

## **EMPLOYEE RELEASE AS AN OPTIMIZATION METHOD OF COMPANIES' EXPENSES IN THE FINANCIAL CRISIS**

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***Abstract:** The personnel of the company possessing the required knowledge and working experience is considered by modern scientists as a competitive advantage promoting the application of advanced technologies. In this regard it is possible to observe the transformation of personnel management in human resources management when the personnel are considered not only as a factor of expenses, but as a key resource. In its turn, human resources management should be reoriented on the maximum investments efficiency into personnel by means of creation of the system motivating employees on goal achievement within business strategy of the company capable to estimate productivity of their work and give an unbiased reward for achievements.*

*At the same time, the financial and economic crisis in Russia which started in 2014 "has forced" Russian managers to be reoriented in management of companies on strategy of expenses' optimization by employee displacement.*

*The detailed analysis of indicators of "movement of personnel" on the example of the representative of large business - a federal distribution network with the total number of personnel more than 20 thousand people across all Russia is presented in this article. Authors correlate statistics of company's branches located in the territory of Central Federal District (on the example of Moscow and the Moscow region) and in regions. Revealing a general tendency of expenses' optimization by employee displacement in the above company, authors show its manifestation in separately taken representative office with the total number of personnel of 420 people, performing activities in Tyumen.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In recent years domestic and foreign economists actively study prerequisites and development mechanisms of financial and economic crises, and also extent of their

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influence on companies' management (Allen, 2011; Cecchetti, 2009; Claessens, 2010; Ghosh, 2011; Krishnamurthy, 2009; Lotova, 2014; Nosova, 2016; Reznichenko, 2014; Shesnyak, Bustrakova, 2011). But each new large-scale crisis leads to ideas' change of specific factors' importance in companies' management in the financial and economic instability.

Since 2013 the Russian economy has achieved a stage of so-known stagnation that reflected, first of all, in delay of economic growth in the country, fall of capital investments into basic capital and practically zero level of industrial production (in 2013 it constituted 0.4%; in the sector of manufacturing there was a fall for 1.1%). Considering the investment recession in 2014 as logical there would be a further delay of economic growth even without outside pressure. (Problems of Economics and management of enterprises, branches, complexes, 2015; Factors of sustainable development of regions, 2014). However, the sanctions imposed by the state have only accelerated the transition from stagnation to recession which in 2015 became inevitable. (Russia-Tyumen: vectors of Eurasian development, 2015; The economy of regions and regional policy, 20142)

Therefore, the decrease of key macroeconomic parameters of a social and economic state in development of Russia was fixed during 2015:

- decrease in GDP of the country by 3.8% by 2014;
- inflation by Rosstat data in 12 months has constituted 12.9%;
- fall of a retail trade turnover (as indicator of the consumer demand) by 13.1%;
- drop in the rate of national currency, that is decrease of the Russian ruble in relation to the US dollar and euro, and also change of social indicators of the labor market - the level of unemployment in Russia according to Rosstat constituted 5,8% (in comparison with 2014 - 5,3%). (Federal state statistics service).

If in economically developed countries in the period of social and financial instability the fast growth of number of dismissals and growth of unemployment is observed, then the tendency of working hours' reduction, including government institutions is the characteristic feature of Russia (for example, the transition from five-day working week for 4 or 3 working days) and optimization of structures; to reduction of bonuses, privileges and a wage supplement (that allows carrying out "soft" decrease in the salary level and staff expenses in general. (Problems of Economics and management of enterprises, branches, complexes, 2015). And the following stage is the release of personnel (i.e., the dismissals by the initiative of the organization or the employee).

At the same time, authors note that official workers' reductions in the country are about 1-2% of the total number of dismissed workers. In most cases employers apply so-called "enforced redundancy", i.e., the creation of such labor conditions when employees independently make the decision to leave the company.

For example, unpaid wages which in comparison with April, 2015 in May it has grown by 11.7%, having constituted 3.28 billion rubles up to 76 thousand workers. The basic reason (about 95% of this figure) which is announced by employers is the deficiency of a working capital that is quite natural, considering high credit rates and tightening of conditions for business in obtaining of credits.

The second reason of enforced dismissals - increase in volume of work and job responsibilities. In this case the employer distributes functional obligations of vacant positions among the working personnel without salary increase.

The third reason, also popular among Russian employers, is the bonuses and compensations' reduction. Due to the reduction or liquidation of additional payments the employer receives the personnel cost reduction.

Comparing the recruitment activity of medium-sized and large business employers in 2015, then the amount of vacancies placed in electronic and printing sources is smaller than in 2014 by 20% while the number of the curriculum vitae of candidates increased by 17%. It is also possible to note that according to the website of job search "Superjob", professions in "Sales" and "Working personnel" remain the most demanded during 2015.

## 2. TECHNIQUE

For the detailed analysis of " personnel movement " the indicators on the example of the large business representative - a federal distribution network with the total number of personnel more than 20 thousand people across Russia (further the company) would be considered by authors. It will allow correlating statistics of Central Federal District (on the example of Moscow and Moscow region) and regions where a ratio of the employed employees is approximately identical: Moscow and the Moscow region - 47% of employees, regions – 53% (table 1).

The reasons of forced dismissals on the example of one of divisions of the company with the total number of personnel of 420 people, performing its activity in Tyumen (hereinafter referred to as – the division of the company) would be examined further (table 2).

**Table 1**  
**Territorial arrangement of company's branches**

<i>City</i>	<i>Number of personnel</i>
St. Petersburg	2,840
Moscow and Moscow region	9,667
Yaroslavl, Ivanovo, Nizhny Novgorod	1,568
Voronezh, Tambov, Lipetsk	2,007
Samara, Ufa, Kazan, Ulyanovsk, Penza	1,912
Chelyabinsk, Tyumen	1,067
Rostov-on-Don, Krasnodar	1,504
Total:	20,565

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of personnel of the division of the**  
**company performing the activity in Tyumen, by management levels**

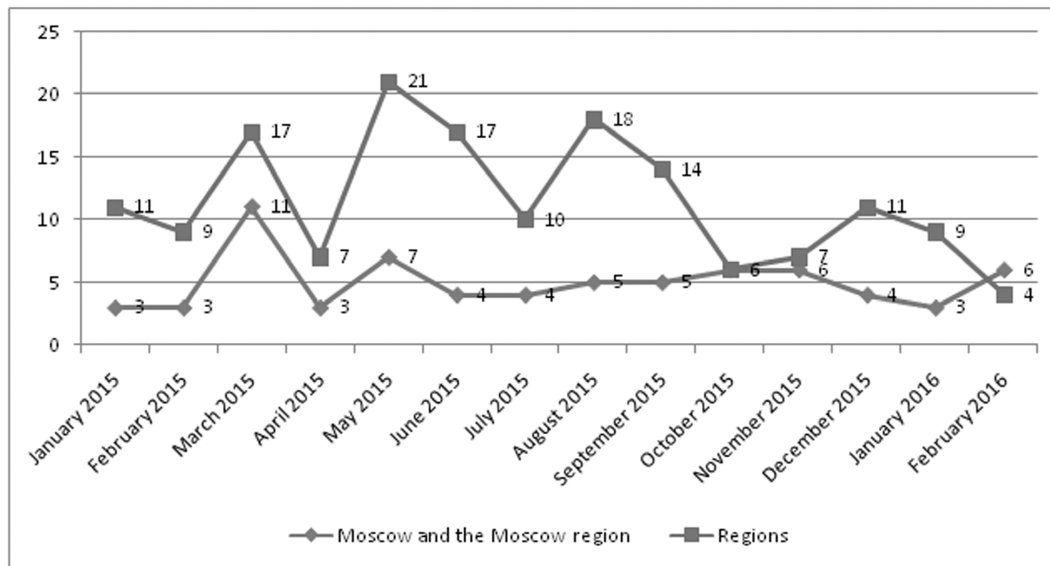
Type of personnel	Quantity	Levels
Managerial structure	manager, head, director	30
Linear/working personnel	Seller, acceptor, employee of service, operator, supernumerary, cashier	390

The comparative analysis of revealed tendencies will allow designating features of companies' cost optimization in the conditions of crisis by personnel release.

### 3. RESULTS

In general in 14 months the number of the managers employed in the company in Moscow and the Moscow region has constituted 70 people, and in regions - 161. It is possible to note obvious recession in registration of employment relationships in regions, since October, 2015 which remained till February, 2016 (figure 1).

Considering the employment dynamics of linear/working personnel in sales, the number of employed employees in the company from January, 2015 to February, 2016 inclusive in the region exceeds the quantity of employed in Moscow and the Moscow region (4867 people to 4320 people). However, this gap is not as essential as it is in situations with managerial structure, and recession of employment was noticed only since the beginning of 2016. This fact can be explained by the fact that the end of the year for trade enterprises is the most productive and high-profitable and with an



**Figure 1: Employment dynamics of managerial structure in the company (levels: the manager, the head, the director) in 14 months, persons.**



administrative board there is an opportunity “to wait a little”, then the linear personnel is the main labor power providing a company turnover(figure 2).

One of methods which is practiced in companies during such periods is provisional contracts. So in figure 3 the number of provisional contracts where there is an obvious increase during the autumn and winter period is presented.

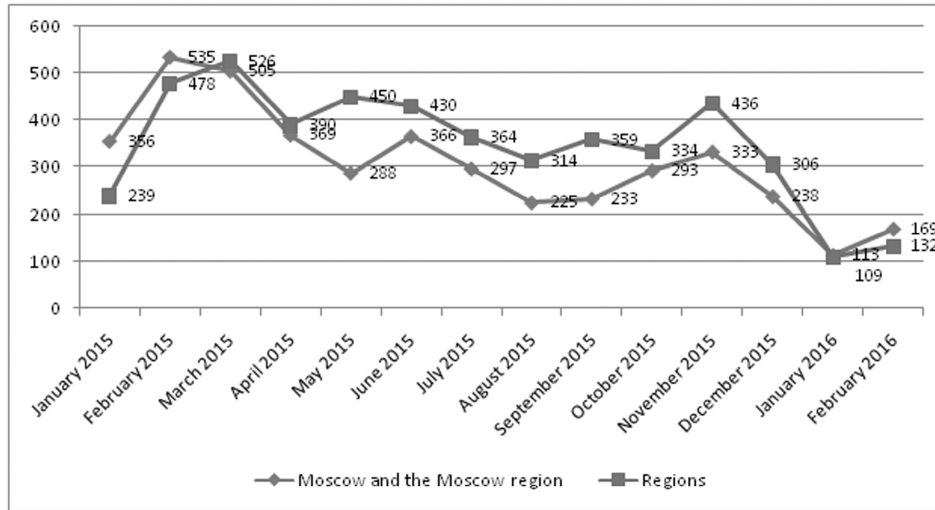


Figure 2: The employment dynamics of linear/working personnel in the company in 14 months, persons.

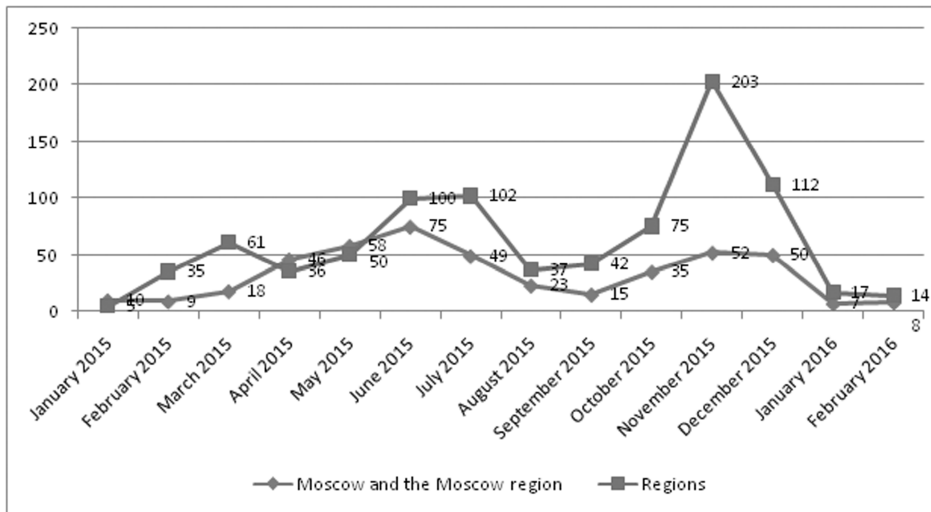


Figure 3: The number of employed workers in the company according to the provisional employment contract, persons.

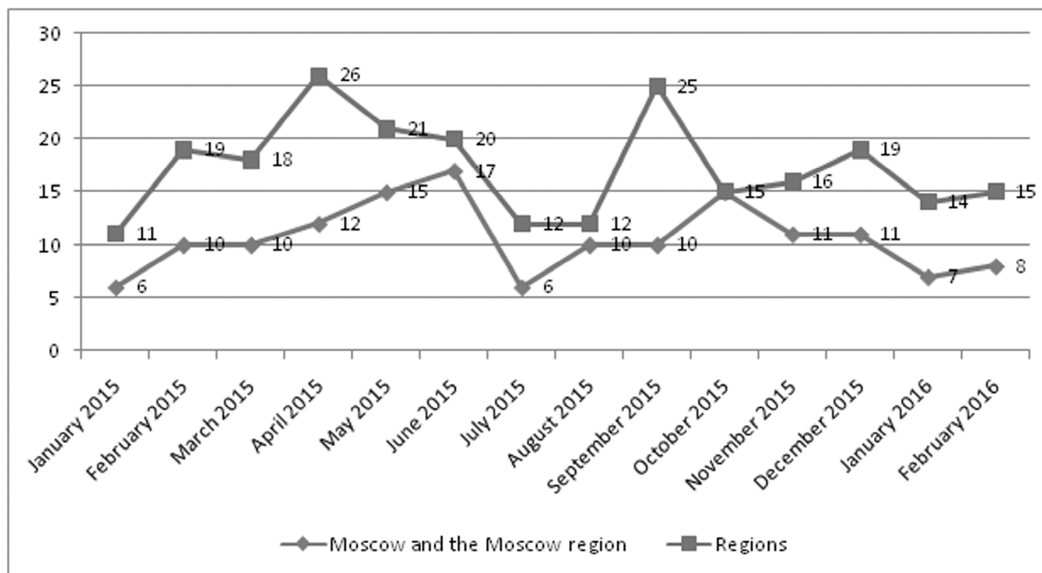
**Table 3**  
**Share of the employed workers under provisional employment contracts,**  
**for the period August, 2015 - January, 2016.**

Period	Employment (the total number), persons.		The temporary employment, persons		Share, %	
	Moscow and MR	Regions	Moscow and MR	Regions	Moscow and MR	Regions
August 2015	225	314	23	37	10,2	11,8
September 2015	233	359	15	42	6,4	11,7
October 2015	293	334	35	75	11,9	22,5
November 2015	333	436	52	203	15,6	46,6
December 2015	238	306	50	112	21,0	36,6
January 2016	113	109	7	17	6,2	15,6

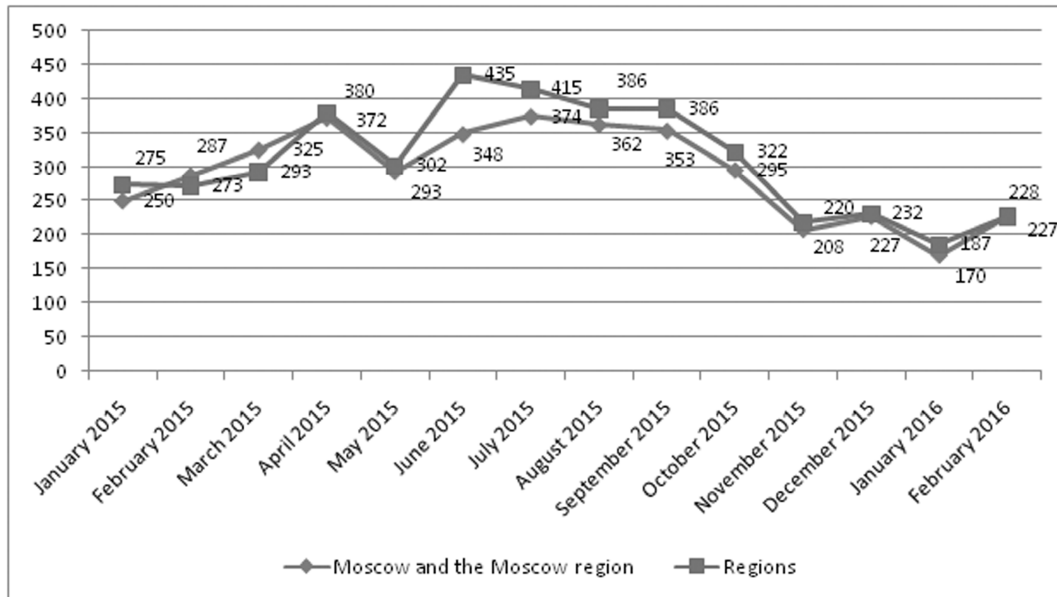
It should be noted that the share of the total quantity of employment significantly increased during the period from October to December, 2015 (table 3).

Analyzing the statistics of managerial structure and linear personnel dismissal it is possible to note lack of any regularity among dismissals of managers for which it would be possible to reason the natural distribution of managerial personnel.

The fact that there are more dismissals in regions than in Moscow and the Moscow region almost for 40% (243 people to 148 people) is obvious, but the small recession at the beginning of 2016 is observed in all country (figure 4).



**Figure 4: The number of managerial structure dismissal**  
**(levels: the manager, the head, the director) in 14 months, persons.**



**Figure 5: The number of linear/working personnel dismissal in the company in 14 months, persons.**

As for linear and working personnel, recession of dismissals is significantly noticeable, since September, 2015 – despite the active trade period when the working volume on the personnel increased in proportion to a goods turnover of the company (figure 5).

Thus, authors note the reduction of dismissals' quantity in the company on the whole in the country, since September, 2015 which proceeds till today, irrespective of the level of a position and functional obligations.

In case of comparison of a share ratio of retired chiefs to employed all within 14 months (during the period from January, 2015 to February, 2016), then in the company in the first half of 2015 (from January to August) in Moscow and the Moscow region 46,5% of vacancies, are closed in regions of 79% (i.e., an external recruitment process has been organized for this vacancy). During the period from September, 2015 to February, 2016 in Moscow and the Moscow region the percent of closing of vacancies remained approximately at the same level – 48,4, in regions – has decreased and was 49% (table 4).

The situation with linear personnel is more optimistic – the percentage of vacancies' closing in general during the period from January, 2015 to February, 2016 in Moscow and the Moscow region constitutes 105.6%, in regions – 112.3%. The essential difference between half-year and regions is not observed (table 5).

In general, the situation with candidates' promotion – a ratio of the employed workers to retired – is not critical. If the percentage of closed vacancies among

**Table 4**  
**A share ratio of retired chiefs to employed all within 14 months.**

Period	Employment, persons		Dismissals, persons		Share, % Moscow and MR	Share, % Regions
	Moscow and MR	Regions	Moscow and MR	Regions		
January 2015	3	11	6	11	50,0	100,0
February 2015	3	9	10	19	30,0	47,4
March 2015	11	17	10	18	110,0	94,4
April 2015	3	7	12	26	25,0	26,9
May 2015	7	21	15	21	46,7	100,0
June 2015	4	17	17	20	23,5	85,0
July 2015	4	10	6	12	66,7	83,3
August 2015	5	18	10	12	50,0	150,0
January-August 2015	40	110	86	139	46,5	79,1
Сентябрь 2015	5	14	10	25	50,0	56,0
October 2015	6	6	15	15	40,0	40,0
November 2015	6	7	11	16	54,5	43,8
December 2015	4	11	11	19	36,4	57,9
January 2016	3	9	7	14	42,9	64,3
February 2016	6	4	8	15	75,0	26,7
September 2015– February 2016	30	51	62	104	48,4	49,0
January 2015– February 2016	70	161	148	243	47,3	66,3

**Table 5**  
**Ratio of retired employees' share among linear/working personnel to employed in 14 months.**

Period	Employment, persons		Dismissals, persons		Share, % Moscow and MR	Share, % Regions
	Moscow and MR	Regions	Moscow and MR	Regions		
January 2015	356	239	250	275	142,4	86,9
February 2015	535	478	287	273	186,4	175,1
March 2015	505	526	325	293	155,4	179,5
April 2015	369	390	372	380	99,2	102,6
May 2015	288	450	293	302	98,3	149,0
June 2015	366	430	348	435	105,2	98,9
June 2015	297	364	374	415	79,4	87,7
August 2015	225	314	362	386	62,2	81,3
January-August 2015	2941	3191	2611	2759	112,6	115,7
September 2015	233	359	353	386	66,0	93,0
October 2015	293	334	295	322	99,3	103,7
November 2015	333	436	208	220	160,1	198,2
December 2015	238	306	227	232	104,8	131,9
January 2016	113	109	170	187	66,5	58,3
February 2016	169	132	227	228	74,4	57,9
September 2015– February 2016	1379	1676	1480	1575	93,2	106,4
January 2015– February 2016	4320	4867	4091	4334	105,6	112,3

**Table 6**  
**Ratio of the employed workers' share to retired in 14 months, %**

<i>Period</i>	<i>Managers</i>	<i>Employees</i>
January 2015	82,4	115,4
February 2015	41,4	146,8
March 2015	100,0	134,3
April 2015	26,3	98,5
May 2015	77,8	97,6
June 2015	56,8	91,2
June 2015	77,8	85,0
August 2015	104,5	78,5
September 2015	54,3	79,3
October 2015	40,0	95,3
November 2015	48,1	126,4
December 2015	50,0	101,3
January 2016	57,1	79,3
February 2016	43,5	87,0
Average value in 14 months	61,4	101,1

managerial structure (levels: the manager, the head, the director) constitutes 61,4%, on linear/working personnel – more than 100% which indicates that there was not so-called “freezing” of recruitment for linear personnel in this company, and for managerial structure – the minimum number of the employed top-managers was in April, 2015 (table 6).

Similar tendencies are also observed in regional divisions of the above-stated company. The reasons of forced dismissals on the example of one of company's divisions, performing the activities in Tyumen with the total number of personnel of 420 people (further division of the company) are examined in details.

The number of dismissals for 2014 in the company's division has constituted accumulatively – 212 persons, and in 2015 – 206 persons. In figure 6 the total quantity of dismissals from 2014 till 2015 is presented. It is possible to note that in the second half of 2015 (since September till November) the number of dismissals remained approximately at one level. And only in December, 2015 their quantity has decreased to 12. Also it should be noted sharp increase in dismissals both in 2014, and in 2015 in April (figure 6).

Considering dismissals in the company's division and excluding the reason as “not passed a probation period” (i.e., during three months since the moment of employment the employee independently makes the decision to leave the company or the employer announces to the employee the negative decision concerning him/her and unwillingness to continue cooperation), then the number of dismissals in 2014 will constitute 131 people, in 2015 – 155 people. Thus, the number of dismissals after a probation period in 2015 has increased by 20% in comparison with 2014.

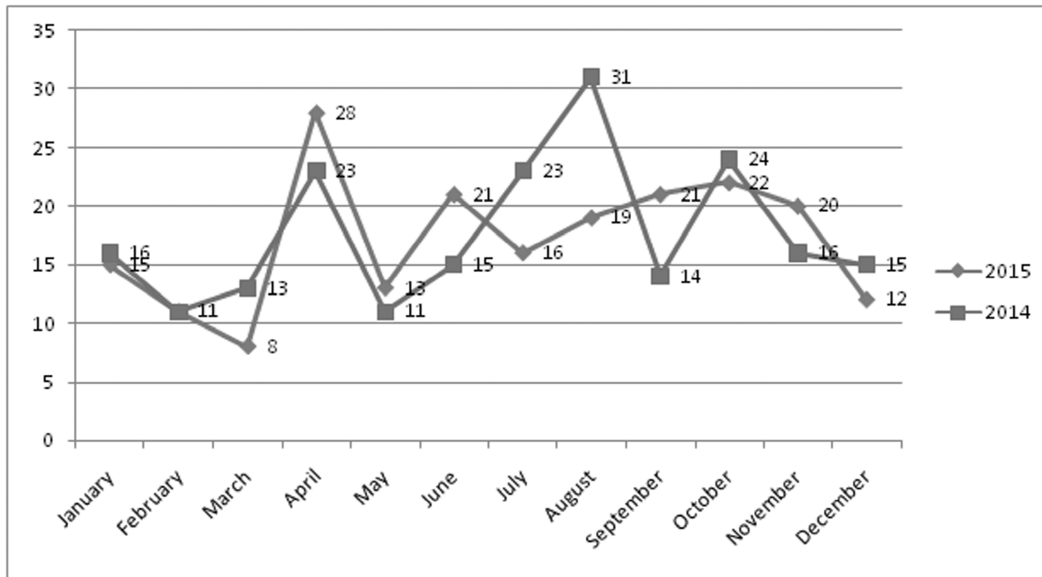


Figure 6: The number of dismissals since 2014 till 2015, persons.

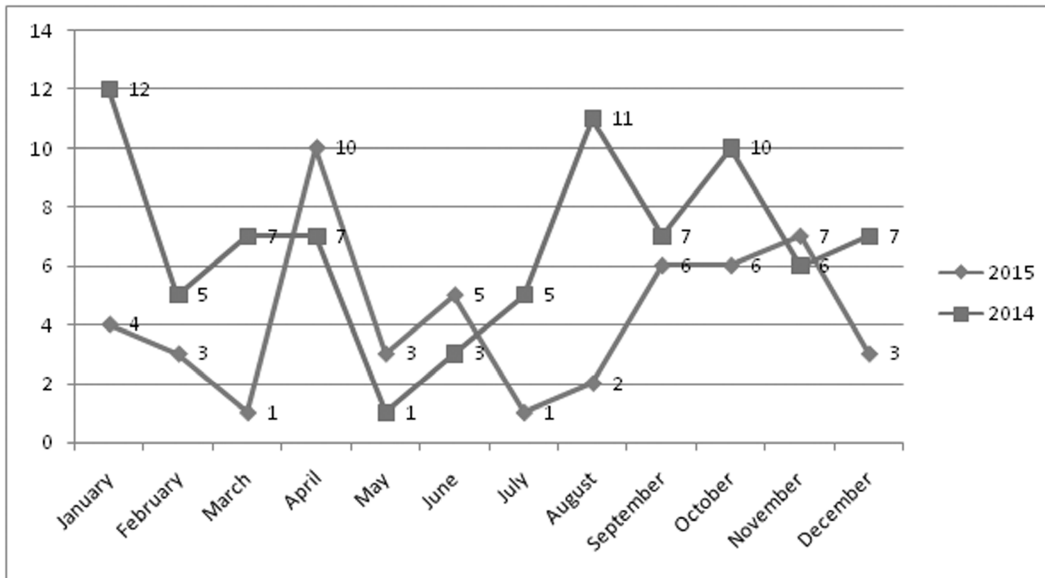


Figure 7: The number of dismissals in the company's division during a probation period since 2014 till 2015, persons.

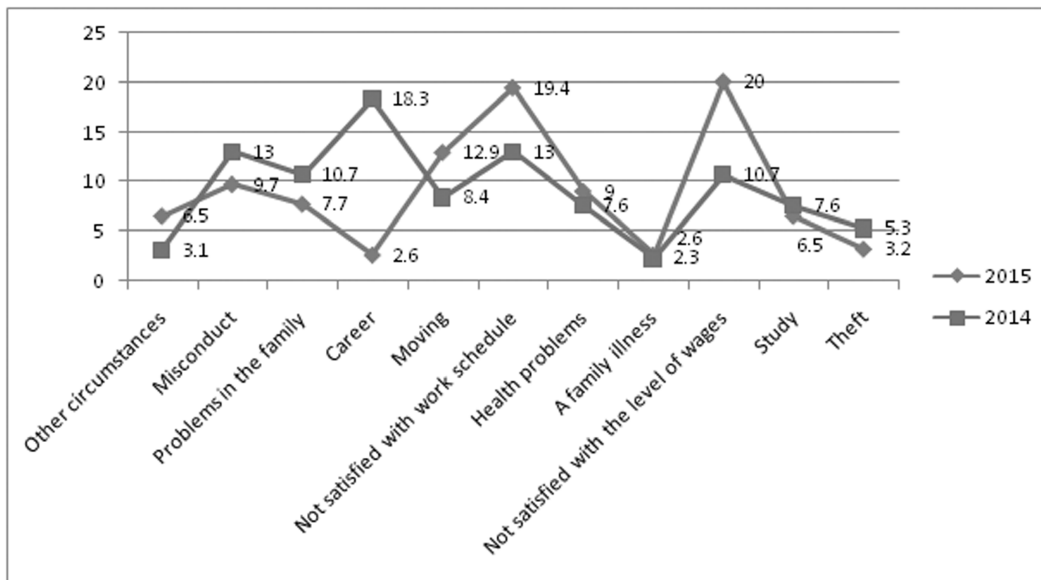
But there is an obvious trend of dismissals' reduction during a probation period in 2015 almost for 40% by 2014 (2014 - 81 people, 2015 - 51 people) which allows authors to assume that in this company the quality of staff selection and also its

maintenance and adaptation has improved. It is possible also that the ambiguous social and economic situation in the country has obliged candidates to treat more seriously and scrupulously not only the search and the choice of work, but also the "entry" stage in the company - to the fastest performance of job duties (figure 7).

Staff dismissals motives from the company's division after passing a probation period are fixed by Personnel and Employment Service department according to the poll. The most frequent reasons in 2014-2015 are presented in table 7, Figure 8. It is

**Table 7**  
**Distribution of dismissals in the company's division**  
**according to concrete reasons in 2014-2015, people.**

Reason for leaving	2014	2015
Other circumstances	4	10
Disciplinary violation, Employment Policies and Procedures (EPP)	17	15
Problems in a family	14	12
Promotion on career	24	4
Moving	11	20
Inconvenient working schedule	17	30
Problems with health	10	14
Illness of relatives	3	4
Low salary level	14	31
Study	10	10
Thievery/stealing	7	5
TOTAL	131	155



**Figure 8: The dismissals' reasons in the company's division in 2014-2015, %**

necessary to pay attention that in 2015 in the company's division the number of dismissals for a cause of disciplinary violation or detection of cases of thievery/stealing has decreased (2014 - 24 cases, 2015 - 20).

Authors pay attention that in 2015 in the company's division the share of dismissals for the purpose of building the career was reduced fast (from 18.3% to 2.6%). This fact gives the possibility to assume that most of employees during 2015 was in a stage of expectation and was not engaged in search of new work and building the career. Authors exclude an opportunity of professional growth and promotion in the company in 2015 since the number of dismissals because of the low salary level (from 10.7% up to 20%) and the inconvenient working schedule has significantly increased (from 13% to 19%).

It should be noted that in 2015 in relation to 2014 there was the fast growth of number of dismissals for the purpose of moving (8, 4% in 2014 to 12, 9% in 2015).

Results of the beginning of 2016 continue the outlined tendency. So, the total quantity of dismissed people in January-February of the current year constituted 20 persons. Only two persons left the job during probation period. The most popular reasons of dismissals: "low salary" – 8 people; "inconvenient working schedule" - 6 people.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

The analysis of the indicators reflecting the personnel release process in the company, being the representative of a federal distribution network with the total number of personnel more than 20 thousand people allows drawing the following conclusions:

1. Since October, 2015 till March, 2016 the number of employed managers and heads in regions is lower, than in the central Russia (Moscow and the Moscow region). While the number of the employed linear personnel on the contrary is more almost on 500 persons.
2. Decrease in number of managerial structure dismissals at the beginning of 2016 is observed in all the country. In 2015 in regional company branches the number of managers and heads' dismissals is more almost for 40% than in Moscow and the Moscow region.
3. Among linear and working personnel recession of dismissals is significantly noticeable since September, 2015 which remained till March, 2016.
4. The share of temporary contracts averages 10% and has increased only during the autumn and winter period that significantly has not influenced the personnel rotation in the company during 2015
5. The percentage of closing vacancies among linear/working personnel is higher than managerial structure for 40%.



The analysis of the reasons of dismissals in the representative office performing activities in Tyumen with the total number of 420 people also shows an active use of personnel release as an optimization method of expenses. So, in comparison with 2014 in the company fast staff reduction was not observed. The quantity of dismissed people in 2 last years is approximately at the same level (212 people – 2014, 206 people – 2015).

The tendency of dismissals' reduction during a probation period in 2015 by 2014 almost for 40% proves that employers began to treat more professionally the process of recruitment, maintenance and training of new employees, understanding that each new employee means additional expenses of financial, temporary and human resources. New employees, employed in the company, also realize the importance of fast and most effective social and professional adaptation.

In 2015 in relation to 2014 there was a fast growth of number of dismissals because of moving (8,4% in 2014 to 12,9% in 2015) as one of consequences of social and economic transformations of the country – internal migrations of the population in search of "better life".

The most popular reasons of dismissals in 2015 are: "low salary level" (20%) and "inconvenient working schedule" (19%). Perhaps, these barriers are artificially created by the employer forcing the personnel to leave at their own will. The reason for leaving as "a salary delay" was not sounded by employees; however, perhaps, it is hidden in the reason "other circumstances".

## 5. CONCLUSION

As a result of the financial and economic crisis in Russia which started in 2014 and showed in devaluation of Russian ruble in relation to foreign currencies, reduction of prices of energy resources (the sale constitutes the considerable part in budget revenues of Russia) and also imposition of economic sanctions concerning Russia because of events in Ukraine, Russian managers are forced to optimize structure and number of personnel, resorting to the following actions. (Ustinova, Uteshev, 2014; Khairullina, 2012; Khairullina, 2014).

Staff reduction is the most radical measure. It is not always is economically advantageous since the obligation on dismissal wage payment is assigned to the employer, besides the violation of staff reduction procedure is an administrative offense and is punished by a fine. Consequences in the form of negative reaction of personnel, an intense situation can be reflected in motivation of personnel and decrease in its productivity.

- ~ Vacation time without preserving a salary. The procedure of forcing employees to take vacation without preserving a salary is not provided by the Russian legislative system. By agreement between the head and the employee the latter can write the application for such vacation and in this case they keep the workplace.

- ~ The implementation of the mode of part-time job where the employer can reduce both duration of the working day, and quantity of working days in a week. According to the terms of part-time job the worker's compensation is made in proportion to his/her working time depending on the executed amount of works.
- ~ Change of wages system as the most popular method of cost optimization provides awards' reduction, additional payments, compensations, and even their total absence. Some employers pass to piece-work wages when earnings of the worker depend on quantity of produced units or the executed amount of works.
- ~ The structure and number of personnel optimization provides consolidation/liquidation/reorganization of structural divisions of the company, change of their number that, certainly, can lower staff expenses
- ~ "Forced" dismissals – application of this method by the Russian companies, unfortunately, is rather popular and is perceived by them as alternative to official staff reductions, but in case of which there are no additional expenses and risks of payment of penalties. The employer consciously creates absolute obstacles for a further labor activity of the employee in the company (conflicts, change of the working schedule, job responsibilities and so forth) in case of which the employee writes the application on dismissal at own will. (Nosova2016; Reznichenko2014)

In large companies where the economic situation is not so critical, such optimization method of staff as "hiring freezing" or natural employee turnover is widespread. I.e., after dismissal of the worker, this vacancy is not opened but the internal movement or the duties' distributions between staff members are made.

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