

FROM THE ECONOMY OF PRODUCTION TO THE ECONOMY OF CARE

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Abstract

Nowadays, employees are assessed by how effectively they do their job. Helping people is not an indicator of productivity. Labor productivity affects the financial performance of the company, and, according to employers, direct duties are more important than talking to a person who needs it. Because due to such communication, the productivity decreases. An approach in which the main condition is the productivity of employees is not correct, since it puts financial goals above a person. From a humanistic point of view, caring for people should prevail over labor productivity. Consequently, our entire economic system must radically change. The article analyzes the process of transition from the economy of production to the economy of care, and also describes the current economic trends.

Keywords

Cost, productivity, care, quality indicators.

In France, the elderly who can no longer live on their own are usually placed in specialized medical facilities. The right professional term is EHPAD (Établissements Hébergeant Des Personnes Âgées Dépendantes), which in French stands for «institutions for the elderly in need of assistance.» Medical expenses are funded by medical insurance, while living expenses are covered by local government or relatives. All activities in such nursing homes are strictly regulated, employees are required to achieve maximum productivity and their functions are precisely defined.

A few weeks ago, I got into a conversation with a young man who worked in a parking lot. While I was waiting for the tow truck, he told me that he used to be a cleaner at a nursing home. He put things in order in the rooms of elderly, lonely people isolated from society. Sometimes the young man talked to those who were on the verge of death. Since he did not spend 100% of his time on cleaning, his work was recognized as insufficiently effective. As a result, he was fired and now works in a parking lot.

This case is a vivid example of how many organizations measure employee productivity. Employers evaluate and assess, first of all, the work itself, and the employee's remuneration is tied to certain productivity indicators. Compassion for the elderly was not part of the cleaner's job and, from a management perspective, was a waste of time.

Hospitals and educational institutions adhere to the same principle. Doctors are paid by the number of surgeries they perform, and the patients' health condition does not affect their remuneration. Teachers are forced to spend a certain amount of time on teaching, no matter how much attention each student requires. I do not know the state of affairs in Russia in this respect, but in France the situation is exactly as described. In the US, things are even worse – you can get an impression that the patient can only be treated after checking his bank account.

Getting back to employee productivity, I would like to claim that we need an approach involving not only the good work of the staff, but also care for the elderly, sick people, and students. The approach, in which helping people has no value, is quite risky, but, unfortunately, it has spread throughout the whole society and, in particular, public services. Only what can be measured quantitatively matters, quality is not considered.

What really matters: caring for people and society as a whole requires an evaluation of human labor that cannot be limited to numbers. How is it possible to assess the quality, and therefore the value, of a young cleaner's care for the dying in a nursing home? How to measure mother's care for children? How can I evaluate the work of my fellow Red Cross volunteers? How to understand that people help selflessly and gratuitously and that their actions are not driven by personal interests or economic gain? We are talking about the principles of utilitarianism. The basis of classical economic theory, from Adam Smith to Karl Marx and Milton Friedman. I am convinced that this school of economics will play an important role in

assessing the social aspects of human activity.

For a century and a half, the main institutional tool of labor productivity has been a business that could, for instance, raise large funds for the construction of railways. The approach to remuneration for human labor is based on the company's performance. But a commercialized society that prioritizes productivity may soon end up in the ash heap of history.

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