility of stationary work (9.4%) job satisfaction (8.5%), good cooperation with colleagues and supervisor (9.4%). In contrast, only about 5% believe that the opportunity for professional development has the greatest impact on their sense of belonging to a company.

Question. Do respondents recommend their company as a good place to work to family/friends?

- Yes 50 persons - 42.7%.
- Difficult to say 53 persons - 45.3%.
- No 14 persons - 12.0%⁴.

The predominant answer is "hard to say". This is given by almost half of the respondents (45.3%) - mostly those working for a short time (up to 1 year). Just over 40% of respondents recommend their company to their family/friends as a good place of employment. 12% of respondents do not recommend their company to their relatives.

Do those declaring a high attachment to the organisation promote their company as a 'good place of employment' to their loved ones?

Table 5.

Attachment to the company versus promoting it as a good place to work

Would you recommend your company to family or friends as a good place to work?	How many percent would you rate your attachment to the organisation?				
	HIGH 81% and above	%	MODERATE 80-41%	LOW 40-0%	Total (100%)
Not	1	7,1%	6	7	14 (100%)
Difficult to say	32	60,4%	20	1	53 (100%)
Yes	49	98%	1		50 (100%)
Total	82	100%	27	8	117

Source: own elaboration.

Here, a close relationship is observed between attachment to the company and its promotion as a good place to work. The higher the degree of identification with the organisation, the more often it is recommended to those closest to them as a good place to work. Of the 50 people recommending their company to others - 49 people declare their high attachment to the organisation.

⁴ 117 persons - 100%.

Does the job give respondents satisfaction?

Question 11: Do you find your job satisfactory?

- Yes 48 people - 41.0%.
- Rather yes 49 people - 41.9%.
- Difficult to say 9 people - 7.7%.
- Rather no 10 people - 8.5%.
- No 1 person - 0.9%.

For 83% of respondents, the job is satisfying (for 41% "fully"; for 41.9% "rather satisfying"). Those whose work is rather unsatisfying are 8.5%. The remainder chose the answer "difficult to say".

Table 6.

Do respondents feel they are appreciated for a job well done?

Q Do you feel that you are appreciated for a job well done?	Number of persons	%
such	45	38,5
rather yes	48	41,0
hard to say	15	12,8
rather not	8	6,8
no	1	0,9
Total	117	100%

Source: own elaboration.

The vast majority of employees (79.5%) feel appreciated for a job well done. "Not appreciated" or "rather unappreciated" - is a group of people accounting for 7.7%. The answer "difficult to say" is given by 12.8% of respondents.

Table 7.

Employees' appreciation of their supervisor versus willingness to change employment

Do you feel that you are appreciated for a job well done?	Do you intend to change your workplace over the next six months?			Grand total
	I don't know, it depends on whether the company will positively change its attitude towards employees	No, I think this company is the right place for me	Yes, I will certainly be looking for another job	
Not			1	1
Rather not	2		6	8
Rather yes	13	27	8	48
Yes	4	31	10	45
Difficult to say	4	3	8	15
Grand total	23	61	33	117

Source: own elaboration.

People who feel valued for a job well done are more likely to link their professional future with their current company. 95% of people who feel valued for a job well done consider the company to be a suitable workplace for them.

Do teleworkers use the gadgets offered by the company that contain the organisation's logo?

Question 17. Do you use the gadgets offered by the company containing its logo?



Figure 1. Do you use the gadgets offered by the company containing its logo?

Source: own elaboration.

Gadgets with the company logo are willingly used by 44.4% of employees, while they are only sometimes used by 40.2% of respondents, 15.4% see no need for them.

A sign of identification with the company is also the participation of employees in team-building events organised by the company.

"Orange Polska INC" is taking the following measures in this regard:

- integration meetings, e.g. going out to the cinema, restaurant, theatre... - 50 people - 42.7%,
- integration trips, e.g. sports and recreational activities - 33 people - 28.2%,
- joint cyclical meetings - 21 persons - 17.9%,
- workshops - thematic activities - arts, cooking... - 5 people - 4.3%,
- special events (Christmas Eve, Easter) - 3 persons - 2.6%,
- the company is not in the habit of organising time together - 5 people - 4.3%⁵.

The above-mentioned forms of integration meetings are used by 83.9% of respondents ("regularly" by 51% and more than 1/3 - sometimes "if I have the possibility"). One in five respondents does not participate in them.

⁵ 117 persons - 100%.

5. Completion

The surveys made it possible to assess the employees' level of identification (from five areas of work: sense of attachment to their place of work/'my company', degree of attachment to the company, desire to stabilise in the company, recommend the company to friends, use items containing the company logo, job satisfaction, sense of appreciation for work).

It was hypothesised that employees working in the form of teleworking, due to its specific nature, working outside the company, identify poorly with the company. The research rejected this hypothesis and proved that 60-70% of employees rated their level of identification with the company as high. The factors that influence their perceived identification are the same as for stationary employees.

Managing people professionally, taking steps to increase organisational integration - all of these factors that increase the degree of identification fall within the bounds of well-understood internal marketing and, more specifically, HR marketing.

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