The 21st Century Workforce:

Handbook for Managing Teleworkers

Toolkit

By
Sandra Gurvis
&
Don Philpott

Government Training Inc.™

CONTENTS

About the authors

Sandra Gurvis

Sandra Gurvis (www.sgurvis.com), professional development instructor for Government Training Inc (GTI), is the author of fourteen books and hundreds of magazine articles. Her titles include MANAGING THE TELECOMMUTING EMPLOYEE with Michael Amigoni (Adams , 2009), MANAGEMENT BASICS, 2nd ed (Adams , 2007), and CAREER FOR CONFORMISTS (Marlowe, 2001), which was a selection of the Quality Paperback Book Club. Her books have been featured on "Good Morning America," "CBS Up to the Minute," "ABC World News Tonight," in USA Today and in other newspapers and on television and radio stations across the country; and have been excerpted in magazines.

Sandra has traveled throughout the US , lecturing and providing information on telework and telecommuting, as well as other issues relating to management and self-employment. She lives in Columbus, Ohio.

Don Philpott

Don Philpott is editor of International Homeland Security, a quarterly journal for homeland security professionals, and has been writing, reporting and broadcasting on international events, trouble spots and major news stories for more than 40 years. For 20 years he was a senior correspondent with Press Association -Reuters, the wire service, and traveled the world on assignments including Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Israel, South Africa and Asia.

He writes for magazines and newspapers in the United States and Europe and is a contributor to radio and television programs on security and other issues. He is the author of more than 90 books on a wide range of subjects and has had more than 5,000 articles printed in publications around the world. His most recent books are Terror - Is America Safe?, The Wounded Warrior Handbook, The Workplace Violence Prevention Handbook, and Public School Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Management. He is a member of the National Press Club.

Symbols

Throughout this book you will see a number of icons displayed in the margins. The icons are there to help you as you work through the Five Step process. Each icon acts as an advisory – for instance alerting you to things that you must always do or should never do. The icons used are:

Must Do   This is something that you must always do

No No   This is something you should never do

Tips   Really useful tips

Remember   Points to bear in mind

Checklist   Have you checked off or answered everything on this list?

Step One. Overcoming Management Resistance

Telework yields multiple benefits to the Federal government, other public sector organizations, the private sector, the individual employee, and the community and has become increasingly prevalent in the modern workforce. Its results are so proven in fact, that Public Law 106-346 §359 requires Federal agencies to "establish a policy under which eligible employees of the agency may participate in telecommuting to the maximum extent possible without diminished employee performance."

Remember

The Arguments For Teleworking

Key benefits stemming from mainstream implementation of telework include:

☐ A workforce that teleworks on a regular basis is also capable of leveraging its decentralized work settings to maintain continuity of operations (COOP) in the face of a natural disaster, terrorist attack, or other emergency situation.

☐ Telework contributes to a greener environment by diminishing vehicle carbon emissions as a result of a truncated or nonexistent employee commute.

☐ The job performance of teleworkers has been documented to either exceed or remain on par with that of workers in a traditional workplace arrangement.

☐ Telework increases personal freedom and flexibility, thereby improving morale and decreasing stress.

☐ A strong telework program improves employee retention and recruitment by increasing an employer's attractiveness in the current competitive job market.

☐ Telework accommodates persons with disabilities.

☐ Telework permits more time for employees to care for their loved ones.

☐ Telework can enable reduced demand for office space as well as reduced facility operating costs.

☐ Telework allows for optimal use of technological advances.

Continuity of Operations

Telework is a key factor in emergency planning, response, and prevention because it allows for the continuity of operations (COOP), or business continuity plans, where catastrophe would inhibit necessary protocol. Essentially,

Remember

telework decentralizes and spreads the workforce to reduce the ratio of those impacted by a disaster. In fact, many public and private sector workplace policies now contain a telework component for COOP in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks, Hurricane Katrina, and potential pandemic or other widespread illnesses.

The George W. Bush administration, in particular, made clear the necessity for emergency planning and response. On May 3, 2006, President Bush issued the Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza, which outlines the government's approach for dealing with the threat of pandemic influenza. It states: "All departments and agencies will be responsible for developing pandemic plans that … (2) ensure that the department or agency will be able to maintain its essential functions and services in the face of significant and sustained absenteeism."

To put absenteeism in a more quantitative sense, the Department of Health and Human Services expects a workplace absenteeism rate of up to 40 percent in the middle of a severe pandemic. The Telework Exchange reports that 73 percent of Federal employees assert that they will not show up at the office in the event of a pandemic outbreak and that only 27 percent of employees note that their agencies' COOP plans incorporate telework.

Remember A telework program should not be merely delineated in a COOP plan, however. To be effective during an emergency, employees must already be actively teleworking, to smooth the transition from office to home and ensure security concerns are adequately addressed. This means as many employees as possible should already have telework capability including alternate site work arrangements, connectivity, necessary equipment, and frequent enough opportunities to telework so their systems have been tested and are functional.

The Scoop on COOP

What is a COOP plan?

A COOP plan is a plan developed for agencies to follow in the event of an incident situation (such as natural or human-made disaster) to maintain business operations. The plan should be sustainable for 30 days and include elements such as alternate facilities that could be operational within 12 hours of a disaster. The objective of COOP planning is to ensure the continuous performance of an agency's essential operations during an emergency; protect essential facilities, equipment, records, and other assets; reduce or mitigate disruptions to operations; reduce loss of life, minimize damage and losses; and achieve a timely and orderly recovery from an emergency and resumption of full service to customers.

What does a COOP plan entail?

Usually a COOP plan consists of plans and procedures, identification of essential elements, delegations of authority, orders of succession, alternate facilities, interoperable communications, vital records and databases, and tests, training, and exercises.

Where did COOP begin?

COOP essentially began in 1988, with the Executive Order 12656 that called for each agency to ensure it could continue to provide services during an emergency. Ten years later, the 1998 Presidential Decision Directive 67 stated that agencies should plan for all types of hazards, from floods and fires to terrorist attacks as well as alternate facilities that could be operational within 12 hours of a disaster and that the COOP operations should be sustainable for 30 days. In 2004, the Federal Preparedness Circular 65 was updated to establish standard elements for agencies' COOP plans and discusses how agencies can develop and implement their plans.

How are COOP and telework related?

Aside from telework's benefits such as employee work-life balance, increased productivity, and reduced operating costs, telework also enables continuous vital government services during a state of emergency. Continuity of operations relies more than ever on enabling government employees and contractors to work from any location. Therefore, a critical component of COOP planning is an information technology framework that enables secure, remote use of the same IT resources that would be accessed from the main office location. This infrastructure enables employees to work remotely at any time, not just in the event of a disaster.

Recent studies underscore the value of telework as a COOP measure. According to the Telework Exchange "COOP: A Wake Up Call" study, 40 percent of respondents believe their agency is not prepared to continue operating in the wake of a disaster. However, of respondents who indicated that their agency has a telework component in their COOP plans, 90 percent feel that their agency would be able to maintain business operations during a disaster. Additionally, according to a recent OPM study, 35 agencies have incorporated telework into their COOP programs, while another 37 say they are considering adding telecommuting to these initiatives.

Reduction of Energy Consumption and the Associated Carbon Footprint

Exorbitant gas prices; air pollution; irate, frustrated workers burning wasteful fuel sitting in traffic: America's post-industrial age has left modernized cities inundated with smog, vehicle emissions, and other environmental toxins. As we hand over our global home to posterity, we seek to buy less plastic, turn off the computer at night, use the recycling bin, and yes, even telework.

Remember

Telework curbs the emission of vehicle byproducts by keeping employees off the road or at least reducing their commute. As an added benefit, less time spent on the road also means less traffic congestion for those who choose to commute.

Domestically, the Federal government is seeking to preserve environmental purity, cut oil dependency, and help drivers save money. Telework researchers Kate Lister and Tom Harnish reviewed data from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Transportation (DOT), General Services Administration (GSA), and seven other sources and found that if 33 million Americans worked from home, Gulf oil imports could be reduced by 24-48 percent, greenhouse gases would be lowered by up to 67 million metric tons a year,

and as much as 7.5 trillion gallons of gasoline each year would be saved, for a total of $110 million in savings a day. According to the Telework Exchange, if all eligible Federal employees teleworked two days per week, the Federal workforce would collectively save $3.3 billion and 2.7 million tons of pollutants annually.

Seeking to lead by example, the GSA determined the estimated savings based on a workforce of 12,205 teleworking one day per week. The environmental and other savings projections are based on fuel costs and other factors as of 9/3/07.

Total GSA Telework Work Trip Savings:

☐ 4,735,146 single occupancy vehicle miles.

☐ 220,239.3 gallons of gas.

☐ $615,789 fuel costs.

☐ 2,299.5 tons of emissions.

Remember It is clear from the figures above that GSA telework alone can achieve significant reductions in vehicle emissions, refueling costs, and vehicle maintenance costs from extended wear and tear. And figures are expected to be even higher today since gas costs have increased dramatically since 2007.

Improved Performance

The current research consensus is that telework either improves job performance or maintains existing levels. According to a recent Telework Exchange study of Federal managers, 66 percent of managers who manage teleworkers find that teleworkers are as productive as their in-office counterparts. A considerable case in point is the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's (PTO) telework program.

PTO has one of the largest telework programs in the Federal government because it established sound telework policies that led to maximum participation, abundant program support, and aggressive top level leadership. As of October 2007, there were 3,609 PTO employees participating in some form of telework. This represents an impressive 40.7 percent of PTO's total work force and 45.7 percent of total eligible employees.

PTO identified strong job performance as one of its key goals for its telework program. Examiners participating in one PTO pilot telework program showed a productivity increase of 10 percent with no difference in the quality of work. By 2003, there was so much interest in its telework pilot program that the agency needed to create a waiting list for participation. In part because of its use of telework, PTO has been recognized by Business Week magazine as one

of the best places in America to launch a career and to round out one's career, and by Families magazine as one of the best places in the Washington area to work if you have a family.

While PTO may quantitatively assess productivity due to determining the amount of patents reviewed, many Federal agencies' productivity rates are not so easily calculated. There is no truly valid quantitative measure of typical white collar job performance. In spite of this however, even at jobs lacking the yardstick-type measurements used at PTO, there is ample evidence to suggest that telework has no impact on productivity and in some cases it is actually increased.

According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Office of the Inspector General, frequent teleworkers reported that they performed difficult work faster while at the home office (due to lack of frequent interruptions), lost no time due to traffic congestion or the stresses associated with commuting, and used less sick leave because healthcare providers were located closer to their homes.

A two-year study conducted on the productivity of a telework program at the Administrative Appeals Office in the Department of Justice (DOJ) on production-oriented tasks, i.e., adjudicative casework, showed an increase in productivity of approximately 71 percent. And at the National Energy and Water Management Center, telework afforded a 44 percent increase in productive person-hours.

There is a gamut of reasons telecommuting has the ability to increase productivity. Telecommuters typically find working at home to be more pleasant and less stressful, and people who enjoy their work and/or are less stressed are likely to be more productive. According to a study of the British communications agency, BT, "[m]ore than 90 percent of BT's teleworkers who responded to a European Union-backed survey said they experienced less stress and that their productivity increased." Also, certain tasks are easier to perform in specific environments. If a worker must read a mountain of reports, a quiet room at home is preferred to a busy office with distractions and frequent interruptions.

On the managerial side, telecommuting may improve performance by leading managers to measure performance primarily by results. Telecommuting pushes aside the justification of process and focuses on outcome. Essentially, managers and employees agree on which projects need to be completed and when, removing the need to constantly prove busyness at a desk.

Remember

This contrasts with the traditional office setting where there is more of a tendency for a manager to be impressed by those who spend long hours in the office. Such employees may indeed be hard-working, but staying behind a desk for a long period of time is not, in itself,