

## Freelance work

Freelance work is a form of solo self-employment that involves relative autonomy in delivering skilled tasks for a client. However, this is a fuzzy concept and, in the UK for example, freelance work does not hold an official or widely accepted definition. Nevertheless, it is a common form of work and IPSE (the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self Employed), working with data from the Office for National Statistics, suggest that there are around 2.2 million freelance workers in the UK (IPSE, 2020).

The prevalence of freelance work reflects the changing nature of work and employment through periods of organizational downsizing and the externalization of labour (Storey et al., 2005). Those employees who were pushed out of organizations and into self-employment have the potential for independence and autonomy, yet sometimes found themselves working for their former employers and in competition for work with former colleagues. Further, freelance work carries the potential for a lack of social protection, employee rights and for forms of self-exploitation in highly competitive markets.

The everyday realities of freelance workers include the need to market themselves and their work, the importance of networking and the use of co-working spaces (Hoedemaekers, 2021). Rosenkranz's (2019) study of freelance travel journalists highlights how these workers emphasize their professional status and training to differentiate themselves from other travel writers or bloggers, though they now lack assignment-based contracts.

As the nature of work continues to change and freelance workers become more common, Cross and Swart (2021) suggest that the boundaries of HRM's remit should be extended outside the organization. Meijerink et al. (2020) highlight the complexity of HRM for freelance workers and the tensions that arise between HRM activities focused on both the autonomy and selection of external freelance market logic, and the more internally focused logic of activities such as training, and appraisal. Together with a wider set of issues including zero-hours contracts, freelance work is likely to be a critical focus of debate for HRM and the lives of many workers.

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### See also:

Self-employment, Zero-hour contracts.

### References and selected further readings

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