
Questions & Answers

What is Telework?

Telework is working at a location other than the conventional office. This location may be the home or an office close to home. Telework involves moving work to the worker, instead of moving workers to work. Telework is an alternative to the traditional office setting.

Advantages to the Employer

- Increased productivity
- Fewer distractions/interruptions
- More continuous work time
- No commute = decreased stress
- Work at personal "peak" times
- Increased flexibility = employee trust and responsibility
- Decreased absenteeism
- Decreased turnover
- Increased recruitment advantage
- Increased labor pool
- Improved managerial techniques
- Improved employee morale
- Decreased overhead

Issues for Employers

- Increased security responsibility
- Changes in management philosophy
- Managing by objectives—not observation
- Managing projects—not individual tasks
- Monitoring of actual work hours
- Regulatory and legal issues
- Start-up and operating costs

Advantages to the Employee

- Decreased stress
- Decreased or eliminated commute time/expense
- More flexible work/family schedules
- Increased job satisfaction
- Improved work environment
- Decreased cost of clothing and food
- Closer bonds with the family and community

Employee Concerns

- Isolation from co-workers
- Less visibility
- Lack of support services
- Loss of living space
- Increased at-home costs
- Distractions in the home environment



What traits make the best Teleworkers?

Those who:

- Require minimal supervision
- Require minimal social interaction
- Have a high level of skill and knowledge in dealing with work-related responsibilities
- Work well with family members
- Prefer the home environment
- Are self-motivated
- Exhibit a desire towards Telework
- Are well-organized
- Demonstrate a high level of productivity
- Possess strong time-management skills



How do I know if Teleworkers are really working?

The employee's completed work product is the indicator that he/she is working. Managers of Teleworkers must focus on the quality, quantity, and timeliness of the work product, rather than on the process the Teleworker used to achieve the end result. Managers must manage by objectives or results, rather than by observation. The manager and the employee should establish the employee's goals and objectives together.

Will the employee work less if they are working at home unsupervised?

No. Survey results show marked improvements in productivity. Productivity increases because employees have fewer distractions and interruptions, work at their best times, and are less stressed due to the absence of the commute to work.

How will managers know how to supervise Teleworkers?

Telework presents an opportunity for managers to become better managers. By focusing on the employee's work product, managers will increase their own organizational skills and their skills in managing by objective. Managers of teleworkers should be given training on managing remote employees.

What kinds of jobs and what type of employees are suitable for Telework?

Many jobs or parts of jobs are suitable for Telework. Tasks that are successfully managed in Telework programs are those where the individual already works alone handling information, such as writing, reading, telephoning, computer programming, word processing, and data entry.

Should a supervisor require an employee to work at home?

No. An employee's participation in a Telework program should be entirely voluntary.

How are Teleworkers selected?

Managers or supervisors who understand the concept of Telework should identify jobs they feel are suitable for work away from the traditional office. Employees will fill-out questionnaires which have been developed to assist departments in determining employees whose jobs and personal characteristics make them good candidates for successful Telework. To be selected, an employee must have the endorsement of his/her supervisor.

Won't loyalty to the organization diminish?

No. In fact, loyalty is likely to improve since employees are happier with their work conditions. Employee morale also improves as a result of Telework.

How can social interaction be maintained to keep Teleworkers from feeling isolated from their colleagues?

There are many techniques for overcoming feelings of isolation. These include part-time Telework, core days in the office, and frequent communication by telephone or voice mail. The Teleworkers should be included in all scheduled meetings and events.

Is Telework a substitute for child or elder care?

No. A teleworker must focus on his/her job, not handle demanding child or elder care situations. However, Teleworkers are better able to manage their work/family schedules because they have greater flexibility in their work hours. In some cases, a parent may be able to work on a part-time basis—20 hours per week while the baby is sleeping—allowing the employee to reduce the length of her maternity leave enabling the department to continue to have the services of that employee.

Can Telework result in reduced use of sick leave?

Yes. An employee working in the regular office usually has to use a half-day of sick time to get to a doctor or dental appointment. A teleworker can take an hour or two off for the appointment and then work that time later in the day or the week. Also, sometimes an employee who does not feel well enough to drive to the office can work at home.

Of what issues should teleworkers be aware?

Working Long Hours - Teleworkers need to be aware of the tendency to work long hours and the need to take regular breaks.

Exercising self-control - If Teleworkers find themselves procrastinating; they should evaluate their work habits and make necessary changes to ensure productivity.



Designating Space - A designated work area is recommended for Telework. A separate workspace may mean fewer distractions or interruptions and a higher level of discipline and organization.

Gaining Support - A family or supervisor's attitude may sometimes be detrimental to a Telework arrangement. Teleworkers must work to gain the support and understanding of those around them.

How do you manage the employees who cannot Telework?

It is important to include the non-Teleworkers in your planning process. Specific guidelines should be established regarding how the workload is distributed so neither Teleworkers nor non-Teleworks are unfairly overloaded. Also, all employees should have a clear understanding of the selection criteria for Telework to minimize feelings of resentment over who was and who was not selected to participate in the program.

What happens if the employee is hurt at home while working?

If the employee is hurt while working at home, he/she is covered for worker's compensation, just as if at the regular place of business.

Will the need for overtime decrease as a result of Telework?

With Telework, employee productivity generally increases, which could reduce overtime.

What should employees do to prepare to be effective Teleworkers?

Contact your organization's DOE-Flex Advisor – see name and contact information below: