

Підприємництво, торгівля та біржова діяльність

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**CONCEPTUAL BASICS OF FREELANCE BUSINESS AND ITS ROLE  
IN THE MODERN WORLD  
КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНІ ОСНОВИ ФРІЛАНС-БІЗНЕСУ ТА ЙОГО РОЛЬ  
У СУЧАСНОМУ СВІТІ**

***Summary.** Freelancing in the field of online activities is considered as a promising direction of evolution of the post-industrial economy. This new sphere forms the mechanisms of managerial interaction at the macroeconomic level, but some issues, such as demand generation, socio-economic consequences, and the impact on the career development of a freelancer, remain insufficiently researched.*

*Freelancing in the context of online work symbolises a new era of post-*

*industrial economic systems, sparking debate among scholars. Research in the context of the information and network economy is becoming important, as online employment requires detailed study.*

*The last decades have led to global challenges that require adaptation of labour organisation, and self-employment in the form of freelancing has proved to be a suitable response. Freelancing has become an important category in the labour market both in Ukraine and abroad, due to its unique features that distinguish it from non-traditional models of employment.*

*Freelancing is seen as a form of self-employment, where a specialist provides services without formal obligations to a permanent employer. In the global context, freelancing is growing due to flexible working hours, the ability to choose projects and independence from corporate structures. However, it is accompanied by unstable income, lack of social guarantees and the need to manage all aspects of the business independently.*

**Key words:** *freelance, business, entrepreneurship, precarious employment.*

**Анотація.** *Фріланс у сфері онлайн-діяльності розглядається як перспективний напрямок еволюції постіндустріальної економіки. Ця сфера формує механізми управлінської взаємодії на макроекономічному рівні, але деякі питання, такі як формування попиту, соціально-економічні наслідки та вплив на кар'єрний ріст фрілансера, залишаються недостатньо дослідженими.*

*Фріланс в контексті онлайн-роботи символізує нову еру постіндустріальних економічних систем, викликаючи обговорення серед науковців. Дослідження в контексті інформаційно-мережевої економіки стають важливими, оскільки онлайн-зайнятість вимагає детального вивчення.*

*Останні десятиліття призвели до глобальних викликів, що вимагають адаптації організації праці, при чому самозайнятість у формі*

фрілансу виявилася відповідною. Фріланс став важливою категорією на ринку праці як в Україні, так і за її межами, завдяки унікальним особливостям, які виділяють його серед нетрадиційних моделей трудової зайнятості.

Фріланс розглядається як форма самозайнятості, де фахівець надає послуги без формальних зобов'язань перед постійним роботодавцем. У глобальному контексті фріланс зростає завдяки гнучкому графіку, можливості вибору проектів й незалежності від корпоративних структур. Однак, він супроводжується нестабільним доходом, відсутністю соціальних гарантій та необхідністю самостійного управління всіма аспектами діяльності.

**Ключові слова:** фріланс, бізнес, підприємництво, нестандартна зайнятість.

**Problem statement.** Current trends emphasize the need for adaptive skills in a dynamic business context and capacity to respond effectively to rapid transformations. The digital revolution and modern information systems are actively reshaping most economic sectors. The labor market follows suit, mirroring trends in the digitization of employment relationships. The growing interest in this domain is driving the creation of inventive models of work and fostering the rapid growth of flexible forms of employment.

Globalization, large-scale integration processes, the development of advanced computer technologies and information networks, the coronavirus pandemic, and other contemporary challenges are driving changes in the social and labour sphere, transforming employment, and creating new non-standard forms of employment and labour relations.

In the context of global phenomena, Ukraine is shaping its strategy for responding to global challenges, which contributes to the reform of the labour segment. The country is integrating into international trends by adapting new

employment models. The key flexible employment models in Ukraine include freelancing, remote work, innovative working hours, staff leasing, outsourcing, and others. It is important to emphasize that freelancing plays a critical role in the labour structure, becoming especially relevant due to changes in the social and economic context of Ukraine.

In the present era, it is progressively crucial to view online freelancing as a novel work model that mirrors shifts in the contemporary economic landscape. One approach is to examine freelancing from the perspectives of individual specialists as well as companies that incorporate freelancers into their operations.

**Analysis of recent researches and publications.** The issues of the freelance market and freelance work were considered by such domestic and foreign scholars as: Savchenko S. [3], Burke A. [4], Christopherson S. [10], Novak I. [13], Lieskova L. [14], Sapsed J. [11], Camerani R. [11], Masucci M. [11], etc. However, the issues of freelancing are mostly fragmented, lack a systematic approach and do not cover all theoretical and practical aspects of this form of employment.

**Formulation purposes of article (problem).** The primary objective of the article is to elucidate the fundamentals of the freelance business and analyze the freelance market, aiming to explore its characteristics and the factors influencing the efficiency of freelancers' work.

**The main part.** The ascent of the information age is influencing the organization and structure of work. The digitization of labor relations lays the groundwork for the development and expansion of virtual labor markets, which represent systems of rules and institutions governing the recruitment and utilization of labor.

The implementation of remote employment in Ukraine has progressed at a relatively slower pace in comparison to the global community. Nonetheless, this work arrangement has securely entrenched itself within the local labor market and is gaining momentum, leading to the development of legal norms that regulate

this form of employment.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the atypical employment contracts in Ukraine have become increasingly common. For an extended period, there was no legal regulation governing the activities of remote workers. This lack of regulation resulted in limited geographic mobility of the labor force and hindered the efficient utilization of labor resources. The prevailing legal circumstances necessitated the gradual expansion of remote employment to prompt the supplementation of the legal framework.

Remote work as an atypical form of employment has emerged in large cities, as well as the problem of employment of the rural population and job creation in remote regions. Analyzing any phenomenon, including remote work, necessitates initially identifying the factors influencing its formation. Atypical employment generally encompasses all forms of work that diverge from the standard, characterized by indefinite employment contracts, full-time commitments, and on-site work under the supervision and direction of the employer. It is worth noting that the trend of significant growth in self-employment over the past decade has been subject to varied interpretations in global policy and academic circles. Some perceive self-employment through a pessimistic lens, viewing it as an economic illusion wherein individuals, possibly remnants of the unemployed population, turn to online work after the identification of a significant labor force. Conversely, others hold a more optimistic perspective, acknowledging the positive aspects of this evolving employment landscape.

The characteristics of standard and non-standard types of employment are shown in the table 1.

*Table 1*

**Comparative characteristics of standard and certain types of non-standard employment**

Standard					
Type of employment	Employer	Employment for hire	Working day duration	Type of employment agreement	Process control
Standard	Organization	Yes	Normal	Indefinite term contract	Employer
Non-standard					
Part-time employment	Organization/ Private entrepreneur	Yes	Part-time	Indefinite term contract	Employer
Temporary employment	Organization/ Private entrepreneur	Yes	Flexible	Fixed term	Employer
Self-employment	None	No	Flexible	None	Employee

*Source:* compiled by the authors on the basis of [1; 2; 3]

One of the main and distinctive features of remote work is that an employee performs his or her job function outside the employer's location. However, it is this feature that unites remote workers and home workers [1].

Freelancing represents a professional arrangement where individuals work independently without a permanent employer and, instead, undertake tasks or projects for diverse clients. It's essential to recognize that freelancers operate on a project basis, offering their expertise to multiple clients without the commitment of permanent employment. This distinctive form of professional engagement has gained prominence in various industries, allowing skilled individuals to leverage their talents across a spectrum of projects and clients.

An examination of the scientific literature indicates that there is a lack of consistency in the interpretation of the term "freelance." Different sources and studies provide varying definitions and understandings of this term, contributing to a lack of uniformity in its conceptualization. Table 2 compares the definitions of different scholars.

*Table 2*

**Definition of the term "freelancer" in domestic and foreign literature**

Author	"Freelancer" definition
Burke A. [4]	Freelancers are employees who supply their services for potential projects or time-limited assignments for remuneration that is directly proportional to the outcome of the work. Freelancers assume all or most of the costs and risks of their own labour downtime, as well as the risks of low performance expectations within projects. They bear all the costs and risks of economic inactivity between projects.
UpWork – online platform [5]	An individual freelancer is a self-employed person or a small company that has a certain set of skills and works independently.
Skyba T. [6]	A freelancer is a qualified freelance worker who independently carries out entrepreneurial activities in cooperation with a customer only for the duration of the freelance project and does not act as a hired labour force.
Zabolotna N. [7]	A freelancer is an independent, highly qualified professional who is not employed by an organisation and does not enter traditional labour relations, but independently provides his or her services in the labour market to various clients and is not a subcontractor of a single customer.
Tertychnyi O. [8]	Freelance and e-lance are primarily a model of self-employment, direct labour activity of a specialist (professional) in search of work and earnings. Thus, we record two polarities - the pole of "labour customers" and the pole of "free workers", which, despite a certain degree of autonomy, are in the same space. This space is not the traditional labour market, but the remote work exchanges.
Strebkov D. O., Shevchuk A.V. [9]	Freelancer - an independent professional of high qualification who is not employed by an organisation and is not included in traditional labour relations, but independently sells his/her services on the market to various clients without being a subcontractor of a single customer.
Christopherson S. [10]	The term "freelance" reflects a form of contractual work, self-organised work that does not imply a formally stable and continuous relationship with one company or employer.
Sapsed J, Camerani R., Masucci R. and others [11]	Freelancers are a visible labour force, called differently - freelancers, contractors, consultants: self-employed agents of creative and digital growth.

*Source:* compiled by the authors on the basis of [4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11]

The main aspects of the freelance concept include the following: freelancers decide who to work with, what projects to work on, how much time to devote to work and how to organise their work schedule; flexibility - the ability to work from anywhere with the Internet. it can be home, a cafe, another city or even a country; a variety of projects, which can help develop a set of skills and gain experience in different areas; receiving payment for a specific project or task,

rather than a fixed salary, the amount of payment may vary depending on experience, specialisation and the agreement with the client; full responsibility for the quality of work performed, meeting deadlines and other aspects of cooperation with the client; business process management: accounting, marketing, client communications, etc.

An increasing number of professionals across diverse fields, ranging from design and programming to journalism and consulting, are opting for freelancing as their preferred mode of work. This choice is driven by the allure of flexibility and the autonomy to independently shape their career paths.

The World Bank defines two main types of online employment (Table 3): micro-work and online freelancing [12].

*Table 3*

**Main types of online employment according to the World Bank methodology**

Micro-work	Online freelancing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- small tasks that can be completed in a few seconds or minutes;</li> <li>- usually require basic skills such as labelling images or data entry;</li> <li>- payments are made on a per-task basis and are usually small;</li> <li>- this type of work is particularly suitable for people without specialised skills;</li> <li>- the quality of work is controlled by algorithms;</li> <li>- some popular platforms offering micro-work: Amazon Mechanical Turk, CrowdFlower and others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- long-term projects for professionals with specific skills;</li> <li>- the task can last hours, days or even months;</li> <li>- areas include graphic design, web development, and report writing;</li> <li>- the quality of work is checked by specialists or automatic systems;</li> <li>- freelancers usually have higher education and are paid more than micro-workers;</li> <li>- well-known freelance platforms: Upwork, Freelancer, Zhubajie/Witmart.</li> </ul>

*Source:* compiled by the authors on the basis of [12]

E-lancing is recognised as a promising form of work, allowing employees to work remotely from their employers. The idea of remote work was proposed by J. Nilles in the 1970s [13]. But it was only with the advent of modern technology that it was implemented on a large scale.

In today's world of intensive technological development, large amounts of data require sophisticated and advanced processing methods [13]. This



necessitates the involvement of experienced specialists in this area.

In this context, freelancers are key actors. They are independent specialists who, not being bound by long-term contracts with specific organisations, provide a wide range of services for different customers, actively using information and communication technologies [14].

With the development of information and communication technologies, we are witnessing the formation and development of complex network systems. These networks are becoming not just tools for socialisation, but also platforms for obtaining information about the latest market trends, a source of innovative business ideas and a place to find opportunities for the so-called "online workers" who are forming a new networked economic system.

The fundamental concept behind the global reputation economy is that an individual's online reputation evolves into a valuable asset with the potential for economic gains. In the contemporary online work environment, characterized by globalization and flexibility, the primary currency is not necessarily a formal diploma or academic credentials but rather a business reputation shaped by professional, soft, and ideological skills.

It's noteworthy that the trajectory of self-employment growth in recent years is subject to diverse interpretations within the global community. Some perceive it purely as an economic phenomenon, while others, such as the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee, view it as an enduring trend not solely linked to the scarcity of alternative job opportunities.

**The main advantages and disadvantages of freelance business.** Among the disadvantages of independent employment for freelancers are instability and unpredictability of future income. Significant negative factors of the remote work market were also identified as high competition from other freelancers, a high probability of fraud, and a constant search for new projects. About a third of the participants noted the lack of a social package and guarantees. It can be assumed that the reasons for some underestimation of the importance of social guarantees

by remote workers are partly due to their young age and, therefore, lower need for any specific services, as well as the underdeveloped pension system, which is not able to guarantee a decent standard of living. Almost every third remote worker mentioned the lack of communication with people as a disadvantage of independent employment.

Freelance work, like other forms of self-employment, has several advantages and disadvantages, which are presented in Table 4.

*Table 4*

**Advantages and disadvantages of freelance business**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Freedom to choose a work task	The need to search for customers on your own
Free schedule, flexibility, mobility	No guarantee of receiving payment for the work performed, risk of being deceived by the employer
No transport problem - a freelancer can work anywhere, preferably at home, so there is no need to spend time on transport	Lack of constant relevant job offers in terms of skills
Favourable working conditions - freelancers have the opportunity to choose and arrange their own workplace	Additional costs for the workplace
No threat of dismissal	Lack of social package, social guarantees, labour protection
Responsibility only for your actions	No paid days off and holidays
Opportunities for international cooperation (no borders)	The need to keep accounting and pay taxes on your own
Possibility to study or get another job, take care of a child in parallel	Finding and hiring the right equipment on your own
Lack of organisational obligations - not distracted by additional job tasks, not subject to corporate rights	No career development opportunities
The likelihood of receiving and executing interesting, diverse projects	There is a threat of routinisation of work and, as a result, a decrease in productivity
Lack of total official control	Constant self-control, self-organisation
Relatively high profit margins	Volatility and unpredictability of future income

*Source:* compiled by the authors on the basis of [15]

Considering the aforementioned advantages and disadvantages of freelance work, it is crucial to highlight the intricacies of planning for freelancers. Despite the common perception that freelancers operate in a laid-back and unhurried manner, it's essential to recognize that freelancers bear a comparable level of responsibility to their counterparts who favor office-based work. Freelancers need to formulate a work schedule that suits their preferences while ensuring timely completion of assignments. This dispels the notion of a lax work ethic and emphasizes the importance of conscientious planning for successful freelancing. The employee needs to learn how to plan their working hours so as to avoid burnout, overwork, or vice versa, and to prevent procrastination [15].

Breaks are crucial for freelancers, providing them with the chance to transition between work and leisure, especially since both often occur in the same home environment. Employing effective self-management techniques is essential for freelancers to responsibly and wisely allocate their time. The autonomy that freelancers enjoy allows them to create a comfortable workspace tailored to their preferences, positively impacting their work quality.

By approaching activity planning with the right mindset, freelancers can maintain a high standard of work, subsequently influencing their professional reputation. A commendable reputation not only attracts more clients but also opens doors to global opportunities for international collaboration. This emphasizes the interconnected relationship between strategic planning, work quality, reputation, and broader professional achievements in the realm of freelancing.

To a large extent, non-traditional forms of employment are aligning with conventional in-house work. Nevertheless, an online survey conducted among respondents regarding the present state of non-standard employment has proven instrumental in pinpointing the primary impediments hindering the complete development and efficient operation of independent online workers.

In this context, two distinct categories of issues have been identified:

1. Challenges associated with the "home" format of remote employment services.

2. Issues pertaining to the legal regulation of remote employment.

Financial management. Engaging in such employment often means dealing with fluctuating income. It becomes imperative to plan financial expenditures prudently and judiciously.

Work-life balance challenges. When orchestrating own workday independently, difficulties arise in effectively allocating time between work and leisure.

Overcoming procrastination. Individuals with this type of non-traditional employment format frequently grapple with overcoming laziness, especially when confronted with repetitive tasks. To mitigate the impact of laziness, it becomes essential to establish motivation and stimulate activity, a task not easily achievable for everyone.

Payment methods. Beyond currency exchange considerations, employees encounter challenges in receiving their salaries, necessitating the management of various e-wallets and bank cards.

Loneliness and lack of a team. Pursuing such employment implies limited personal interactions with colleagues, resulting in diminished socialization that can influence individuals' perceptions and behaviors, particularly in comparison to larger corporate settings.

Psychological dependence on computer work. A parallel can be drawn between the addictive nature of contemporary social media and the reliance on computer work for remote employees. Constant connectivity to electronic devices due to dependence on the Internet can lead to an imbalance between work and personal life, blurring the lines between reality and the virtual world. The reliance on electronic equipment is on the rise.

The data indicates that non-traditional employment can act as a catalyst for cultivating entrepreneurial individuals. Despite the practical realization of such

initiatives, there is a notable entrepreneurial potential, encompassing the establishment of new ventures in information and communication technologies, creative industries, and business services.

In general, remote workers exhibit a substantial level of human capital, enjoy relatively high incomes, and showcase positive motivation, enthusiasm, as well as a heightened sense of work and life satisfaction. However, this form of work is also marked by various challenges, including prolonged working hours, social isolation, income unpredictability, instances of client deceit, and even limited social protection measures.

Considering the context of freelance work, the following potential issues may arise (Table 5).

*Table 5*

**Risks for freelancers and employers**

<b>Freelancers' risks</b>	<b>Employers' risks</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is a possibility that the customer will not fulfil its financial obligations.</li> <li>2. Investment costs are associated with the creation and maintenance of a workspace, including equipment, software and educational resources for professional development.</li> <li>3. Lack of a standard social security package that is usually provided to regular employees of organisations.</li> <li>4. Potential difficulties in self-organisation and risk of unproductive use of working time.</li> <li>5. A sense of isolation due to a lack of corporate identity and teamwork.</li> <li>6. Limited opportunities to share knowledge and experience with professional colleagues.</li> <li>7. Need to expand in-house expertise in related fields to maintain competitiveness.</li> <li>8. Administrative challenges, including finding potential customers, agreeing on technical requirements, and resolving issues related to financial transactions.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is a risk of losing financial resources in case of a subscription without receiving the completed task from the freelancer.</li> <li>2. Modifying or changing the completed task may result in additional financial costs.</li> <li>3. The short-term cost of freelance services may be higher compared to regular staffing on a permanent basis.</li> <li>4. Limitations in the ability to supervise and control the activities of a freelancer.</li> <li>5. Freelancers often undertake several projects in parallel, which may affect the speed and quality of work for a particular client.</li> <li>6. A freelancer may have business relations with the client's competitors, and a conflict of interest may arise.</li> <li>7. The legal aspects of copyright in relation to the work performed remain in favour of the freelancer.</li> <li>8. It is common for freelancers to perform work without proper documentation and reporting.</li> <li>9. The need for additional time to detail the requirements for tasks and specifics of the order for the freelancer.</li> </ol>

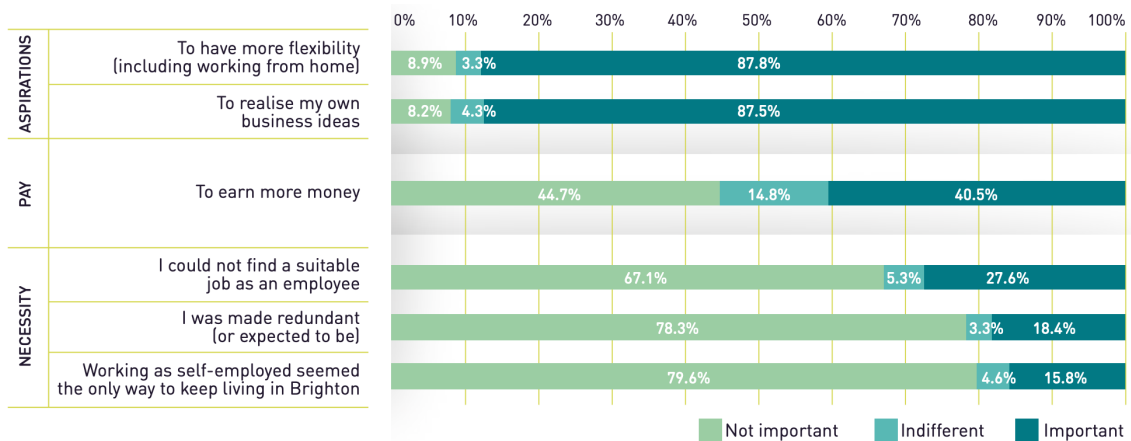
*Source:* compiled by the authors

According to numerous scholars and practitioners, one of the key problems in using freelancing as a potentially effective model of labour relations in the virtual environment is the phenomenon of precarisation. The term "precarisation" refers to labour agreements that are not stable and can be easily terminated by the employer, as well as to the lack of full legal protection and social guarantees for the employee [16].

The concept of precarization aims to heighten instability for freelancers, complicating their social protection. This shift is primarily driven by the transition from traditional production methods to remote working arrangements, accentuating the transience and informality of employment.

In practical terms, precarization often manifests as a failure to meet contractual obligations or their violation, a challenge faced by both freelancers and clients. However, various participants in the labor market devise their own strategies to navigate this risk. For instance, freelancers establish portfolios on professional platforms, providing a space for clients to review feedback from previous collaborations. The internet also facilitates the authentication and verification of a freelancer's work experience, contributing to efforts to address the challenges associated with precarization.

The study conducted by British researchers [11] focused on various aspects of freelancers' lives, analysing gender, age, education, family, employment status, income, and social relations. In particular, the reasons for choosing freelance employment were studied, which were presented in the format of three integrative categories: aspiration, salary, and necessity (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1. Reasons for choosing freelance work**

Source: [11]

The realisation of personal aspirations is by far the most significant reason for engaging in freelance work. According to Fig. 1, an important motivation for engaging in freelance work for 87% of respondents was the ability to be flexible and implement specific business ideas. Another influential motivational factor is the willingness to run their business independently (to implement their own ideas). The third group of freelancers identified motives that are classified as need-oriented. Only 27.6% of respondents said that they started freelancing because they could not find a suitable job; 18.4% because they were fired or expect to be fired and 15.8% because it was the only way to stay in the city [11]. The study noted that the common perception that people become freelancers not by choice, but by necessity, is wrong.

**Conclusion.** Freelancing in the field of online activities is considered a promising direction in the evolution of the post-industrial economy. As a relatively new field, it is gradually establishing its mechanisms for macroeconomic management and interaction. However, certain aspects related to the generation of demand for such activities, their socio-economic implications, the trajectory of a freelancer's career progression, and their impact on a country's macroeconomic indicators have not received adequate attention from the scientific community.

Freelancing in the context of online work signifies a new era in the development of post-industrial economic systems. This phenomenon is currently the focal point of vibrant discussions among scholars and professionals, encompassing an exploration of both the positive and negative aspects of this activity at various levels—from individual freelancers to global regulatory mechanisms. Research in this domain holds particular significance within the context of the information and network economy. A detailed examination of online employment and its multifaceted aspects is crucial to effectively address the challenges inherent in this evolving landscape.

In recent decades, global society has confronted numerous challenges stemming from rapid political, socio-cultural, and economic transformations. These profound changes have compelled the adaptation of labor organization forms, with self-employment in the form of freelancing emerging as one of the most suitable responses.

Freelancing has evolved into a significant and distinct category in the labor market, not only within Ukraine but also on an international scale. Its uniqueness lies in specific features that set it apart from other non-traditional models of labor engagement. Freelancing is essentially a form of self-employment wherein specialists offer their services without formal contractual obligations to a permanent employer. In today's globalized and digitized economy, the role of freelancing is expanding, meeting the market's demands for flexibility and efficiency.

The primary advantages of freelancing encompass flexible working hours, the ability to select projects, and independence from corporate structures. However, freelancing is not without its drawbacks, including income instability, a lack of social guarantees, and the need for individuals to handle all aspects of their business independently.



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