



## Digital Instruments and Country Linguacultural Definitions of Mass Recruitment for Large Retailers

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### ABSTRACT

We picked recruitment services at large Russian retailers as an object of our research. Not only fast economic and retail development depend on **retailers' effectiveness, but also success in solving some important social tasks** at the state level. Our research assesses the trends of the Russian alcohol chain retail and outlines the main features of the top 5 large spirits sellers. We single out special features, demonstrate special features of the **companies' activities, their staff policies and mass recruitment instruments**. We formulated problems of staff recruiting for line positions, which hinder stability and efficiency of the organization and its innovative development basing on the analysis of human resources availability, compliance of personnel selection with the rules and closure of vacancies in a regional office of a large retailer. We assessed results of work and monetary **incentives for recruitment managers, specialists' functions and recruitment stages**, we revealed their positive and negative features. We proved the need of application of digital instruments during mass recruitment, developed recommendations on introduction of innovative automation solutions in creation of a unified base of applicants with the help of the Recruiter module -- especially important during the pandemic -- whose introduction will help reduce labour input, decrease possible errors, improve the quality and speed of recruitment.

**Keywords:** recruitment, cultural approach, linguistics, recruitment personnel motivation, digital tools, mass recruitment methods, line personnel.

### Introduction

Large retail chains do use recruitment instruments, however, there is no single correct or ideal innovative technology for performing this type of managerial activity. Its choice is largely conditioned by the area of activities, the special features of a company, its personnel policy, the quantity and quality of its employees and other factors. Large Russian retailers traditionally lack personnel in the low season because of lower supply on the line personnel market, which harms the recruitment funnel for line positions. This conditions the need to improve the recruitment procedures as the companies develop. Labour mobility reduces the time for line position closures (Barrett, 2015). However, the epidemiological conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic triggered significant deficit of line **employees on the markets of the country's largest metropolises** (Buheji, 2020; Petrova et al., 2020; Johnson, 2020; Szydowski 2019; Yemelyanov et al., 2018).

This is why efficient recruitment is required, or recruitment costs may overshoot revenue from labour **productivity growth of retail chains' employees. It means that the subject of our research is promising** and pressing (Arif, 2012). The goal of our paper is to research tendencies of mass recruitment for line positions of a large Russian alcohol retailer in the context of digitalization of mass recruitment and offer solutions to boost its efficiency.

The goals: to assess the current recruitment system of a large Russian alcohol retailer; outline the problems **preventing higher effectiveness of recruitment; single out special features and trends of digital instrument's use** during mass recruitment; issue **recommendations to boost recruiters' motivation. We used the following scientific** methods in our work: description, comparison, expert evaluation, idealization, analysis, analogy, synthesis, formalization, induction, deduction, generalization, concretization, abstraction. Our scientific approaches include the systemic, logic, dialectic and process approaches.

#### Literature Review

Modern scientific literature offers recruitment definitions galore. Rombach (2015) and Balakrishnan (2021) understand recruitment only as a process of studying applications. Zveial, (2019) and Alqahtani, (2020) sees recruitment as selection of candidates from the labour market and in the organization. Kibanov (2018) disagrees with the approach saying that identifying the concepts of picking and recruitment of personnel is incorrect and defining the latter as comparison of business and other qualities of an employee with the requirements of the workplace.

The key in interpretation of the concept of "personnel selection" is its definition as a multi-stage process, which determines the need for personnel, and requirements (experience, competencies, skills). At that, candidates are picked from the resumes on the labour market at a certain moment.

We should note that the modern scientific literature has no generally accepted definition of mass recruitment because mass recruiting is a relatively new technology, local demand for which has been growing since 2001 (Aguilera, 2007). We can produce the following definition after studying and generalizing the experience of recruiting **and technologies of mass recruitment (Tvaronavičienė et al., 2020; Klochko, 2020; Khoruzhy et al., 2020; Glotko et al., 2020).**

Mass recruitment is recruitment from a large number of applicants to close the necessary line vacancies in the shortest possible time (Kalacn, 2007). Mass recruitment means the fastest search for the necessary number of employees ready to master the necessary and additional skills and start working quickly. Mass recruitment is of a purposeful, organized, continuous and systematic nature necessary to achieve the company's goals, profitability of its activities and, ultimately, life success of the company's personnel in modern conditions (Hansson, 2015). We should note that mass recruitment is part of company management. We shall consider its special features using the example of a large Russian alcohol retailer.

#### Research Question

The Russian alcohol chain retail is a fairly closed information community. It lacks public companies and its development plans are not usually made public. Below are the **top-5 large alcoholic retailers** as of July 2019 (table 1).

**Table 1. Top-5 Russian chain alcohol retailers**

Name	Annual revenue, bln rbl.	Number of outlets	Revenue per outlet, mln rbl.	Rating
Krasnoye&Beloye	300	7,347	40.8	1
Bristol	81.6	3,300	24.7	2
AryshMae	15	1,500	10.0	3
Aromatny Mir	11.5	451	25.5	4
Market TD Extrasib	11.5	698	16.5	5
WinLab	11.5	500	23.0	5

The Krasnoye&Beloye chain leads the Russian alcohol retail market by the number of outlets. The Bristol chain, part of the Mercurry Group of companies, was rated second. AryshMae (3d rating) is a Tatar chain, part of JSC **Tatspirtprom, so far only develops on the territory of the Tatar republic. The next Russia's retail alcohol market leader** is Aromatny Mir. The chain belongs to one of the largest alcohol importers and producers, Aroma. The fifth place in the rating is shared by the Novosibirsk alcohol market chain Market belonging to local company Extrasib, and fast developing firm WinLab belonging to BelugaGroup.

The object of our research is a regional branch of one of the largest Russian alcohol market retailers. Since the core activity of our research object is alcohol sales, all company employees are 18 or more years of age. Staff turnover in the regional branch under analysis decreased in 2019 compared with 2017, which is good. This is a result of many factors, because as the company expands the importance of its Human Resources department grows, marketing and

advertising departments work more effectively, while working conditions – good wages, official employment, employment near home, training and self-management, career prospects -- also contribute. Recruitment has transformed seriously in the last 2 years on the back of changing company goals and fast development of the retail chain. The current stage of company development calls for a wider and more structured functions of an HR-specialist to increase the speed of recruitment. The functions of a recruitment specialist in the retailer under analysis include:

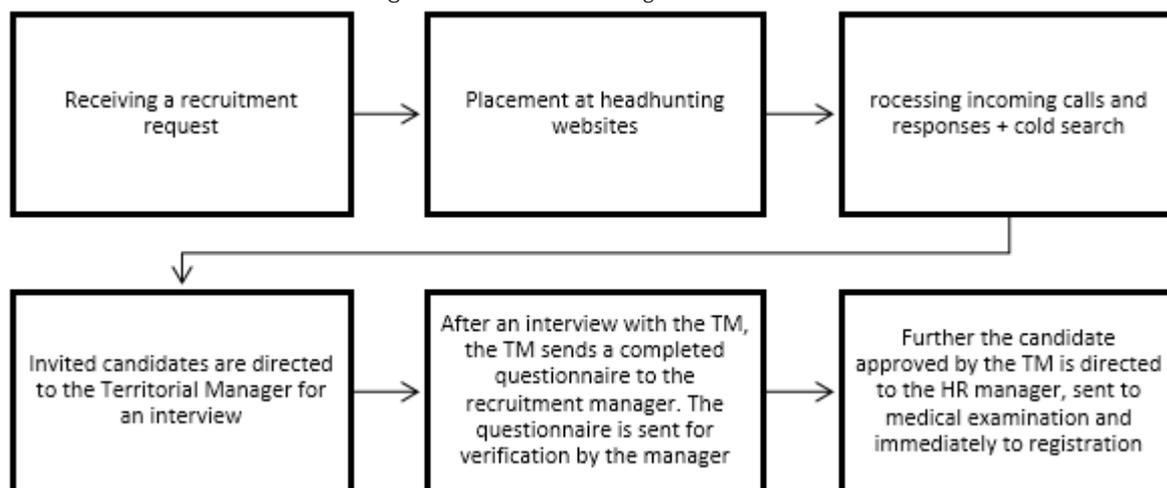
- a) recruitment for vacant line staff positions;
- b) preparation and placement of vacancies on specialized websites;
- c) processing of incoming responses and cold calls;
- d) preparation of reports on the work done;
- e) successful positions closure in their region.

At the moment the company under research is doing mass recruiting meaning the type of recruiting applied when there is a large number (100 and more) of open standard linear positions. Cold calls made by a recruitment specialist is a special feature of the task. Recruitment managers of the company under research are to make a certain number of calls a day. This depends on many factors, including:

- a) the number of open positions;
- b) the number of recruiters in the team;
- c) the funnel of position closing.

The recruitment plan depends on the number of open vacancies adjusted to the personnel turnover. The recruitment plan defines the number of calls made by recruiting managers depending on the funnel of position closing. The obligatory recruitment stages are presented in fig 1.

Figure 1. *Recruitment stages of the retailer*



Each vacancy should be worked out and the number of candidates invited by a recruitment manager should be no less than 2-3 people per vacancy. Those who were directed to an interview with the head are considered approved by the HR department. Further they are directed to the head of a cluster of shops. After an interview and a four-hour traineeship, the head sends data of successful applicants to the manager, and they are directed to medical examination and registration. The downside of the business process is that the interviews take place in a retail outlet as a rule. Personnel managers believe that this is less effective than having the first interview with an HR manager.

Since HR specialists have relevant experience and education, they know how to sell a vacancy unlike some shop managers. Many applicants believe that they have to undergo a stress interview. But such interviews should only be held by an experienced specialist to relieve an applicant of stress and not to leave a negative impression of the company.

Of course, it is good that a recruitment manager is responsible for a specific region and maintains its staffing level. An HR specialist studies his region well while working, he knows each railway station (sometimes street) and how and which transport to use to get to the shop. This factor also simplifies employee rotation.

A distinctive feature of mass recruitment in the company under consideration is active search. If managers wait for calls passively, the company may be severely short of specialists in the low season (in the summer), which means **lower profits, because core profits depend on good work of shops' employees in retail. It is them who sell actively and make profit.** Higher staffing increases efficiency of the retail trade and the likelihood of a shop making a good profit by meeting or exceeding the sales plan. This means that if a recruitment specialist does not control the recruitment process, waits for applications or calls, production levels and, as a consequence, the company profit will fall.

**Recruitment managers in the company under consideration believe that there can't be mass recruitment** without outgoing calls. You cannot do without cold search. Mass recruitment (line personnel -- administrators, salespeople, loaders) prevails in the company, but there is also individual recruitment (administrative personnel -- accountants, category management, coordinators, etc.). Talking about individual recruitment, the research object is office positions. Individual recruitment is carried out by an individual specialist, a senior HR manager, who is a functional head of the mass recruitment group. The second block of functional responsibilities of the group includes recruitment of office employees for the head and regional offices. The differences and special features of each recruitment approach in the company are presented in table 2.

**Table 2.** *The difference between the systems of individual and mass recruitment in a large alcohol retailer*

Mass recruitment	Individual recruitment
A manager invites people who are looking for a job. If the company needs an experienced employee, they only look for this criteria in a resume	<b>Selecting successful applicants' resumes by professional</b> experience, expected wage, by the territory of residence and many other criteria in accordance with the application for selection
Sending a stream of candidates for an interview conducted by a direct supervisor	Sending resumes to the heads of departments seeking specialists for the first stage of recruitment
This type of recruitment usually requires no testing	Approved candidates are invited for the first stage of an interview. Prior to that there is a little test for required qualities and the degree of their development in a person

HR specialists of the company under consideration use the BIST test (Brief Indicative Selection Test, proprietary methodology of V.N. Busin, E. F. Wonderlic) meant to capture general intellectual abilities. The BIST is adaptation of the Wonderlic test. But a recruitment HR manager involved in individual recruitment should understand that the test does not suit all vacancies. It may not suit, for example, such positions as a designer or a marketing specialist.

**A manager involved in recruitment of office positions has a tool aimed at revealing applicant's competences.** As a rule, testing is not the key selection instrument. A complete set of **HR manager's tools varies depending on** vacancy. For lawyers, for instance, a text comprehension test is used, corporate office management specialists (COM) are tested for knowledge of the Russian Federation Labour Code and different COM blocks. The instruments used for recruitment of office specialists are aimed at individual recruitment in accordance with the requirements of each department head.

HR recruitment managers have their own uniform rules, which allow them to use individual, reasonable and appropriate recruitment methods, which makes assessing effectiveness of the recruitment system of the object of our research possible. The company under research carries out target-based strategic planning, under which the recruitment service compiles recruitment plans periodically. The company also has profiles for mass recruitment and deadlines for their closure.

The number of closed vacancies is one of the key indicators of labour efficiency of a recruitment manager. Labor efficiency of a recruitment manager of the retailer under research is assessed with the help of KPI (Key Performance Indicators) (table 3).

**Table 3.** *KPI system indicators for a recruitment manager in a large alcohol retailer*

KPI indicators	Target indicators	Bonus paid on attainment of a target indicator, %	Underperformance	Bonus paid for underperformance, %	Specific weight of the indicator in the structure of bonuses, %
Number of registered people.	38-40	100	4-1	90	30
			5-7	80	
Total staffing at existing retail outlets, %	98	100	0.5%	75	30
			1%	50	
			1.5%	25	
			over 1.6%	0	
Vacancy closure, days	14	100	over 14	0	20
	0-20%	100	25%	80	10

Dismissal of accepted retail employees for the previous month, %			over 25%	0	
Compilation days and quality of reports, days	Within a day	100	More than one day	0	10
Total					100

The two key indicators have the largest share in the structure of material incentives of recruitment managers in the company under consideration -- the number of registered people and total staffing of operating retail outlets -- 30% each. The most important KPI indicator for a recruitment manager is closure of 38-40 vacancies. However, in reality the company faces the problem of a specialist recruiting 28-30 people, underperforming the plan. In this case, he is demotivated by not receiving a bonus for the indicator.

**This, in its turn, does not only translate into lower results of specialists' work, but also increases recruitment costs** – the longer the manager closes a vacancy, the more costs the placement involves, the more the company pays for outsourcing to replace the existing shop employees in a timely manner. The more expensive are the applicants coming from the recruitment department, the less it is efficient. This is why the heads of the HR services aim at reducing the cost of an applicant and a more flexible KPI system for recruitment managers.

To achieve this, the head of the recruitment division in the company is to do the following -- to carry out a **reality check of a recruiter's targets; to establish compliance with the deadlines of vacancy closure** with the average for the industry; to evaluate recruiter's understanding of the requirements for an applicant, and analyze whether they **are realistic; reveal the key stages, where the applicants' flow is lost.**

Recruitment efficiency is usually done by **calculating manpower turnover coefficients. Let's assess efficiency of the recruitment system in the company with the use of the turnover coefficient**, which will reflect only the dismissals which could have been avoided (table 4). The turnover coefficient helps us forecast planned staff turnover, which the company can take as a norm.

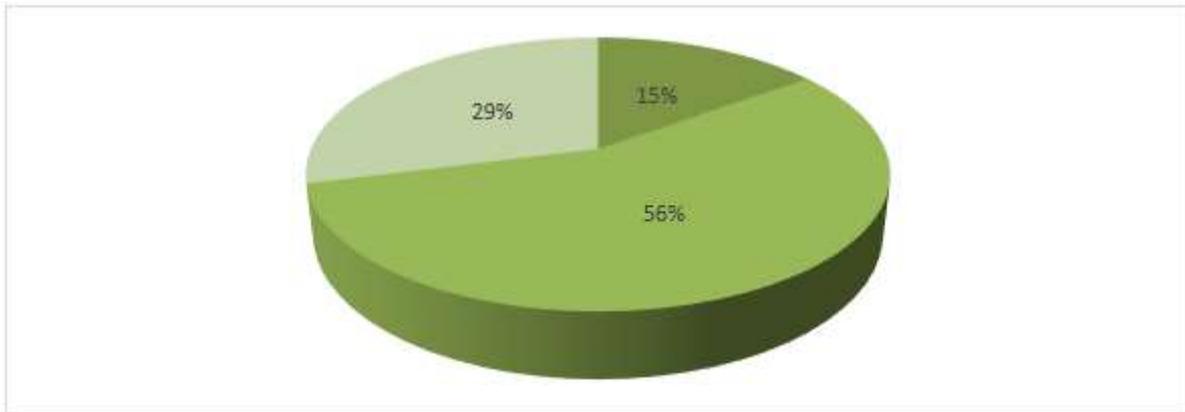
Table 4. *Turnover coefficient, which accounts for inevitable dismissals*

Indicators	2019	2018	2017
Average staff numbers	1,144	984	636
Number of dismissed people	372	380	272
Inevitable dismissals	70	65	69
Turnover coefficient accounting for inevitable dismissals, %	26.4	32.0	31.9

It is utterly important that we understand that the quantitative factor is not the only one, which should be taken into consideration when we use the manpower turnover indicator to assess the recruitment efficiency. Qualitative characteristics of the employees leaving the company are also important. When an ineffective employee leaves the company, experts call it functional turnover, which can be beneficial for the company, since the costs of keeping an ineffective employee are sometimes significantly higher than the costs of recruiting and training of a new, **more effective employee. Now let's analyze manpower turnover indicators among the employees who have been working in the company for a month / six months / a year (fig. 2).**

Figure 2. Manpower turnover indicators among the employees who have been working in the company for a month / six months / a year

We suggest considering the indicators separately from the general staff turnover for a more accurate assessment of the recruitment system in the company. Detailed analysis of the dynamics helps us find a recruitment problem fast and consequently, these are the indicators are the best to demonstrate the effectiveness of fulfilling a recruiting task in general.



### Discussion and Results

In general, we can note that mass recruitment tools are used in the framework of a personnel needs plan taking into account a company development strategy. Our research established that the mass sectorial recruitment technology has inherent problems (Shuvalova, 2016; Sarkisian-Artamonova 2020). The key problem of mass **recruitment is creation of a unified updated and full base of applicants; reducing the time for vacancies' closure;** adjustment of the KPI system for recruitment managers (Esbjerg, 2016; Korableva, 2016; Dudukalov et al., 2020).

Given that a large number of employees, who are supposed to occupy their positions fast, are selected during mass recruitment in a short period of time, the only selection criteria is often expertise and experience of the applicants (Barmuta, 2019; Zvereva, 2020; Vertakova et al., 2019). Advertising to attract a great number of applicants is of special importance during mass recruitment. Proper advertising placement, initial selection, connecting to the labour services and agencies – all these require significant labour and financial costs. We suggest automating the **process of creating a full, updated and unified applicants' base by introducing a CRM (customer relationship management) system (for the applicants' base) to cut labour costs at this stage** (Ko, 2019; Belyakova, 2020; Pogosyan, 2018; Rahman, 2017).

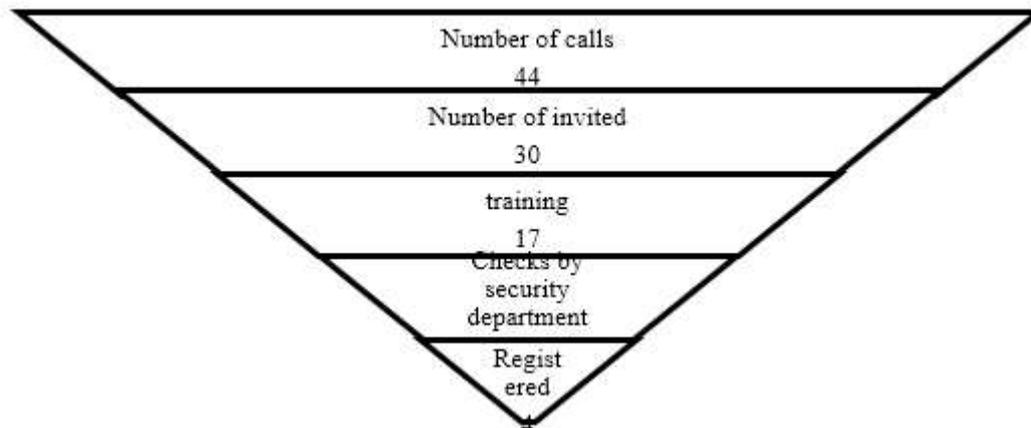
The system helps reduce the loss of applicants, who couldn't be reached by phone; track completion of the selection stages by each of the candidates; reduce unproductivity of manager's recruitment work (to raise his productiveness). Software of different CRM systems include recruitment modules designed to automate the recruitment process for personnel departments of companies and recruitment agencies (Korableva, 2018; Wang, 2021). They have various functions, which help HR managers. The CRM systems for the Recruiter module include:

- a) accounting and management of all vacancies and distribution of vacancies among the recruiters (Akhmadeev, 2018);
- b) managing mass vacancies and planning and accounting for the closing dates of vacancies (Bykanova, 2020);
- c) splitting the vacancies by complexity and priority and events planning for vacancies (Morozova, 2019);
- d) publication of vacancies on job websites and collecting feedback from job websites (Maltseva, 2020).

Further automation is aimed at simultaneous solving of the following two problems – reducing the time of vacancy closing; adjustment of the KPI system indicators for recruitment managers. Introduction of a telephoning system is suggested to reduce the cost of manual input of the recruitment manager; reduce repeated call errors and the chance of dialing a wrong number; integrate data with the CRM system (Avvakumova, 2020; Zvereva, 2020). The proposed CRM system is good for integration with the telephony. The telephone system can be switched via all messengers, such as Telegram, Skype, etc.

Integration of the Recruiter module of these two suggested CRM systems and telephony will help import resumes, call an applicant with a single keystroke and not to miss a call. Both suggested systems are presented in the form of cloud servers and have tariffs. To solve the third problem, we have revealed, adjustment of the KPI system indicators for recruitment managers to achieve the department effectiveness targets, we will assess the funnel (fig. 3).

Figure 3. Recruitment funnel per company manager



Assessing the funnel, we should note that 4 out of 30 selected applicants are registered, which means that to fulfill a plan to hire 40 people, one manager should invite 300 people a month. There are 22 working days a month on average, which means no fewer than 14 people a day. Consequently, this figure can be used to develop a KPI system with a minimal indicator because there are many factors, which can be of different impact. For example, all staff of a shop can be replaced. Besides, fulfilling the plan under the KPI efficiency system includes wage monitoring both for the employees the company is hunting for and for the recruitment managers.

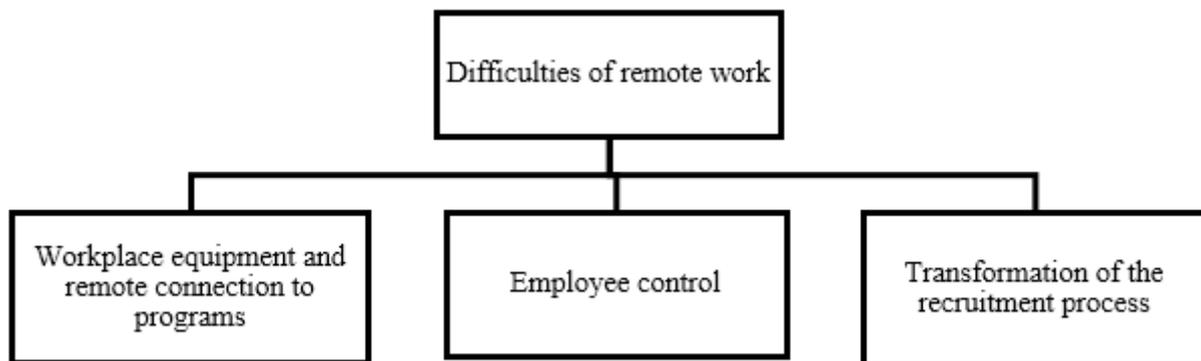
Motivation of recruitment managers should stimulate them register a larger number of people independently. Since the company at the moment is mainly engaged in mass recruitment, KPI should be wider so that the manager would understand what should be done to achieve a positive result. We offer the following motivation plan (table 6).

Table 5. Motivation of recruitment managers (a proposed KPI system) for the company

Target indicator	Planned indicator	Bonus paid on attainment of a target indicator, %	Underperformance	Bonus paid for underperformance, %	Specific weight of the indicator, %
Number of invited people per day.	15	100	Less than 15	0	10
Number of registered people	40	100	4-1	90	20
			5-7	80	
Total staffing at existing retail outlets, %	98%	100	0.5%	75	20
			1%	50	
			1.5%	25	
			1.6 and more	0	
Vacancy closure, days	14	100	over 14	0	20
Dismissal of accepted retail employees for the previous month, %	0-20%	100	25%	80	10
			over 25%	0	
Compilation days and quality of reports, days	1	100	More than one day	0	10

Monitoring applicants on the CRM system's Recruiter module	1. Adding a resume to a database. 2. Managing candidates by stage 3. Adding a recruitment source	100	Underperformance / bad performance of at least 1 out of 3 criteria	0	10
Total					100

The suggested KPI system is adapted to industry specifics, it can be applied and used to increase effectiveness of the recruitment department in normal working conditions of the company. But in 2020 the world faced the pandemic, which forced many companies to switch to remote operations fully or partially creating difficulties (fig. 4). Figure 4. Difficulties of remote company work in 2020



The company under consideration encountered the following problems – workplace equipment and remote switching to the programmers; difficulties in controlling employees; transformation of recruitment (there used to be group interviews in the office). The key recruitment task of the company during the current restrictions became maintaining the speed of recruitment by neutralizing the impact of the restrictions (Kalacheva, 2020; Voronova, 2020; Tarman, 2020).

This is why the company decided to replace group interviews with interviews with a limited number of applicants and an ensuing training. Managers immediately hold a meeting, and if they like the applicant, they leave him for training, and the next day they send him for medical examination and registration (Tractinsky, 2003; Kalacheva, 2019). This is how the company maintained the speed of vacancy closures during the pandemic by changing the tactics of recruitment temporarily. When the epidemiological situation stabilizes and the restrictions are lifted, the tool of mass recruitment will be returned to the aforementioned description and recommendation to introduce **automated systems and telephony while adaption of recruitment managers' motivation will become handy** mainly for large retailers.

#### Conclusions

Our research proves that the use of digitalization instruments in mass recruitment helps cut recruitment costs and reduce the time of vacancy closures. The interconnection of the digital instruments and the KPI recruitment **managers' system adapted to them is aimed at increasing recruiters' motivation to fulfil the recruitment plan and** ensuing staffing at existing retail outlets.

Integration of the two systems offered for introduction (the CRM system and the telephone system) connected to well-known messengers helps managers accompany closing of mass vacancies more accurately, rank them by complexity and priority, import resumes and collect responses from the websites, make calls to the applicants quickly, track unanswered calls. The effectiveness of introduction of the systems in a company is evaluated by expected reduction of unclosed vacancies at companies by 2%.

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