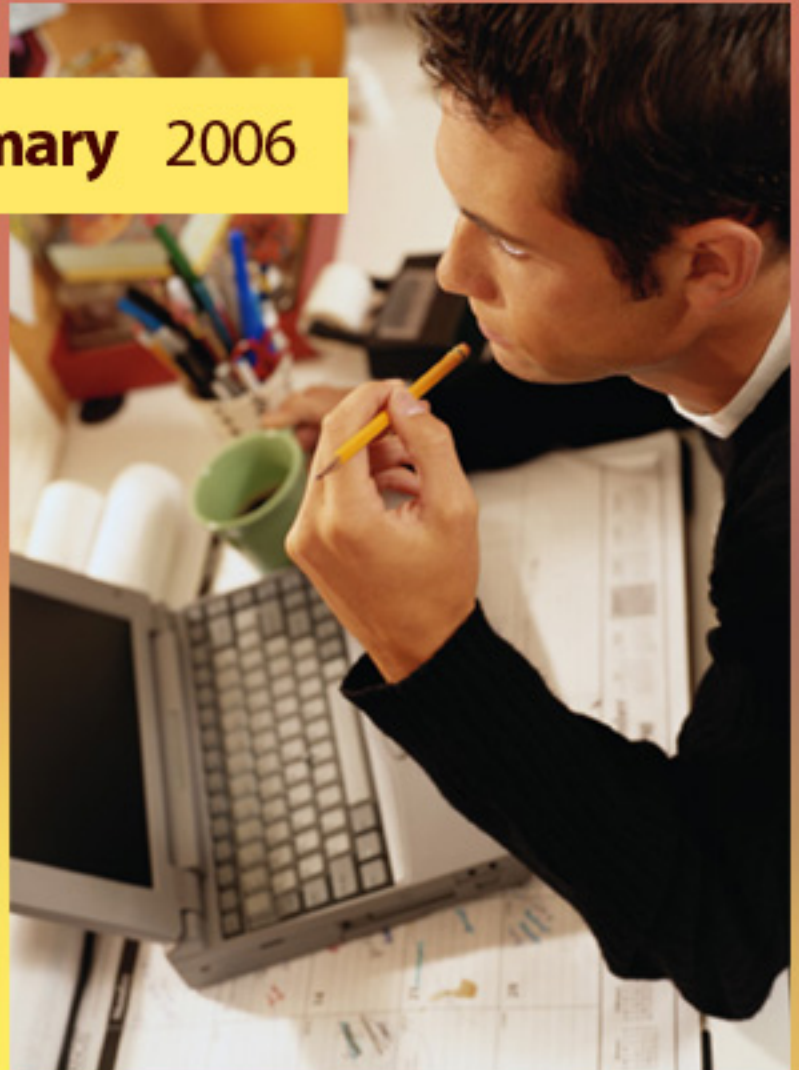


The Telework Coalition

Telework Benchmarking Study
Best Practices for Large-Scale Implementation in
Public and Private Sector Organizations

Executive Summary 2006



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Executive Summary

The objective of this study is to identify the best practices of public and private sector organizations with large-scale telework programs to better understand how their programs were created and how they have grown. The criteria used to evaluate best practices include program development and administration, implementation, technology and equipment, and program evaluation.

Organizations were identified based on their reputation for having large, well-established telework programs. Thirteen organizations participated, including three public-sector organization and ten private-sector companies. The industries represented include finance, government, health care, science, technology, and telecommunications.

Data was gathered through telephone interviews with key representatives from those organizations willing and available to participate in the project. This study represents information gathered from 13 organizations which collectively have more than 77,000 teleworkers and nearly 60,000 additional mobile workers. The participating organizations' telework programs have been in place for an average of 10 years. Key findings related to the study criteria are as follows:

Program Development and Administration

Several common themes emerged with regard to how the participating organizations' telework programs have changed over time and how they are administered today.

- Many of the programs have changed focus since they were initially introduced. Today, most are driven by facilities as a way to reduce the cost of underutilized real estate; however, business continuity is becoming increasingly important, especially for those organizations whose people and facilities were affected by catastrophic events like 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina.
- Recruitment and retention remains a key driver for many participating organizations, especially since flexibility is in high demand by today's workforce. However, human resources, which has been a common point of entry for telework, played a minimal role in program development and expansion within the participating organizations.
- Mobility – the ability to work anywhere – is becoming the trend for many of the participating organizations, typically those that already have a large number of teleworkers.
- In most cases, the participating organizations' telework programs are administered internally using a small core staff or a cross-functional team.
- All of the participating organizations have “formal” telework programs with written policies and procedures, but those organizations with the largest number of teleworkers stressed driving the decision down to the manager-employee level. Interestingly, those organizations transitioning to mobility indicated that these programs are very unstructured and viewed as “*just work.*”
- Internal resistance was fairly common at the outset for many of the participating organizations; however, resistance turned into support once management saw the benefits first-hand.

Implementation

- Nearly all of the participating organizations' telework programs are voluntary. Only one organization is placing new hires directly into a full-time telework environment.
- Another common approach among the participants is that all jobs and employees are generally considered suitable for telework.
- The training programs vary widely for the participating organizations, ranging from none to several weeks of intensive remote training. The trend is towards on-line training and tools.
- Other best practices for successful implementation include linking telework to cost savings at the business unit level, taking a deliberate "grass roots" approach rather than imposing another corporate initiative on people, and obtaining union support and involvement from the outset.

Technology and Equipment

- Virtually all of the organizations have standardized on a common set of technology solutions which include laptop computers, a Virtual Private Network (VPN) for secure remote access, and extended help desk support, which is often on a 24/7 basis and frequently outsourced.
- Many organizations are beginning to use Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP), a technology which enables users to make calls over the Internet. VoIP eliminates the need for a second phone line and significantly reduces long-distance charges, especially for international calls.
- File sharing and collaboration tools are also being used to a greater extent.

Evaluation

Evaluation was an integral part of most of the participating organizations' telework programs; however, what was measured and how it is measured vary widely. The organizations generally measured participation, office space utilization, recruitment and retention, and/or the adequacy of training and supervisor support.

Unexpected Consequences

The participating organizations reported a number of unexpected consequences resulting from their telework programs, including greater flexibility for employees to relocate to other parts of the country, greater ability to maintain business continuity in response to natural or man-made disasters, lower turn-over rates and better performance for teleworking employees, access to a larger number of qualified applicants, and fewer layoffs for teleworkers than their office-based counterparts.

Regardless of sector or industry, the participating organizations expressed a common sentiment – Teleworking is nothing special. It is just the way they work and do business.