

Telework Managers

Introduction to Telework

Teleworking, also known as telecommuting or flexiplace, is a 21st century and beyond business solution, incorporating the newest technologies to enable productive work away from the standard office atmosphere. With technology developing at immeasurable speeds, telework offers a fresh, new alternative for many.

Telework is basically a technological system that allows workers to both enjoy the comforts of home while seamless to the organization of customer, conducting their normal jobs.

Telework arrangements are key to strengthening an organization. Telework can, among other things, help generate extra productivity; save on expenses; and improve employee retention. Allowing your employees to telework not only strengthens the trust of current employees, but also attracts new employees looking for flexibility in the workplace.

This section discusses some of the many benefits of Telework as well as a few managerial tips that may allow for a smoother implementation and transition to the world of telework.

For more information and support about Telework, please visit www.telework.gov, the Federal Government's Telework support and description website.

Managerial Benefits from Telework

Managers themselves also benefit from allowing their employees to telework. With the smaller office work force due to teleworkers, managers reduce time spent on direct supervision, often giving them additional time to focus on more essential work (management of the organization, strategic planning, etc...). In addition to these personal benefits, Telework is also often times used as a powerful marketing tool. There is a significant portion of the work force whose jobs could be completed even more efficiently, while at the same time never leaving the house. In addition, teleworkers have proved to be more productive, more cost efficient and even more loyal to their respective companies. Below is just a sample of the various benefits that telework has the capabilities to provide:

Office Space Costs

- With a reduced office work force, simple office-space costs are reduced, greatly improving cost efficiency.
- Full- time teleworkers also enable corporations to reduce real-estate costs.
- Worker flexibility allows money to be spent in other areas rather than on office essentials such as desks, telephones, etc...
- Reduced absenteeism, workers may still be able to work at home on days they otherwise may have been absent from the office.

Worker Productivity

- Teleworkers are found to be even more productive than their office-working counterparts. Studies have found that teleworkers work nearly an hour more per day, translating to nearly 250 more hours of work per year!
- Working at home reduces office distractions, promoting a more productive and efficient work environment.

Retention and Recruiting

- Teleworking jobs are often much more attractive to job seekers, aiding employers in recruiting.
- Teleworkers have also said that they have been much more satisfied with a teleworking job versus an office job.
- One of the reasons that telework employees often reject outside job offers is because of the flexibility and versatility that telework allows.

General Workforce Benefits

- Other benefits include reduced gas consumption, traffic congestion, etc...
- No commute time whatsoever, also no reduction of communication capabilities with rapidly developing technologies.
- Accommodates people with disabilities, allowing them to work in their more disable-friendly homes.

Even with these immeasurable benefits, Telework, however, also bring along with it other work-place and managerial concerns. The greatest is that of implementation. In order to properly implement the Telework environment to operate efficiently, both teleworkers and tele-managers must be sufficiently trained. Technology must also be adapted to transform its usability to such a different work atmosphere. However, the benefits of Telework far out-weigh any of the initial costs and concerns of Telework implementation.

The true benefits of telework; to the manager, to the teleworker, to the corporation, can only truly be seen from a firsthand experience. It is only with the implementation of telework that a company is able to appreciate the absolute magnitude of its contributions to a 21st century operation.

Managerial Tips for Telework

When initiating, integrating/interacting with Telework, there are a few suggestions that can be offered to make this entire process run more efficiently. Listed below are some of the most common tips given to employers and employees of telework. Telework studies have shown that the following SEVEN suggestions have been deemed "essential" in successful teleworking environments. It is suggested that these receive ample attention.

Develop consistent, clear, measurable and reasonable telework program goals.

- To measure if telework is accomplishing what was hoped it would accomplish.
- Reasonable, achievable goals are best for the initial stages of a newly implemented program.

Utilize an executive champion

- Need support from the top! Shows employees that telework is the work environment of the future, works to prevent worker apathy.

Utilize a program manager/coordinator whose primary concern is telework.

- Provides the necessary expertise and direct control to facilitate a better, more effective telework program.

Require telework training for managers of teleworkers.

- Creates consistent treatment and evaluation of teleworkers across the teleworking work environment.

Ensure that teleworker performance appraisals are consistent and follow the same procedures as both teleworkers and office-place workers. Also, regular performance reviews, especially in initial stages.

- Cuts down on concerns that teleworkers and office-place workers have different advantages and disadvantages in their work environment.
- Consistent treatment satisfies all workers.
- Allows employer to know which occupations, after first stages, are more suitable for telework.

Prior to implementation, conduct a detailed assessment to gauge teleworker and organizational technology needs for the telework program.

- Corporation knows the technological and financial needs---economic needs--
- prior to committing fully on telework.

Establish technological support guidelines for those involved in the telework program.

- Cuts down on 'gray area' problems, personal versus business technological problems when it comes to telework.

Other Suggestions:

Determine very clear guidelines as to which occupations qualify for telework and which do not.

- Reduces worker complaint as to " why can't I telework?"

Develop a diverse telework project planning team with representatives of corporate organizations such as finance, human resources, real estate, management, risk management, information technology and all other applicable sectors.

- Creates a solid foundation for the implementation of telework.

As a reference to be used by other telework models, studies also found that the majority of successfully implemented telework environments contained the involvement of the following areas in a company/corporation:

- Organizational issues
- Human resources management
- Technology requirements
- Economic considerations
- Facility requirements
- Project/program management
- Legal/risk management issues
- Program promotion/marketing