



## Will Telework Work For Your Organization?

### Questions to Ask Before You Begin

#### **Q: What is teleworking?**

A: Teleworking, also known as telecommuting, replaces travel to, from and for work with telecommunications technologies. It refers to working at home or another location on a full- or part-time basis. Many employees telework only once or twice per week. On the other hand, some employees telework full time and only go to the office on an occasional basis.

#### **Q: How do I know if the teleworkers are really working?**

A: The employee's completed work product is the indicator. Telemanagers must focus on quantity, quality and timeliness. They must manage by objectives or results, rather than by direct observation.

#### **Q: What type of equipment is needed for teleworking?**

A: Teleworking can be done with as little technology as a phone, a piece of paper and a pen, or may involve computer hardware, software and other technologies. The amount and type of equipment for successful teleworking will depend on the nature of the job and the frequency of teleworking.

#### **Q: What types of jobs are appropriate for teleworking?**

A: Most "information-based" jobs are appropriate for teleworking. Teleworking is ideal for jobs that require reading, writing, research, working with data, and talking on the phone. Many jobs that may not seem appropriate at first may be modified so that the worker can telework, at least on a part time basis. One of the secrets of designing a good teleworking program lies in the ability to organize specific jobs so that they can be done without constant interaction or need for feedback.

#### **Q: Which employees are ideal for teleworking?**

A: The ideal teleworker is well organized, can work independently, and requires minimal supervision. Successful teleworkers have a high degree of job skill and knowledge, and strong time-management skills. Teleworkers like working at home or away from the office for at least part of the week, and don't mind working alone. Teleworking is not ideal or desirable for every employee.



**Q: Who is the ideal manager for supervising teleworkers?**

A: The ideal manager of teleworkers (telemanager) has a positive attitude towards teleworking and is willing to allow employees to telework. A telemanager manages by results and not by monitoring work hours. Telemanagers delegate work easily, are well organized and trust their employees. Not every manager is comfortable with a style of management that is conducive to successful teleworking.

**Q: How will managers know how to supervise teleworkers?**

A: Teleworking presents an opportunity for telemanagers to become better supervisors. By focusing on the employee's work product, telemanagers will increase their own organizational skills and their own skill in managing by objectives.

**Q: Will employees work less if they are at home working unsupervised?**

A: No, survey results showed marked improvements in productivity. Productivity increases because employees have fewer distractions and interruptions, work at their peak times and experience less stress due to the absence of the commute to work.

**Q: Will loyalty to the company be diminished?**

A: No, loyalty is likely to improve as employees are happier with their working conditions. Employee morale also improves as a result of teleworking.

**Q: How can social interaction be maintained to keep teleworkers from feeling isolated from their colleagues?**

A: Many techniques are available to overcome the feeling of isolation. These include part-time teleworking, core days in the office and frequent communication via telephone and voice-mail. In addition, teleworkers should be included in all scheduled meeting and events.

**Q: What happens if the employee is injured at home while working?**

A: If the employee is hurt while working, he or she is covered by workers compensation, just as at the regular place of business.



**Q: Is teleworking a substitute for child or eldercare?**

A: No, a teleworker must focus on his or her job, not handle demanding child or eldercare situations. However, due to their flexibility, teleworkers are better able to manage their work/family schedules.

**Q: Can teleworking result in reduced use of sick leave?**

A: Yes. An employee working in a regular office usually has to use half a day to get to the doctor or dentist appointment. A teleworker can take one or two hours and then return to work. In addition, often an employee that does not feel well enough to drive or whose child is sick may work some hours at home.

**Q: Will the need for overtime decrease as a result of teleworking?**

A: With teleworking, employee productivity generally increases, which could reduce the need for overtime.

**Q: What are some of the issues that teleworkers should be aware of?**

A: Teleworkers should designate a work area for teleworking in their homes. A separate room provides greater privacy but is not necessarily required. Teleworkers must gain the trust and support of their families, coworkers, clients, and managers. Teleworkers need to be aware of the tendency to work long hours and the need to take breaks.