

TeleWorking FAQs

What is teleworking?

Teleworking, also called telecommuting, is when an employee works at home or a location other than the office, replacing travel to and from work with telecommuting technologies (e.g. phone, computer, fax, etc.) Many employees telework only once or twice per week, while others telework full time and only go to the office occasionally.

Can teleworking result in reduced use of sick leave?

Yes! When a teleworker gets sick, continues to "brave it out" and work, none of their co-workers are exposed. A teleworker may be able to work a few hours, rather than taking a whole day off, if they have a sick child at home or are not feeling well enough to drive.

Do employees work less if they are at home working without supervision?

Surveys actually show marked improvements in the productivity of those who work from home. They have fewer distractions and interruptions, work during their most productive times of day and are less stressed not having to commute.

How can social interaction be maintained to keep teleworkers from feeling isolated from their co-workers?

There are many techniques available to prevent worker isolation. Included among them are: part-time teleworking, key days in the office and frequent communication by phone, voice mail and e-mail. Additionally, teleworkers should always be included in all scheduled meetings and events.

What are some of the issues that teleworkers need to take into consideration?

Teleworkers should designate a specific work area that is used only for teleworking. While a separate room provides greater privacy, it is not required. Teleworkers must gain the respect and trust of their co-workers, clients and managers by their availability, responsiveness and work quality. Additionally, teleworkers need to have established rules with family members regarding their work hours and being interrupted.

What type of employee would make a good teleworker?

An ideal teleworker is well organized, can work independently and requires minimal supervision. They have a high degree of job skill and knowledge, and strong time-management skills. Teleworkers like working at home or away from the office at least part of the week and don't mind working alone. Teleworking is not desirable for an employee who has a high need for social interaction in the workplace.

What types of jobs are appropriate for teleworking?

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.

What type of equipment is needed for teleworking?

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

Who is the ideal manager for supervising teleworkers?

A good manager of teleworkers (telemanager) has a positive attitude towards teleworking and is willing to allow employees to be self-sufficient and independent. A telemanager manages by results and not by monitoring work hours. They delegate work easily, are well organized and trust their employees. Not every manager is comfortable with a style of management that supports successful teleworking.

Will employee loyalty to the employer be diminished?

Loyalty is likely to improve as a result of teleworking. Teleworking employees are happier, feel more productive and generally have a higher morale.